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# 博士論文

オタク化するギーク、ギーク化するオタク

ハンガリーのプロデューサーから見た

アニメ・マンガ文化の国際的普及およびサブカルチャー的クラスタの役割

From geek to otaku culture and back again

The role of subcultural clusters in the international dissemination of  
anime-manga culture as seen through Hungarian producers

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## **1. Why researching the international dissemination of manga through subcultural producers and subcultural clusters matters**

### **1.1. The international significance of Japanese anime-manga culture for youth culture**

Japanese anime, manga, video games, card games, toys and so on have become ubiquitous outside of Japan. It is impossible to designate a definitive starting point for the rapid rise of anime-manga culture<sup>1</sup> internationally, partly because each national market has followed differing time-lines of development, and also because this movement has been a gradual build-up towards the explosive growth experienced for instance in Europe and North America during the first half of the 2000s (see for example Brienza 2009, Leonard 2005a, Malone 2010, Pellitteri 2010, Tsugata 2014, Yui 2010). Japanese popular culture and anime-manga culture specifically have had a similar impact on a wide range of national markets around the globe, as discussed for instance by Iwabuchi (2002) and more recently by researchers and artists alike at the *Manga and the Manga-esque: New Perspectives to a Global Culture* conference in 2015 (Ateneo de Manila University) in relation to the East Asian and South-East Asian markets. The present dissertation will, however, only focus on North America and Europe as its wider context.<sup>2</sup>

The impact of Japanese popular culture on the youth culture and the corresponding visual culture of Europe and North America has been similar to the impact that rock and roll, punk, hip-hop, or electronic dance music, for example, have had on the music and fashion of

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1 Throughout this dissertation I will refer to anime-manga culture and anime-manga fandom in this hyphenated form due to the strong interrelation of the two forms not only with regards to their production and consumption (cf. Ōtsuka 2010 [1989], Steinberg 2012), but also the conjoined nature of both the European and North American fandom and the scholarly discourse surrounding them (cf. Berndt and Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013a).

2 It is important to keep in mind that despite the overarching trends and similarities – not to mention interconnected pathways of adoption and localization (see Chapter Four for examples in relation to Hungary) –, which link these countries together in relation to anime and manga, a finer grained analysis will reveal a host of existing differences regarding the development and position of anime-manga culture among not only countries (cf. Bolalek 2011, Bouissou 2010, Brienza 2009, 2011, 2014, Malone 2010, Pellitteri 2010, Woo 2012), but in certain cases even regions (cf. Santiago Iglesias 2014).

generations of young people around the world in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> As distinct from the enumerated musical styles, which all have their roots as well as their mythical place of origin in America and Europe, anime-manga culture both coming from Japan, and being recognized or imagined as Japanese, heralds a shift from previous modes of Japanese cultural export, and at the same time is an undeniable sign of the non-monopole nature of globalization (cf. Brienza 2009, Iwabuchi 2002, Leonard 2005a, Yui 2010). Moreover, it is also a testament to Japan's "soft power" (Nye 1990), as I will argue below.

The question of whether the success of Japanese popular culture has been a result of its lack of national characteristics, its "culturally odorless" nature (Iwabuchi 2002), or precisely the opposite, i.e. its Japaneseness or simply its foreignness, either real or imagined (Allison 2006), continues to be contested. And although this study will not attempt to address this question in any detail, I would like to argue that the multifaceted connotations of Japan and "Japaneseness" which the term manga is still anchored to attest to the fact that Japan remains not only the real but also the mythical point of origin for anime-manga culture (Kacsuk 2015).

There is, of course, also an ongoing debate in relation to both the impact of Japanese popular culture on European, North American and Japanese markets and modes of production, and concerning the meaning and extent of the power this impact signals.<sup>4</sup> The present work does neither attempt to assess the various positions along the fault lines of these debates, nor the efficacy of Japan's policy-level endorsement of *Cool Japan* (McGray 2002) and its

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3 The proliferation of both localized versions of Japanese manga and the growth of *global manga* (Brienza 2015a, Johnson-Woods 2010, Moreno Acosta 2014), that is, sequential storytelling building on the visual and narrative conventions of Japanese manga (cf. Cohn 2013), has started to shift the position of manga from Japanese exotica to something which is experienced by younger generations as their *own* culture (Brienza 2011, 2014) in the same way rock and roll music or later hip-hop spread from the United States to become the vernacular of youth all over the world.

4 See for example Brienza (2014).

incorporation into an agenda of increasing *soft power* (Nye 1990) (cf. Brienza 2014, Iwabuchi 2010, 2015 Lam 2007, Okada 2008, Valaskivi 2013). However, the impact of these debates on the Japanese discourse surrounding works, consumers and industry (see Valaskivi 2013) is in itself one of the most pressing phenomena prompting this study.

## **1.2. Researching the dissemination of manga in context**

Japan's anime, manga, merchandising and games industries have also given rise to a theoretical discourse related to the production, dissemination and consumption of these goods (e.g. Azuma 2007, 2009 [2001], Itō 2005, Mihara 2010, Ōtsuka 2006, 2010 [1989], Tsugata 2014), and to their fans known as *otaku*<sup>5</sup> (e.g. Azuma 2009 [2001], Morikawa 2013, Nomura 2005, Okada 1996, 2008, Saitō 2011 [2000], Yoshimoto 2009), but also topics as wide-ranging as urban space and architecture (Morikawa 2003), the public sphere and politics (Kitada 2012 [2005]). This discourse has slowly started to cross language borders with the publication of translations of certain key texts (Azuma 2009 [2001], Saitō 2011 [2000]) and excerpts thereof (Itō 2006 [2005], 2011 [2005], Kitada 2012 [2005], Morikawa 2012 [2003], Ōtsuka 2010 [1989]). At the same time a growing number of English-language works building in part on this Japanese theoretical discourse have appeared and enriched the debate about anime (e.g. Condry 2013, Lamarre 2004-5, 2009, Pellitteri 2010, Suan 2013), manga (e.g. Berndt 2008, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, Berndt and Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013a, Brienza 2015a, Johnson-Woods 2010), *otaku* (e.g. Condry 2013, Galbraith 2010, Galbraith et al. 2015a, Kam 2013, Lamarre 2004-5), toys and the Japanese “media mix” (e.g.

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5 The connotations of the term “otaku” within Japan have undergone a number of changes since its first appearance in public discourse in 1983; for an overview of its history in English see for instance Brienza (2012) or Ito (2012), and also Chapter Eight. For a more sociological discussion of the difficulties implied in trying to identify the meaning of the concept in Japan see Kam (2013). The word “otaku” has also been invoked by European and North American fans of Japanese anime, manga, games and related goods as a term of self-identification. For the purposes of the present work, the definition provided by Ito seems highly appropriate as will be discussed in Chapter Eight in more detail: “otaku culture references a constellation of “fannish” cultural logics, platforms, and practices that cluster around anime, manga, and Japanese games and are in turn associated with a more generalized set of dispositions toward passionate and participatory engagement with popular culture and technology in a networked world” (2012: xi).

Allison 2006, Steinberg 2012). These works, despite their different foci and theoretical as well as methodological approaches, occupy a common discursive field with a large number of cross-references, shared concepts and empirical anchor points.

This thesis relates itself to manga studies, a field with a well established tradition in Japanese language research and criticism (see Berndt 2003, 2008, Itō 2005) that has also emerged within the English language sphere over the past fifteen years (e.g. Berndt 2010, Berndt and Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013a, Brienza 2015a, Johnson-Woods 2010). However, I shall position my study within manga studies in a wide sense, that is, the above-described interconnected domain of research on anime, manga and otaku. But in this wider sense, too, my study stands at a similar “crossroads between divergent research areas as well as between established and new fields of scholarship” as those described by Berndt and Kümmerling-Meibauer (2013b: 2) in relation to manga and manga studies:

1) First, I discuss manga in a wide sense, referring not only to Japanese manga, but also the wider spectrum of mangaesque forms such as manhwa, manhua, global manga and even cross-over forms between American comics and manga and combinations thereof. Although my use of the term “mangaesque” [Japanese: *mangateki*, *mangachikku*] has a slightly shifted emphasis in its meaning compared to its original introduction by Berndt (2013a), it still relates to and builds on the original notion of drawing attention to the qualities of manga that most characterize it. For it is these very characteristics themselves that allow for the opening up of the word “manga” into the umbrella term encompassing all forms which creators, editors, publishers and audiences identify as building on and/or resembling Japanese manga (Brienza 2015a, Kacsuk 2015, Moreno Acosta 2014). But, at the same time, from a different angle, I will be discussing manga from a restricted viewpoint, one that implies *story manga*, i.e. graphic narratives, only (cf. Brienza 2015b: 19).

2) Second, while the outset of my fieldwork coincides with the start of manga publishing in Hungary and people working in and around manga publishing in one way or another are a major focus of my research, the international dissemination of manga culture cannot be examined by itself. Not only because anime has been the most important access point of anime-manga culture for most European and North American fans (Eng 2012b, Leonard 2005a, Malone 2010, Pellitteri 2010). But also because, as Itō emphasizes (2005), there have been a number of major shifts in the production and consumption of manga. One of these is the fact that even in Japan manga can no longer be seen as the definitive entry point into a given story or franchise, with other elements of the media-mix, such as anime, toys, video games and so on being just as important points of first interaction (see also Steinberg 2012).

3) Third, similar to the way the production and consumption of manga are often framed in a system of related goods, the consumption of manga and further elements of the pertaining media-mix are often also couched in a wider range of consumption practices and social interactions (cf. Ito et al. 2012, Pellitteri 2010). Thus a vibrant fan culture with events, a range of meta-content and anime-manga related products increases the appeal of the core products: manga, anime and games. The way in which manga in particular and anime-manga culture in general are intertwined in this manner lies at the very core of my research.

Thus, the present work expands on inquiries focusing on the actors engaged in the international production and dissemination of anime-manga culture, as discussed by anthropologists and sociologists such as Brienza (2009, 2014, 2015a), Condry (2013), Lee (2009, 2012) and Mihara (2010). More specifically, I will take a sociologically informed subcultural and fan studies based approach, rather than a legal (e.g. Leonard 2005a, 2005b), international relations (e.g. Lam 2007), philosophical (e.g. Azuma 2007, 2009 [2001]), psychoanalytical (e.g. Saitō 2011), historiographic (Tsugata 2014) or aesthetics-oriented (e.g. Berndt 2003, 2015, Itō 2005) approach. It is important to remember, however, that questions

of law, form, reception, affect and all the other facets elaborated upon within the wider field of research on manga, anime and otaku are equally important in order to understand the repercussions manga and the wider anime-manga culture globally have. Precisely because the larger body of work on manga, anime and otaku across a range of various disciplines helps us understand their wider legal, social, economic and aesthetic global *impact and significance*. Relatedly, this study clarifies certain aspects of the *how and why* of the dissemination of these forms and cultures.

### **1.3. Examining subcultural producers and subcultural clusters**

If we are to understand more fully the changes and interactions outlined above both in Japan and globally, then it is imperative that we understand the frameworks and logics according to which anime, manga, games and related products are being disseminated internationally, first of all the actors responsible for these processes.

The global success of anime-manga culture has been furthered by three major groups of such actors.<sup>6</sup> On one end of the scale we have major corporations, such as publishing houses, broadcast and network television channels, film distribution companies, etc. These actors mostly operate according to a business logic and focus on the large-scale legal mediation of content and products. Major businesses, television companies foremost, have been the most important actors in introducing the widest possible public to anime and manga, leaning mostly on the mainstream top sellers content-wise.<sup>7</sup> On the other end of the scale we have already initiated fans, dedicated to fan-ethical considerations and motivations and engaged in the mostly unauthorized dissemination of the widest possible range of content from smash hit to niche cult success to esoteric curiosity, serving mostly a narrow fan audience, who

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6 Just as Thornton (1996 [1995]) highlights the different reach and role of *mass media*, *niche media* and *micro media* in relation to subcultures, these three types of actors also service various audiences in a similar way.

7 This applies to most subcultures (see Thornton 1996 [1995], Vályi 2010).

already know and crave the products of this culture. In between these two ends of the scale we have the small businesses, independent professionals and fan volunteers, the *subcultural producers*<sup>8</sup>. These actors often come from the fandom itself in one way or another, and pursue the mostly legal dissemination of products, but with consideration for the fan audience. While the labour of fans and fan networks in relation to unauthorized dissemination (in particular, scanlation and fansubbing) has received the most attention within research on the international spread of anime-manga culture (e.g. Condry 2013, Eng 2012b, Hatcher 2005, Ito 2012b, Lamarre 2004-5, Lee 2009, 2012, Mihara 2010), with some coverage of the role of major business actors (Mihara 2010, Brienza 2009, 2011), the strata of subcultural producers has received the least attention so far (Kacsuk 2011), although references to their roles and positions can be found in a range of scholarly texts (Eng 2012b, Hatcher 2005, Leonard 2005a, Brienza 2009, 2014). The present study furthers the understanding of this strata within the ecosystem of actors responsible for the global rise of anime-manga culture.

While one of the distinguishing features, of these actors is their willingness to service markets deemed too small by major business actors, it would be a mistake to think that they are only to be found in small domestic markets like that of Hungary. It is important to remember that fan cultural markets can and often do start out as small niche markets in even the largest countries, such as the US (Condry 2013, Cubbison 2005, Jenkins 2006, Leonard 2005a).

Fan-studies research tends to concentrate mostly on the interactions within the level of non-professional (in the sense of non-profit oriented) fandom and/or its relationship with the major companies producing and distributing the texts that serve as the focus of fandom (Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992). The fact that there are actors emerging from within fan

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8 Term introduced by Hodkinson (2002) and discussed below in more detail.

cultures, who create careers or businesses building on their fannish interests and experiences, receives only passing mentions within the literature (Hills 2002, Jenkins 1992, 2006). For the most part the importance of these actors and their career paths for fandom has yet to be explored.

Therefore, it is to subcultural studies that I shall turn in search of a more expedient framework for addressing the role these actors play in the creation and development of fan cultures. The term *subcultural entrepreneur* was coined by McRobbie (1994 [1989]) drawing attention to the way small-scale entrepreneurship often coming from within the counter-culture and youth subcultures had always been important to the life of these cultures. This line of thought was further elaborated by Hodkinson, who introduced the term *subcultural producers* to refer to not only entrepreneurs, but also volunteers, employees and freelance professionals coming from within the subculture, and underlined the importance of their role in the creation of the relatively autonomous infrastructure necessary for subcultures to exist independently of the ebb and flow of mainstream interest (2002: 31–33, 114–127). This is exactly what happened in Hungary where the withdrawal of major business actors from the anime-manga market starting in 2010 did not correspond to a drop in the vibrancy of the fan culture, in part as a result of the continued operation of subcultural businesses servicing the fandom, as will be explained in Chapter Four in more detail.

Hodkinson is very clear about the importance of outside market interests during the boom period of goth culture – his field of investigation – and the way insider specialists catering to that subculture became central afterwards (2002: 110-116). The Hungarian anime-manga fan market was also characterized by corresponding shifts in the make-up of relevant actors (discussed in Chapter Six). However, elaborating Hodkinson's insights further, I shall draw attention to subcultural producers from *related fields* who played a key role in facilitating the emergence and development of the anime-manga fan market.



Subcultural businesses from related fields were, of course, especially important during the fledgling period of the fandom, when they provided the necessary subcultural goods. But these actors also proved to be the most prepared to step in as suppliers of imported or localized subcultural goods once the market demand had become apparent. Besides their access to an already existing infrastructure – established enterprises, operating retail spaces, existing channels of communication, etc. – and personnel, these businesses were also more aware of the shape of demand in the nascent fan culture as a result of their role as auxiliary suppliers. Furthermore, these actors were not bound by the implicit fan ethic – an ad-hoc mix of the logic of amateurism and anti-business sentiments emphasized within certain segments of the core of the organized fandom.<sup>9</sup> Looking at the major manga publishers in Hungary, we find that most of them came from related areas, such as comics, SF<sup>10</sup>/fantasy and role-playing games. And while anime-manga specialist shops and web-shops would emerge to service the market, established comics book stores and figure shops were not only first to the market but would also stay longer.

I introduce the concept of *subcultural clusters* in order to consider the larger groups of related cultures, which are characterized by a significant level of interconnectedness with regards to the following dimensions:

- (a) correspondence between stylistic and thematic elements and focal interests, which translate into
- (b) a higher level of convertible capital and
- (c) a higher proportion of shared infrastructure and media channels; these again feed into

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9 This is, again, not specific to anime-manga fandom per se (see for example Woo 2012). Hodkinson (2002), Kahn-Harris (2007) and Vályi (2010) also all note how subcultural producers are to a certain extent bound by their respective culture's ethics.

10 Science fiction will be abbreviated as SF throughout the present work.

- (d) an increased mobility of participants and enable
- (e) a greater level of cooperation and competition for subcultural producers operating within these fields.

The make-up of these clusters changes over time, and the rise of anime-manga fandom outside Japan is one such example. The current anime-manga fan culture in Europe and North America is embedded in what I call the *geek subcultural cluster*; it comprises fan cultures and subcultures organized around science fiction, fantasy, role-playing games, miniature wargaming, board games, American and European comics, collectible card games, computer games, etc.<sup>11</sup>

The crossing-over of subcultural producers between these markets is facilitated not only by the relative proximity of the themes – as explained in Chapter Six –, but also by the very similar working conditions, relations and rewards these markets offer, discussed in Chapter Seven. Furthermore, these markets are also comparable in scale,<sup>12</sup> and they are all characterized by free labour as well as a field-specific subcultural reward structure (cf. Hodgkinson 2002), also examined in Chapter Seven. Finally – in relation to learning and skill acquisition as discussed in Chapter Five – we can see that the transferability of specialist knowledge, such as comics/manga editing and typesetting, was also conducive to the movement of subcultural producers between these markets.

Adopting the framework of *subcultural clusters*, however, not only helps us make sense of the developments in manga publishing and the wider anime-manga fandom, but also offers new avenues for re-examining the complex relationship between European and North

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11 Woo (2012) provides a highly congruous description of interconnected subfields of interest in relation to what he calls a “nerd-culture scene” in Canada.

12 One of the reasons that major Hungarian publishing houses have pulled out of manga publishing is most likely related to the fact that these markets are of a smaller scale with regards to rate of return than their usual markets.

American geek culture and Japanese otaku culture (in Chapter Eight), and for assessing its potential futures (in Chapter Nine).

#### 1.4. Outline of the present work

The present work thus examines the role of both *subcultural producers* and *subcultural clusters* in the international dissemination of anime-manga culture in general and manga publishing in particular through an investigation of the development of the Hungarian fandom and market.<sup>13</sup>

Chapter Two provides an overview of the theoretical framework of the present analysis building on Bourdieu's *field theory* and Anglophone *subcultural and fan studies*. First, I trace the compatibility between subcultural studies and fan studies, between Howard Becker's *art world* and Pierre Bourdieu's *field* approach. I argue that field theory not only offers a more concise description of subcultures and fan cultures compared to previous models, but also allows for a productive engagement with cultural-industries and creative-labour approaches to cultural production. Finally, I also demonstrate how the concept of subcultural clusters not only helps understand the movement of participants and subcultural producers between related subcultures and fan cultures, but is itself a logical extension of the way these cultures can be considered fields in the Bourdieusian sense.

The third chapter describes the methods employed during the course of my research and some of the characteristics of the gathered empirical material, including its limitations. In this chapter I also provide a discussion of four of the most important problems relating to my position as an *insider researcher* and the employed quasi-ethnography style methodology: a) the interrelations between the observation I undertook and my sample selection, b) the

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13 The following chapters incorporate materials from Kacsuk (2011, 2012, 2015, 2016a, 2016b), without explicitly quoting them, as these papers have all come to be written within the context of the present dissertation research project.

benefits and drawbacks of conducting insider research, c) the problem of friendship and bias arising not just within insider research, but in ethnography type approaches in general, and finally d) the problem of anonymity versus identification in relation to disclosing research results and the role that trust plays in such a research setting.

In order to provide context for the discussion of the empirical material and findings the fourth chapter offers a basic overview of the developments of anime broadcasting, manga publishing and anime-manga fandom in Hungary. Both anime broadcasting and manga publishing in Hungary are discussed according to chronological periodizations that attempt to capture the most important trends in the development of these markets and their major actors. The overview of the maturation of the Hungarian anime-manga fandom, its media and conventions focuses to a large extent on the *Hungarian Anime Association* (Magyar Anime Társaság), the first and most important anime-manga fan organization in Hungary. This chapter closes with a composite periodization – which will be referenced in the discussion in Chapter Six – that aims to capture the overall development of the anime-manga fandom and market in Hungary.

Chapter Five focuses on learning in subcultures and fan cultures, and discusses two main facets of learning in relation to subcultural producers. First, in relation to the general aspects of learning in subcultures and fan cultures I examine the way knowledge and skill acquisition takes place in these environments. Second, I offer an exploration and categorization of the skills and knowledge participants master within anime-manga fandom based on the typology created by Ronald Hitzler and his colleagues (Hitzler et al. 2004, Hitzler & Pfadenhauer 2007). The chapter concludes with a cursory look at the uses of competences acquired in formal education in relation to subcultural and fan cultural careers.

Following on from my approach in Chapter Five and leading into the discussions in the seventh chapter, in Chapter Six I offer a parallel discussion of the career patterns of subcultural producers and the changes in their interests and corresponding free time activities and consumption as related to their contribution to the anime-manga fandom and market. I will also discuss how these two sets of patterns are not only interrelated, but also point towards the embeddedness of anime-manga fandom in the wider geek subcultural cluster.

In Chapter Seven I shift my focus from the individual participants and their career paths to the level of the fandom and market in general, exploring the mechanisms of subcultural fan markets in relation to specialist tastes and knowledge, resource mobilization, employment and the rewards and drawbacks these activities entail. By drawing on literature regarding cultural industries, creative labour and ethnic migrant markets to expand upon the framework of field, subcultural producers and subcultural clusters, this chapter demonstrates how subcultural fan markets are a special type of market which share the characteristics of both creative cultural markets and migrant ethnic markets.

Chapter Eight broadens the horizon of my inquiries by incorporating the Japanese literature on otaku culture. I not only examine these works in relation to my own findings, but also compare them with the Anglophone literature on geek culture. In this way I am able to outline a wider framework for understanding the development of European and North American anime-manga fandom within the overarching context of the interrelationship of geek and otaku culture. Building on Bourdieu's theory of aesthetic dispositions in this chapter I also offer a possible novel approach in relation to understanding the aesthetic principles aligning elements of the geek and otaku subcultural clusters and underpinning their relationship.

In the concluding ninth chapter I offer a short overview of how we can reassess the tension between the perceived success and assumed failure of Japanese anime-manga culture abroad through the lens of the framework outlined in the present work focusing on subcultural producers, subcultural clusters and the interrelationship of Western<sup>14</sup> geek culture and Japanese otaku culture. In my closing discussion I focus on two main aspects through which this problem can be approached: the vibrancy of anime-manga fan culture in Europe and North America, and the possible trends in mainstream market interest as seen through the example of other subcultures and fan cultures.

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14 I will use the term Western as shorthand for European and North American throughout the present work.

## 2. From subcultures as fields to subcultural clusters

### 2.1. Introduction

Becker's *art world* (1982) and Bourdieu's *field of cultural production* (1993 [1983], 1996 [1992]) both take account of the multiplicity of actors responsible for the production and dissemination of artistic and cultural products and the related institutions and markets, and are thus natural fits for investigating the role of subcultural producers in the international dissemination of anime-manga culture. Although there are various competing frameworks related to the sociology of art and to cultural production (see Brienza 2010, van Maanen 2009), both Becker's *art world* (e.g. Bacon-Smith 1999, Jenkins 1992, Vályi 2010, Woo 2012), and various elements of Bourdieu's *field* framework (e.g. Hills 2002, Hodgkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Muggleton 2000, Thornton 1996 [1995], Vályi 2010, Woo 2012) and his distinction between *aesthetic dispositions* (e.g. Fiske 1992, Jancovich 2002, Jenkins 1992) are the most commonly employed within subcultural and fan research. These and related concepts have also been taken up in comics studies and manga research, for example *cultural capital* (Brown 1997), *cultural intermediaries* (Lee 2012), *field* (Lopes 2009, Brienza 2009) and *art worlds* (Brienza 2013).

In line with van Maanen (2009) and Battani (1999) I argue for the compatibility of the two approaches, giving preference to the Bourdieusian framework due to its more developed theoretical apparatus, and its deeper integration with English-language subcultural studies. Kahn-Harris (2007) and Vályi (2010) even suggest that subcultures can in fact be conceived of as *fields* in the Bourdieusian sense. Taking these works as my lead and building on Hodgkinson's (2002) definition of subculture I present a – so far missing – detailed argument

for the applicability of a *field* approach to subcultures, arguing that a large number<sup>15</sup> of subcultures are in fact subfields of the field of cultural production. Furthermore, drawing on Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) as well as Moorhouse (1991) I will also demonstrate – in agreement with Jenkins (1992), Hills (2002), Sandvoss (2005) and others – how the core of fan cultures is in fact subcultural in nature, and how an integrated approach to fan cultures and subcultures is very much in line with not only a *field* approach but also the concept of *subcultural clusters* I introduced in the previous chapter.

Field theory, however, not only offers a more concise description of subcultures and fan cultures compared to previous models, but also allows for a productive engagement with cultural-industries and creative-labour approaches to cultural production. Whereas cultural-industries approaches have contributed towards describing the world of mass or large-scale production (e.g. Hesmondhalgh 2007), Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art* (1996 [1992]) and *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993 [1983]) has mainly dealt with the world of restricted production. The two approaches, however, seem to offer less competing than complementary descriptions of cultural production, as pointed out by Hesmondhalgh (2006).

In order to explain all of the above in detail I will start this chapter with a discussion of the problem of integrating subcultural studies with fan research, introducing Hodgkinson's definition of subculture in the process. In the subsequent, most central and extensive part of my theoretical work I will examine the relationship between Becker's art world approach, Bourdieu's field framework and the results of subcultural and fan studies, leading in to a step by step working through of why and how Bourdieu's field framework is indeed applicable to subcultural and fan research, as already suggested by a number of the above referenced researchers. The next subchapter will bring me to re-examining the unique position of

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15 Although all subcultures will have aspects which fall within the field of cultural production, some will be also positioned in other fields such as skateboarding in the field of sports, and thus cannot be seen to be purely a subfield of the field of cultural production.



subcultural producers – already explained in chapter one – in relation to the field of cultural production and how this position relates to bringing together cultural industries and creative labour approaches with Bourdieu's work on the art field. In the final subchapter on subcultural clusters I will lay out in more detail the results from subcultural and fan studies alongside Bourdieu's work all pointing towards the importance of an approach that is able to take into account the closely intertwined nature of various subcultural and fan cultural groupings.

## **2.2. Integrating subcultural studies with fan studies: a general framework**

I have already addressed the history of subcultural and fan studies research and the relationship between the two in various articles (2005b, 2007, 2012), and will refrain from reiterating all the arguments and overviews here for lack of space. However, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the often courted project (cf. Gelder & Thornton 1997, Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003) of integrating subcultural studies and fan research has been strained in part because of the distance between these two fields of research. This distance in part stems from the different disciplinary embeddedness of the two research areas (fan studies coming from literary and media studies and subcultural studies from sociology and cultural studies), but is also a result of a gendered division between the perceived subjects of the two fields (fandom corresponding to the feminine and subculture to the masculine), with the rift being structured by a series of further binary oppositions (private/public, passive/active and consumption/resistance) organized around this central dichotomy of gender.<sup>16</sup>

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16 For a more detailed discussion of this question see Kacsuk (2012).

### 2.2.1. Subcultural studies and Hodkinson's definition of subculture

Subcultural studies as understood today (see Thornton & Gelder 1997, Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003)<sup>17</sup> concentrate to a large extent on the study of *leisure and consumption oriented (youth)*<sup>18</sup> *cultures*. This focus within the discipline is probably a result of the impact of the body of work produced at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) during the seventies (P. Cohen 1972, Hall & Jefferson 1993 [1975], Willis 1978, Hebdige 1988 [1979]). From the eighties onwards the tradition which now calls itself subcultural studies has been engaged with an ongoing critique of the CCCS body of work and the concept of subculture (see Widdicombe & Wooffitt 1995, Thornton 1996 [1995], Redhead 1997, Muggleton 2000), however, with a continued indebtedness to the Birmingham approach (Weinzierl & Muggleton 2003).<sup>19</sup>

A number of researchers of leisure and consumption oriented (youth) cultures have tried to circumvent the Marxist connotations the concept of subculture carried as a result of the impact of the CCCS body of work by trying to signal a move away from the term by employing concepts such as clubcultures<sup>20</sup> (Redhead 1997), post-subcultures (Muggleton 2000, Weinzierl & Muggleton 2003) or adopting the concepts neo-tribe (Bennett 1999, 2000) or scene (Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010).<sup>21</sup> Amongst this flurry of conceptual innovations the most important recent redefinition of subculture emerged from Hodkinson's (2002) work,

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17 The concept of subculture is also invoked in criminology, studies of deviance and a number of other research fields. The focus and research question of these latter areas are nevertheless quite distinct from those of current subcultural studies, and as such will not be discussed in the present work.

18 Although the cultures under examination are regularly regarded as being youth cultures, an increasing number of older participants are now also present in these cultures (see Bennett 2006, Bennett & Hodkinson 2012), not to mention the fact that fan cultures have traditionally attracted adult participants as well (Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992).

19 For a more detailed history of the term subculture going all the way back to its Chicago School roots see Kacsuk (2005b), Muggleton (2005), Muggleton & Weinzierl (2003) and Thornton & Gelder (1997).

20 The expression was first coined by Thornton as club cultures (1996 [1995]), but appropriated and respelled by Redhead as clubcultures (1997).

21 *Scene* has become the defining conceptual framework within popular music studies (Bennett 2004, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010, Barna 2011).

which instead of dismissing the term went about redefining what it means from the bottom up.

According to Hodgkinson (2002: 28-33) subcultures exhibit *(sub)cultural substance* which is comprised of four elements: consistent distinctiveness, identity, commitment and autonomy. *Consistent distinctiveness* refers to “the existence of a set of shared tastes and values which is distinctive from those of other groups and reasonably consistent” (2002: 30) in space and time among participants. *Identity* means that “participants hold a perception that they are involved in a distinct cultural grouping and share feelings of identity with one another” (2002: 30-31). *Commitment* describes the phenomenon that subcultural participation will result in a marked impact on the way people allocate their free time, disposable income and energy, and also on their patterns of social interactions both offline and online. Finally, *autonomy* refers to the way subcultures have access to an alternative infrastructure (retail and media channels, events, etc.) – often run by enthusiasts from within the culture –, which allows the culture to keep producing and reproducing itself even when it no longer attracts mainstream interest.

This definition of subculture will be my point of reference and departure for connecting subcultural and fan studies with Bourdieu’s field framework. First, however, I will introduce a unified framework for working with subcultures and fan cultures together and explain the relationship of the two concepts to each other in relation to this shared framework.

### 2.2.2. *Connecting fan studies and subcultural studies*

Before moving on to a more detailed discussion of the possibilities of integrating the results of fan studies and subcultural studies, I would very briefly like to indicate why it seems appropriate to apply the results of the two fields to each other’s areas of research.

To sum up and offer in advance one of the main arguments of this chapter, I will explain that in relation to *scene*, *neo-tribe* and other competing terms the concept subculture is best seen as describing the *core* of leisure and consumption oriented (youth) cultural formations in relation to practices, knowledge and participants. If we reposition the emphasis of the meaning of the concept subculture in this way, we find that it demonstrates a good fit with the way the term is used within fan studies. The emerging consensus within fan studies (Tulloch & Jenkins 1995, Kozinets 2001, Hills 2002, Sandvoss 2005) holds that it is a smaller subset of fans who can be seen to participate in and compose a fan subculture. It is in the case of this smaller subset of fans that the results of subcultural studies will be relevant and applicable.

If we examine the question from the other direction, that is, why should the results and concepts of fan studies research be applicable to the subjects of study of subcultural research, we find that most groups studied by subcultural studies researchers are actually fans. This is the easiest to understand in relation to music based subcultures – with subcultural participants being music fans. However, if we turn to the most overarching definition of fandom offered by Sandvoss according to which “*fandom [i]s the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text*” (2005: 8, emphasis in the original) – where text is understood by Sandvoss in the widest sense encompassing not just books or movies but also “sports teams and popular icons and stars ranging from athletes and musicians to actors” (2005: 8) – it is easy to see how fandom can be attributed to other non-music based leisure and consumption oriented (youth) cultures, as Sandvoss himself also suggests.<sup>22</sup>

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22 “From this definition of fandom as a form of sustained, affective consumption follows the relationship between fandom and ‘subculture’ [...]. Most – maybe all – of those who participate in subcultures which evolve around a given media text or genre conform to the patterns of regular and emotionally committed consumption by which I define fandom here. [...] [R]egardless of whether members of subcultural groups describe themselves as ‘fans’, a term often avoided by audiences trying to portray themselves in opposition to mainstream

Now that we have seen that the concepts subculture and fan culture are cross-applicable I will demonstrate how they fit together in a joint framework. Abercrombie & Longhurst building on fan studies (on both media fandom and pop music fandom), studies of ‘serious leisure’ – a term introduced by Stebbins (2007) – and enthusiasm (Moorhouse 1991), subcultural research and popular music studies propose the following framework for understanding audience engagement with the media. Within their framework the *mode* and *focus* of engagement shifts from *consumers*, to *fans*, to *cultists*, to *enthusiasts*, to *petty producers*. Within this terminology *fans* are consumers who “become particularly attached to certain programmes or stars within the context of relatively heavy mass media use”, they are however still alone with their fannish interest, with the possibility of enjoying “mass-produced fannish literature (teenage magazines, for example)” and discussions with their peers (1998: 138).

One step further along the line of involvement we find “[c]ultists (or subcultists) [who] are closer to what much of the recent literature has called a fan” (1998: 139, my emphasis). In the case of the cultists it is often not just an attachment to a star or programme, but to programme types, “the cultist focuses his/her media use” (1998: 139). While their interest usually revolve around programmes and stars in the mass media, they participate in the consumption and creation of cult focused specialist content. “Cultists are more organized than fans. They meet each other and circulate specialized materials”, but their networks are “characterized by informality” (1998: 139).

The focus of *enthusiasts* according to Abercrombie & Longhurst revolves around activities (such as fan art, fan fiction, etc.) instead of stars or programmes. Enthusiasts are more organized than cultists and their media consumption will focus on “a specialist literature, produced by enthusiasts for enthusiasts” (1998: 139).

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media (Thornton 1995).” (Sandvoss 2005: 9)

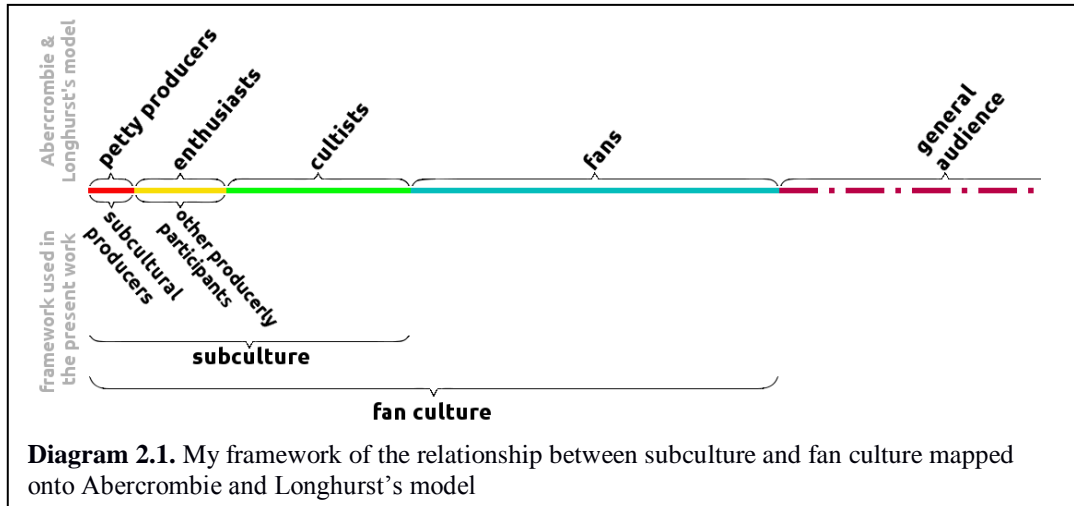
At the other end of the continuum are the *petty producers*, who in a seeming paradox tend to turn the continuum into a circle as they become more like consumers. [...] As the enthusiast moves out of an enthusiasm towards being a petty producer or forms a production company, *he/she is returned more to general capitalist social relations*; as producers, they are as much at the mercy of structural forces as the consumers at the other end of the continuum. (Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998: 140, my emphasis)

The above passage can be seen as a key to understanding a number of points I will be arguing in relation to subcultural producers, and I will therefore refer back to it again below. For now I would just like to note that I will be using the term fandom to refer to the whole spectrum of actors from fan to petty producers in terms of the above definition, and subculture to denote the range of actors from cultists to petty producers – though my own understanding of fandom and subculture is more inclusive in relation to the focus of interest than the media audience centred description above. Petty producers correspond to subcultural producers in my own terminology, and enthusiasts correspond to the part of the subculture or fandom that can and often are engaged to a certain extent in producerly activities, but are still detached from any sort of profit motive or goals beyond personal development and expression. The line between petty producers and enthusiast – between subcultural producers and other producerly actors within the subculture or fandom – is more like a continuum than a clear division, just as with all the other distinctions above. A majority of participants will, nevertheless, fall clearly on either side of the distinction even as they may shift positions through their careers of involvement. However, as I hope to demonstrate in my own research material, there are some who will straddle a double position in relation to this divide, underlining the inevitable impossibility of clearly bounded categories in relation to social scientific research.

Sandvoss points out that with regards to the number of participants “the continuum between fans, cultists and enthusiasts is a pyramid instead of a linear continuation” (2005: 32). This is in line with Abercrombie and Longhurst’s suggestion that “this continuum may represent a possible career path under certain conditions” (1998: 141), which would mean that ever decreasing number of participants pass through to the subsequent steps of the continuum. This progression is also well illustrated in the following quote by Bacon-Smith in relation to science-fiction fandom:

This is not to say that every fan who tries to write a book for publication or find a job with a science fiction publisher will succeed. Rather, those who do succeed will, in most cases, come out of the pool of hopefuls who established themselves as avid readers of the genre by their teens. For that reason, most industry hopefuls are encouraged to attend conventions, where they may make the social connections they will need to move into the business. (2000: 192)

This view of participants moving through increasing levels of engagement to the point of building careers in relation to their objects of interest also informs my own research methodology as will be discussed in Chapter Three. To summarize Abercrombie and Longhurst’s model and my own use of the various related key terms and the idea that there is not only a difference in the forms and intensity of engagement but also the number of participants progressing towards more involved forms of participation, I have created the diagram below.



Closing this subchapter I want to re-emphasize the distinction between fan cultures and subcultures and my own use of these terms in the following. Fan cultures always have an outer circle of participants, who are less defined by and aware of the field specific logic (as discussed in the next subchapter) of the given culture, whereas subcultures proper will lack this outer ring. The reason for this is that to be involved in those cultures usually requires such an investment in time and resources, or is so dangerous, etc. that the cut off point is more accentuated than in the case of fan cultures. In the case of subcultures proper, either one is interested in and invested in the culture, at least to the point of being a cultist (in Abercrombie and Longhurst's terms), or will have almost no knowledge of or interest in the given activity or will have no claim to belonging to that particular culture. So while all fan cultures have a subcultural core, not all subcultures have an outer circle of fan participants (again in Abercrombie and Longhurst's terms). This is the reason I will be repeatedly referring to both subcultures and fan cultures in the following. And this is also why, whenever I am only addressing subcultures, I am in fact addressing both fan cultures and subcultures, as the core of fan cultures are understood to be always subcultural in nature in line with the above.



### 2.3. Subcultures as fields

The idea that Bourdieu's concept of *field* could be incorporated into research on leisure and consumption oriented (youth) cultures is not a completely new one. Both Kahn-Harris (2007) and Vályi (2010) have suggested the potential for integrating the concept of *field* with that of *scene*, and Bacon-Smith (2000) has invoked Bourdieu's *field of cultural production* in relation to science-fiction culture. Furthermore, Woo (2012) has also pointed out the way *field*, *subculture* and *scene* can be connected. Kahn-Harris suggests thinking about the two terms – scene and field – as analogous in order “to examine the multifarious ways in which power is reproduced through the extreme metal scene's infrastructure” (2007: 69). Vályi on the other hand attempts to incorporate elements of Bourdieu's field theory into his own conceptualisation of scene alongside Becker's notion of *art world*. This is similar to Bacon-Smith's approach (2000), who instead of incorporating elements from Bourdieu's *field of cultural production* and Becker's *art world* concepts – the latter of which was already part of her theoretical approach in *Enterprising Women* (1992) – rather signals the fact that both descriptions are relevant in understanding worlds of cultural production such as the science-fiction fan community. It is important to take note of the fact that Bacon-Smith (2000), Vályi (2010) and Woo (2012) all reference both the notion of *art world* and that of *field* simultaneously. Similar to the way the relationship between *field* and *subculture* remain mostly unexplored within works of subcultural and fan studies, the connection between *art world* and *field* is also taken to be self-evident. Although I agree with the use of the two frameworks in conjunction with one another I will briefly examine why there is such a good fit between the two, and how this compatibility can help us better understand the correspondence between *subculture* and *field*.

#### 2.3.1. The relationship between the art worlds framework and the field approach

Based on the way both frameworks have been invoked repeatedly – enumerated above – in relation to subcultures and fan cultures, it would seem that there is an intuitive

correspondence between Becker's art world and Bourdieu's field approach. Nevertheless, even though the two authors mutually acknowledge each other's work, they are both keen to point out how different their approaches are (Bourdieu 1996[1992], 204-5; Becker and Pessin 2006), which should prompt us to at least consider the relationship and concurrent applicability of the two frameworks, a point that is usually glossed over or taken for granted – precisely because of the intuitive fit between the two theories – within the cited body of works.

Fortunately, we can find more rigorous exercises in relating the two author's approaches within the sociology of art. Both Battani (1999) and van Maanen (2009) offer developed examinations of the relationship between Becker's art world and Bourdieu's field of cultural production frameworks reaching similar conclusions in relation to the way DiMaggio and Powell's work and the concept of *role* can serve as a bridge towards a unified framework employing the insights of both authors – an avenue of investigation that will be left unexplored for our present purposes. Since these authors – especially van Maanen – provide well-argued analyses of why and how these two frameworks are indeed compatible with each other, I will only offer a cursory look at some of the most important differences of the two approaches, and instead focus on the shared central problem of *convention* and *innovation* and its relationship to boundary work, which acts as an axis connecting not only Becker's and Bourdieu's work but also the wider unified subcultural and fan studies framework introduced above. Furthermore, this question will be revisited again in section 2.3.2.2. on the *limits of the field* below.

The most immediately visible difference between the two authors' works is the way Becker drawing examples mostly from music and visual arts is concerned with cooperation and concentrates more on the actual production process of works of art, whereas Bourdieu paying attention to the literary world focuses instead on struggle and engages to a greater

degree with the constitution of the artist as artist (cf. Becker & Pessin 2006). To these differences corresponds a far less obvious epistemological break as Bourdieu's theories clearly require an idealist or realist position, with a repeated call for analyzing the objective relations between *positions* that actors occupy, while Becker is very nominalist in his attitude of not wanting to imply the existence of any form of metaphysical entity. Finally, although Bourdieu is commonly understood to belong to the lineage of grand theory and Becker could most likely be seen as operating on the level of middle-range theory, both authors consider their approach to the world of art as a concrete implementation of a more general framework. This is quite obvious in Bourdieu's case, with field being a recurring framework throughout the latter half of his oeuvre, but less often considered in relation to Becker's work, who nevertheless ends *Art Worlds* on this very note, suggesting that a similar approach to focusing on the ways "networks responsible for producing specific events, the overlaps among such cooperative networks, the way participants use conventions to coordinate their activities" and so on can be applied more generally to other areas of social endeavour and interaction (1983: 371).<sup>23</sup> This resonates with Martin's following observation, who examining a range of different field theories – with Bourdieu's naturally figuring predominantly among them – generalizes regarding these frameworks in the following way:

field theories, like mechanistic theories (and unlike functionalist theories), reach toward the concrete and propose only local action, but like functionalist theories (and unlike mechanistic theories), they insist that any case must be understood in terms of the global pattern. (2003: 12)

Which in turn also evokes Becker's actual approach in *Art Worlds* – with his focus on the concrete, but signalling the more universal applicability of his approach, as I've just

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23      And this is also one of the reasons why both approaches lend themselves so readily to the analysis of activities and cultures beyond what is generally considered the world of art proper, which Becker already transcends in his own analysis of craft practices for instance.

explained – further underlining the parallels between the art worlds framework and Bourdieu’s field approach. The compatibility is again supported by the concord in their overall stance in relation to social phenomena. While it is very easy to see why Bourdieu is generally seen to embrace a conflict theory approach, Becker comes from a symbolic interactionist lineage, yet his view of the social world is also quite compatible with conflict theory as evidenced by his emblematic formulation of the labelling theory of deviance in *Outsiders* (1991[1963]). This is probably also why Becker has a strong interest in maverick artists – his own term – who defy the accepted norms of a given art form and thereby create radical new spaces for innovation. This seems to fully resonate with the way conformity and non-conformity to the rules – or in this case conventions – have advantages and disadvantages for individual actors in his theory of deviance. Incidentally, according to Martin one of the strengths of field theory lies in its ability to take into account instances of deviating from the rules (2003: 31-32). It is thus not surprising that the tension between convention and innovation occupies a central role in both Becker’s and Bourdieu’s framework. For now I will focus on Becker’s description and the way it maps onto various concepts introduced within works in subcultural studies, and will address Bourdieu’s fully compatible version of this distinction in section 2.3.2.2.

Every art work creates a world in some respects unique, a combination of vast amounts of *conventional* materials with some that are *innovative*. Without the first, it becomes unintelligible; without the second, it becomes boring and featureless, fading into the background like music in supermarkets and pictures on motel walls. *The variations may be so small that only an aficionado would notice them*, or so obvious no one could ignore them. (Becker 1982: 63, my emphases)

The above passage captures the essential paradox of creative practices. They require a steady background of conventions, of the regular, the already known for the innovations to stand

out and be intelligible. This tension between convention and innovation, between continuity and change is also one of the central structuring dichotomies of subcultures and fan cultures. Furthermore in the above quote Becker also calls attention to the way a certain familiarity with the subject matter is often necessary for the beholder to understand and appreciate the innovation at hand. Aficionados, connoisseurs, initiated participants or insiders all denote audiences and practitioners, who are aware of the conventions of a given genre, community or culture. The significance of this dichotomy between convention and innovation, I would like to point out, has been discussed – independent of the above passage and in different terms – in the works of Hodkinson (2002), Kahn-Harris (2007) and Vályi (2010) alike in relation to the central values of the subcultures, scenes studied by them.

In the case of goths Hodkinson found that the *subcultural ideals* – the term introduced by him – of *individuality* and *commitment* lay at the core of the way participants' stylistic expression progressed and allowed the claiming of subcultural capital and thus status and recognition within the culture (2002: 76-80). *Commitment* meant that participants had to familiarize themselves with the culture and adhere to its stylistic sensibilities, while *individuality* referred to the way innovation grounded within an understanding of the shared tradition was also expected. Just as in Becker's description above the one depends on the other, without an understanding of goth tastes and sensibilities the participant would not be able to demonstrate an appropriate attachment to the culture and its values, while on the other hand a slavish conformity to the templates of the goth style would mark out the participant as having failed at one of the important elements of goth culture, creativity and expression of individuality.

Kahn-Harris (2007) further elaborating on Thornton's notion of subcultural capital<sup>24</sup> distinguishes between two forms of subcultural capital within extreme metal scenes *mundane subcultural capital* and *transgressive subcultural capital*. The first "is a form of capital accrued through a sustained investment in the myriad practices through which the scene is reproduced" and is accumulated "through self-sacrifice, commitment and hard work" (2007: 122). The second on the other hand "is claimed through a radical individualism, through displaying uniqueness and a lack of attachment to the scene" (2007: 127). Thus similar to the previous case – and Becker's dichotomy of convention and innovation – on the one hand we find a commitment to the conventions and practices of the scene and at the same time an imperative to deviate from these, with both elements contributing to the standing of participants within the extreme metal scene.<sup>25</sup>

For Vályi's crate diggers the "foundational values" (2010: 184) of *the crate digging ethos* – not unlike Hodgkinson's *subcultural ideals* – were *work* ("paying dues") and *creativity* ("flipping records") (2010: 178-185). Here again we find the dichotomy of convention and innovation as described by Becker. "Paying dues", putting in the hard *work* of familiarizing oneself with the tradition of hip-hop and the break aesthetic through the practice of crate digging and record hunting leads to an understanding of the conventions of this particular

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24 Introduced by Thornton based on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital: "Subcultural capital confers status on its owner in the eyes of the relevant beholder. In many ways it affects the standing of the young like its adult equivalent. Subcultural capital can be *objectified* or *embodied*. Just as books and paintings display cultural capital in the family home, so subcultural capital is objectified in the form of fashionable haircuts and well-assembled record collections (full of well-chosen, limited edition 'white label' twelve-inches and the like). Just as cultural capital is personified in 'good' manners and urbane conversation, so subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being 'in the know', using (but not over-using) current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles. Both cultural and subcultural capital put a premium on the 'second nature' of their knowledges. Nothing depletes capital more than the sight of someone trying too hard." (1996[1995]: 11-12, emphases in the original)

25 Furthermore, reflecting on Keith Negus' work (1999 in Kahn-Harris 2007) on genre, according to which "in all musical genres there are tensions between genre as 'routine' and genre as 'transformative'", Kahn-Harris (2007: 131) associates mundane subcultural capital with the 'routine' and transgressive subcultural capital with the 'transformative' aspect of genre, which again equates to my own aligning of these two forms of capital with Becker's dichotomy of convention and innovation.

culture. “Flipping records”, that is DJ-ing, creating mixtapes, cutting up records and producing new tracks are a way of demonstrating a form of mastery over the given tradition by being able to introduce innovations and thereby showing off *creativity*.<sup>26</sup>

The reason I wanted to demonstrate in detail regarding these three authors working on different subcultures how the tension between convention and innovation was found to be central by each of them – to the point of being formulated as a specific dichotomy in each case – is because this is a strong indication of how clearly applicable the art world/field framework is in these cases. This is a point I will return to again in section 2.3.2.2 on the limits of the field, but for now I already want to point out how the knowledge of conventions defines the limits of the art world/field.

Becker’s description of integrated professionals and maverick artists can be seen to correspond to Bourdieu’s description of actors positioned towards the heteronomous (that is market driven) and the autonomous poles (that is defined by artistic criteria of evaluation) of the field of cultural production. Irrespective of whether these participants reproduce (such as integrated professionals) or contest (like mavericks) the accepted conventions of the art world/field they are defined by their relation to it. This sets them clearly apart from naive artists who are defined by their lack of knowledge of these conventions and the history of the art world/field, and are thus outside its boundaries. As both authors note, it is mostly only

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26 Vályi’s understanding of ethos is firmly grounded in both Bourdieu’s notion of ethos and his more developed concept of habitus (Vályi 2010: 176), while Kahn-Harris and Hodkinson build on Thornton’s notion of *subcultural capital* and *subcultural ideology* respectively both also rooted in Bourdieu’s work (Hodkinson 2002: 79). It is not hard to see a certain fit between the two *subcultural ideals* identified by Hodkinson, the two forms of subcultural capital distinguished by Kahn-Harris and the two elements of the *crate digging ethos*, with the ideal of *commitment* overlapping with the ethos of *work* (as already suggested by Vályi) and with the sources of *mundane subcultural capital*, and the requirement of *individuality* with the expectation of *creativity* and the source of *transgressive subcultural capital*. These values – as emphasised by Hodkinson – have been identified by both Muggleton (2000) and Thornton (1995) in their respective research fields, and – as pointed out by Vályi – have also been highlighted by Macdonald (2001), with the presence of different types of work ethics being present in different music scenes (Kahn-Harris 2007, Tófalvy 2008) also already pointed out by Vályi.

actors from within the art world/field who can legitimize or – to use Bourdieu’s expression – consecrate these outside actors and bring them within the bounds of the art world/field.

The outlines of the world/field seem clearer in relation to actors responsible for core artistic endeavours, the boundaries become less and less well defined as both authors struggle to take into account all the relevant actors – from support personnel to critics and curators to audiences – and effects that contribute to making art works and artists what they are; to the point of introducing formulations that would make the concepts of world/field diluted beyond any utility (Becker 1982, 35, 214; Bourdieu 1996[1992], 225-6). “The proliferation of fields in Bourdieu’s theory and the uncertainty that necessarily arises when the boundaries and object of the field are objects of struggle” (Martin 2003, 24) is mirrored in the way Becker’s art worlds “may be subdivided into separate and almost noncommunicating segments” (1982, 158) on the one hand but at the same time they “typically have intimate and extensive relations with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves” on the other (1982, 36). While neither the boundaries nor the subdivisions of art worlds/fields will conform to firm boundaries, in part as a result of the relatively weak barriers to entry in these areas of activity (Bourdieu 1996[1992], 226), both authors’ approach – somewhat more pronounced in Becker’s case – of concentrating on actual activities, markets and work within these worlds/fields offers a possibility for distinguishing actual boundaries, as fluid as they may be.

The way the knowledge of conventions is intertwined with the limits of the art world/field also ties back to the integrated model of subculture and fan culture introduced in the previous subchapter. And to provide a vivid example let us take a look at Jenkins’ invocation of Becker’s framework in relation to media fans.



In one sense, fandom constitutes one component of the mass media Art World, something like the “serious audience” which Becker locates around the symphony, the ballet, or the art gallery. Not only do “serious audience members” provide a stable base of support for artistic creation, Becker suggests, they also function as arbiters of potential change and development. Their knowledge of and commitment to the art insures that they “can collaborate more fully with artists in the joint effort which produces the work” (48). Historically, science fiction fandom may be traced back to the letter columns of Hugo Gernsbeck’s *Amazing Stories*, which provided a public forum by which fans could communicate with each other and with the writers their reactions to published stories; critics suggest that it was the rich interplay of writers, editors, and fans which allowed science fiction to emerge as a distinctive literary genre in the 1930s and 1940s (Ross, 1991; Del Rey, 1979; Warner, 1969; Moskowitz, 1954; Carter, 1977). (Jenkins 1992: 46, italics in the original)

Thus we can see that art world and Bourdieu’s field theory both provide a very good match with the results of subcultural studies and fan research. So why choose field theory instead of the art world framework. There are four main reasons for this.

First, as van Mannen (2009) points out Becker’s strength lies in his rich and vivid empirical material with which he illustrates the various aspects of the way art worlds work, however, in relation to theory his work is somewhat lighter. This is by no means necessarily a problem, and can be seen as one of the book’s strengths, but for my present purpose the more developed theoretical underpinnings and corresponding vocabulary offered by Bourdieu’s field approach are more conducive to arguing my point. I will, however, still reference Becker’s work later on in the present chapter, and would like to emphasize that I concur with Battani (1999) and van Mannen (2009) in relation to the compatibility of the two frameworks.

Second, as already put forth in the introduction, Bourdieu's work has received overall more attention within subcultural studies and fan research, and as a result has come to be already partially integrated with the theoretical frameworks employed within this body of work. In a way my work is both a continuation of this trend, but also a much needed engagement with the reasons for the applicability of Bourdieu's approach within these research traditions.

Third, as already emphasized in the introduction, Bourdieu's field theory also provides an avenue for engaging with the results of cultural industries and creative labour approaches to cultural production, which I will discuss in subchapter 2.4 below in detail.

Finally, the fourth reason ties in with and elaborates on the second reason from a slightly different angle. As explained by Martin (2003) the explanations offered by field theories occupy a tentative space between more commonly seen sociological arguments building on either mechanisms or functions. Whereas mechanism type arguments rely on "making an accepted relation or set of relations plausible", functionalist arguments "appeal to a *higher* [...] level of analysis" (2003: 11, emphasis in the original) claiming that something is as it is as a result of some overarching logic governing the social structure. Field theories demonstrate similarities to both approaches, in that they – as already cited above – "like mechanistic theories [...], reach towards the concrete and propose only local action", but at the same time recalling "functionalist theories['] [...] insist[ence] that any case must be understood in terms of the global pattern" (2003: 12). I would like to argue that the work in subcultural studies and fan studies during the past twenty years has yielded a high number of congruent descriptions of phenomena found across a range of different subcultures and fan cultures, which have made it possible to identify a number of commonly applicable theoretical constructs in relation to these cultures (for example the centrality of the dichotomy of convention and innovation, as explained above). In a sense subcultural studies and fan studies have amassed a tool box of mechanisms for the description of a number of

common characteristics shared by these cultures. By applying a field approach – informed by Bourdieu’s work on the field of cultural production – to these cultures the relationship between these various mechanisms becomes clearer and the analytical framework more integrated. Instead of a list of disparate tools we have an integrated model, which accounts for our previous separate mechanism type descriptions, as I hope to demonstrate in the following section.

### 2.3.2. *Field and subculture*

So how does Bourdieu define fields and how can we demonstrate that subcultures are indeed fields? We find one of the first formulations of the notion of *field* in the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (2003[1972]), where the concept is still very much in the background compared to that of *practice*, a concept which Bourdieu progressively abandons, *habitus* and *field* moving to the fore in later works (Warde 2004). The *dominant metaphor of the game* is already present in this first formulation, and will remain a fixture for summarizing the meaning of field (also present in *The Rules of Art* for example), and is generally considered the place to start examining the meaning and contents of the concept.

We can indeed, with caution, compare a field to a game (*jeu*) although, unlike the latter, a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified. Thus we have *stakes* (*enjeux*) which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have an *investment in the game, illusio* (from *ludus*, the game): players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning. Players agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a “contract,” that the game is worth playing, that it is “worth the candle,” and this *collusion* is the very basis of their competition. (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 98, emphases in the original)

Although Bourdieu never provided one precise definition for what a field is, and how it can be analysed, he has produced a number of examples in his own work, from which we can glean an understanding of the most important elements of fields. In the following discussion I will focus on Bourdieu's works on the field of cultural production (1993[1983], 1996[1992]) – which is in my view a superfield<sup>27</sup> of a large number of subcultures –, and his discussion with Loïc Wacquant on the meaning and details of the concept from *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (1992). As already mentioned in the previous section Bourdieu himself thought that a general science of fields could be reached in time,<sup>28</sup> with “the methodical transfer of general problems and concepts, each time made specific by their very application, [relying] on the hypothesis that structural and functional homologies exist between all the fields” (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 182). It is with this approach in mind that I set out to outline the fit between the concept subculture and that of field.

In discussing the concept of field and its relation to subculture, I will focus on four smaller topics, which are all crucial elements in Bourdieu's understanding of his theoretical construct. First, I will discuss the question of *capital*: for Bourdieu each field has its specific form(s) of capital, which is/are valued within that particular field. Second, I will examine the question of the *limits of the field*, the definition of which according to Bourdieu is always one of the stakes within the field. Third, I will discuss the centrality of *struggles and positions* in the field: for Bourdieu just like the limits the relative position of possible and actualized positions within the field are also constantly being renegotiated by participants in the field, and one of the most important defining elements of the concept of field is the existence of a structure of objective relations among these positions. And finally I will examine the way

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27 Although Bourdieu does not use the term superfield to denote a field encompassing the field under discussion, I will nevertheless refer to both subfields and superfields in my discussion, see section 2.3.2.4 below for more on these terms.

28 “ [T]he economic theory of the field is a particular case of the general theory of fields” (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 183).

fields are positioned in relation to *subfields*, *superfields* and *related fields*. According to Bourdieu fields such as the field of cultural production are themselves contained in superfields such as the field of power and contain subfields such as the fields of poetry or drama.

#### 2.3.2.1. Capital and field

Fields and capital are intrinsically tied together, a given form of “*capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 101, emphasis in the original). Indeed, so central is the concept of capital to that of field, that Bourdieu goes on to claim that “it is one and the same thing to determine what the field is, where its limits lie, etc., and to determine what species of capital are active in it” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 98-99). The reason for this is that different forms of capital each require a specific game in which they might be mobilized in order for them to be considered capital in the first place. Furthermore, the field specific capital not only allows for the claiming of positions, but is, at the same time, itself also at stake within the struggles of the field.<sup>29</sup>

In relation to subcultural theory and fan research Thornton’s (1996[1995]) appropriation of Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital into *subcultural capital* has been almost unanimously accepted and adopted by authors in both fields of inquiry, with Fiske’s (1992) extension of Bourdieu’s concept, *fan cultural capital* also holding currency within fan studies. Subcultural capital/fan cultural capital can take many forms, from well assembled record collections, to mastered skate moves, to daringly executed graffiti pieces in impossible to

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29 “[P]layers can play to increase or to conserve their capital, their number of tokens, in conformity with the tacit rules of the game and the prerequisites of the reproduction of the game and its stakes; but they can also get in it to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game. They can, for instance, work to change the relative value of tokens of different colors, the exchange rate between various species of capital, through strategies aimed at discrediting the form of capital upon which the force of their opponents rests (e.g., economic capital) and to valorize the species of capital they preferentially possess (e.g., juridical capital).” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 99)

reach spots, to knowledge about obscure cult movies, but there seems to be a general agreement that the claiming of subcultural capital/fan cultural capital lies at the heart of subcultural/fan involvement. This is increasingly so as one moves from the outer edges towards the core of a given culture.

While fields might be characterized by field specific forms of capital, they are still subject to the presence and influence of more general types of capital, such as economic capital. In relation to the field of cultural production Bourdieu notes how it “demands neither as much inherited economic capital as the economic field nor as much educational capital as the university sub-field”, which is one of the main reasons for the “the extreme permeability of its frontiers” (Bourdieu 1993[1983]: 43), which in his eyes is one of its main characteristics. The same is also true of subcultures and fan cultures, which often develop around the use of resources readily available to youth: the body (dancing, skateboarding, etc.), the voice and language (singing, rapping, etc.), discarded objects (old clothes, records, etc.), neglected places, narratives of popular culture, and so on. The question of permeability leads us on to the next topic, that of limits of the field.

#### 2.3.2.2. Limits of the field

Although the entry into fields of cultural production often does not require given amounts of economic capital and specific forms of educational capital, there are still certain barriers of access. One of these is the necessity of mastering the tradition of the particular field of cultural production:

It is one and the same thing to enter into a field of cultural production, by settling an entrance fee which consists essentially of the acquisition of a *specific code* of conduct and expression, and to discover the finite universe of *freedom under constraints* and *objective potentialities* which it offers: problems to resolve, stylistic

or thematic possibilities to exploit, contradictions to overcome, even revolutionary ruptures to effect. (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 235, emphases in the original)

The above quote and similar formulations of the same question<sup>30</sup> resonate very strongly with Becker's discussion (1982) of *convention* and *innovation* and the various formulations of this dichotomy within subcultural theory discussed previously. Subcultural and fan participants have to master a certain set of base knowledge/skills, "a *specific code*", in order to be able to engage with the subculture on a level which will be understood and appreciated by fellow participants. The knowledge of conventions lays out the blueprint for possibilities of deviating from the norm.

One of the four elements of (sub)cultural substance Hodgkinson suggested as an identifying feature of subcultures was *consistent distinctiveness*, which also corresponds to the limits of the subculture. In the sense that should the stylistic differences be too great in time or space between the manifestations of the same culture, its participants might not recognize themselves as belonging to the same group,<sup>31</sup> although they might still be able to trace the affinities between the groups. In a similar vein Bourdieu also notes that the *specific code* that needs to be mastered and understood for membership in the field of cultural production is historically – and geographically, we might add – situated:

it [= the specific code] functions as a historically situated and dated system of schemas of perception, appreciation and expression which define the social conditions of possibility – and, by the same token, the limits – of the production and

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30 "The entrance fee to be acquitted by any new entrant is none other than the mastery of the set of achievements which underly the *current problematic*. Any interrogation arises from a tradition, from a practical or theoretical mastery of the *heritage* which is inscribed in the very structure of the field, as a *state of things*, dissimulated by its own evidence, which delimits the thinkable and the unthinkable and which opens the space of possible questions and answers." (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 243, emphases in the original)

31 See Polhemus (1994) and P. Cohen (1972).

circulation of cultural works, and which exist both in an *objectified state*, in the structures constitutive of the field, and in an *incorporated state*, in the mental structures and dispositions constitutive of the habitus. (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 270, emphases in the original)

Bourdieu's point on how this specific code is contained in both an *objectified* form and an *incorporated* form relates to the difficulty of delineating what actually constitutes the field of cultural production, or by analogy what constitutes a subculture. Hodkinson's elements of (sub)cultural substance contain both subjective (incorporated) and objective (objectified) elements.<sup>32</sup> But the problem of defining the limits of the field or of membership within the field does not stop here. As Bourdieu points out, there are a large number of various criteria one could invoke in order to offer a description of the literary field of a specific time and place, from publishing record, to prizes, to different forms of canonization, and so on (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 225).<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore the actors one must take into account when considering the composition of the field is also a question where the limits of the field seem to become fuzzy. This is a point where Bourdieu comes closest to Becker's art world approach, with its emphasis on focusing on the networks of cooperation that go into creating art works, the boundaries of which are drawn much more inclusively than the implied boundaries of the field of cultural production. Although for the most part the discussion of the field of cultural production seems to focus on a core group of actors identifiable by their immediate stakes within the field (such as writers, critics, etc.), Bourdieu is never quite explicit about the possible boundaries of the

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32 In a similar fashion Kahn-Harris when trying to define scene refers to *construction* and *structure*. Construction refers to "the ways in which scenes are discursively and aesthetically constructed through talk and a range of other practices", while structure denotes "those aspects of scenes that are implicated in the reproduction of specific institutional and other practices" (Kahn-Harris 2007: 100).

33 What is more, canons themselves are also constantly changing (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 225, also cf. Williams 1971 [1961]).



field, providing the “criterion of membership of a field” as “the objective fact of producing effects within it” (Bourdieu 1993[1983]: 42).<sup>34</sup>

Another important element of the limits of the field is that “it is *always at stake in the field itself*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 100, emphasis in the original). In other words “what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition” of what a member of the field is, and thus to “delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define” its members (Bourdieu 1993[1983]: 42). This resonates quite clearly with the findings of subcultural and fan studies, where participants not only define themselves against the non-subcultural other (the squares, the mainstream, the mundanes, etc.), but also in opposition to the inauthentic insider, the “other” claiming to be a part of the culture (the poseur, the toy, the baby goth, the weekend punk, the part-timer, etc.). This inauthentic insider similar to the non-subcultural other exists mostly within the discourse of the subculture itself (Thornton 1996 [1995]) and plays an important role in the constant renegotiation of status and subcultural capital among participants (Hodkinson 2002).

What is more, just as in the case of the field of cultural production, where according to Bourdieu participants of the field are “trying to impose the *boundaries* of the field most favourable to [their] interests or – which amounts to the same thing – the best definition of conditions of true membership of the field” (1996[1992]: 223, emphasis in the original), in relation to subcultures we find that different groups will provide different versions of what authentic participation implies based on their own positions *vis-à-vis* the culture (cf. Muggleton 2000, Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010), which leads us onto our

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34 This approach of only examining the creatorly core of the subfield of restricted cultural production on Bourdieu’s part can be seen to be mirrored in the way authors such as Kahn-Harris (2007) and Vályi (2010), who both opt for invoking the term *scene* – specifically to highlight the lack of clear boundaries of subculture-like cultural formations –, nevertheless only seem to concentrate on participants from within the subcultural core of their respective fields of research, with an emphasis on subcultural producers.

next topic in relation to the concept of field and subculture, struggle and positions.

#### 2.3.2.3. Struggle and positions

We have already seen how *struggle* – or more generally *conflict* – is key to understanding Bourdieu's approach to fields, both the forms of capital one can draw upon within a field and the limits of the field are at stake – and are “weapons” – in the struggles between participants within the field vying for the greatest possible returns on their investments in what rewards the field has to offer. But not only is a field “also a *field of struggles*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 101, emphasis in the original), it is a structured structure, one which offers various positions, with various forms of capital, trajectories and requirements.

In analytical terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determination they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 97, italics in the original)

One of the most important characteristics then, according to Bourdieu, of fields is the existence of objective relations between positions in the field. This means that the various participants within the field occupy positions of relative power and recognition in relation to the capitals relevant in the field and capitals of other fields, and these positions define the possibilities of action to a large extent. To a large extent, but not in a deterministic fashion, as positions and their relations to each other are both continually renegotiated as a part of the workings of the field – or to put it another way they too act both as stakes and tools of the

struggle. Furthermore, actors wishing to enter a field will also position themselves in relation to the desired positions they wish to attain within the given field – and while this trajectory of entry does not define the whole career path of an actor within a particular field it those provide for an initial position and investment structure within the field.

Both Kahn-Harris (2007) and Vályi (2010) offer examples of how different positions within the cultures of extreme metal and crate digging respectively allow for different strategies of participation and claiming recognition and status within those cultures. Building on Spooner's account of oriental carpet collectors (1986 in Vályi 2010) Vályi emphasizes "taking part in the *debate* about authenticity as lying at the heart of what it means to be an aficionado" (2010: 158, emphasis in the original), furthermore

discerning collectors not only apply shared criteria of authenticity in an appropriate manner, but [...] also demonstrate their competence in part through *consciously and confidently challenging ideal-typical norms, and providing expertly justifications for individual deviations*. (2010: 158, my emphasis)

As Vályi aptly demonstrates these individual deviations and justifications are related to the position of the participant issuing them. This description also resonates with what we have already seen in relation to the double imperative towards both a mastery of conventions and a deviation from those conventions through innovation characterising subcultures, but it also highlights the way that it is the community of involved peers who will be able to truly appreciate the "expertly justifications." In a similar manner Sandvoss points out in relation to fan cultures that it "is mainly fellow fans who will recognize the nuanced differences in consumption choices [...] and consumption practices" (2005: 38).

There is a dynamic relationship between *dispositions* – or through a different lens the *habitus* – and particular positions.<sup>35</sup> Not only are actors, who wish to enter a certain field, drawn to certain positions based on their original dispositions,<sup>36</sup> but as a result of the participation within the field and the adoption of certain positions therein, the dispositions corresponding to the field in general, and the given positions within the field in particular, will make an impression on the participant.<sup>37</sup> The question of predisposing and acquired dispositions is the topic which has received the least direct attention within recent works on subcultures and fan cultures, with the exceptions of Kahn-Harris' work (2007) on how certain forms of original *habitus* seem to be more frequent among members of extreme metal culture, and Vályi's (2010) description of how the *habitus* relating to crate digging is acquired by diggers through involvement with the culture of digging. However, the idea of socially determined predisposing factors itself goes all the way back to the Chicago School works on subcultures (e.g. A. Cohen 1971[1955]), and descriptions of what could be seen as subculture specific *habitus* can be found in a host of contemporary analyses (e.g. Thornton 1996 [1995], Macdonald 2001, Hodkinson 2002). As for fan studies, Sandvoss – although building on *Distinction* (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]) and not addressing the question of fields – offers the following description of the role *habitus* plays in relation to fan consumption practices and their interpretation:

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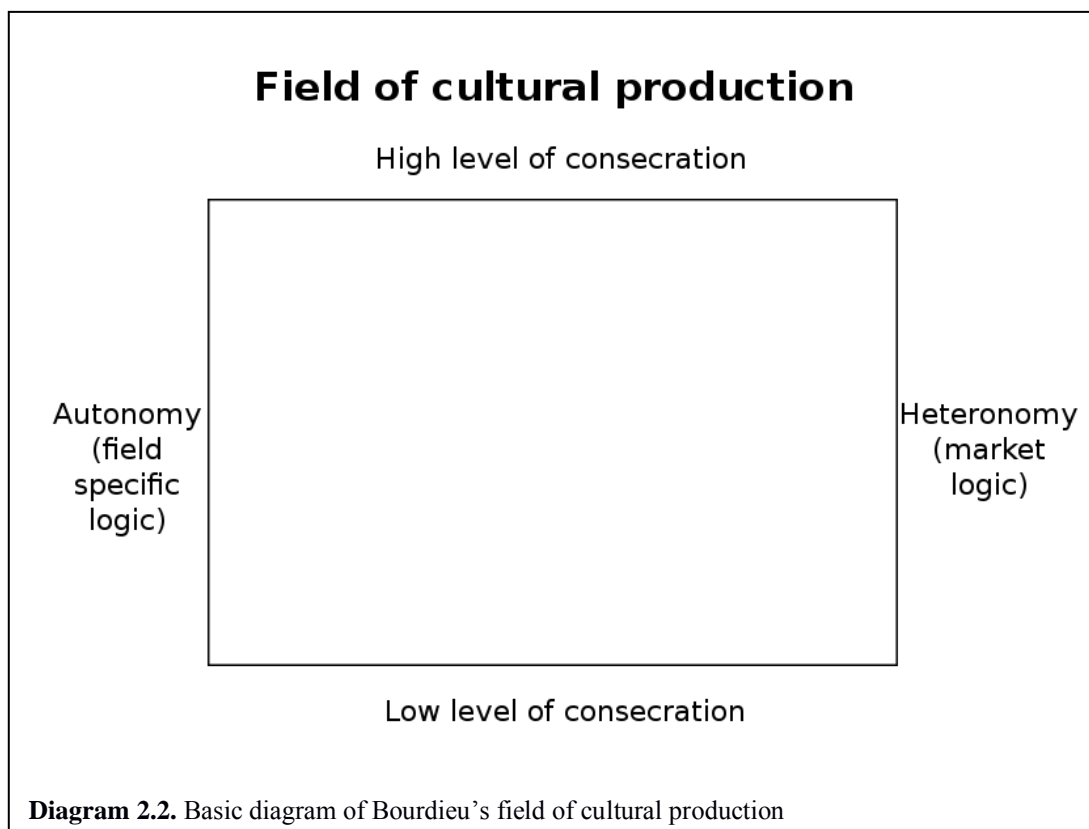
35 For Bourdieu the way we perceive the world and the way we operate within it is defined by our *dispositions* which make up our *habitus*. The class *habitus*, for example, is “the internalized form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails” (1984 [1979]: 101) shaped by material and social conditions as well as the corresponding habitual modes of thought (or dispositions) of one's immediate social world.

36 But again, without any form of deterministic relationship: “If one cannot deduce position-takings from dispositions, neither can one relate them directly back to positions.” (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 266)

37 “The interactions between positions and dispositions is clearly reciprocal. Any *habitus*, as a system of dispositions, is only effectively realized in relation to a determinate structure of socially marked positions [...]; but, conversely, it is through dispositions, which are themselves more or less completely adjusted to those positions, that one or another potentiality lying inscribed in the positions is realized.” (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 265)

Indeed, it seems plausible to suggest that the emotional intensity and public display of consumption in fandom constitutes a celebration of one's habitus. The habitus articulated in fandom thus fulfils a double function that is of crucial importance to our sense of self in a media-saturated world. It functions as a simultaneous form of communication and identity building: as communication, in that our consumption choices articulate our complex class position, and as identity building, in that this communication is as much directed inwards as outwards, forming a sense of who we are and believe ourselves to be. Taste thus 'functions as a sort of social orientation, a "sense of one's place"' (Bourdieu 1984: 466). This role of the habitus in fandom has been conceptualized in three different ways: first, by exploring the extent to which fans' habitus reaffirms existing cultural social hierarchies; secondly, by examining the opposition between fans' habitus and existing cultural hierarchies; and *thirdly, beyond the scope of existing cultural hierarchies, by focusing on the role of fans' habitus in the creation of new hierarchies within a subcultural context.* (2005: 34-35, my emphasis)

The first two of the ways in which the habitus has been conceptualized can be seen to correspond to predisposing factors, and the third "*the role of fans' habitus in the creation of new hierarchies within a subcultural context*" corresponds to the development and role of a fandom specific habitus within fan cultures.



In relation to the field of cultural production Bourdieu maps out the positions regarding the “degree of consecration”<sup>38</sup> enjoyed by a given genre/stance/form – and as a corollary of the participants involved with said genre/stance/form<sup>39</sup> – and of the positions’ relative distance from “heteronomy” meaning market influence and closeness to “autonomy”, meaning the lack of market influence (1993[1983]: 49), see diagram 2.2 above. Heteronomous positions are marked out by a compromise in relation to artistic expression for the sake of serving a popular market *outside* the field of cultural production – with different class factions being catered to as one moves along the axis of degree of consecration – whereas autonomous positions have only the stakes and capitals of the field of cultural production itself to take into account when producing art works.<sup>40</sup> As a result actors positioned towards the

38 The level of legitimacy and status they command.

39 “[A] homology [exists] between the space of works defined by their essentially symbolic content, and in particular by their *form*, and the space of positions in the field of production” (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 205, emphasis in the original).

40 Bourdieu also refers to the two poles of autonomous and heteronomous production as “the *subfield of restricted production*, where producers have only other producers for clients [...], and the *subfield of large-scale production*, which” caters to popular audiences (Bourdieu

heteronomous end of the spectrum tend to be richer in economic capital – the advantages of working for a paying audience – and poorer with regards to the symbolic capital specific to the field of cultural production itself, while at the opposite end of the scale we find participants who receive symbolic capital – catering to other creators within the field of cultural production itself, and rewarded with recognition – but who are often struggling with regards to securing financial remuneration for their travails.<sup>41</sup>

This description is very well aligned with the dichotomy that faced Becker's (1991[1963; 1973]) jazz musicians, who could either play "real" jazz in an uncompromising ensemble, or could yield to economic pressure and work in bands which would play music for a popular audience composed of "squares" – their own term for outsiders, the non-initiated mainstream audience. The mainstream audience according to their opinions would not be able to appreciate their art – and indeed, according to their experience would request simple dance numbers – leaving other members of the culture, other jazz musicians, as the audience they actually aspired to play for. The tension between "keeping it real", "staying true" and "selling out"<sup>42</sup> – that is between performing to the initiated circle of aficionados mostly for symbolic rewards or catering to a wider public by watering down the art and making it thus palatable to a non-insider audience with diminishing symbolic rewards or even straightforward ostracization from the original culture, but accompanied by growing monetary rewards from the outside – is so fundamental to most subcultures that we are overly familiar with the discursive mantras of remembering one's roots and staying true to

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1996[1992]: 217, emphases in the original).

41 "Thus, at least in the most perfectly autonomous sector of the field of cultural production, where the only audience aimed at is other producers (as with Symbolist poetry), the economy of practices is based, as in a generalized game of 'loser wins', on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies: that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains), that of power (it condemns honours and temporal greatness), and even that of institutionalized cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a virtue)." (Bourdieu 1993[1983]: 39)

42 As Thornton points out "'selling out' means *selling* to *outsiders*" (1996[1995]: 124, emphases in the original). See also Jancovich (2002) on further elaborations of this argument in the context of cult cinema fan cultures.

them, that is staying authentic, from even the most mainstream of acts. This is also an example of how the field logic exerts itself over even participants positioned towards the heteronomous end of the field.

Debates around authenticity lie at the heart of most subcultural concerns, and authenticity refers to obeying the autonomous principle of the given culture (its field specific logic in Bourdieusian terms), of adhering to the conventions and focal concerns, as opposed to taking into account such outside considerations as making money<sup>43</sup> or pursuing a non-subcultural career. Both Hodkinson (2002) and Kahn-Harris (2007) note that cooperation among participants is more common towards the autonomous end of the field and competition is more prevalent towards the heteronomous end. The more comprehensible one's style, actions, products are to outsiders the more they will be seen as a betrayal of insider norms, and the larger the audience it will potentially attract as a result.

The centrality of authenticity to internal discourses policing the assumed or real surrender of the autonomous principle of the given field, and the on-going internal negotiations of granting status based on adhering to the autonomous pole also appear within fan cultures.

Authenticity, particularly when validated as the production of an artistic individual (writer, painter, performer), is a criterion of discrimination normally used to accumulate official cultural capital but which is readily appropriated by fans in their moonlighting cultural economy. (Fiske 1992: 36)

Fan cultures thus give rise to “new cultural hierarchies” and according to Sandvoss, just like in subcultures, the “bourgeois aesthetic norms are replaced by the subcultural leitmotifs of

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43 This can also vary from culture to culture, for instance Kahn-Harris notes that “[m]aking a living from the scene is problematized much less in the extreme metal scene than in other scenes” (2007: 64).



‘authenticity’ and ‘hipness’” (2005: 39) as the criteria for status.

The reason participants can move from the autonomous end of the spectrum towards the heteronomous end is a direct result of the fact that – according to Bourdieu – the field of cultural production is itself embedded within the field of power. In the final section below it is to this nested nature of fields and subfields that I will turn to.

#### 2.3.2.4. Subfields, superfields and related fields

As already mentioned above in relation to the autonomous and heteronomous poles of the field of cultural production Bourdieu talks of *subfields* and larger fields within which a field is located, which I will call *superfields* for ease of reference and to complement the logic of the term subfield. Finally Bourdieu also occasionally mentions *related fields* – although just as in the case of superfields, he does not use this term to refer to them –, which are not in any direct hierarchically nested relation with each other, but which still have some form of effect on or relationship with each other. The field of education is related to and is referred to by Bourdieu (e.g. 1993[1983]: 37) in relation to the field of cultural production. For instance, regarding the way the field of education plays a part in the reproduction of the dispositions required to appreciate high art.

The field of cultural production, according to Bourdieu, is embedded within the field of power in a dominated position (1993[1983]: 38). I would like to argue that subcultures and fan cultures are located within the field of cultural production in a dominated position *vis-à-vis* the field of cultural production. To make things slightly complicated sport-like activity based subcultures are *also* located within the field of sports, but similarly to their embeddedness within the field of cultural production in a dominated position. The reason that sport-like activity based subcultures are embedded in both the field of sports *and* of cultural production is because these cultures often actively resist being interpreted as sport

and align themselves with values, focal concerns and forms of expression characterizing cultural production rather than sports.<sup>44</sup> Subcultures and fan cultures occupy dominated positions in their respective superfields since they are barred from the symbolic and financial recognition of their superfields in the same way that participants in the field of cultural production are denied the rewards of the field of power to a certain extent. Furthermore, in a similar fashion to the way participants within the field of cultural production can opt to compromise their allegiance to the logic of the field of cultural production in order to gain increasing access to the rewards of the field of power in the form of financial rewards and political influence – moving away from the autonomous end of the field towards the heteronomous end –, so too subcultural participants have the option of moving away from the focal concerns of the subculture or fan culture and thus enjoy a greater level of access to the external rewards of money, educational attainment, etc.

But just as the field of cultural production is embedded within the field of power, it too is the superfield of all its subfields, which all have their “own logic, rules and regularities” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 104). According to Bourdieu the move towards subfields “entails a genuine qualitative leap” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 104). On the one hand this allows us to understand how subcultures and fan cultures can be seen to be subfields of the field of cultural production, but on the other hand it also hints at the possibility of the existence of further sub-subfields. Indeed, within anime-manga fandom there are a number of subfields, with their own specific stakes and hierarchies (e.g. cosplay, anime music videos (AMV), scanlation, fansubbing, etc.). And just as we can talk about related fields in relation to the field of cultural production so too subcultures have horizontal connections of related fields, which allow for a greater conversion of subcultural capital between them, a topic which will be addressed in more detail in *Chapter Six*.

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44 For a discussion of how the tension relating to being perceived and experienced as a cultural pursuit versus sport is played out in for instance skateboarding culture, see Rinehart (1998) and Kacsuk (2005a).

Having examined in detail the way the results of subcultural and fan studies conform to the descriptions offered by Bourdieu in relation to capital, the limits of the field, struggles and positions in the field, and subfields, superfields and related fields I will now re-examine Hodkinson's definition of subculture to both summarize the above and to tie it to my initial point of departure in relation to subcultural studies.

### *2.3.3. Reconsidering Hodkinson's definition of (sub)cultural substance*

As I have previously stated, Hodkinson's definition serves as the basis of my approach to what subculture means. Now, however, having shown that Bourdieu's concept of field is very well aligned with the insights provided by subcultural and fan research, I would like to demonstrate how the elements – *consistent distinctiveness*, *identity*, *commitment* and *autonomy* – of Hodkinson's (sub)cultural substance actually follow from the way in which subcultures can in fact be described as fields.

In relation to *consistent distinctiveness* we have seen that just as in the case of subcultures and fan cultures, where participants learn the conventions of the culture in order to be able to fully participate within it, so too within the field of cultural production participation is posited upon the mastery of the specific code of the field. It is this understanding and constant reproduction – even if in a continuously slowly shifting manner – of the conventions, traditions, canons and codes of a subculture/field, which result in consistent distinctiveness, in the set of stylistic elements and focal concerns around which subcultures/fields seem to organize, and which enable participants to recognize, understand and meaningfully engage with one another.

Second, *identity*, which in Hodkinson's definition stood for “participants hold[ing] a perception that they are involved in a distinct cultural grouping and shar[ing] feelings of identity with one another” (2002: 30-31), can also be seen to be intrinsic not only to

subcultures but also fields. The field of cultural production, and especially its autonomous subfield, as described by Bourdieu offers participants the recognition of their peers, this recognition is relevant to the degree that participants disidentify with bourgeois culture and as a corollary identify with the values of the autonomous subfield of cultural production – to reiterate, only the recognition of the initiated is worth anything –, which also leads to a mutual understanding of their shared – outsider or oppositional – position.

Third, *Commitment* referred to the way subcultural participants will allocate a significant amount of their free time and disposable income to participating in the activities of the given culture,<sup>45</sup> and to the fact that, as a result, their social circles will also develop around subcultural participation to a certain degree. In the case of Bourdieu's conception of field it seems improbable to the point of being impossible to be able to enter a field, become accepted and established within it, without investing in that particular field, without spending time and other resources in learning and participating in the field. This is indeed one of the ways in which the entrant starting out in a field becomes progressively invested in the *illusio* and particular stakes of that field. Which means that should one accept the proposition of subcultures being fields it follows that commitment will be a necessary requirement of participation.

The fourth and final element, *autonomy* is slightly tricky, since – as we have already seen – Bourdieu talks about autonomy in relation to the field of cultural production to refer to the expression of the field's own logic as opposed to it being submitted to the logic of the field of power. Even though Bourdieu's use of the term autonomy refers to a slightly different or to an extant wider concept than the way in which Hodkinson uses the term autonomy to

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45 Or in the words of Bacon-Smith in relation to science fiction fans: "If we accept the possibility that a group of women who write, illustrate, edit, and publish a fanzine, consuming all of their discretionary income and a great deal that others would not consider discretionary in the process, are not participating in a game but are inventing a culture" (1992: 289-99).

denote the existence of a semi-independent alternative infrastructure, capable of producing and reproducing the subculture irrespective of whether mainstream interest exists or not towards the culture, it can still be seen to constitute a subset of Bourdieu's use of the term. In *The Rules of Art* he writes that

the indices of the field's autonomy, such as the emergence of a set of specific institutions which are required for the functioning of the economy of cultural goods – places of exhibition (galleries, museums, etc.), institutions of consecration (academies, salons, etc.), institutions for the reproduction of producers (art schools, etc.), and specialized agents (dealers, critics, art historians, collectors, etc.), endowed with the *dispositions* objectively required by the field and with *specific categories of perception and appreciation* which are irreducible to those in common use and which are capable of imposing a specific measure on the value of artists and their products. (Bourdieu 1996[1992]: 292, emphases in the original)

Thus we can see that in the case of the field of cultural production there is a very real need according to Bourdieu too for the existence of an infrastructure, which much like in Hodkinson's description *obeys the logic of the field and provides space for its expression*.

Having shown that all four elements of (sub)cultural substance introduced by Hodkinson naturally follow from subcultures being interpretable as fields in the Bourdieuan sense – which is not meant to sideline Hodkinson's definition – I will now turn to a further concept of Bourdieu's work, which will be the final element in my reconceptualization of subculture. So far I have examined the relationship between subcultures and the dimension of autonomy-heteronomy Bourdieu discusses in relation to the field of cultural production. The second dimension structuring the field of cultural production has so far been only mentioned, and it is to this point in Bourdieu's thought I now wish to turn to.

#### 2.3.4. *Subcultures and Bourdieu's hierarchy of cultural legitimation*

According to Bourdieu the subfields of the field of cultural production not only differ in their relative position in relation to the autonomous and heteronomous end of the field but also in relation to their position in the degree of consecration they enjoy, whether it be charismatic or institutional consecration (1996[1992]: 122). The higher the level of consecration enjoyed by a particular subfield the more rich it is in symbolic capital that is also recognized as such outside the subfield itself. The way different forms – and thus subfields – enjoy different levels of consecration within the field of cultural production, corresponds to the way Bourdieu positions different forms of cultural expression – ranging from high art to the most mundane of domestic forms of production/consumption – along a hierarchy of legitimacy (1978[1965]). According to Bourdieu there are three distinct levels of legitimacy cultural forms may enjoy. The first level is that of the *sphere of legitimacy*, works and disciplines of art which are commonly accepted to be consecrated belong to this level, with institutions of authority such as universities and academies vouching for their position. The second level is that of the *sphere of the legitimizable*, with works and cultural practices pertaining to this level which have yet to gain entry into the sphere of legitimacy, but which are already championed by groups and organizations with some level of authority. And the third level is the *sphere of the arbitrary* legitimacy-wise, where all other forms and cultural pursuits reside, with no commonly accepted authoritative criteria of evaluation recognized in relation to them.

Based on Bourdieu's ideas of a hierarchy of degree of consecration in the field of cultural production and a hierarchy of legitimacy in the wider sense of production/consumption I would like to argue that *another defining characteristic of subcultures is that they enjoy low levels of consecration and are seen to belong to the sphere of the arbitrary with regards to legitimacy*. This is the reason why, even though a number of activities can be seen to conform to Hodkinson's definition of (sub)cultural substance – note how careful Hodkinson

himself is by bracketing off the sub part – or more generally to being fields, or subfields, in their own right, they are not understood to be subcultures, rather they are referred to as being a sport, art, science,<sup>46</sup> etc.

This argument is actually a reformulation of a position found within subcultural studies that the *sub* in subcultures actually stands for a dominated position. This stance has become increasingly unpopular since the two-thousands – to the point of serving as one of the main arguments for circumventing the use of the concept subculture (e.g. Peterson & Bennett 2004) – in part because the fact that subcultures occupy a subordinate, or in Bourdieuan terms dominated, position has been interpreted in the following three ways.

1) According to the CCCS researchers' position subcultures were by definition working class cultures; this is why for instance hippie culture was not understood as being a subculture.<sup>47</sup> Since working class culture is subordinate to bourgeois culture, and as subcultures were working class in origin they too occupied a dominated position. In light of what we know of subcultures today it seems very sensible to oppose the idea of equating subcultures with the working class, however it seems a slight overreaction to completely give up on the concept as a result of the high impact the CCCS works had on its development, especially in the light of how the post-CCCS works have gradually returned to addressing questions raised by for instance Becker (1991 [1963]). An objection might be raised here, however, that pointing towards the Chicago school of works, while removing class from its central position in defining subcultures, does not fully circumvent the problem of the concept of *subculture being aligned with subordinate groups*. But once we reformulate this argument in the general,

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46 The strong parallels and tension between academic scholarly work and fan scholarly work has already been pointed out by Jenson (1992) and Jenkins (1992) – see also Kacsuk (2006) – and further elaborated in Hills (2002).

47 An interesting tension considering the fact that one of the groups examined by Willis in *Profane Culture* (1978) are hippies, which might be a reason for the total lack of the use of the term subculture in that book.

as I have just done in the previous sentence, it becomes clear that this is precisely what I would like to argue in the first case: that subcultures *are* dominated cultures in the sense that they occupy low levels of cultural legitimacy or low degrees of consecration, and as a result members of a given subculture irrespective of the class, ethnicity, gender, etc. make-up of its participants and their relative positions of power within society, will occupy a dominated position *as* members of the given subculture.

2) Being dominated implies that there exists *a single* dominant culture, and the idea of a single dominant culture seems just as problematic as identifying the mainstream as Thornton (1996[1995]) has shown us. My argument would be that the fact that certain cultures are dominated does not imply in any way that there should or could exist a single dominant culture within a given society. Rather there are a host of different cultures, and some of them are higher up in the hierarchy of legitimation or the level of consecration they enjoy, while others occupy lower positions and lower levels of consecration.

3) Saying that a certain culture is dominated seems to devalue that culture. This is again a misunderstanding, which becomes quite clear if we employ the Bourdieusian framework outlined above. There is no relationship between the intrinsic value of a given culture and the position it occupies within the hierarchy of cultural legitimation or the level of consecration it enjoys. Bourdieu points out how different forms can rise and fall within these hierarchical structures. Observing that a certain culture occupies a dominated position is merely stating that the particular culture is seen by the majority of society as crass, childish, superficial, unworthy of serious investment, etc. and that certain forms of support (state funding, acknowledged avenues of education, etc.) enjoyed by cultures more highly regarded by society are not available or not available to the same extent for the dominated culture. As for the insider view of such dominated cultures, as we have already seen, it tends to assign a high cultural value to the focal concerns of the culture, *to the point of conceiving of itself as*



*occupying a vanguard position in relation to cultural refinement and taste* (Thornton 1996 [1995]). Thornton goes on to point out that “clubber and raver ideologies are almost as *anti-mass culture* as the discourses of the artworld”, with a similar celebration of artistic innovation and shunning of commercial success (selling out in the terms of subcultural participants) in both spheres (Thornton 1996[1995]: 5, emphasis in the original).<sup>48</sup> And while the world of high culture is haunted by the danger “of ‘trickle down’, the problem for *underground subcultures* is a popularization by a gushing *up* to the mainstream” (Thornton 1996[1995]: 5, emphases in the original).<sup>49</sup>

Thus, by employing the Bourdieusian framework of hierarchy of cultural legitimacy/degree of consecration the above concerns regarding the use of the concept *subculture* not only become non-issues, they in fact underscore the very reason it is adequate to talk about subcultures as occupying a dominated position.

## 2.4. Field theory and subcultural producers

I will now examine the ways an understanding of subcultures and fan cultures informed by Bourdieu’s field theory can contribute to making sense of the specificities of subcultural producers. For this I will first briefly return to the discussion on the relationship between subcultures and fan cultures in subchapter 2.2, and more specifically to Moorhouse’s (1991) argument and model of enthusiasm upon which Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) have

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48 For a discussion of similar attitudes and concerns within cult cinema fan culture see Jancovich (2002).

49 Hodgkinson offers a similar argument: “As indicated already, the distinction drawn by goths between themselves as committed and individual and the mainstream as commercial, shallow and homogenous was shared with many other music-related amalgams, notably those described by Thornton (1995) and Muggleton (2000). In addition, many of the elements which make up the [subcultural] ideals can be traced to a general emphasis on artistic authenticity that goes far beyond contemporary popular music or fashion. Notably, it resides in the way proponents of ‘legitimate’ discerning bourgeois culture distinguish themselves from the ‘vulgar’ tastes of mass society, as described in Bourdieu’s famous work, *Distinction* (1984). It is also directly promoted by some of the most well known of cultural theories – most notably, perhaps, the contrast drawn by Adorno (1941) between standardized ‘popular music’ and artistic ‘serious music’.” (2002: 79)

drawn in their conceptualization of fandom, as discussed above.

Moorhouse chooses to use the term enthusiasm instead of subculture, as a result of his disagreement on a number of points with the CCCS body of work and also because he wishes to address a wider circle of involved parties beyond that of the immediate subculture. He acknowledges the fact that the inner core of the enthusiasm is indeed a subculture (1991: 22), and points out that it is made up of two distinct groups, amateurs and professionals, the latter depending on the culture for their living, and loosely corresponding to subcultural producers.

Moorhouse's model offers further insights in its conceptualization of what lies beyond the core of the enthusiasm – that is the subculture:

Then [outside the core] there is a layer of *the interested public*, a heterogeneous group consisting of dabblers in the focal concerns, mere consumers of symbols, novices and new entrants, state bodies concerned with control, big businessmen seeking opportunities, the mass media looking for stories and so on. (1991: 22, emphasis in the original)

Thus we can see that similar to the way we find a continuum of commitment and engagement among participants engaged in various fandoms, enthusiasms (to include Moorhouse's term here) or subcultures – the core of which are all subcultural in nature – we find *a similar continuum in relation to the production of goods and services* related to these cultures. This continuum of producerly activities can be seen to reside within the field of cultural production as the efforts of a subset of interrelated subfields and actors, as will be discussed in the following subchapter.

Indeed, although Bourdieu talks about the fields of consumption in *Distinction* (1984 [1979]) and about the fields of cultural production in later works (1993 [1983], 1996 [1992]) this doubling of fields as related to consumption and production has received hardly any attention. Even though we understand consumption and production to be more a continuum than two separate activities, I would like to argue that subcultures and fan cultures provide the perfect example of how the field of consumption and the corresponding field of production are related.

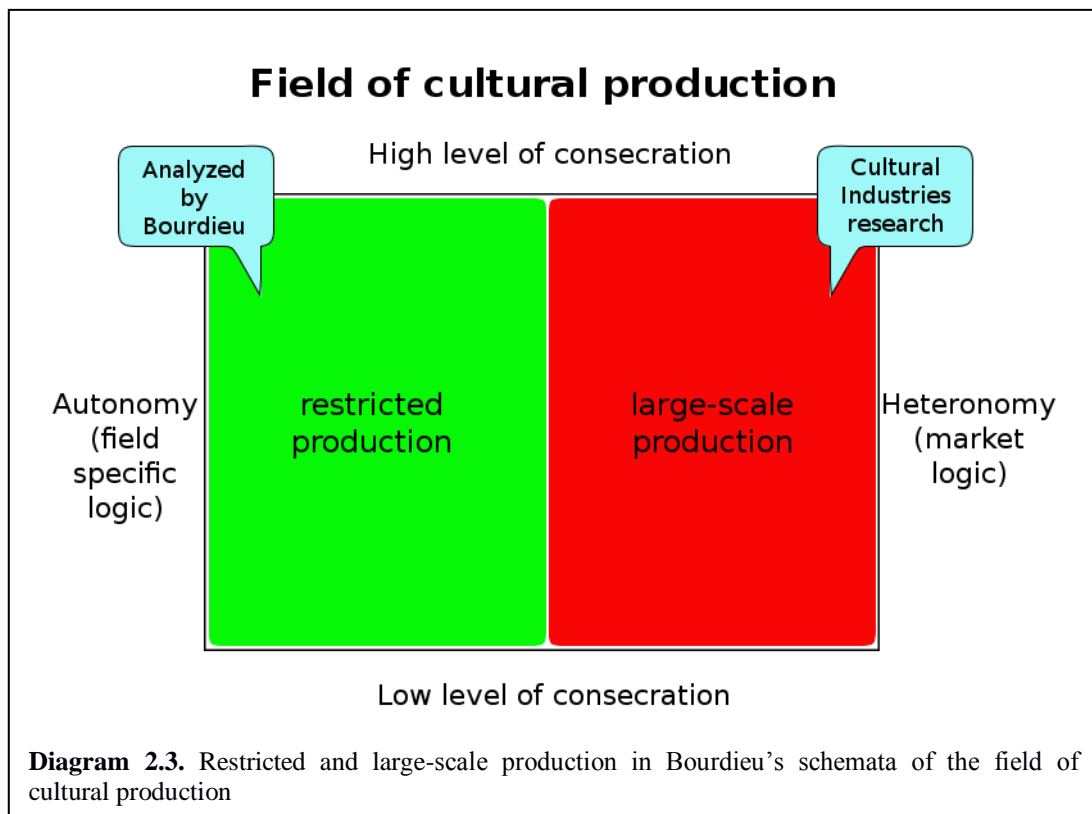
If we look at the “consumption side” of subcultures and fan cultures, we find that involved consumers – from fans all the way to the subcultural core – will feel the gravity of the field specific logic. This pull will be lightly felt on the outer edges and strong towards the centre. To reformulate the distinction between subcultures and fan cultures from subchapter 2.2 now in Bourdieusian terms, fan cultures have an outer circle of involved consumers who are more invested in the culture than general audiences are, but who are still mostly unaffected by – although usually aware of – the field specific logic of the culture.

Turning to the “production side” of subcultures and fan cultures, and returning to the question of the conjoined fields of consumption and production, the field logic is not only stronger towards the core, but it is also there that the field of consumption (of the subculture proper) intersects with the field of cultural production. Subcultural producers and other producerly participants already *occupy a position within the field of cultural production as well*, where they enjoy a very different position to the one they enjoy within the field of consumption (in other words the wider subculture or fan culture) – there these actors occupy a central role, often with the highest levels of subcultural capital. On the other hand within the field of cultural production they occupy positions that are marked out by their distance from (in the case of other producerly participants) or movement towards (in the case of subcultural producers) the market logic, and by their subordinate positions within the whole

of the field of cultural production, as discussed in the previous subchapter.

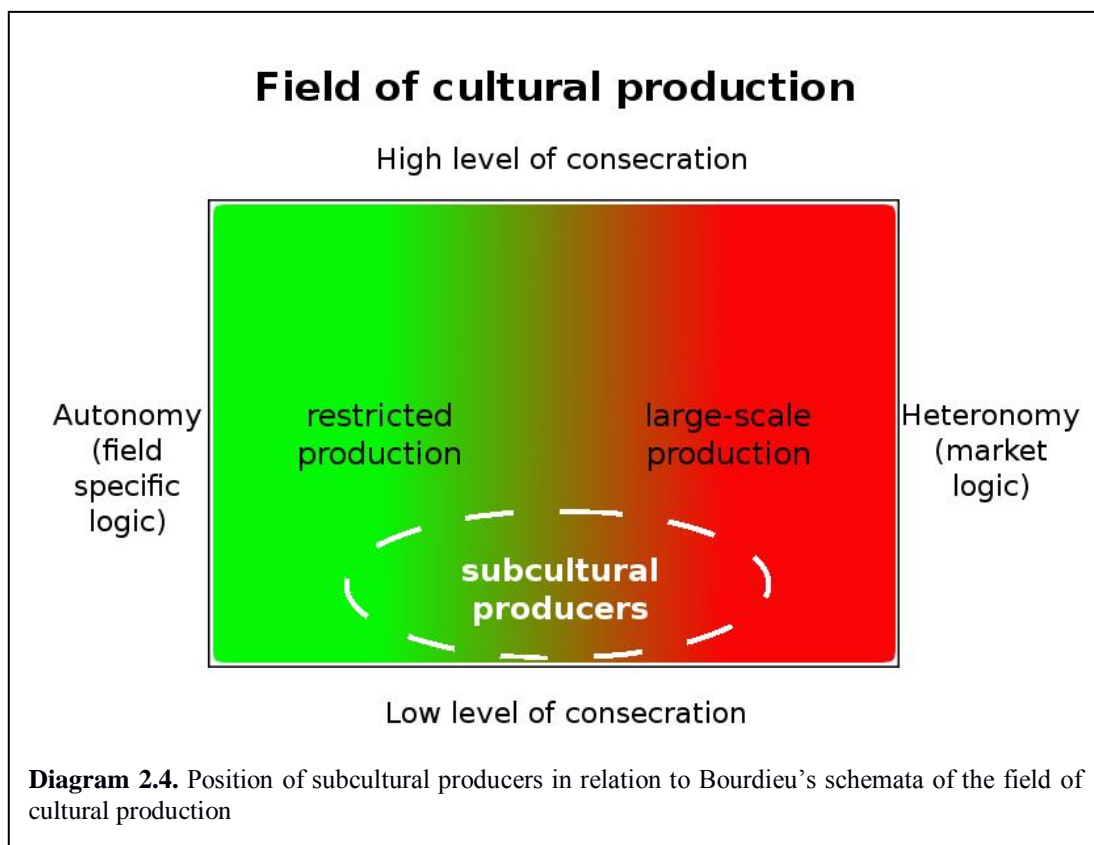
Looking at the field of cultural production, as already discussed in Chapter One, on one end of the continuum of positions related to given subcultures and fan cultures, towards the autonomous end of the subfield (obeying the field specific logic of subcultural values, as discussed above) we find actors rooted within the specific subculture producing for other participants within the subculture. On the other end of the continuum towards the heteronomous end of the subfield there are the activities of outside business actors (most of which are rooted outside the subfield in question, and whose interests and activities also largely fall outside of the subfield) obeying a market logic. And finally, between these two poles we find subcultural producers both specific to the subfield in question or rooted within related similar subfields (as discussed in the following subchapter). And as already explained above, all of these subcultural subfields occupy a dominated position within the field of cultural production (see Diagram 2.5 at the end of this chapter).

In this way actors coming from within subcultures and fan cultures will have incorporated the logic of restricted production (or the subcultural ideals/ethos in the words of Hodkinson (2002) and Vályi (2010)), and having moved on to becoming subcultural producers will retain at least some of that knowledge and identification even when moving towards more heteronomous positions. The gravitational pull of the field logic within these fields of production is however even more evident in the way actors coming from outside will sometimes gradually enter into an understanding relationship with the logic of restricted production even to the point of observing some of its tenets in a way similar to Bourdieu's description in relation to how participants within the subfield of large-scale cultural production are still aware of and reflect upon their status in relation to the subfield of restricted cultural production (1996[1992]).



Bourdieu, however, does not really address the world of large-scale production in *The Rules of Art* (1996 [1992]) or the *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993 [1983]), instead offering a nuanced and historically informed examination of the world of restricted production. On the other hand cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh 2007) and creative labour (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011) approaches have contributed towards describing the world of mass or large-scale production. Hesmondhalgh (2006) demonstrates how these two approaches actually offer complementary descriptions of the world of cultural production. However, I would also like to offer an important addendum to this observation. Namely, that subcultural producers fall in between the world of large-scale and restricted production, and are thus not really discussed in either approach (see Diagram 2.4).<sup>50</sup>

50 One of the most telling signs of this marginal status of subcultures or fan cultures in relation to discussions of the cultural industries is Hesmondhalgh's defining overview of the culture industries (2007) in which only a couple of pages are devoted to a fleeting mention of "the independents" and their relations to the more significant actors in the culture industries, even though Hesmondhalgh himself is an expert on the topic and has devoted several important



Nevertheless, the fact that we are dealing with a continuum of different types of actors and markets, also means that these areas of inquiry are not only related, but can also be productively employed to extend the existing research on these topics, as also emphasized by Hesmondhalgh (2006). This is precisely why it is possible to engage with the findings of creative labour approaches – which focus on the labour conditions and individual career trajectories within cultural industries (e.g. Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011, McRobbie 1998, Smith & McKinlay 2009) – within the context of the Bourdieusian framework introduced so far. Furthermore, these scholarly texts often focus on the situation of entrepreneurs, freelancers and employees working on the fringes of the cultural industries, precisely in the same position as the subcultural producers I study, neither fully integrated within the world of business, nor the purely artistic world.

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papers to the producerly side of music scenes, which tend to show subculture-like traits (e.g. 1999).

In this way my focus of concentrating on the producerly side of anime-manga fandom in Hungary offers a productive tension in relation to both Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production and cultural industries and creative labour approaches by explicitly addressing the in-between position of subcultural producers along the continuum of restricted and large scale production. However, there is a further way in which my account of subcultural producers elaborates upon unexamined facets of Bourdieu's work on the field of cultural production.

Although Bourdieu points out on several occasions that there are a host of different actors (such as critics, collectors, curators and so on) involved in the workings of the field of cultural production – indeed on occasion going so far as to say that the only real criteria of membership within the field of cultural production is that of having an effect on it<sup>51</sup> – any analysis devoted to these other actors is cursory at best. For the most part Bourdieu is content to focus on analyzing only the positions, conflicts and trajectories of creators of the subfield of restricted cultural production. This attitude on Bourdieu's part could be interpreted – within a Bourdieusian framework – as a conscious or even more likely unconscious, move towards securing the highest possible symbolic returns on one's work by analyzing the symbolically most highly valued segment of the artistic field.<sup>52</sup>

But even in the case of approaches where the aim is explicitly to extend the scope of both the theoretical framework and the research to include non-creator actors such as in Becker's *Art Worlds* (1982) the attention paid to support personnel is still lacking, although Becker does manage to expand on the role of semi-professionals and amateurs. While Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) also strive to provide a more inclusive definition of creative labour they too fall

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51 A claim which if taken verbatim would broaden the scope of the term field to such an extent as to strip it of all meaningful qualities.

52 As already cited earlier, Bourdieu notes how there is a homology between the subject, the form and the audience of each work, and the symbolic value of works is defined by their audience even outside the realm of restricted cultural production (1996[1992]: 205).

short of actually addressing the roles and experiences of non-creators, while at the same time similar to Becker managing to pay attention to the “reserve army” of non-full-time employees working in and around the creative industries – actors whom Bourdieu (1996[1992]) on occasion even relegates outside the field of cultural production, but in other passages describes as crucial to the operation of the world of restricted cultural production.

So how those my window on the producerly side of anime-manga fandom in Hungary offer a productive tension in relation to Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production and the problem of “support personnel”? Bourdieu (1996[1992]), Becker (1982) and Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) all reflect upon the distinction between the act of creating and the host of support functions needed for that creation to happen. When talking about the field of cultural production Bourdieu – more so than the other authors just cited – concentrates almost exclusively on the creators, and for the most part sidesteps dealing with the problem of all those other actors and activities that contribute towards producing and reproducing that field. When looking at the producerly side of anime-manga in Hungary it is immediately clear that some of the most important activities contributing to the flourishing of these cultures have little input with relation to the creatorly aspects of cultural production, rather they are oriented towards the import, localization and diffusion of cultural products from abroad. This is not to say that for example translation work and editing or retail have no element of creativity involved, neither would I like to downplay the role and importance in the Hungarian versions of these cultures of activities such as writing, videography or cosplay to name but a few which would be readily understood as being creatorly endeavours. Nevertheless, it is strikingly obvious that the bulk of anime and manga being consumed in Hungary is produced abroad and is imported and localized for domestic consumption fuelling the growth of the fandom. Thus by trying to examine the producerly side of this culture in Hungary, by attempting to understand the careers and roles of these actors in relation to the production and reproduction of this culture and its respective infrastructure it



becomes simply impossible to skirt around the question of those actors who are not engaged in the more straightforwardly creatorly work, but rather in what is most likely to be understood as support activities.

As a result my work hopes to shed light on two grey areas which are more often avoided than not, in not only Bourdieu's approach, but also the body of work on cultural industries and creative labour. On the one hand, where the field of restricted and large-scale cultural production – or to put it another way where the subcultural and wider field of cultural production – meet, and on the other hand, dealing with a more complete set of actors participating in the production and dissemination of cultural products.

## **2.5. Field theory and subcultural clusters**

Conceptualising subcultures as subfields of the field of cultural production which are not isolated but rather form subcultural clusters of closely aligned cultures of interest, helps us to approach another important question mostly left unaddressed both within Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field of cultural production – also Becker's discussion of art worlds – and Anglophone subcultural studies: the problem of boundaries. By drawing on English-language fan studies (Hills 2002, Sandvoss 2005) and subcultural research (Muggleton 2000, Vályi 2010) I will now re-examine the problem of bounded collectivities, and demonstrate how subcultural clusters help make sense of the intertwined nature of subcultural and fan formations, and the way they conform with Bourdieusian field theory.

I argue that the individual trajectories of participants criss-cross various cultures with varying levels of engagement and attachment – I will provide ample examples from my own research material in Chapter Six. This is the reason why, from the perspective of personal histories, these cultures appear elusive (cf. Muggleton 2000), while a cross-sectional approach highlights their definite form (e.g. Hodkinson 2002). This tension can also be

addressed by shifting our interpretative framework to the level of subcultural clusters. Entry into and exit from these cultures are not completely random; they adhere to a larger *field* logic of invested (sub)cultural capital and its convertibility, with participants often moving between related, but different subcultures and fan cultures within the same subcultural cluster.

One of the central points emphasized by proponents of post-subcultural theory, scene research and advocates of the term neotribe is that subculture-like formations are not as tightly bounded or exclusive in relation to membership and identification as the Birmingham body of work had seemed to imply (Bennett 1999, 2000, Kahn-Harris 2007, Muggleton 2000, St John 2009, Thornton 1996 [1995], Vályi 2010). But as with most critiques of former scholarship (present work included) such claims are always slightly less accepting and generous than they could be, emphasizing certain aspects of the critiqued work more and downplaying or completely forgetting other elements at the same time – it is in this way for instance that Stanley Cohen’s work (1972) has come to be the straw man standing in for a simplistic understanding of the relationship between the media and subcultures.<sup>53</sup>

In a reading more inclined towards looking for elements in the argument referencing the less bounded, more fluid nature of subcultural attachment I would like to suggest that reflections on the relations and interactions between subcultural formations have been present in subcultural studies from as early as Phil Cohen’s 1972 programmatic *Subcultural conflict and working class community*, which provided the template for the theorization of youth subcultures for the scholars of the Birmingham CCCS. Cohen explicitly noted the lines of filiation in relation to how post-war subcultures developed in Britain, such as how “the

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53 This is by no means just a feature of subcultural studies, Hills (2002: 31) points out how Adorno’s arguments have become simplified in later scholarship on audiences in a similar way to the point of creating a ‘mock-Adorno’ figure compared to which later media and fan studies can feel that progress is indeed being made in relation to understanding the complex relations between media production and reception.

Parkers or Scooter boys were in some senses a transitional form between the mods and the skinheads” (P. Cohen 1972: 24). Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1988 [1979]) reframed Cohen’s original argument, placing the increasing importance of race relations in post second world war Britain at the centre of subcultural developments – and highlighting how white working class subcultures borrowed extensively from black youth subcultural styles and tastes – as opposed to class conflict and the experience of significant restructuring in the housing,<sup>54</sup> economic conditions and available career paths of working class communities and individuals. But with this shift in focus regarding the driving forces of stylistic development and possible articulated meanings<sup>55</sup> a new layer of subcultural connections and influences are brought to the fore, further highlighting the way subcultural formations do not spring to life out of nowhere, but are rather the products of a number of already present practices, musical forms, stylistic elements and social environments, which are recombined into a new stylistic ensemble.

One of the as yet mostly unexplored, but rather significant contributions of Muggleton’s research (2000) focusing not on one particular subculture, but rather individuals deemed to be subculturalists by him,<sup>56</sup> is his exploration of the individual subcultural career paths of participants from a range of different – although generally music oriented – scenes and subcultures. His interviews and detailed analysis (2000:107-125) highlight the way subcultural participants can negotiate gradually shifting engagements and alignments between different subcultures, at times cultivating multiple affinities, while being able to sustain a coherent narrative of the authenticity of participation and the expression of self

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54 An important sign of how indebted subcultural analysis is to the Chicago School of urban sociology.

55 Virtuosoically interpreted by Hebdige, as contested as these readings may be, however, still providing the visceral power that keeps scholars coming back to this body of work.

56 Which does raise the methodological question of whether all of the interviewees were indeed subculturalists. But this is more of a finer point of debate, rather than anything which would substantially impact the veracity of his findings in relation to the lived experience of subcultural affiliation.

throughout this process. Although Muggleton's analysis provides an even richer treatment of the ways subcultural participants negotiate these stylistic changes and morphing affinities, the points I would like to highlight from his discussion for my own argument are the following three: 1) subcultural participants often progress through different subcultures; 2) this progression if taking place gradually is accepted as an appropriate process of the way individuals change over time, without necessarily questioning the sincerity of the individuals' commitment and authenticity; 3) there seems to be a certain pattern to the way these movements happen. This third point is not something which is explicitly said or implied by Muggleton, but one that seems to suggest itself based on the examples offered in the book, with movement happening between cultures which are related along either stylistic lines or in the way they provide a similar kind of outlet and experience.

Hodkinson concentrating on the goth subculture (2002) not on the level of individuals, but rather on the level of the cultural entity 'subculture' is more inclined towards interpreting this cultural formation as something coherent and somewhat distinct – as already explained in the second subchapter the first element of (sub)cultural substance posited by him as an identifying characteristic of subcultures is *consistent distinctiveness*, consistence referring to a stability both in geographical and temporal terms. Nevertheless – even though he does not directly address this question – he does not shy away from the fact that the goth subculture is a) a cultural formation which came into being with specific cultural roots within the post-punk era b) has changed and is constantly changing over time, and finally c) bleeds into other stylistic ensembles and taste cultures, scenes. But once again the examples offered by Hodkinson similar to Muggleton's material seem to indicate that there is a certain underlying logic regarding the way certain scenes and subcultures are more readily open for cross-fertilization than others. For instance, Hodkinson mentions how certain goths had been influenced by extreme or death metal as a result of the stylistic fit, "particularly the prominence of black hair and clothes, and the wearing of horror-style make-up" (2002: 57),

and that “a gradual incorporation of particular aspects of dance-club fashions into goth appearances was taking place during” (2002: 58) the time of his fieldwork.

Finnegan (2007 [1989]), Kahn-Harris (2007) and Vályi (2010) all highlight congruous elements in relation to both change and development experienced by individual participants and the cultures to which they pertain and in relation to the system of proximities and distances among various cultures. Finnegan, for example, mentions the pattern of *connections* and *disjunctions* between various musical worlds she studied in her pioneering work on music making in England:

Some worlds were more open to overlapping membership than others: classical, operatic and brass flowed easily into each other, unlike, say, rock and classical (though there were a few surprises). (2007 [1989]: 18)

Kahn-Harris in his exploration of extreme metal emphasizes not only the constant changes in subcultural formations, but also the multiple attachments and varied trajectories of not only participants but also texts – in the widest possible sense – for example:

everything within a scene may exist within a number of scenes. A musical text, for example, may circulate within a number of scenes at once. Texts and individuals may move through scenes on a variety of trajectories, as they also move along particular individual ‘pathways’ (Finnegan 1989). Similarly, it follows that scenes with varying degrees of autonomy may exist within other scenes. Scenes themselves are constantly shifting, splitting and combining – any coherence can only be temporary. (Kahn-Harris 2007: 22)

For Vályi (2010) the varied trajectories of participants of the geographically highly dispersed crate digging scene was in a similar fashion the starting point of his inquiries into the ways routes both in spatial terms and in collecting career trajectories criss-cross each other to form a distinct community of like minded peers, who – as explained in subchapter three above – still share and understand a common set of core higher values, which structure their individual positions as varied as those might be.

Turning towards fan studies we find the problem of strictly bounded collectivities and exclusive identification on the part of participants to be an almost non-existent question. Flowing from the focus of fan studies being mainly on science-fiction, cinema and television<sup>57</sup> fandom, it is understood that while certain fans can indeed be more involved – to the point of excluding all other fan cultural engagements – in one or the other fandom, it is generally understood that fans will often pursue more than one fan attachment or will be involved in a form of genre fandom. Although discussions of fan practices and communities will often concentrate on one particular fandom, the seminal *Textual Poachers* by Jenkins (1992) provides a rich and evocative description of the larger world of media fandoms, in which fans are continuously introduced to new works and thus potentially new fandoms, and where a high level of reflexive play is present regarding both the intertextual connections between varied films, series and fandoms and the practices and conventions of fan reading and socializing themselves. In line with this approach both Hills (2002) and Sandvoss (2005) also stress the multiple alignments and involvements one develops throughout one's life and the way these interests might be of varying degrees of intensity over time.

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57 While science-fiction is a genre label and television and cinema denote media, I have deliberately chosen to place these alongside each other in an attempt to highlight the way disciplinary fields will have their own quirky logic and history of development not necessarily moving forward along well ordered categories.

Irrespective of whether it is the connections, multiple affinities and shifting alignments or whether it is the disjunctions and distance between various cultural formations that is highlighted, all the examples from across the range of subcultural and fan studies point towards the existence of a certain underlying logic found in relation to these overarching relationships. I would like to argue that this structuring logic is tied to the way these cultural formations can be seen to exhibit a field-like nature. From a Bourdieusian perspective the attraction of any one culture is tied to a pre-existing affinity between the original habitus of the participant and the available positions within the given culture. Furthermore, once a participant has started along a path of learning that will lead to a position within the field, the investment in participating within the culture will have a formative effect on the habitus of the participant. As a result the attractiveness of other related cultures, the positions of which have higher levels of correspondence with the participants' habitus, and which also offer higher possible rates of conversion in relation to already acquired subcultural capital, will likely be more attractive, than cultures which are more distant and therefore presuppose different dispositions, other forms of capital and different modes of participation and appreciation. Indeed, most stories of personal involvement in subcultures and fan cultures seem to correspond to this understanding.

Thus out of the five elements that contribute to the existence of subcultural clusters, already enumerated in the previous chapter, three – points (a), (b) and (d) – can already be seen to be a direct result of subcultures being fields:

- (a) correspondence between stylistic and thematic elements and focal interests
- (b) higher levels of convertible capital
- (c) higher proportion of shared infrastructure and media channels
- (d) increased mobility of participants
- (e) greater level of cooperation and competition for subcultural producers

As for points (c) and (e) I would like to briefly return to Becker's *Art Worlds*, as he concentrates even more on the networks of cooperation and connections between various cultural formations than Bourdieu those. The way various art worlds are related both stems from and impacts the relationships of production and work within these cultures:

[A]rt worlds typically have intimate and extensive relations with the worlds from which they try to distinguish themselves. They share sources of supply with those other worlds, recruit personnel from them, adopt ideas that originate in them, and compete with them for audiences and financial support. In some sense, art worlds and worlds of commercial, craft, and folk art are parts of a larger social organization. So, even though everyone involved understands and respects the distinctions which keep them separate, a sociological analysis should account of how they are not so separate after all. (1982: 36)

Furthermore, Becker also highlights how “[o]rganizations for one medium often use people from other fields as support personnel for the work that is central in their own field” (1982: 161), such as visual artists working on stage design for example. These connections among artists and support personnel (roles also changing according to context as we’ve just seen), just as much as the connections among the concerned audiences all contribute to creating an overarching art world within which a multiplicity of variously interconnected art worlds can be found, not unlike Bourdieu’s field of cultural production with its many subfields.

To tie this back to subcultural and fan research again, Woo in his study of the role of cultural intermediaries (i.e. producerly participants) in a nerd culture scene in Canada also observed that his

research sites were connected with one another and with other local and trans-local actors by relationships of patronage, cross-promotion, and sponsorship, suggesting that the scene is in



fact highly interconnected at the level of its cultural intermediaries. Even the most monomaniacal devotee of some sub-sub-sub-genre of nerd culture is regularly exposed to nerdy practices and communities outside of his or her immediate interest. (2012: 127)

Woo's results, thus, once again highlight the importance of shared infrastructure and media channels – point (c) – and the corresponding greater level of cooperation and competition among subcultural producers – point (e) – in relation to the larger overarching subcultural clusters that individual cultures are embedded within.

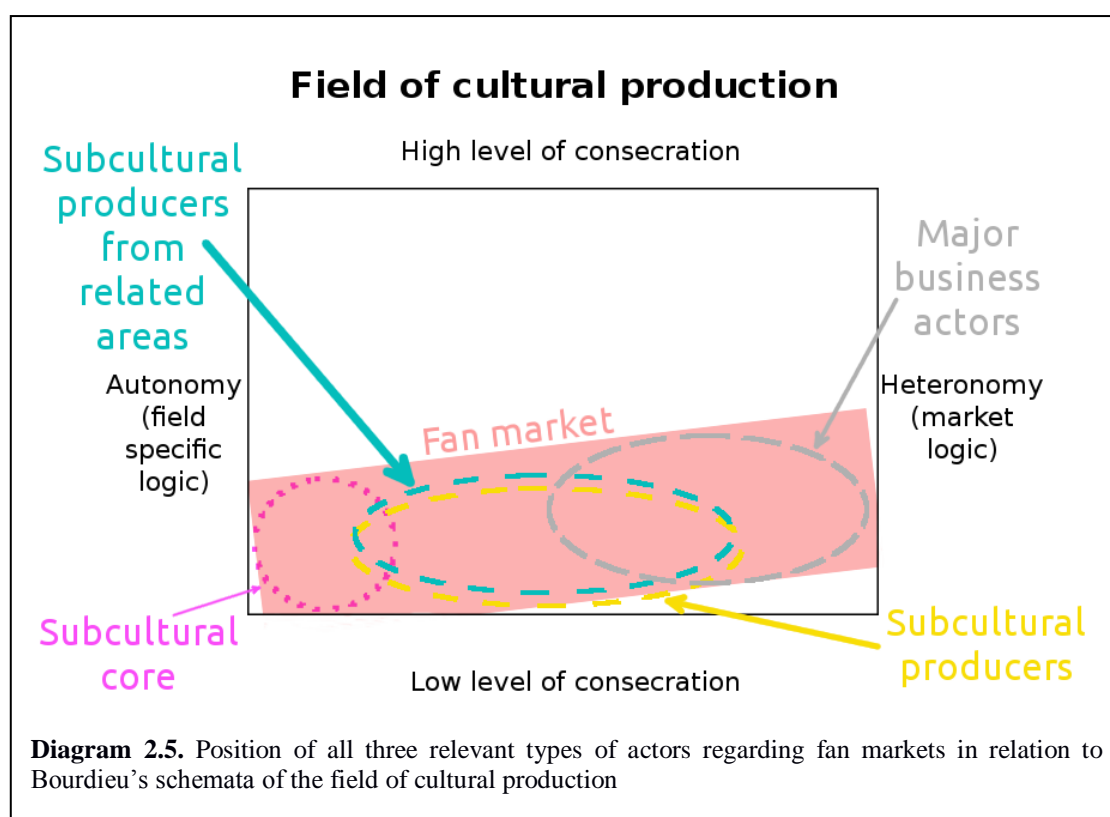
And finally, highlighting the relevance of cultural industries and creative labour approaches discussed in the previous subchapter, the crossing-over of subcultural producers between these cultures and markets is facilitated not only by the relative proximity of the themes of these interests, but also by the very similar working conditions, relations and rewards these markets offer – in many respects not unlike those of other types of creative labour (see Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). Furthermore, these markets are also comparable in scale, and are all characterized by the presence of free labour and a subcultural motivational and reward structure specific to these worlds/fields (cf. Hodgkinson 2002). All of these characteristics will be addressed in Chapter Seven in detail.

## **2.6. Summary**

This chapter provided a compact overview of the theoretical backdrop informing my research. I traced the compatibility between subcultural studies and fan studies, between Becker's art world and Bourdieu's field approach, and finally between the combined subcultural and fan studies framework and Bourdieusian field theory. Based on this unified framework I argue that subcultural producers fall between the subfield of restricted and large-scale production, which is one of the reasons why these actors have so far received almost no attention within either Bourdieusian sociology of art or cultural industries and

creative labour approaches. At the same time my own research material focusing on subcultural producers working in the anime-manga fandom and market in Hungary elucidates a further element that has mostly been left unexplored so far, in the way that I examine actors who would most likely qualify as support personnel in Becker's, Bourdieu's and creative labour frameworks. Furthermore, I have also demonstrated in detail how the concept of subcultural clusters not only helps make sense of the movement of participants between related cultural formations, but is itself a logical extension of the way these cultures can be considered fields in the Bourdieusian sense.

Finally, as a visual summary to this chapter's main arguments Diagram 2.5 below offers a composite view of the position of all three types of relevant actors highlighted in my framework in relation to the producerly side of subcultural and fan markets and their position within Bourdieu's schemata of the field of cultural production.



### **3. Methodology: Insider research and career interviews**

In the present chapter I provide an overview of the methods used to gather my empirical material, the process of the research itself, the problems involved in such an approach, and the data gathered. The four problems I discuss in relation to my empirical research are a) the interrelations between the observation I undertook and my sample selection, b) the benefits and drawbacks of conducting insider research, and c) the problem of friendship and bias arising not just within insider research, but in ethnography type approaches in general, and finally d) the problem of anonymity versus identification in relation to disclosing research results and the role that trust plays in such a research setting. The chapter closes with an overview of my research participants.

#### **3.1. Overview of the empirical material**

Using qualitative methods, especially interviews, observation and participant observation within an ethnography type framework can be almost considered standard practice among researchers working in the field of subcultural studies (e.g. Thornton 1996 [1995], Muggleton 2000, Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010) and to a lesser extent within fan studies (e.g. Bacon-Smith 1992, 2000, Jenkins 1992, Kozinets 2001). There are also plenty of examples of researchers employing interviews and observation – alongside other methods as well – regarding the study of manga, anime and otaku related research topics (e.g. Brienza 2009, 2011, 2014, Condry 2013, Lee 2009, 2012, Mihara 2010, Morikawa 2003, Yoshimoto 2009). In the case of small business and entrepreneurship research – although the defining portion of the work on the topic is from a macro-scale and quantitative standpoint – we can also find a growing number of works arguing for the merits of qualitative methods (Perren & Ram 2004) and case studies (Chaudhry & Crick 2004) in general and micro-sociological (Kuczi 2000) and ethnographic (Hill & Wright 2001) approaches and the study of entrepreneurial narratives (Rae 2000, *Down & Warren 2008: 6*) in particular.

### 3.1.1. *Career interviews*

The core of the empirical material for this dissertation are fifty-two long-form interviews conducted between May 2010 and March 2014 with thirty-two producerly participants working in the Hungarian anime-manga fandom and market. This material is supplemented by an extended period of observation conducted at comics and anime-manga events in Hungary during the same period.

My interviews are *career interviews* with regards to both subcultural careers and participants' education and work careers. By looking at both the personal stories of gradual involvement in various subcultures and fandoms and the concurrent life events of educational trajectories and work histories I am able to provide a unique view on the interplay of these domains of life, usually left unexplored in similar studies. Furthermore, the career interview approach also meshes well with Bourdieu's field framework, as well as previous approaches to subcultural research (e.g. Clarke et al. 1993 [1975]), both of which have emphasized a longitudinal approach to participants' trajectories within fields and subcultures respectively. This underlines not only the fit between my empirical approach and the employed theoretical framework, but once again underlines the compatibility of Bourdieusian theory with subcultural studies. Moreover, such a longitudinal approach also helps us see more clearly the unfolding movement of actors between both various roles and different markets allowing for a better understanding of the proximity and distance among diverse subcultural and fan markets within the borders of a subcultural cluster and beyond.

Career interviews are longitudinal by nature, but this aspect was further enhanced by the fact that my interviews were conducted in two phases. The majority of the initial interviewees were approached three years later for a second round of interviews, lending a rare temporal dimension to my research material. I conducted twenty-one interviews between May 2010 and November 2010, and two more follow-up interviews with two of these interviewees

during the summer of 2011. The second phase of my research work took place during the summer of 2013 and late winter, early spring of 2014. I conducted twelve interviews during July-August of 2013 with four new interview subjects and eight of my previous interviewees. Between January and March of 2014 I conducted a further seventeen career interviews, seven of these with new respondents and ten with interview subjects from my original 2010 interview sample.

With regards to sample selection I started out with a list of major actors I knew I wanted to interview and another list of all the actors I knew I had more or less access to within the field. I then worked my way through both lists, with additions turning up as I progressed in my fieldwork. As is common in the case of researching more specialized sub-populations, chance meetings with possible interview subjects at the research sites and events were also important, as was direct referral offered by already contacted interviewees. I will discuss further aspects of this method of sample selection and its limits in the following section on observation.

My research subjects include entrepreneurs, employees, freelancers and volunteers working within or in relation to the anime-manga fandom and market. The types of work and enterprises covered include a wide range of different positions such as publishers, event organizers, shop owners, shop employees, editors, translators, journalists, etc. My aim was to be able to grasp the multiplicity of activities and positions that contributed to the production of domestic manga publishing and the wider anime-manga fan culture and market. I provide a summary overview of my interview subjects in subchapter 4.4 below.

In 2010 all interviewees were given a description of the research project. During the 2013-2014 round of interviews all interview subjects were both given the description of the research project and signed consent forms for the use of both the new interviews and the

previous interview materials if I had interviewed them on preceding occasions. The description of the research project from 2010 was only in Hungarian, but the new version of the description – very similar to the original version – and the consent form are in both Hungarian and English (see Appendix). In line with the description of the research project and general qualitative research best practice guidelines all interview materials were stored in an encrypted form.

The interviews were conducted based on a semi-structured guideline, covering the following major topics:

- How the interviewees learnt about, came in contact with the given field and how this relationship developed.
- How this new interest might have built on previous interests.
- How the interviewees procured the necessary knowledge and artefacts regarding the field and whether or not this was done in any sort of social context.
- Other interests besides the given field.
- What the most important things according to the interviewees are, which they had learnt from participating in the given field.
- Educational background and employment history of the interviewees.
- Typical daily, weekly or monthly time-use rhythm of the interviewees and questions regarding self-exploitation (working irregular hours, on weekends, late at night, etc.).
- Income structure of interviewees (especially the ratio of the income from field related activities within their total income).
- Whether the interviewees use foreign sources of information or have foreign professional contacts.
- How the interviewees started to work within the field, and what type of experience, skills and knowledge were required to do so.

- What type of support the interviewees received, if any, when starting out in the field.
- What the interviewees' parents think of their activity in the given field.
- The interviewees' view on the future of the given field related activity in their lives.
- The interviewees' view on the benefits or disadvantages of pursuing the field related activity being discussed.
- Socio-economic background questions.

The interviews typically lasted between two to three hours and focused on the career paths of the respondents with in-depth exploration of additional topics based on the interviewee's personal position and history.

All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed with respect to themes relevant to the present research. The analysis followed a three-step bottom-up/top-down/lateral approach. First a number of larger themes were identified based on the interviews; this was done both during the actual interviews and the transcribing process. I had opted for transcribing all the interviews myself in part as a way to develop a more intensive relationship with the interview materials, as the slow process of transcribing not only afforded me with a second experience of the original interviews, but also provided ample time and space for the initial round of identifying overarching themes. The interview materials were then cut up and grouped together based on the identified main themes. This second phase provided an opportunity to explore and identify potential sub-themes, but also to re-evaluate the significance and relevance of the main themes. Finally, based on all the identified sub-themes I created cross-table-like summaries bringing each part of the material to bear on each other part, looking for possible patterns that might emerge when aligning different aspects of the material alongside each other.

### *3.1.2. Observation and sample selection*

Regarding the observation element of my research, there have been two distinct phases to my involvement with the producerly side of anime-manga fandom. During 2006-2007 I was actively involved in my friend, Csaba Boros' then fledgling business Mangafan – which has now come to dominate the Hungarian manga market and anime-manga convention circuit –, participating in conventions and selling manga. I had already decided by the time of my first convention that I will conduct research in this field, and taking part in this fashion proved to be a valuable way of getting to know the other actors in the market. From 2008 till the summer of 2010 I still attended conventions and smaller events and again during the summer of 2013, but only as a visitor.

Although I mostly only reference my interview materials in the following chapters, I would like to briefly elaborate on how participating in conventions and smaller events was invaluable in a number of ways for my research project. First, attending conventions and events informed my understanding of the various subcultural producers from related fields, who played a role in this market. Their presence and the shift in their role and significance over the years is a testament to the way these cultures interact, and is a topic I will be addressing in chapters six and seven.

Second, and strongly related to the first point, conventions and smaller events allowed me to see all the main offline actors engaged with the anime-manga fan market in the country. The major conventions practically acted as my sampling frame in relation to the actors I wanted to interview for this research project. One of the main reasons for this is that Hungary has a very uneven population distribution. More than two million people (over a fifth of the whole population) live in the larger Budapest area, and even the second largest city in the country only numbers around two-hundred thousand people (a tenth of the size of the capital). As a result almost all the major anime-manga conventions are held in Budapest (see Chapter Four



for details), and the overwhelming majority of specialist shops are also located in the capital. In a similar fashion even though there are a large number of smaller clubs and organizations across the country, the reach and impact of these are usually limited compared to the Budapest based *Hungarian Anime Association*, who are also the oldest such organization in the country – I will discuss their history and impact in more detail in the following chapter. Furthermore, the major conventions are important enough to attract participants from across the country. Thus these events provided me with ample opportunities to both see who are exhibiting, selling, performing and so on at these events, and also to get to know these actors and those people they deemed important to introduce to me.

There are of course limitations to this approach, and as a result, to my own sample as well. First and foremost by focusing on actors who had a public presence at these events I have a slight imbalance in relation to the actors I have spoken to regarding the online aspect of this culture. Even though I have talked to some of the people behind or active on various impactful Hungarian websites in relation to anime-manga, I am aware that there are a number of important online sites and forums I did not manage to include in my interview research. The partial nature of my sample in relation to the online presence of Hungarian anime-manga fandom is also connected to the problem of legal/semi-legal/illegal content and channels. My work focuses on subcultural producers whose activities are mostly geared towards the legal end of the spectrum of activities found within fandoms. This is one of the reasons why they are also more readily visible at events. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that unauthorized channels of distribution and content do not play an important role within the Hungarian fandom. Nevertheless, I will only touch on these topics in a tangential manner, as both the empirical material and the arguments of my research are in relation to the actors who lie beyond the often discussed unauthorized strata of activities within fandom.

Second, I strived to focus on actors who were either central to certain aspects of the anime-manga fan market or were working full-time within subcultural or fan markets (see subchapter four for an overview of my interview participants below). This meant leaving certain segments of and roles within the fan market unexplored. Cosplayers and photographers are unfortunately under-represented in my sample, *dōjinshi* artists are completely missing, just as the small-scale handicraft creators who emerged in larger numbers from the end of 2011 onwards. The list goes on, and I am very aware that as much as I would have liked, the present work cannot serve as a well-rounded overview and catalogue of all the possible aspects of work in the anime-manga fan market. By focusing on the *Hungarian Anime Association*, the major manga publishers, the two main magazines, the major shops and central event organizers, I have tried to approach the actors whose work within the authorized spectrum of the fandom has the most wide-ranging impact on the anime-manga fan market as a whole. However, I am clearly aware that my opportunities and choices in relation to who to interview for this project are just as much a result of my own position vis-à-vis both the fandom and market and the actors engaged in it, and therefore unavoidably biased in various ways.

One such bias, which I had intentionally tried to correct, but had fallen short of properly mitigating, is the gender imbalance in the make-up of my interviewees. Compared to other geek cultures participation in anime-manga fandom in Hungary just as in the wider European and North American context is more balanced gender-wise with a larger presence of girls over boys. Nevertheless, once we look at the positions within the producerly side of the fan culture and market in Hungary, we find a reverse gender ratio with men occupying more powerful positions, and women more often found in supporting roles. Still, I wanted to interview as many female participants as possible in the hopes of getting a more balanced picture overall. Although I did manage to interview a number of key female actors within the fandom, the inherent gender bias of my research approach became more and more obvious as

I conducted further and further interviews with male participants where women – from spouses, mothers to friends, employees and business partners – would figure just as prominently in the stories of struggle and success these activities entailed. With the limited resources at my disposal I was unable to follow-up this pattern by conducting interviews with these said women. The possible effects of this gender bias in my sample on my discussion of work within the fan market will be noted again in Chapter Seven. However, another reason which seemed to obscure these women from view and make it more difficult to talk to them even when I made an effort to do so, was that in a way in quite a few cases I found myself in a position where the men who acted as the public faces of these ventures would be more willing to talk to me, while the women would be more reluctant to do so. This I am assuming is in part a result of me being a man, and therefore more readily presumed to be interested in male participants' views. My overall situatedness beyond being a male researcher, however, plays an even larger role in my research project, and it is this aspect of my work that I will discuss in the following two subchapters.

### **3.2. Insider research**

Being Hungarian, in my early thirties, and coming from a geek cultural background, having identified as a role-playing gamer during my teens, and later getting into US comics and to a lesser extent Japanese anime meant that beyond sharing the cultural background of my interviewees to a significant degree, I also had a generational connection with the majority of them. Not only did I see myself in their stories again and again (cf. Woo 2012), but it would be hard to deny that I was one of them. My own career trajectory was shaped in a similar way to theirs by my love and interest for the wider geek culture. And even on the most tangible level I was already a part of this network of actors long before I had started my research project, reading articles by them, buying comics from them, having some of them as my friends, enjoying the influence and impact of others without knowing about it, and so on. In other words I was/am an insider to this field.

It is now quite common to find researchers who are insiders in subcultural studies (e.g. Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010, Woo 2012) as well as fan studies (e.g. Jenkins 1992, Kozinets 2001, Hills 2002) and research on anime-manga (e.g. Brienza 2009, 2011). The insider position has both a number of advantages and potential pitfalls, which I will reflect upon in the following. On the one hand, my position and involvement helped me to get to know a certain number of relevant actors and gain access to them as interview subjects. Furthermore, my position has informed both my choice of potential interview subjects to pursue and my understanding of the references and subject material being addressed within the interviews. On the other hand, my involvement as both a researcher and a friend/acquaintance of my research subjects brings with it a set of problems in relation to not only the reliability and validity of my analysis but also specific ethical concerns. This aspect of the role of potential friendship ties in insider research has so far not been addressed in subcultural and fan research and it is this question that I will explore in more depth following an overview of the most important points already established by other researchers in relation to insider research.

Vályi provides the following list in relation to the possible advantages of insider research and an insider position:

(1) awareness of the history, beliefs, customs, values and agendas of the group prior to beginning research; (2) formulating the terms of analysis in a way that resonates with the experiences and concerns of the group; (3) the ease of establishing rapport and gaining access to information; (4) the ability to pick up on obscure references and passing mentions, understand inside jokes, and recognise subtle distinctions in interview situations. (Vályi 2010: 77)

Based on this list we can see that the insider position means that the researcher naturally omits certain key phases of entering the field, such as familiarizing oneself with the history, practices and language of the culture and community being studied. This element of entering the field is so crucial for researchers, that they will often reflect upon this process, both to signal that a learning process has indeed taken place – validating their own position as proficient interpreters of the given culture (cf. Geertz 1973) – but also to underline their initial distance from the research field.<sup>58</sup>

Although in the case of insider research the researcher's personal history of involvement both before and during the research process (cf. Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010, Woo 2012) serves as a guarantee for the validity of the interpretation, it also acts to destabilize that very notion of validity, since the researcher might be seen to be biased towards the dominant interpretations of the research field itself (cf. Rosaldo 1993 [1989]) and/or might suffer from a form of “data blindness or myopia” as a result of “familiarity of the material” (Edwards 1999: 5 quoted in Vályi 2010: 78). Thus the advantage provided by the already present understanding of and possible contacts within the field, the lack of commonly expected critical distance from the field is seen to have a possible adverse affect on the research process and the validity of the results. For Vályi the answer to this problem came in the form of feedback from the scholarly community who were not familiar with the specificities of his research field, and could thus offer “questions and comments” that made him “aware of some issues that were unclear or puzzling from the perspective of “outsiders”” (2010: 78). Hodkinson also notes how being a “critical insider” required “continually taking mental steps back so as to observe, compare, contrast and question as well as to experience” (2002: 6). This back and forth is all the more important as valid accounts mean somewhat

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58 For example, Macdonald writing on her experience of researching graffiti culture: “In the early stages of my own research, I felt exactly that. Unfamiliar with their terminology, I spent most of my time feeling confused and left out – a true outsider. This feeling eased as I learnt more and grew more adept at relating to writers in their own terms.” (2001: 160)

different things within a subcultural and an academic context as Vályi points out:

“keeping it real” as a scenic ethnographer meant that my discussion of scenic practices, participants, and history had to stay within often quite differently understood limits of what an “accurate and respectful” representation meant in these two worlds. (2010: 87)

But at the same time, academic and non-academic accounts and practices can converge to the extent that the distinctions between them become nothing more than issues of power and status hierarchy, such as those pointed out in the previous chapter in relation to the hierarchy of legitimacy and various activities, like sports or arts. As Jenson (1992) notes, researchers working in the humanities can be seen to be quite similar in their approach and activities to serious fans of popular culture, yet the former are not called “fans” and are awarded status and recognition within the wider society. As a result of their focus of study fan studies scholars are far more aware of the precariousness of the distinction between “academic” and “fan” – between the fan-academic and the academic-fan – within their own fields of specialization (cf. Jenkins 1992, Hills 2002). And this serves as a very important hint for understanding that both proximity and distance are never given, but rather constructed in relation to the object of study. The insider researcher’s or the fan-academic’s position is no more – or less – problematic than that of the researcher coming from the “outside.”<sup>59</sup> Not only can researchers from the “outside” “go native” as a result of the research process, internalizing the values and interpretations of their objects of study, but their works can also come to bear on the future development of the culture being analysed in a number of ways.<sup>60</sup> This is even more of a pressing issue, if we take into consideration the way cultures are constantly changing and developing, disregarding or embracing works about themselves.

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59 And how little prior knowledge would constitute a truly “objective” first look at a given culture in the first place?

60 For example via policy measures based on the works, through media attention brought about by them, by members of the researched culture or group reading the works, and so on.

Actors from outside and from within have become important, even canonical figures within certain cultures, and the works they had produced taken on a life of their own within the cultures they set out to explore, represent and/or analyse.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, there is a clear responsibility towards the communities and cultures being represented, again exemplified by Jenkins' stance in relation to downplaying conflict within media fandom (Hills & Jenkins 2001). In a similar fashion, even though Kahn-Harris addresses politically disturbing aspects of the extreme metal scene, he is aware that the complex picture he constructs can be subverted by those seeking to further their own agenda against it:

Even if this book attempts to offer a sober, politically sensitive response to the scene, the best intentions of writers are often subverted. There is much about the scene that is shocking and worrying to those who are not scene members. Given the history of attacks on and censorship of metal, there is always the possibility that this book may be misused by those with a less subtle agenda. (2007: 26)

I too am aware of my responsibility in representing anime-manga fandom in Hungary, which is further exacerbated by the fact that I am also offering an analysis of my friends and acquaintances' careers and activities. This situation is not unique to my own research or situatedness, however, a detailed discussion of this aspect of subcultural and fan research has so far been missing, and it is therefore to this highly delicate problem that I now turn.

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61 Some of the most famous examples include Henry Chalfant's exploration and documentation of early graffiti culture in particular and the wider hip-hop culture in general – most notably co-producing the documentary film *Style Wars* (1983) –, and Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* (1992), which according to his account (Hills & Jenkins 2001) became a sort of “how to” book of media fandom within the fan culture itself.

### 3.2.1. Friendship and bias

The problem of friendships and the biasing effects they may have on research accounts has a long history within ethnographic research that go beyond the confines of just subcultural and fan research. One of the most famous examples is William Foote Whyte's pioneering ethnography *Street Corner Society* (1993 [1943]) of a slum district of Boston he calls "Cornerville." During his research Whyte befriends "Doc" – one of the "corner boys"<sup>62</sup> –, who acts as his main gatekeeper introducing him to various aspects of life in the neighbourhood. As their relationship grows Whyte involves Doc more and more in his research project even discussing his findings and possible interpretations with him. Whyte revisited his principle research subjects after the initial publication of his work, and found that the leader of the "college boys" Chick Morelli was not pleased with his portrayal in the book, and accused Whyte of taking the side of the "corner boys" at the expense of being understanding towards the "college boys" position and practices. This methodological problem of even unintentionally taking sides in what is supposed to be a neutral description of research findings is endemic to all ethnography type research, where the researcher has to develop rapport with their research subjects and will unwittingly form social relationships with them, and as a result internalize some of their positions. Even though there have been attempts at circumventing this effect, for instance by trying to highlight varying positions and points of view, ultimately there is no getting round this bias effect. As Perren and Ram note regarding the case of researching a field with multiple interviews and thereby opening up the possibility for a detailed examination of different positions:

Accepting multiple subjective interpretations may cloak the lionization of one group of individuals within the researcher's narrative. All narratives are subjective and equal, but

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62 The "corner boys" as opposed to the "college boys" did not pursue possible avenues of upward mobility such as education, and were content to live their life within the established framework of the neighbourhood, which entailed spending their time hanging around with the other young men from the block on their street corner.



some narratives may be more equal than others (2004: 91)

Thus as much as one might try to highlight all positions and viewpoints equally, one can never be sure that they have indeed enjoyed the same level of attention, empathy and so on. Furthermore, one can also never be sure of having accounted for all positions, and indeed it is better to assume that there will always be positions whose viewpoints are marginalized by the very act of constructing a field of multiple positions.<sup>63</sup>

Even though my research has not been ethnographic to the degree to warrant the label ethnography, my participation within the culture, my observation activities, my repeated contact and interviews with my research subjects, and most importantly my pre-existing friendship ties with a number of my interviewees means that this methodological problem is one of the most acute for my own work. This potential interpretative and representational bias stemming from friendship ties was further compounded by ethical concerns regarding the actual conducting of interviews and handling of information as there were a number of obvious business rivalries among my interview participants. I adopted a number of guidelines for myself to help deal with both the bias and the ethical issues. In the case of the ethical concerns I adopted two strategies to make everything as transparent towards my interview subjects as possible and to keep their materials confidential. First, I always made a point of clearly stating my friendship ties in order to avoid a false image of a detached outsider. Second, I avoided discussing any confidential materials, such as the strategies, plans, views, decisions, etc. of my interview subjects with other interviewees even when prompted by them to do so, both within and outside the research context.

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63 This is another reason for my attempt at trying to enumerate the most glaring omissions from my research project in relation to the field being analyzed in the previous subchapter.

In relation to the interpretative and representational bias I have decided to rather embrace the bias than fight it in order to provide a more complete picture of the world I am researching. Since I will be positively biased no matter what I do or say both in relation to the anime-manga fan culture in particular and the wider geek culture in general, and in relation to my interviewees and even more so my friends among them, it is much better to actually embrace this position and turn it into an advantage, by adopting a positive bias towards *all* my interview subjects. This, of course, does not mean that I can fully circumvent the problem pointed out by Perren and Ram, cited above, in relation to the way certain positions and narratives will “be more equal than others”. However, by consciously choosing to adopt a positive bias towards all narratives and positions I am examining, I found that I ended up closer to a more level analysis than prior to having taken this decision. Furthermore, by making myself adopt a positive bias in relation to all positions I not only ended up being more aware and reflexive of my own initial biases towards certain narratives and actors, but have also found new frameworks and relationships within my material, which previously had elided my attention. Finally, by turning positive bias into a productive tool of inquiry and by making this as explicit as possible here, I hope readers will also have an easier time assessing my findings in relation to my materials.

### **3.3. Anonymity and trust**

There is an inherent tension in a work such as this, on the one hand the researcher is obliged to protect the interests of research subjects and to live up to their trust, on the other hand the researcher is supposed to produce new insights and objective accounts of the phenomena being examined. Some of the insights and descriptions of the researcher might end up being unflattering or even conflicting with that of the research subjects’ self-perception or their interpretation of reality. By using anonymity the researcher can provide a level of distance between the actual research participants and the final results. In the case of ethnography type research or work on very specific groups, however, anonymization may only provide for a

thin veil of distancing, and both the research participants themselves and those who know about them, will be able to identify them based on the material. This is precisely what happened when Chick Morelli read William Foote Whyte's *Street Corner Society* as discussed in the previous subchapter.

The case of subcultural and fan research is further special as a result of the importance of subcultural capital and status within these groups. Being a part of a research project that will lead to a dissertation, and possibly even a book, on the given culture, is a point of interest and pride for a number of participants. Some of my interview subjects were clearly excited to be part of such a project. In a way works of subcultural studies often act as snapshots of particular local and trans-local scenes, and often contain information on the histories and major institutions, formative figures, etc. of these cultures, which again underscores their significance for the researched culture itself.

Thus there are two forces at work at the same time, on the one hand anonymizing participants provides a higher level of freedom for the researcher and a greater level of protection for the participants, on the other hand including the real names of places, institutions, events and people helps ground the material, provide it with much needed historical and geographic specificity and also acknowledges the central role the research participants play in these cultures.

Acknowledging one's achievements – “giving credit when credit is due” – is central to the competitive ethos of hip hop, while it also plays a key role in the collective cultivation of the particular traditions of its various art forms and communities. For this reason, I chose to identify my interviewees and the sources of the accounts I collected from secondary sources by name. In the case of the participants who used different aliases as journalists, bloggers, and DJs rather than their real names, I refer to them by the names by which they were best known

within the crate digging scene. Whereas clearly identified sources are the measure of credibility in journalistic practice, in ethnographic accounts informants are often referred to by pseudonyms. As Mitchell Duneier (1999: 348) rightly asserts, naming the people and places one writes about is productive of ethnographic accounts that measure up to higher standards of accountability. (Vályi 2010: 87-88)

Similar to Vályi's position I knew from the very beginning that I would have to include real names in my work, for it would either lose too much of its context if I wanted to create a truly anonymous approach, or else my research participants would be immediately identifiable with little trouble, and thus anonymizing them would only be a superficial and disrespectful gesture towards them. The reason for this is the very small and specific nature of the group I am researching. Since there are so few publishers dealing with manga, so few organizers of anime-manga conventions and so few shops catering to these interests in Hungary even if I were to change the names of all concerned parties I would still provide ample information for identifying everybody and everything mentioned in this work, by saying that my material is based on Hungary. I had even considered saying that my interview material is from a non-specified Eastern European country. But that too would only rob the work of much valuable context and would still allow anybody to immediately guess the exact country based on my nationality and previous work.

Being conscious of the fact that I would have to use real names in my work also helped in relation to the problem of bias explained in the previous subchapter, and is strongly tied to my solution of employing positive bias as a productive tool. As the quote from Vályi says above, using real names leads to "accounts that measure up to higher standards of accountability". It would be too easy to slip into less reflexive and more thoroughly distorting biases had I had the luxury of anonymizing my material. By employing real names, however, I am not only writing for an academic audience, but also for the wider culture and

actual actors I am researching. I am responsible for honouring their trust by providing an account that is as well aligned with their own understanding of their own and each other's positions and the wider culture as much as it is able to produce new insights for the academic community. Although, I am sure that I will not be able to fully live up to this goal, it has nevertheless been a constant standard and spur in the course of re-examining my materials again and again.

On the technical side, all research participants were asked – first verbally during the first wave of interviews, and then in written form on the consent form (see Appendix) during the second wave of interviews – by what name they would like to be referred to and whether they would like to remain anonymous in the works based on the interview materials. None of my interviewees wished to remain fully anonymous, most chose to appear either with their full name or with their nicknames or aliases – by which they are known within their respective cultures – and some preferred to have both their full name and nickname/alias included. This alternating use of both full names and nicknames/aliases is quite similar to that found in other works of subcultural research (e.g. Barna 2011, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010).

### **3.4. Summary overview of research participants**

The present work is based on qualitative research and data, and thus lends itself poorly to any form of statistical analysis. Not only is the actual number of research participants too low for meaningful statistical inquiry, a large portion of the analyses in the following chapters is based on the understanding of the anime-manga fandom and market and related cultures and markets opened up by my interviewees in their accounts, which encompass a larger range of actors, businesses and organizations than I have directly gathered data on. I would nevertheless like to offer a short summary overview of my actual respondents in the following to help anchor the discussions and quotes in the subsequent chapters.

Although the following brief overview of the research participants will indicate the differences between respondents from anime-manga fandom and those from related cultures, these numbers are too small for me to be able to offer statistically significant comparisons, and thus any remarks regarding the interpretations of these differences should be treated with caution and accepted only tenuously.

Eighteen of my respondents came from a background in anime-manga fandom, thirteen with a background in related cultures and markets, and one research participant came from a distantly related background. Nine interviewees had been or still are members of the *Hungarian Anime Association* (see following chapter for details), with only one of them coming from a non-anime-manga fandom background.

Seven of my respondents were women and twenty-five were men, all female interviewees came from the anime-manga fandom. The complete lack of female respondents from related cultures is in part due to the above already detailed reasons, but also reflects the different – more male dominated – gender ratio of comics, SF, fantasy, role-playing games cultures in Hungary.

All research participants were born between 1966 and 1992, with both the average and the median year of birth falling between 1980 and 1981. The table below shows the age distribution of respondents according to their relationship to the anime-manga fandom. The age distribution of research participants with an anime-manga fandom background is slightly younger, which might reflect the fact that anime-manga fandom is a relatively new phenomenon compared to for example comics, SF, fantasy, role-playing games cultures in Hungary.

<b>Year of birth</b>	<b>Anime-manga fan background</b>	<b>Non-anime-manga fan background</b>	<b>Together</b>
-1969	0	1	1
1970-74	1	2	3
1975-79	4	5	9
1980-84	9	4	13
1985-89	3	2	5
1990-	1	0	1

**Table 3.1.** Age distribution of respondents according to background

The roles and positions of research participants in relation to the anime-manga fandom often changed as their careers progressed (see chapters four and six for a detailed discussion). Table 3.2. below offers an aggregate overview of all these roles and positions. The most important point here is that everyone from an anime-manga fandom background had at one point in time engaged in volunteer contributions towards the fan culture. Furthermore, five of the participants coming from related cultures had also at some point participated in volunteer work in relation to anime-manga fandom. The relatively high number of freelance positions vis-a-vis anime-manga fandom from within the culture is also indicative of the way participants from within the culture will often be the first to be recruited following family members by subcultural businesses (see Chapter Seven).

	<b>Anime-manga fan background</b>	<b>Non-anime-manga fan background</b>	<b>Together</b>
Volunteer	18	5	23
Freelancer	8	2	10
Employee	7	6	13
Entrepreneur	6	5	11

**Table 3.2.** Activity types undertaken by respondents in relation to anime-manga fandom according to background

The following two tables are based on UNESCO's<sup>64</sup> statistical framework for education statistics, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). The classification of levels of education was last amended in 2011, and the most recent version of the fields of education is from 2013. Both tables show the results for education attainment *and* attendance. The reason for this is that, on the one hand, in some cases participants were still in the process of obtaining their degrees. While, on the other hand, certain actors had completed or finished their studies without actually graduating with the specific degrees. Thus providing data on both attainment and attendance provides a better overall picture of the educational background of my respondents.

Examining Table 3.3. below, it is immediately obvious that the level of educational background of my research participants are on the whole above the Hungarian average when compared with the education statistics results from the 2011 census (Hungarian Central Statistical Office 2014), with over two-third of my respondents having attended or graduated from a bachelor's or higher level program. Furthermore, taking into account short-cycle tertiary vocational education programs as well, overall more than eighty percent of the research participants attended or graduated from some form of tertiary education.

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64 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.



	<b>Anime-manga fan background</b>	<b>Non-anime-manga fan background</b>	<b>Together</b>
Secondary education	1	3	4
Post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education	2	0	2
Short-cycle tertiary vocational education	1	4	5
Bachelor's or equivalent level education	5	2	7
Master's or equivalent level education	6	4	10
Doctoral or equivalent level education	3	1	4

**Table 3.3.** Highest level of educational attainment/attendance of respondents according to ISCED 2011

Table 3.4 below offers a summary overview of all the major fields of study the research participants had educational attainments in or had attended programs in. Although, as already emphasized earlier it would be impossible to draw out any statistically significant, not to mention in any way representative results based on such a small sample size, I would still like to draw attention to the way the subcategory *business and administration* is the most prevalent field of education. This is in part a result of participants coming from such an educational background to working in relation to anime-manga fandom, but also due to actors pursuing relevant or even necessary education for their future or present positions regarding small-scale entrepreneurship or employment within subcultural markets.

		Anime-manga fan background	Non-anime-manga fan background	Together
Generic programmes and qualifications	<i>Basic programmes &amp; qualifications</i>	1	1	2
Arts and humanities	<i>Arts</i>	1	2	3
	<i>Humanities</i>	1	1	2
	<i>Languages</i>	3	1	4
Social sciences, journalism and information	<i>Social and behavioural sciences</i>	0	1	1
	<i>Journalism and information</i>	1	1	2
Business, administration and law	<i>Business and administration</i>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	<i>Biological and related sciences</i>	1	1	2
	<i>Environment</i>	1	0	1
	<i>Physical sciences</i>	1	0	1
	<i>Mathematics and statistics</i>	1	0	1
Information and Communication Technologies	<i>Information and Communication Technologies</i>	5	0	5
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	<i>Engineering and engineering trades</i>	1	2	3
	<i>Manufacturing and processing</i>	1	1	2
Services	<i>Safety services</i>	1	0	1
	<i>Transport services</i>	1	0	1

**Table 3.4.** Fields of educational attainment/attendance of respondents according to ISCED 2013

#### 3.4.1. Note on information for quotes from research participants

In the subsequent chapters information will be provided for research participants in line with the following. Their name will be presented according to their specified preference. In the text proper I will refer to respondents by their nicknames, if they have one, as a way of making the text flow more smoothly on the one hand, but also in order to better represent the actual subcultural environment on the other hand. The age of research participants is

provided for the year 2012. I conducted interviews between 2010 and 2014, and this year is the midpoint. By assigning one reference year for displaying the age of respondents it is easier to immediately register the age differences among them. If the research participants have at one point been members of the *Hungarian Anime Association* (see the next chapter for details), I have included the abbreviation *HAA* among the provided information. Finally, I list the most important positions the interviewees occupied in relation to the Hungarian anime-manga fandom and market as seen from 2014.

#### 4. Anime broadcasting, manga publishing and anime-manga fandom in Hungary<sup>65</sup>

In order to provide context for the discussion of the empirical material and findings this chapter will present a brief overview of the history of anime broadcasting, manga publishing and the domestic fan culture in Hungary. Anime broadcast on television has been the most important force in the spreading of anime-manga culture in Hungary – similar to other parts of Europe and the US (see for example Leonard 2005a, Malone 2010, Pellitteri 2010), and even Japan (cf. Morikawa 2003, Yoshimoto 2009). Anime screened in cinemas and published on VHS – and later DVD – were also points of engagement for early fans of the form, and will be discussed in the second subchapter. Manga publishing in Hungary will be addressed in detail in the next subchapter, followed by a subchapter dedicated to the emergence and significance of the *Hungarian Anime Association* along with a discussion of the media and conventions servicing the anime-manga fandom. I will round off my overview by offering a periodization of the development of the anime-manga fan culture and market in Hungary based on the trends described in the present chapter.

##### 4.1. Anime broadcasting in Hungary<sup>66</sup>

The history of anime broadcasting in Hungary is characterized by two main trends. On the one hand, anime is increasingly recognized as coming from Japan, especially from 1997 onwards, as will be discussed below. On the other hand, the centre of gravity of anime broadcasting moves from state owned television to commercial channels and then to specialized cable channels. In order to highlight the most important stages in the development of domestic anime broadcasting I have introduced a periodization consisting of five phases from the beginnings of anime on Hungarian television all the way to the end of

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65 I would like to thank Dalma Kálovics for all her help with the present chapter. All mistakes and omissions are my own.

66 Information on anime in Hungary is based on the Hungarian Wikipedia, the AnimeAddicts anime database ([animeaddicts.hu](http://animeaddicts.hu)), and fan accounts such as <http://anoblogja.blogspot.jp/2013/09/az-animek-tortenete-magyarorszagon.html> (last accessed 2015.11.24.).

my research in 2014.

#### 4.1.1. “Odorless” beginnings: 1986-1996

I use the term odorless here and in the following in the sense that Iwabuchi introduces it (2002) to denote the lack of characteristics readily recognizable by its audience as identifying the work as coming from Japan. This does not mean that these works are completely devoid of features based on which they might be easily identified as being Japanese anime,<sup>67</sup> rather, that making this connection requires a conscious knowledge of the existence of conventions of Japanese animation. This is one of the reasons why these works are so readily appropriateable in retrospective personal and collective<sup>68</sup> narratives of engagement with anime from an early age on. Indeed, some of my interview participants also reflected on the way they had enjoyed some of these “odorless” titles even before they knew what anime was. The significance of these childhood viewing experiences is thus retrospectively tied to a larger narrative of enjoying anime and being an anime fan.

The second half of the seventies saw the premièring of anime in Hungary both on the television screen and in the movie theatres (see below). The first arrivals were feature length anime such as *Nagagutsu o Haita Neko* (En: *The Wonderful World of Puss 'n Boots*, Hu: *A klasszikus Csizmás Kandúr* [The Classic Puss in Boots]) in 1976 and *Anderusen Dōwa Ningyo Hime* (En: *Hans Christian Andersen's The Little Mermaid*, Hu: *A kis hableány* [The Little Mermaid]) in 1977, both aired on state television.

During the eighties the state television started showing several anime series based on European stories or with European themes, such as the Japanese-Spanish co-production *Anime Hachijūnichikan Sekai Isshū* (En: *Around the World with Willy Fog*, Hu: *80 nap alatt*

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67 The information in the end credits being the most obvious.

68 As evidenced by for example the meticulous database building on the AnimeAddicts ([animeaddicts.hu](http://animeaddicts.hu)) website.

*a Föld körül Willy Foggal* [Around the World with Willy Fog in 80 Days], Spanish: *La vuelta al mundo de Willy Fog*) in 1987, but also Japanese anime such as *Nirusu no Fushigi na Tabi* (En: *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*, Hu: *Nils Holgersson csodálatos utazása a vadludakkal* [The fantastic travels of Nils Holgersson with the wild geese]) in 1988 and *Supūn Obasan* (En: *Mrs. Pepper Pot*, Hu: *Csip-csup csodák* [Tiny Wonders]) also in the same year.

The nineties all the way up until the broadcast liberalization of 1997 mostly continued this trend, and so there was a slowly increasing offering of Japanese and Japanese co-produced anime (slightly more prevalent during this period), series such as *Mitsubachi Māya no Bōken* (En: *Maya the Honey Bee*, Hu: *Maja, a méhecske*) aired from 1991 on state television or *Harō! Sandiberu* (En: *Hello! Sandybell*, Hu: *Helló, Sandybell!*) from 1994 aired on Szív TV – one of the first regional cable channels in the country – were usually not associated with Japan in any way by the majority of viewers. The recognition of anime as both a specific form and one that comes from Japan would be the product of the next period in Hungary.

#### 4.1.2. Broadcast liberalization and the impact of *Sailor Moon* and *Dragon Ball*: 1997-1999

RTL Klub<sup>69</sup> and TV2<sup>70</sup> were the first two terrestrial commercial broadcast television channels with national coverage in Hungary. Their licenses were issued in spring 1997, and they started broadcasting early October the very same year. Out of these two channels RTL Klub would become the standard-bearer of anime in Hungary most notably as a result of airing *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* (En: *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon*, Hu: *Varázslatos álmok* [Magical dreams] – but nevertheless referred to as *Sailor Moon* by Hungarian viewers) and *Doragon Bōru* (En & Hu: *Dragon Ball*) from 1997. For most older fans of anime and manga

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69 RTL Klub is owned by the German Bertelsmann AG's RTL Group. It is worth noting that German (and Italian) satellite television broadcasts available in Hungary also provided anime series for the first fan generation.

70 Owned by TV2 Media Group Ltd.

in Hungary when recounting how they became interested in this form of entertainment these two series are usually the main reference points. *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn*, adapted from the French version, was broadcast between October 1997 and August 1999. The fifth season was not aired by the French broadcast company and as a result it was not shown in Hungary either. *Doragon Bōru*, also adapted from the French version, started airing in December 1997, with the complete 153 episodes of the series reaching Hungarian television screens. While concerns were already raised about the first series, during the airing of the *Doragon Bōru Zetto* (En & Hu: *Dragon Ball Z*) series, RTL Klub came under investigation by the National Radio and Television Commission for excessively violent content inappropriate to the rating category *children's show* that had been assigned to the series. The show was suspended in April 1999 (with the last episode aired during the original afternoon time slot being No. 122).<sup>71</sup> These two series, the moral panic surrounding *Doragon Bōru* and the ensuing legal dispute brought anime, as a specific form of entertainment imported from Japan, to the attention of a whole generation.

Although there were a couple of other anime like the popular French-Japanese co-produced *Il était une fois...* (En: *Once Upon a Time...*, Hu: *Egyszer volt...*) family of series<sup>72</sup> broadcast on state television, this period was clearly defined by RTL Klub's children's programming, which featured a number of further anime series like *Moero! Toppu Sutoraikā* (En: *Moero! Top Striker*, Hu: *A pálya ördögei* [Daredevils of the Field]) or *Kyandi Kyandi* (En & Hu: *Candy Candy*). Nevertheless, *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* and *Doragon Bōru* stood out as fan favourites not only as a result of their quality, but also due to their marked Japaneseness.

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71 When the airing of the series was resumed after a hiatus, the show had been moved to a late night adult time slot, which made it inaccessible for a significant portion of its target audience and original fans.

72 *Il était une fois... l'homme* (En: *Once Upon a Time... Man*, Hu: *Egyszer volt... az ember*); *Il était une fois... l'Espace* (Jp: *Ginga Patororu PJ*, En: *Once Upon a Time... Space*, Hu: *Egyszer volt... a világűr*); *Il était une fois... la vie* (Jp.: *Seimei no Kagaku: Mikuropatorōru*, En: *Once Upon a Time... Life*, Hu: *Egyszer volt... az élet*).

#### 4.1.3. Preteen collectibles: *Poketto Monsutā*, *Dejimon Adobenchā*, *Yū-Gi-Ō!*, *Bakuten Shūto Beiburēdo*: 2000-2003

With *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* and *Doragon Bōru* gone from the TV screen older fans felt that anime had dried up, and they either turned to other interests and/or started to look for anime beyond what Hungarian television had to offer at the time. Interestingly enough this was far from the case, with the global hit *Poketto Monsutā* (En & Hu: *Pokémon*) debuting on RTL Klub, and *Dejimon Adobenchā* (En: *Digimon Adventure*, Hu: *Digimon*) premiering in Hungary on the then newly established Viasat 3 channel,<sup>73</sup> both in 2000. These recollections, however, point out a very important change, the target group of the new hit anime series to reach Hungary were preteens, while the generation of mostly early to late teenage viewers captivated by *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* and *Doragon Bōru* had only become older during the elapsed couple of years.<sup>74</sup>

All the standout series aired in Hungary during 2000-2003 were collectible game based franchises aimed at a preteen market. Viasat 3 carried on with the popular *Dejitaru Monsutā* franchise with *Dejimon Adobenchā Zero Tsū* (En: *Digimon Adventure 02*, Hu: *Digimon*) from 2001 and *Dejimon Teimāzu* (En: *Digimon Tamers*, Hu: *Digimonszelídítők*) from 2003. RTL Klub was responsible for the introduction of yet another global hit in the form of *Yū-Gi-Ō!* (En & Hu: *Yu-Gi-Oh!*) broadcast from 2003. And even TV2 – the other major terrestrial commercial TV channel – tried their hand at anime with the similarly collectibles based *Bakuten Shūto Beiburēdo* (En & Hu: *Beyblade*) alongside *Atakku No.1* (En: *Attack No.1*, Hu: *Mila, a szupersztár* [Mila the Superstar]).

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73 Viasat 3 is a commercial television channel started in 2000 and owned by the Swedish Modern Times Group Broadcasting AB, which has both terrestrial broadcasting and cabal/satellite television coverage, but nevertheless lacks full domestic coverage.

74 This also seems to be supported by the way several of my youngest respondents named these preteen series as their initial entry point into the fandom.



Alongside these collectible games based franchises a number of “odorless” and usually older anime, not unlike the series aired before 1997, were also shown on various TV channels. Most notably the famous Mushi Pro series *Janguru Taitei* (En: *Kimba the White Lion*, Hu: *Kimba, a fehér oroszlán*) premiered on Szív TV in 2000.

#### 4.1.4. (Re)discovering the teen to young adult segment and the arrival of Anime+: 2004-2007

The airing of the collectible game based franchises continued on RTL Klub, Viasat 3 and TV2, however, 2004 also brought a number of important series and events heralding the (re)turn towards engaging older – meaning teen to young adult – viewers as well with anime. The airing of *Sengoku Otogizōshi Inuyasha* (En: *Inuyasha*, Hu: *InuYasha*) from 2004 on RTL Klub was a landmark event in this regard, followed by *Sureiyāzu* (En: *Slayers*, Hu: *Slayers – A kis boszorkány* [The Little Witch]) the same year on Cool TV,<sup>75</sup> both series were later re-aired on both A+ and Animax, discussed below.

The introduction of the Central European anime cable channel Anime+ (A+)<sup>76</sup> in December 2004 is commonly understood to have had the most impact, since the airing of *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* and *Doragon Bōru* in the late nineties, regarding the growth of the Hungarian anime-manga fandom – as evidenced by the sudden growth in convention attendance, detailed below – even though the channel did not have a nation-wide reach. A+ not only continued franchises that were already established among Hungarian viewers, premiering series such as *Yūgiō Dyueru Monsutāzu GX* (En & Hu: *Yu-Gi-Oh! GX*) and *Dejimon Furontia* (En: *Digimon Frontier*, Hu: *Digimonok: Az új kaland* [Digimons: The

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75 Cool TV is a commercial cable channel owned by the RTL Group, which started broadcasting in 2004.

76 A+ started its daily evening and late-night programming (from 8 p.m. till 2 a.m.) in December 2004. Both A+ and later Animax shared the channel with Minimax (occupying the daytime slots), a Central European cartoon channel owned by Chellomedia (the European content division of Liberty Global international media company).

new adventure]), but also introduced a host of fan favourites to a wider audience like *Furumetaru Panikku!* (En & Hu: *Full Metal Panic!*), *Toraigan* (En & Hu: *Trigun*), *Kaubōi Bibappu* (En: *Cowboy Bebop*, Hu: *Cowboy Bebop – Bolygóközi fejvadászok* [Cowboy Bebop – Interstellar Bounty Hunters]), *Yū Yū Hakusho* (En: *Yu Yu Hakusho*, Hu: *Yu Yu Hakusho – A szellemfiú* [Yu Yu Hakusho – The ghost boy]), *Kareido Sutā* (En & Hu: *Kaleido Star*), *Paradaisu Kisu* (En & Hu: *Paradise Kiss*), or *Gurabitēshon* (En & Hu: *Gravitation*) to name just a few.

Although A+ was indeed single-handedly responsible for the broadcasting of more than half of the anime titles during this period, it is important to take note of how prevalent anime became during this period, with a number of other channels also trying their hand at the form. This manifested itself in two main ways, other than the already noted presence of anime in children's programming on RTL Klub, TV2 and Viasat 3: a) children's channels incorporating anime series, and b) various channels showcasing feature length works of anime.

Fox Television Entertainment's Fox Kids started airing in Hungary as a standalone children's satellite channel in 2000.<sup>77</sup> Fox Kids was acquired by The Walt Disney Company in 2001, who gradually re-branded all domestic and international iterations – including the Hungarian version – of the channel as Jetix. Fox Kids continued as Jetix from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2005 in Hungary, and along with the brand image change came the introduction of a number of anime series to the program offering of the channel, such as *Sonikku X* (En & Hu: *Sonic X*), and *Shāman Kingu* (En: *Shaman King*, Hu: *Sámán király*) both already starting in 2004.

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77 <http://anoblogja.blogspot.jp/2014/04/a-fox-kids-jetix-disney-csatorna-magyar.html> [last accessed: 2015.12.18.]

Turner Broadcasting System Europe's English language Cartoon Network Europe/UK had been available in Hungary since its launch in 1993. In 1998 Cartoon Network Central & Eastern Europe took over in Hungary, and more and more programs were gradually made available in Hungarian until – the Hungarian version of – the channel became all Hungarian in 2004. It was around this time that Cartoon Network Central & Eastern Europe started to offer some anime programming like the Japanese-American *Toransufōmā Sūpārinku* (En & Hu: *Transformers: Energon*) from 2004, or the Japanese-Korean *Saikorobotto Konbokku* (Ko: *Kyubikseu*, En: *Cubix: Robots for everyone*, Hu: *Cubix*) from 2003.

Probably in large part thanks to the Oscar won by *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* (En: *Spirited Away*, Hu: *Chihiro Szellemországban* [Chihiro in Spirit Land]) in 2003 and the ensuing international exposure received by Studio Ghibli, but also silver screen anime in general, there was an unprecedented number of anime feature films broadcast on TV in Hungary during this period. HBO had already aired *Metropolisu* (En: *Metropolis*, Hu: *Metropolisz*) in 2003, and now followed it up with *Tōkyō Goddofūzāzu* (En: *Tokyo Godfathers*, Hu: *Tokiói Keresztapák*) in 2005. The state television presented *Kōkaku Kidōtai* (En: *Ghost in the Shell*, Hu: *Páncélba zárt szellem* [Ghost locked in armor]) in 2004, and TV2 broadcast Miyazaki Hayao's *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* and *Mononoke Hime* (En: *Princess Mononoke*, Hu: *A vadon hercegnője* [Princess of the Wilderness]) in 2005. Finally, AXN – a channel owned by Sony Pictures Entertainment, who would soon take centre stage in relation to anime broadcasting in Hungary –, which started broadcasting in the country in 2003, premiéred *Sakura Taisen* (En: *Sakura Wars*, Hu: *Sakura háborúja*) in 2004 and *Samurai 7* (En: *Samurai 7*, Hu: *7 szamuráj*) in 2005.

#### 4.1.5. Animax Eastern Europe: 2007-2014

In 2007 Sony Pictures Television International acquired A+ and integrated it into its international network of anime channels launching Animax Eastern Europe. Although in

Hungary Animax stayed confined to the evening-night time slot (from 8 p.m. till 2 a.m.) previously occupied by A+, this change in channels still had a very important symbolic impact. Most importantly Animax is a Japanese anime television network, and its presence in Hungary could be seen as an unprecedented direct link to authentic Japanese contents in Hungarian. During its introduction phase Animax also employed a poster campaign utilizing citylight posters in Budapest, which provided a hitherto unseen display of anime fandom in public spaces.

Alongside continuing the already running series from A+, Animax introduced a host of new titles such as *KyoroChan* (En: *KyoroChan*, Hu: *Kukucska kalandjai* [The adventures of Peek-A-Boo]), *Jigoku Shōjo* (En: *Hell Girl*, Hu: *Pokoli lány*), *BLOOD+* (En & Hu: *Blood+*) and *Hagane no Renkinjutsushi* (En: *Fullmetal Alchemist*, Hu: *Fullmetal alchemist – A bölcsek kövének nyomában* [Fullmetal alchemist – In search of the philosopher’s stone]) in 2007, and *Hachimitsu to Kurōbā* (En: *Honey and Clover*, Hu: *Méz és lóhere*), *Desu Nōto* (En: *Death Note*, Hu: *Death Note – A Halállista* [Death Note – The death list]), *Burīchi* (En & Hu: *Bleach*), *Gankutsuō* (En: *Gankutsuou: The Count of Monte Cristo*, Hu: *Monte Cristo grófja*), *Herushingu* (En & Hu: *Hellsing*), *NARUTO* (En & Hu: *Naruto*) in 2008, and *Nodame Kantābire* (En & Hu: *Nodame Cantabile*), *Nana* (En & Hu: *Nana*), *Meitantei Conan* (En: *Case Closed*, Hu: *Conan, a detektív* [Conan, the detective]), *Dī Gureiman* (En & Hu: *D.Gray-man*), *Sōru Itā* (En: *Soul Eater*, Hu: *Soul Eater – Lélekfalók*) in 2009. *Rabu★Kon* (En & Hu: *Lovely Complex*), *Sureiyāzu REVOLUTION* (En & Hu: *Slayers: Revolution*), *Sureiyāzu EVOLUTION-R* (En: *Slayers Evolution-R*, Hu: *Slayers: Evolution-Revolution*), *Hagane no Renkinjutsushi FULLMETAL ALCHEMIST* (En: *Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood*, Hu: *Fullmetal Alchemist: Testvériség*), *Afuro Samurai* (En: *Afro Samurai*, Hu: *Afro szamuráj*), *Toriniti Buraddo* (En: *Trinity Blood*, Hu: *Trinity Blood – Vér és kereszt* [Trinity Blood – Blood and Cross]) were all introduced in 2010. In the case of several of these series, such as *Desu Nōto*, *NARUTO*, *Rabu★Kon* the original manga series was also

published in Hungarian, as will be discussed in subchapter 4.3 below.

Animax also premièred a number of feature length anime – mostly tied to their broadcast series – such as *Gekijōban Hagane no Renkinjutsushi: Shanbara o Yuku Mono* (En: *Fullmetal Alchemist the Movie: Conqueror of Shamballa*, Hu: *Fullmetal Alchemist: Shamballa hódítója*) in 2008, *Gekijōban BLEACH MEMORIES OF NOBODY* (En: *Bleach: Memories of Nobody*, Hu: *Bleach: Elveszett emlékek* [Bleach: Lost Memories]) in 2009, or *Afuro Samurai Resurrection* (En: *Afro Samurai: Resurrection*, Hu: *Afro szamuráj: Feltámadás*) in 2010, and even live action adaptations of hit franchises like the *Desu Nōto* movies<sup>78</sup> in 2009 and the television drama series *Hachimitsu to Kurōbā – Terebi dorama* (En: *Honey and Clover*, Hu: *Méz és lóhere: Élőben* [Honey and Clover: Live]) in 2010.

From 2011 onwards, however, Animax Eastern Europe started to reposition itself as a more general youth programming channel, which also left a mark on its new anime acquisitions, which became fewer, with a higher emphasis on wider audience appeal. Both the anime versions of successful marvel franchises *Aian Man* (En: *Iron Man*, Hu: *Vasember*), *Uruvarin* (En: *Wolverine*, Hu: *Rozsomák*), *Ekkusu Men* (En & Hu: *X-Men*) all introduced in 2011, and the universal appeal of *Doragon Bōru GT* (En & Hu: *Dragon Ball GT*) from 2011 and *Harōkiti* (En: *Hello Kitty*, Hu: *Hello, Kitty!*) from 2012 seem to fit this mould. With non-animation youth programming gaining more and more ground in the channel's profile, anime fans had to contend themselves mostly with reruns of already aired series and movies. The channel finally ceased broadcasting on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2014 – incidentally only a couple of weeks after my last interviews – marking the end of an era for Hungarian language anime broadcasting.

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78 *Desu Nōto* (En: *Death Note*, Hu: *Death Note: Az első mozifilm* [Death Note: The First Movie]) and *Desu Nōto the Last name* (En: *Death Note 2: The Last Name*, Hu: *Death Note: Az utolsó név*).

As dominant and defining as Animax Eastern Europe was during this period, a number of anime series and feature films were also aired on other TV channels as well. The most important of these was Jetix's broadcasting of the first two seasons of *NARUTO* starting in February 2007. From a fan perspective, the Jetix version of the anime could be seen to have been riddled with shortcomings. It was an adaptation of the U.S. cut version of the anime, retaining its often debated translational choices,<sup>79</sup> and to aggravate things further, the voice actors in the Hungarian dub were not necessarily consistent between the two aired seasons. Animax remedied the situation by starting to air the uncut and re-dubbed version of the series in December 2008. They also took on board some of the well received voice actors from the Jetix version, but replaced, for instance, the voice of NARUTO. Animax paid more attention to the dubbing of the anime, employing translators, who were fans of anime and manga,<sup>80</sup> working from both the English and the Japanese scripts.<sup>81</sup>

Megamax the sibling channel of Minimax – the channel that A+ and later Animax shared their airtime with – which started in 2012 also dipped its toe into anime waters with the premier of *Chō Robotto Seimeitai Toransufōmā Maikuron Densetsu* (En & Hu: *Transformers: Armada*) in 2011 and *Pakkuwārudo* (En: *Pac-Man and the Ghostly Adventures*, Hu: *Pac-Man és a szellemkaland*) in 2014.

Cartoon Network Central & Eastern Europe continued to offer new anime series, with *Bakugan Batoru Burōrāzu* (En: *Bakugan Battle Brawlers*, Hu: *Bakugan*) premiering in 2010,

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79 The – from a fan perspective often problematic – reworking of the original materials in certain U.S. versions have been mentioned and discussed in for instance Allison (2006: 21), Cubbison (2006: 52-54), Katsuno and Maret (2004: 80-106) and Leonard (2005b: 285, 289). It is worth noting that the U.S. practice isn't the only example of this phenomenon. Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez (2006: 43) note that Spain too was importing most of its anime from a mediating country, Italy, where translation was also subject to censorship. For further examples of how the Japanese original might get distorted through localization see Lee and Shaw on the self-censorship of manga translations in Chinese (2006: 45).

80 For a discussion of the positive impact of genre familiarity in the work of fan translators see O'Hagan (2008: 177-179).

81 For further discussion of debates and positions surrounding the Hungarian localization of *NARUTO* see Kacsuk (2011)

*Metaru Faito Beibureedo* (En & Hu: *Beyblade: Metal Fusion*) introduced in 2011, *Inazuma Irebun* (En & Hu: *Inazuma Eleven*) broadcast from 2012, and the American-Japanese *ThunderCats* (Hu: *Villámmacsák*) also starting in 2012.

Cartoon Network also premiered the US made global anime *Star Wars: Clone Wars* (Hu: *Csillagok háborúja: Klónok háborúja*) in 2008. There is a noticeable number of further South Korean and global anime being broadcast on Hungarian television channels during this period, such as the South Korean character based international co-production *Jjajang Sonyeo Ppukka* (En. & Hu: *Pucca*) on Jetix from 2007, the South Korean *Wondeopol deijeu* (En. & Hu: *Wonderful Days*) on film+ in 2011, the South Korean-Spanish series *Aieon Kideu* (En: *Eon Kid*, Hu: *Iron Kid – A legendás ököl* [Iron Kid – The legendary fist]) on Megamax from 2012, the sequel series to the American *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (Hu: *Avatár – Aang legendája* [Avatar – Aang’s Legend]) – broadcast first on the Nickelodeon cartoon block of TV2 – *Avatar: The Legend of Korra* (Hu: *Avatar: Korra legendája*) on the Nickelodeon channel from 2012, and the also US made *Dead Space: Downfall* (Hu: *Dead Space: Holt Tér* [Dead Space: Dead Space]) and *Dead Space: Aftermath* (Hu: *Dead Space: Utójáték*), both premiering on AXN Black<sup>82</sup> in 2013 and later re-aired on Animax as well.

Similar to the way manhwa, manhua and global manga are both marketed and received/contested in relation to Japanese manga in the European and North American context (cf. Brienza 2015b, Kacsuk 2011), South Korean, Chinese and global anime are also positioned and discussed in relation to Japanese anime (cf. Suan 2015). This is clearly illustrated in the way, for instance, AnimeAddicts ([animeaddicts.hu](http://animeaddicts.hu)) one of the biggest anime fan sites in Hungary, which has an encyclopaedic overview of all manga and anime to have appeared in Hungarian, also include these works in their database.

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82 AXN Black is owned by Sony Pictures Entertainment, and is a sibling channel of AXN, which replaced AXN Sci-Fi in Hungary from October 2013; however, retaining a similar SF oriented profile.

Finally, similar to the previous period, a host of feature length anime was also broadcast on various channels. Apart from the South Korean and global anime just listed, the state television channels MTV1 and MTV2<sup>83</sup> also aired *Akira* (En & Hu: *Akira*) in 2007 and a number of Studio Ghibli films like *Tonari no Totoro* (En: *My Neighbor Totoro*, Hu: *Totoro – A varázserdő titka* [Totoro – The Secret of the Magic Forest]) in 2008 and *Heisei Tanuki Gassen Pom Poko* (En: *Pom Poko*, Hu: *PomPoko – A tanukik birodalma* [PomPoko – Kingdom of the Tanuki]) in 2009; and various other anime features like *BLOOD THE LAST VAMPIRE* (En: *Blood – The Last Vampire*, Hu: *Blood, az utolsó vámpír*) on film+ in 2011 or *FINAL FANTASY* (En: *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, Hu: *Final Fantasy – A harc szelleme* [Final Fantasy – The spirit of combat]) on RTL Klub in 2008, showed up on a host of different channels.

## 4.2. Cinema screenings and VHS, DVD releases of anime in Hungary

### 4.2.1. From children's matinée to festival screenings: Anime in Hungarian cinemas

Before the year 2000 there was hardly any anime shown in Hungarian cinemas. During the eighties a small number of anime like *Sekai Meisaku Dōwa: Hakuchō no Mizuumi* (En: *Swan Lake*, Hu: *A hattyúk tava*) were however screened for children. The idea that anime are supposed to be for children, still prevalent in Hungary at the time, can be clearly seen in the way *Kaze no Tani no Naushika* (En: *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Hu: *Nauszika – A szél harcosai* [Nauszika – Warriors of the Wind]), premiered in 1987, was screened during the afternoon children's time slot. Furthermore, the Hungarian version was based on the American theatrical release from 1985 produced by New World Pictures, which was already severely edited to make it more appropriate for a child audience.<sup>84</sup>

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83 MTV stands for Magyar Televízió (Hungarian Television).

84 The Hungarian title is a direct translation of this American version's title.



From 2000 onwards, while the number of anime presented in Hungarian movie theaters remains exceptionally low, there are two main trends to be observed. First, festivals are the most important venues to see fresh anime in cinemas. The Titanic International Film Festival<sup>85</sup> and later the Anilogue International Animation Festival<sup>86</sup> are the most important annual events to have presented anime on the silver screen. Second, a select few global hits like the *Poketto Monsutā* (En & Hu: *Pokémon*) movies,<sup>87</sup> and mostly Miyazaki Hayao's works from *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* onwards<sup>88</sup> receive a more generous treatment of regular screenings at some movie theatres in the country.

#### 4.2.2. VHS, DVD releases of anime in Hungary

VHS and DVD releases represent a continuum of home television viewing oriented anime publications with a roughly five year overlap, anime VHSs were no longer published after 2005 and the first anime DVDs were introduced from 2000 onwards in Hungary. There is a surprisingly high number of anime – altogether over 350 different titles – which were available at one point or another in Hungary on VHS or DVD. As an overall trend it is

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85 The Titanic International Film Festival is an annual independent Hungarian festival, which started in 1993. *Mononoke Hime* (En: *Princess Mononoke*, Hu: *A vadon hercegnője* [Princess of the Wild]) in 2000, *Metoroporisu* (En: *Metropolis*, Hu: *Metropolisz*) in 2001, *Ninja bugei-chō* (En: *Band of Ninja*, Hu: *Nindzsák bandája*), *Tōkyō Goddofāzāzu* (En: *Tokyo Godfathers*, Hu: *Tokiói Keresztapák*), *Inosensu* (En: *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, Hu: *Páncélba zárt szellem 2. – Ártatlanság* [Ghost locked in armor 2. – Innocence]), *Suchīmubōi* (En: *Steamboy*, Hu: *Gőzfű*) all in 2005, and *Byōsoku 5 Senchimētoru* (En: *5 Centimeters Per Second*, Hu: *Másodpercenként 5 centiméter*) in 2009 were all shown at the Titanic International Film Festival.

86 The Anilogue International Animation Festival is an annual Hungarian festival, which started in 2003 first under the name AniFest, which was then changed to Anilogue from 2007 onwards. For example, *Papurika* (En & Hu: *Paprika*) in 2006, *Gake no Ue no Ponyo* (En: *Ponyo*, Hu: *Ponyo a tengerparti sziklán* [Ponyo on the seaside cliff]) in 2008, *Samā Wōzu* (En: *Summer Wars*, Hu: *Nyári háborúk*) in 2010, *Ōkami Kodomo no Ame to Yuki* (En: *Wolf Children*, Hu: *Farkasgyermek*) in 2012, *Kotonoha no Niwa* (En: *The Garden of Words*, Hu: *A szavak kertje*) in 2013, and *Joban'ni no Shima* (En: *Giovanni's Island*, Hu: *Giovanni szigete*) in 2014 were all screened at this festival.

87 *Gekijōban Poketto Monsutā: Myūsū no Gyakushū* (En: *Pokémon: The First Movie: Mewtwo Strikes Back*, Hu: *Pokémon – Az első film* [Pokémon – The first movie]) in 2000, and *Gekijōban Poketto Monsutā Maboroshi no Pokémon Rugia Bakutan* (En: *Pokémon: The Movie 2000: The Power of One*, Hu: *Pokémon 2000*) in 2001.

88 *Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi* in 2002 and *Hauru no Ugoku Shiro* (En: *Howl's Moving Castle*, Hu: *A vándorló palota* [The wandering palace]) in 2005 distributed by Best Hollywood, and *Kaze Tachinu* (En: *The Wind Rises*, Hu: *Szél támad*) in 2014 distributed by Cirko Film.

important to keep in mind that a significant portion of the series and movies broadcast on television were also published in these formats, in part as a result of the dub (and/or subtitles) already having been prepared for TV.

Although there were already a couple of VHS publications during the late eighties, such as the cut version of *Kaze no Tani no Naushika* published by VICO,<sup>89</sup> the nineties saw the real start of anime on VHS in Hungary. The majority of these publications from the nineties were mostly “odorless” children’s programs. Surprisingly enough VICO had a number of anime publications aimed at more mature audiences already during the nineties, for example *Chōjīkū Yōsai Makurosu: Ai Oboete Imasu ka* (En: *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross: Do You Remember Love?*, Hu: *Macross, az űrcsatahajó* [Space Battleship Macross]) in 1991, that were nevertheless hard to come by due to their obscurity, and were thus highly prized within the nascent fandom later on.

The dominance of “odorless” children’s anime continued on into the first half of the 2000s, however, a growing number of VHS and DVD publications of markedly Japanese children’s anime – *Poketto Monsutā*, *Dejimon*, *Yū-Gi-Ō!* and *Bakuten Shūto Beiburēdo* series and movies corresponding to the TV presence of these franchises from this period on – and even Studio Ghibli style (art house) cinema anime and Mushi Pro style television anime (cf. Lamarre 2009) intended for a slightly older audience were also published. Corresponding to both the market shock following the global financial crisis, but also mirroring the not unrelated lack of sales produced by official publications there is a sharp drop in DVDs of both feature films and series after 2010.

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89 It is unfortunately very hard to find any information on VICO now; however, they were one of the first publishers to bring out a number of foreign hit motion picture titles – not limited to anime – on VHS in Hungarian.

### 4.3. Manga publishing in Hungary<sup>90</sup>

Similar to the discussion of the history of anime broadcasting in Hungary above I will discuss the unfolding of official localized manga publishing<sup>91</sup> in the country according to four phases in the development of the market. I will also offer an overview of the most important trends in relation to manga publishing and finally a brief look at original Hungarian manga or domestic *dōjin* publications to round off my discussion.

#### 4.3.1. First attempts: 1999-2001

SEMIC Interprint – later ADOC SEMIC – had been the most important comics publisher in Hungary during the nineties, and it was this company that first experimented with publishing manga in Hungarian. The fact that it was a comics publisher who first started out in manga publishing, and the way it settled on localizing manga in a format resembling that of the US comics booklet or “floppy,” and finally the result of this attempt ending up as not so successful, is similar to the story of manga publishing in a number of other European countries and the US (cf. Brienza 2009, Malone 2010). The very first series, *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* (Hu: *Sailor Moon – Varázslatos álmok* [*Sailor Moon – Magical Dreams*])<sup>92</sup> starting in January 1999 was in fact an anime comic, meaning that instead of the original manga, it contained stories compiled from stills of the anime in a comics form. In line with the fact that this publication resembled the comic booklet format Hungarian readers had already been accustomed to, as a result of a decade’s worth of localized US comics publishing in Hungary, each issue read from left to right and contained two episodes worth of material.<sup>93</sup> This first series of the *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* anime comics ended with issue

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90 Information on translated series compiled based on the websites of the major publishers; information on *dōjin* publications is based on the AnimeAddicts ([animeaddicts.hu](http://animeaddicts.hu)) database.

91 As already noted in the introduction, I use the term “manga publishing” to refer to all mangaesque works, including global manga, manhwa, manhua and crossover works. In contrast, I use the term “Japanese manga” to distinguish manga published in Japan by Japanese publishers.

92 Corresponding to the title of the anime series in Hungarian.

93 It had been customary for Hungarian versions of US comics such as Spiderman or Batman

twenty-four at the end of 2000. A parallel series of *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* anime comics was also launched in 1999, focusing on the contents of the second season of the anime, called *Sailor Moon füzetek* [Sailor Moon booklets], but was discontinued after only seven issues. The major difference this new series introduced was the pocket sized booklet format, which was closer in dimensions to a *tankōbon*, but still only contained a double issue's worth of material, and was stapled together similar to previous comic booklets in Hungary. January 2000 saw the launching of further two series, *Doragon Bōru* (En. & Hu: *Dragon Ball*) and *Den'ei shōjo* (En: *Video Girl Ai*, Hu: *Ai, a videólány*). Both series followed the new pocket-booklet format, with the first lasting sixteen issues and the second being discontinued after only four issues. The *Doragon Bōru* series, however, is also noteworthy as the first non-mirrored manga publication in Hungary.

#### 4.3.2. The manga publishing boom: 2006-2008

Following this first failed attempt the re-emergence of Hungarian manga publishing in 2006 entailed a similar shift to that described by Brienza (2009) in relation to the US case, with publishers now concentrating exclusively on publishing *tankōbon*, and the distribution channels shifting from the news stand to book stores respectively. The one thing that does show a continuity between the attempts of 1999-2001 and those starting from 2006 is that similar to the way the first official Hungarian manga booklets were produced by a comics publisher still further comics publishers played a role in the manga boom of 2006-2010 (see diagram 4.1 below), with two of the major manga publishers – Fumax and Vad Virágok Könyvműhely [Wild Flowers Book Workshop] – both coming from comics publishing and maintaining a comics publishing profile alongside their manga output.

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to feature at least two US issues worth of material in each Hungarian issue, this was in part a result of the fact that the Hungarian series were publishing notable storylines from the given franchises' past instead of following the current US storylines.

2006 saw the start of the current manga publishing boom, with five major publishers emerging: Delta Vision, Mangafan and Mangattack alongside the already mentioned Fumax, and Vad Virágok Könyvműhely. These publishers came from varying backgrounds.

- Delta Vision was an established Hungarian science fiction, fantasy novel, role-playing and board-game publisher, and concentrated on publishing mangaesque works which fit thematically with their original profile.
- The name Fumax was originally a concatenation of *fumetti*,<sup>94</sup> manga and *comix*,<sup>95</sup> referring to the aim of the publisher to offer American, European and Asian comics alike.
- Mangafan was established with the mission to publish Japanese manga in Hungarian in a high-fidelity format. It is the sole publisher dedicated exclusively to Japanese manga, and the only publisher still publishing Japanese manga in Hungary, with ongoing major hit series such as *NARUTO* and *NANA*. The publisher also became a major driving force of the wider fan market, starting *Mondo*, a print magazine focusing on anime-manga fan culture in 2007 and *MondoCon* in 2009, which became the leading anime-manga convention in the country by 2014, as will be discussed in subchapter 4.4 below.
- Mangattack was set up as the manga publishing imprint of Athenaeum Publishing – one of the publishing companies of the major domestic publishing house and distribution chain Lira Books Corporation. It is commonly recognized to have been the most important publisher of “global manga” in Hungary; however, it did publish a number of Japanese manga titles as well.
- Over the years the main profile of Vad Virágok Könyvműhely has become the

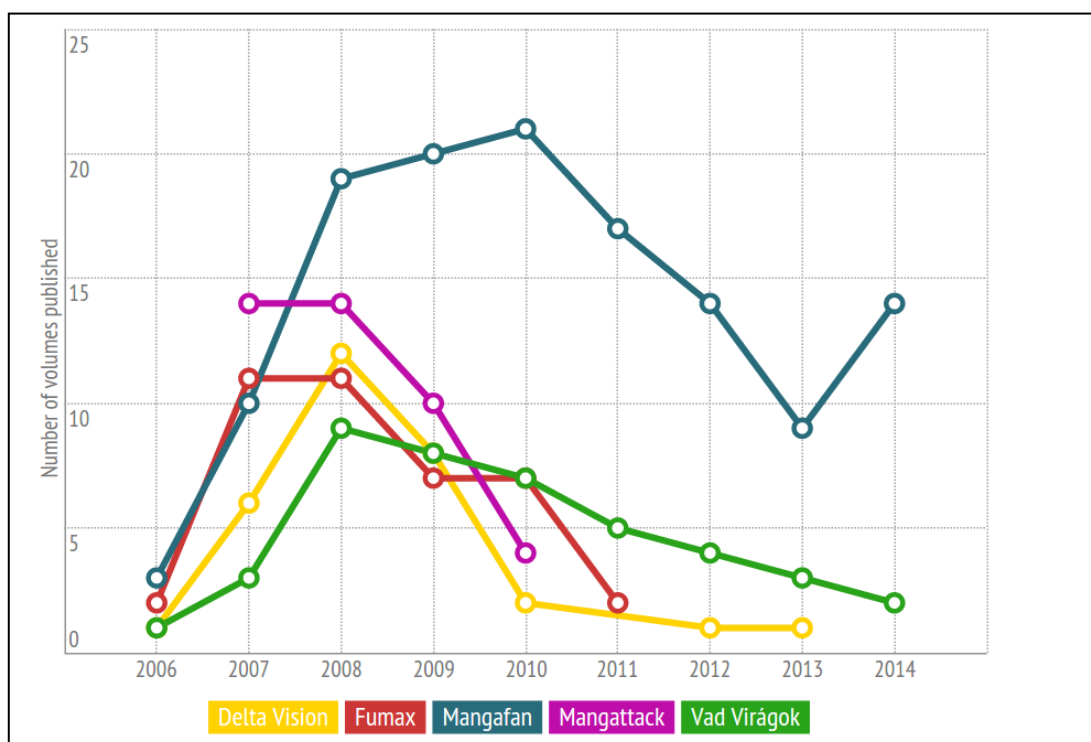
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94 Fumetti is the Italian word for all forms of comics, and the expression is commonly used outside of Italy to refer to Italian made comics.

95 A common play on the English pronunciation of the word comics, but also referencing the x-rated content found in underground comics, where the spelling “comix” was first introduced as a way of demarcating it from mainstream comics.

publication of US comic strips and *sunjung* manhwa.<sup>96</sup> It was the only publisher besides Mangafan still publishing mangaesque works in Hungary by 2014.

Diagram 4.1 below summarizes the trends in manga publishing in Hungary. Similar to the US market (cf. Brienza 2014) the economic crisis of 2008 had a major negative impact on the publishing boom. Although the initial momentum did carry the publishers forward, only Mangafan increased the number of volumes put out each year after 2008 up until 2010, with all the other publishers going into decline immediately, and Mangattack exiting the market in 2010, Fumax following suit in 2011. Delta Vision also moved out of manga publishing after 2010 even though they did publish one volume per year during 2012-2013. This impact of the global financial crisis from 2008 onwards will be discussed in the subsequent sections below, for now, however, I want to focus on the initial growth period of the market.



**Diagram 4.1.** Foreign manga publishing in Hungary by the five major publishers 2006-2014 (Number of volumes per year by publishers)<sup>97</sup>

96 *Sunjung* manhwa – also romanized as *sunjeong* manhwa – is the Korean equivalent of Japanese *shōjo* manga.

97 Diagram created with Infogram (<http://infoqr.am>).

Thus 2006-2008 saw the explosive growth of manga publishing in Hungarian, and the five major publishers emerging to claim the market with a handful of other publishers (e.g. Ciceró Könyvstúdió, Képes Kiadó, Pesti Könyv Kiadó, Tercium) also producing single volumes of manga during this period. But manga publishing would mean a somewhat different scope of works and authors in this second wave than during the first attempt at bringing manga to Hungary. Publishers were putting out not only Japanese manga, but also manhwa, global manga, manhua and even comics-manga cross-over works for the Hungarian public. During the first AnimeCon to top the two-thousand visitor count in the country,<sup>98</sup> where the first *tankōbon* were premièred by Delta Vision, Fumax and Mangafan, the first volume of the US comics series *Usagi Yojimbo* (Jp.: *Usagi Yōjinbō* Hu: *Usagi Yojimbo*) published by Vad Virágok Könyvműhely was also embraced by the crowd as one of the first Hungarian language manga offerings, so great was the desire to see a proliferation of localized works on the one hand, and so good the thematic fit of the story on the other hand.<sup>99</sup>

Although all the publishers initially wanted to put out major or cult Japanese manga hits, securing translation and publication rights for these works would often prove an arduous task when dealing with Japanese rights holders. This led most publishers to, as a second step, turn to either foreign rights management companies, such as Tokyopop, which incidentally also had an inventory of global manga by this time, or Korean – or in one case even Chinese – publishers who proved more flexible in dealing with the small Hungarian publishers. In this way the hurdles facing publishers trying to secure publication rights for Japanese manga from major Japanese companies directly contributed to the initially unplanned and unforeseen proliferation of official volumes of manhwa, global manga and even manhua in

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98      Held in the autumn of 2006, and organized by the *Hungarian Anime Association* (Magyar Anime Társaság).

99      As a result *Usagi Yojimbo* is included in the aggregate numbers on manga publishing, just as comics-manga cross-over works are also taken into account, as explained in the following.

Hungarian.

Mangafan were the first publisher to secure publication rights from a major Japanese publishing house, and would go on to be the most important manga publisher in the country, focusing exclusively on mainstream Japanese manga hits. The company aimed to bring manga to Hungarian readers both in a format as close to the original as possible – sporting not only the colour inserts, but also wrap-around dust-jackets, which are almost uniformly present in the case of Japanese editions, but quite rare, not only in Hungary but in other foreign versions as well<sup>100</sup> –, but also with regards to its publication schedule. As a result they started off by immediately publishing the first three volumes of *Shin Angyō Onshi* (En: *Blade of the Phantom Master*, Hu: *Árnybíró* [Shadow Judge]) – a *seinen* manga/manhwa-manga/manhwa series depending on the criteria for categorization, as it was created by Korean authors Youn In-wan and Yang Kyung-il for Japanese publisher Shōgakukan – during the last third of 2006. The first volumes of the global manga/global manhwa *Warcraft: The Sunwell Trilogy* (Hu: *Warcraft: Napkút trilógia*), and the also manga/global manga *Purinsesu Ai Monogatari* (En & Hu: *Princess Ai*) published by Delta Vision and Fumax respectively were both premiered alongside the first volumes of *Shin Angyō Onshi* and *Usagi Yojimbo* in October 2006. Fumax was the only publisher other than Mangafan to publish a further manga during the same year, Japanese *mangaka* Nihei Tsutomu's *Wolverine: Snikt!* (Hu: *Rozsomák: SNIKT!*) – a manga-comics crossover, specifically chosen by the publisher for its potential to appeal to both markets.

Following the five titles and corresponding seven volumes published during 2006, 2007 saw an increase in not only on-going and newly released titles (shooting up to twenty-four) and published volumes (a total of forty-six), but also the number of publishers trying their hands

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100 One such exception is the case of manga published in Spain, which also generally feature wrap-around dust-jackets (Santiago Iglesias 2014).



at manga. The most important newcomer this year was Mangattack, an imprint of Athenaeum Publishing, which is in turn owned by the major domestic publishing house and distribution chain Lira Books Corporation, as already explained above. Mangattack would not only keep pace with the smaller publishers in 2007, but would even overshadow them with its offering of eight new titles and pertaining fourteen volumes, the majority of which were global manga licensed from Tokyopop, such as *Boys of Summer* (Hu: *Nyári Srácok*), *Earthlight* (Hu: *Földfény*) or *A Midnight Opera* (Hu: *Éjjeli Opera*). This initial wave of Tokyopop titles in its offering was probably responsible for the image that Mangattack was the global manga publisher in the country. Their début year also saw the publisher experiment with erotic manga in the form of *Rasuto Pirontan* (En: *Last Pirontan*, Hu: *Pirontan*).

The second most prolific publisher in 2007 was Fumax, producing four volumes of both the *sonyan manhwa*<sup>101</sup> *Pok Chu Baedal Bu Panya* (En: *Banya: The Explosive Delivery Man*, Hu: *Bania, a pokoli futár* [Bania, the Delivery Man from Hell]) and the *sunjung manhwa* *Tharo Khaphe* (En: *The Tarot Café*, Hu: *Tarot Café*) alongside the last two volumes of *Purinsesu Ai Monogatari* and the first volume of the manga adaptation *Banpaia Hantā Dī* (En: *Vampire Hunter D*, Hu: *D, a vámpírvadász*), for a total of four titles and eleven volumes. Mangafan were almost neck and neck with Fumax in 2007, with ten volumes published: five new volumes of *Shin Angyō Onshi*, the first three volumes of *NARUTO* (En & Hu: *Naruto*), the first volume of *Rurōni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Romantan* (En: *Rurouni Kenshin: Meiji Swordsman Romantic Story*, Hu: *Rurōni Kenshin*) and the one-shot *ALIVE* (En: *ALIVE*, Hu: *ÉLNI*).

Delta Vision not only completed their Warcraft trilogy publishing its last two volumes, but also brought the first Hungarian manhua series to the market, *Zhen Jia Gong Zhu* (En:

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101 The Korean equivalent of *shōnen* manga, also romanized as *sonyeon manhwa*.

*Real/Fake Princess*, Hu: *Makrancos hercegnő* [Unruly princess]) bringing out two volumes in 2007, and also starting out in global manga during the year with the first volumes of both *Fool's Gold* (Hu: *Bolondok aranya*) and *Grimms Manga* (En: *Grimm's Manga*, Hu: *Grimm mesék* [Grimm Stories]). Vad Virágok started their string of *sunjung* manhwa titles, their trademark offering within the Hungarian manga market, with the first volume of *Pepeominteu* (En: *Peppermint*, Hu: *Borsmenta*), while also bringing out two further volumes of *Usagi Yojimbo*. Finally, both the book publisher Tercium and the comics publisher Képes Kiadó tried their hands at manga publishing with the global manga *Avril Lavigne's Make 5 Wishes* (Hu: *Avril Lavigne – Öt kívánság* [Avril Lavigne – Five Wishes]) and the Japanese manga *Fū Faitā – Yūrei Sendōki* (En: *Who Fighter With Heart of Darkness*, Hu: *Tűzharcos – A sötétség mélyén* [Fire Warrior – At the Bottom of Darkness]), respectively.

2008 proved to have the highest overall output in new Hungarian manga to date with thirty-seven titles and sixty-seven pertaining volumes. This year also saw the rise of Mangafan to the position of leading manga publisher. Bringing out altogether ten new volumes of its running series, and starting off its new series *Desu Nōto* (En: *Death Note*, Hu: *Death Note – A halállista* [Death Note – The Death List]), *Herushingu* (En & Hu: *Hellsing*) and *NANA* (En & Hu: *Nana*) with three volumes each. Mangattack carried on with the same pace as they had burst on to the market the previous year, publishing fourteen volumes, now also offering Japanese manga such as *Aizu On Yū* (En: *J Pop Idol*, Hu: *J-pop bálvány*), *Grenzen Tur* (En: *Doors of Chaos*, Hu: *A káosz kapui*) and the *shōjo/boys' love* series *Gurabitēshon* (En & Hu: *Gravitation*), plus a manhwa title, *Angmaui Sinbu Mandeulgi* (En: *Devil's Bride*, Hu: *Az ördög menyasszonya*) alongside their continued offering of global manga.

Delta Vision started publishing Japanese manga series in 2008 with three volumes of *Tenshi Kinryōku* (En: *Angel Sanctuary*, Hu: *Angyalok menedéke*) and *Beruseruku* (En & Hu: *Berserk*) each, and the first volume of the omnibus edition of *Toraigan* (En & Hu: *Trigun*).

They also continued publishing both manhua and global manga, introducing their second manhua series *Xiān qū* (En: *Divine Melody*, Hu: *Mennyei dallamok*) that year. Fumax also kept their output level compared to 2007, publishing eleven volumes in 2008. Their manhwa offering stayed strong with the new *sunjung* manhwa series *Mawang Ilgi* (En: *Demon Diary*, Hu: *Démonnapló*) premiering alongside their other two series. Their range of Japanese manga branched out into uncharted territories in 2008, publishing both the first Hungarian translation of a *boys' love* manga proper in the form of *L'Etoile Solitaire* (Hu: *Magányos Csillag*) and a classic by Shirō Masamune from the mid-eighties, *Dominion* (En: *Dominion*, Hu: *Dominion: A tankosztig* [Dominion: The tank squadron]), while also continuing both *Bampaia Hantā Dī* and the *Purinsesu Ai Monogatari* franchise.

2008 was also the peak year for Vad Virágok, who not only continued publishing *Usagi Yojimbo* and *Pepeominteu* (En: *Peppermint*, Hu: *Borsmenta*), but also launched their still ongoing *sunjung* manhwa series *Habaek-eui Sinbu* (En: *Bride of the Water God*, Hu: *A vízisten menyasszonya*). Furthermore, this year saw them venturing into global manga, publishing the first two volumes of *Hollow Fields* (Hu: *Lidércfölde*). Finally, 2008 also saw two more book publishers trying their hand at manga publishing with single volumes each of the five volume manhua series *Fén Yuè* (En: *Burning Moon*, Hu: *Lángoló hold*) by Pesti Könyv Kiadó and the three volume long global manga *Avalon High* (Hu: *Avalon High*) by Ciceró Könyvstúdió.

#### 4.3.3. Restructuring for recession: 2009-2011

The global financial crash of the fall of 2008 had severe repercussions within the world of manga publishing in Hungary. Mangafan was the only publisher to keep raising the number of volumes put out each year, peaking at twenty-one volumes in 2010, but even their output dropped to only seventeen volumes by 2011. All other publishers entered either a somewhat rapid (Mangattack, Delta Vision) or more gradual (Fumax, Vad Virágok) decline starting

from 2009, culminating in the exiting of the market for Mangattack and Delta Vision in 2010, and Fumax in 2011. Even though Delta Vision did publish a new volume of *Tenshi Kinryōku* in 2012 and of *Beruseruku* in 2013, this was unfortunately not a sign of a return, as both series have been since discontinued, and thus the publisher's manga publishing plans can be seen to have run their course by the end of 2010.

Examining this period content wise, apart from continuing its ongoing titles Mangafan launched three new series, *Kurono Kuruseido* (En & Hu: *Chrono Crusade*) and *Rabu★Kon* (En: *Love Com*, Hu: *Lovely Complex*) in 2009, and *Vanpaia Naito* (En & Hu: *Vampire Knight*) in 2011, signalling a shift towards female readers with the later two titles being *shōjo* manga. 2010 was also significant in both the publisher's and the Hungarian fandom's life as the first lengthier Hungarian language manga series *Shin Angyō Onshi* reached its completion with the publication of volume eighteen, which was followed the next year by the completion of the twelve volume *Desu Nōto* series. This is especially important in light of not only the way major comics series are too often discontinued in Hungary, but also regarding the fact that a number of manga series were eventually left unfinished by Mangattack, Delta Vision and Fumax.

Mangattack was still in second place with its number of published volumes in 2009 but dropped to fourth place in 2010, before ceasing its operations completely, leading to its ongoing series, like *Gurabitēshon* becoming discontinued. These last two years saw its offering shift even more towards Japanese manga, with new series *Hitsuji no Uta* (En: *Lament of the Lamb*, Hu: *A bárány panasza*) and *Reddo Gāden* (En: *Red Garden*, Hu: *Vöröskert*) in 2009 and *Kimi no Unaji ni Kanpai!* (En & Hu: *Kanpai!*) in 2010. Delta Vision's output saw a similarly steep plunge in 2009-2010. Although they continued with their offering of Japanese manga, manhwa and manhua in 2009, even starting a new manhwa series *Dangu* (En: *Shaman Warrior*, Hu: *Sámánharcos*) with two volumes published that

year, 2010 saw the abrupt discontinuation of all their previously still running series, like *Tenshi Kinryōku* and *Dangu*. They did, however, put out the first two volumes of the global manhwa *Warcraft: Legends* (Hu: *WarCraft: Legendák*) in 2010, unfortunately the third volume of this trilogy was also left unpublished.

Fumax not only continued with all of its running series during this period, but – alongside starting a new series in the form of *Axis Powers Hetaria* (En: *Hetalia: Axis Powers*, Hu: *Hetalia*) – also premiered one-shot volumes, thereby further increasing its Japanese *boys' love* manga offering with a new volume in 2009 and two more in 2010. Even though the publisher's exit from the market was slightly less abrupt, Fumax still left two ongoing series, *Axis Powers Hetaria* – started in 2010 – and *Banpaia Hantā Dī* discontinued. The fifth major manga publisher, Vad Virágok continued amidst a declining yearly output with all their ongoing series during this period, even adding two new *sunjung* manhwa to their offering in the form of *Neon Neomu Meosjyeo* (En: *You're So Cool*, Hu: *Annyira király vagy!*) in 2009 and *Jeongchebulmyeong Saesaek-si* (En: *Pig Bride*, Hu: *A titokzatos menyasszony* [The Mysterious Bride]) in 2011, further cementing their position as the Hungarian *sunjung* manhwa publisher. Finally, this period saw the so far last attempts at entering the manga market by further publishers: Deák És Társa Kiadó in 2009, Képes Kiadó – who had already published a Japanese manga in 2007 – and Agave Könyvek in 2010, Nipponeria in 2011, all with global manga volumes, with Könyvmolyképző Kiadó also publishing two volumes of a comics-manga cross-over work in 2010 and 2011. However, Nyitott Könyvműhely's publication of all six volumes of the “manga-influenced comic”<sup>102</sup> series *Scott Pilgrim* (Hu: *Scott Pilgrim*) during 2010 and 2011 is the most noteworthy such contribution.

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102 This is the term preferred by the author to characterize his work. <http://www.gordonmcalpin.com/writing/interview-bryanomalley.html> [Last accessed: 2015.11.20.]

#### 4.3.4. Post-recession stabilization: 2012-2014

The three years between 2012 and 2014 witnessed stabilization in the manga market in Hungary. Mangafan seemed to have settled on an aim of publishing around fourteen new volumes each year, while Vad Virágok continued at a pace of a few books each year, maintaining their presence in the market with ongoing series *Usagi Yojimbo* and *Habaek-eui Sinbu*. The drop in published volumes by Mangafan in 2013 was a result of technical difficulties, which they openly discussed with their fan base in a number of different forums and media, and the return to their 2012 publishing output in 2014 seemed to evidence that the publisher indeed did not wish to curtail its manga production. Although Mangafan published a one-shot in 2012 and a two volume short-series in 2013 – in part due to the above mentioned difficulties with their ongoing series during that year –, the publisher has mainly focused on putting out its five ongoing major series *Rabu★Kon*, *Nana*, *NARUTO*, *Rurōni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Romantan* and *Vanpaia Naito*.

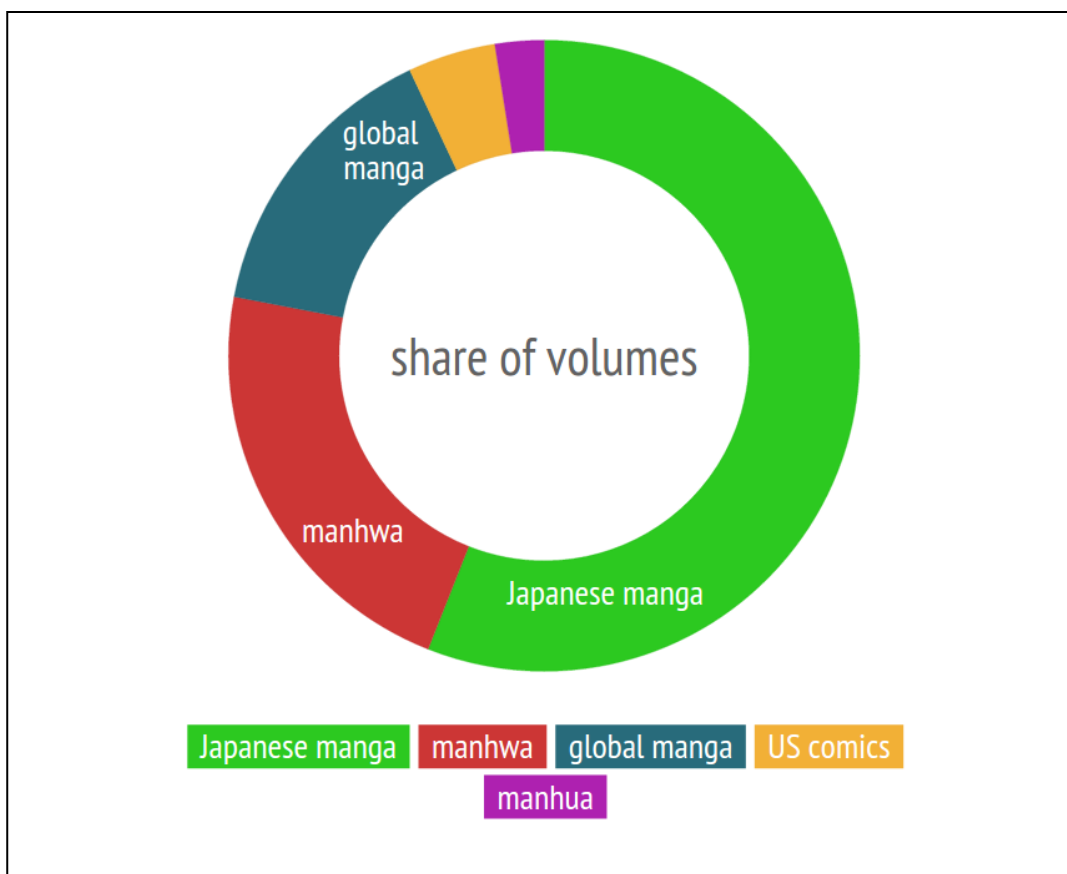
#### 4.3.5. Overall trends in manga publishing in Hungary

Having offered an overview of the evolution of manga publishing in Hungary I will highlight three overarching trends in this domain: a) the small print runs, b) the shift towards female oriented content, and c) the shift towards Japanese manga.

Hungary is a small country with a small market, and thus the print runs of each volume of manga are estimated to be on average around a couple of thousand. Even with occasional reprints of the most successful volumes, the sales numbers are not comparable in scale to larger European markets or the US market.

The majority of manga readers are now women in a large number of countries across Europe and America (cf. Brienza 2009, 2011, Malone 2010), which stands in stark contrast to for instance US comics, with its heavily male audience (Brienza 2009). Delta Vision, Mangafan

and Vad Virágok all started with series aimed at a male and possibly female readership, with only Fumax starting out into manga publishing with a decidedly female targeted series. Mangattack debuted with an offering that included both more male and more female oriented content alongside non-gender-targeted titles. Vad Virágok immediately switched over to *sunjung* manhwa with their second manga title, and all their follow-up titles remained female-targeted. Fumax mostly remained on track with its female oriented titles, even creating the first *boys' love* manga imprint in the country. Over the years Mangattack also shifted its offering to favour female oriented titles. Delta Vision and Mangafan were the most dedicated to publishing male oriented *shōnen* and *seinen* titles – which were, of course, in most cases just as much anticipated and read by a female readership as well. Before exiting the market, Delta Vision had been turning back towards male oriented SF and fantasy titles in line with their main profile. Mangafan, on the other hand, has been steadily building up its offering of *shōjo* titles from 2008 onwards, with three out of five of its ongoing series being *shōjo* by 2014. This marked shift towards female oriented content in each of the major publishers' profiles over the years is a testament to the gender distribution of the fandom and most likely the wider readership as well.



**Diagram 4.2.** Distribution of volumes of manga published between 2006 and 2014 in Hungary by type<sup>103</sup>

Finally, I want to address the question of the distribution of different types of manga published in Hungary. If we look at all the volumes of all the foreign titles that have been published between 2006-2014, we find that 54% are Japanese manga, 21% manhwa, 16,5% global manga, 6% US comics and 2,5% manhua (see diagram 4.2. above). As already noted earlier one of the reasons for the high rate of non-Japanese manga is the initial difficulties experienced by Hungarian publishers on approaching Japanese rights holders. However, all publishers except for Vad Virágok, who remained within the niche they found for themselves with *sunjung* manhwa, seemed to have preferred publishing Japanese manga. Mangafan, of course, only published titles from Japanese publishers, but Mangattack, Delta Vision and Fumax all demonstrated a trend towards increasing the ratio of Japanese titles within their offerings over the years.

103 Diagram created with Infogram (<http://infoqr.am>).



#### 4.3.6. Original Hungarian manga publications

There have been a small number of attempts at publishing original Hungarian manga, with thirty volumes published up till 2014 according to the AnimeAddicts database.<sup>104</sup> The majority of these works were self-published *dōjin* publications with print-runs in the hundreds.<sup>105</sup> A few titles were published by small-press or independent comics publishers. Original Hungarian manga is yet to produce its breakout stars.

#### 4.4. Anime-manga fandom, media and conventions in Hungary

The following overview is mostly based on the accounts of my interviewees, and is thus biased towards highlighting events, organizations and media to which they were related, and as a result cannot hope to provide a full picture of every aspect of the story of anime-manga fandom in Hungary. The most glaring omissions are the lack of a thorough examination of the development and role of a range of further important Hungarian fan websites – such as *Aoi Anime* ([aoianime.hu](http://aoianime.hu)) or *AnimeAddicts* ([animeaddicts.hu](http://animeaddicts.hu)) for example – on the one hand, and the scant treatment of the history of smaller fan organizations, clubs and events across the country on the other hand. Although a comprehensive examination of these elements would further enhance our understanding of the development of the anime-manga fandom and market in Hungary, such a detailed account would over-encumber the present chapter and my main line of argument, and thus will not be pursued here.

The *Hungarian Anime Association* (Magyar Anime Társaság; *HAA* in the following) is the first and without question most important anime-manga fan organization in Hungary. Its roots go back all the way to the launching of the *Hungarian Anime Guide* (Magyar Anime

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104 Five volumes were published in both 2008 and 2009, followed by three volumes put out during both 2010 and 2011. 2012 saw an abrupt break with only one volume appearing. Publication resumed with renewed vigour from 2013 with seven volumes coming out that year, and another six during 2014.

105 [http://random-magazin.blog.hu/2012/04/19/a\\_magyar\\_keszitesu\\_mangakrol](http://random-magazin.blog.hu/2012/04/19/a_magyar_keszitesu_mangakrol) [Last Accessed: 2015.11.20.]

Útmutató) website in 1996, one of the first Hungarian fan pages. The impact of *Doragon Bōru* and *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* on Hungarian broadcast television in 1997 led a number of fans to search the web for resources on these series and/or anime in general. As a result they found the *Hungarian Anime Guide*, which had a visitors' page back then, where people could leave messages on the site. This is where the very first communication started among participants who would later go on to found the HAA. According to the recollections of my interviewees around the autumn of 1998 the *Hungarian Anime Guide* mailing list took over the function of the visitors' page, and by early 1999 the idea of meeting each other face to face – based on the by then common practice of “forum meets”<sup>106</sup> – had surfaced. The very first “Budapest Anime Meet” – as they later became known – or just “Anime Meet” or “Meet” for short took place February 1999 with four intrepid participants, all of whom would go on to play key roles in the development of the fandom later on as well.

One of these four participants was Meglivorn, who had also created his own website to showcase his varied interests such as SF, fantasy, anime-manga, etc. Around this time he uploaded a Hungarian translation of a couple of chapters of an English edition manga he had bought and liked so much that he wanted to share the experience with those who could only speak Hungarian. This was the birth of what would become the now discontinued Manga.hu, the most important Hungarian scanlation site, as more and more people started to approach Meglivorn to have their translations also uploaded to the site.

Budapest Anime Meets started to be held every Saturday at various fast food restaurants in the centre of the city, and the number of regular participants grew rapidly. Fans of Japanese music were also present and a well-defined part of the meet from early on. Meets offered the chance to both talk to like-minded peers about common interests, and to swap and share the

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106 These meet-ups were organized and attended by regular readers and posters of various popular online forums.

scarce materials relating to participants' interests available at the time. Most early participants of the meet came from the "*Dragon Ball-Sailor Moon* generation," who had come to develop an interest in anime and manga around the time of the initial Hungarian broadcast of these two series.

The founding of the *Hungarian Anime Association* was also intimately tied to the generational experience of the already mentioned moral panic in relation to *Doragon Bōru* – and anime in general –, which culminated in the discontinuation and later re-scheduling of the *Doragon Bōru Zetto* series on RTL Klub television, as discussed above.<sup>107</sup> Meet participants felt that they needed to address the misconceptions and negative framing that had been spreading in the mainstream media in relation to anime, and realized that having an official organization would allow them to have a more authoritative position from which to engage various media. The other impetus for founding the *HAA* was that participants thought that it would be useful to have an umbrella organization that could coordinate meets that had been popping up in other larger towns as well across the country, and which could thereby help further the promotion of anime-manga culture in Hungary.

The actual founding of the *HAA* took place in the summer of 2003 at HungaroCon in Salgótarján, an annual science-fiction convention running since 1980, and organised by the *AVANA Nationwide Association for Hungarian Science Fiction Art* (*AVANA Magyar Tudományos Fantasztikus Művészetért Országos Egyesület*) since 1997. That year the convention was also co-organized by *Átjáró Magazin* [Passageway Magazine] the leading domestic SF magazine at the time, who would play an important role in the development of

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107 The role of moral panics in creating (Stanley Cohen 1980 [1972]) and sustaining (Thornton 1996 [1995]) subcultures is now an accepted part of subcultural studies, but far less attention has been paid to the way moral panics contribute to the sense of identity of subcultures (e.g. Hodkinson 2002: 159). In a similar manner media fans also encounter external media representations, which they reject (Jenkins 1992, Kozinets 2001). Through such confrontations a sense of identity and belonging can become more articulated among individual participants and the community as a whole.

the fandom again two years later.

Another landmark event from 2003 is the launch of the *Japanimánia* radio show in November at Radio FIKSZ<sup>108</sup> co-created and hosted by Antal Solti and Dalma Kálovics. *Japanimánia* was the first dedicated traditional medium in Hungarian to cater to anime-manga fans with news, reviews, interviews, historical genre overviews, and much more. Representatives of dedicated anime television channels, fan organizations, manga publishers, etc. all made regular appearances on the show, which ran until autumn 2007.

Following the establishing of the *HAA* it quickly went on to start and fulfil both of the goals – countering negative images of anime in the mainstream media and furthering anime-manga fan culture – it set out to do. During 2003-2005 members of the *HAA* wrote public complaint letters regarding the media representation of anime in Hungarian television programs, appeared on TV programs to argue their position and garnered some attention at the time – most notably from the leading online news website Index.hu. At the same time Delta Vision – who would start out in manga publishing in 2006 – immediately started to involve the *HAA* in organizing and running their fantasy events series titled *Seregszemle* [Inspecting the troops], asking them to bring both programs and possible visitors to these events. After a couple of events *HAA* had enough experience in relation to the number of visitors who would turn up for the anime related programs, that they decided to start their own small-scale events called *Anime Parti* (Anime Party) still under the financial supervision of Delta Vision, which would usually be organized in conjunction with a collectible card game tournament. By the spring of 2005 these events had reached two-hundred attendees.

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108 Radio FIKSZ is a non-profit communal radio, which was started in 1991 by the FIKSZ Association (see <http://www.fiksradio.hu/diohejban.php?lang=en>).

The very first self-financed and run event of the *HAA* took place in the city of Szeged summer of 2005. This was followed by an event held at the Láng Community House in Budapest autumn 2005, where the effects of more and more anime on broadcast television at the time and the already running A+ channel could be felt in the high visitor turn out of around seven hundred people. This was also the first event to also feature a cosplay contest (previous events had already regularly featured drawing contests), which also provided both the fandom and the event, and all subsequent events, with a recognizable visual identity and signature element.

The next leap in event size and complexity came about in the form of a co-organized event within the framework of an event series by *Átjáró* [Passageway] online magazine and *Millenáris*<sup>109</sup> in spring 2006. The event was called Sakura Party, and drew not only around 1800 visitors but also considerable media attention. That same year *HAA* held their own summer convention in Miskolc called MiskolCon,<sup>110</sup> and geared up for what would be a watershed event in many ways for the domestic anime-manga fandom, the 2006 autumn AnimeCon.

The 2006 autumn AnimeCon held at the high capacity and emblematic concert and event venue Petőfi Hall<sup>111</sup> was a resounding success, and a true coming of age party for the Hungarian anime-manga fandom. Not only had the convention run at full capacity with around two thousand four hundred visitors, featured an increasing number of cosplayers, garnered positive media attention for the culture, but also featured the arrival of the first Hungarian language *tankōbon* manga, as already explained above.

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109     Millenáris is a cultural centre and park converted from a historic landmark factory complex in the heart of Budapest.

110     A wordplay as Miskolcon in Hungarian means “in Miskolc”.

111     Petőfi Hall (Petőfi Csarnok) is the biggest and most emblematic youth centre in Hungary, located in City Park in the heart of Budapest. It is a regular concert and event venue.

2007 continued the expansion of the fan market with the start of *AnimeStars Magazine* in January and *Mondo Magazine* in May. The more hardcore fan oriented *AnimeStars Magazine* was distinct in its voice and output from the more mainstream *Mondo Magazine* published by *Mangafan* and as such occupied a special niche position within the fandom. Following a twenty-two issues strong independent run *AnimeStars* was merged into *Mondo* from the autumn of 2010, still retaining some of its brand identity in presentation and content however. *AnimeStars* writers were taken on board *Mondo* – with a couple already having had experience working for the more mainstream magazine as well – writing both *AnimeStars* content and *Mondo* articles.

Regarding media channels, 2007 also saw the start of Cosplay.hu ([cosplay.hu](http://cosplay.hu)), the cosplay community oriented website created by former members of the HAA, which would become the most important hub for cosplay information and photos, only challenged by the emergence of Facebook as the main channel of communication within the fandom during the first half of the twenty-tens.

From 2007 all the way through till the summer of 2009 the HAA continued to organize the defining anime-manga conventions in the country, three each year. The autumn AnimeCons and the spring SakuraCons were held in Budapest and became two-day long events, while the summer conventions, following on from the example set in 2006 by MiskolCon – which was organized by the Miskolc Anime Club (Miskolci Anime Klub, abbreviated MiNK)<sup>112</sup> under the aegis of the HAA –, were organized by non-Budapest based fan organizations under the guidance and with the help of the HAA. This practice of involving other fan organization from around the country and having the summer convention take place outside Budapest was a direct manifestation of one of the original goals of the HAA to act as an

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112 MiNK had already existed unofficially since 2000, and MiskolCon led to the official establishing of the organization.

umbrella or guiding organization for the fandom throughout the country. The importance of supporting fan groups and initiatives outside the capital was also recognized by *Mondo Magazine*, which started a one-to-two page feature showcasing different clubs and organizations from around the country in each issue.

There were, of course, a number of smaller-scale events throughout 2007-2009 as well, like the five year anniversary event of the HAA and Mangafan's *Anime Christmas*, both in 2008. The initial 2008 *Anime Christmas* event – turned convention the following year – was created by Mangafan specifically to provide a direct sales opportunity for all the new manga titles they were publishing for the Christmas season, as previously there had been no major convention between the autumn AnimeCon and the spring SakuraCon. The entry of Mangafan into the convention market, while also turning out to be a profitable long-term strategy, was in fact initially driven by the immediate needs of manga publishing. The major conventions were so important for the publishers that the release schedule of all new publications followed the convention calendar.

Thus, when due to financial difficulties and internal disputes the HAA pulled out of organizing the fall AnimeCon, Mangafan decided to take action and organized the first MondoCon to fill the autumn slot. This was then followed up by the already planned 2009 MondoCon Anime Christmas. While it was becoming more and more evident that organizing anime-manga conventions was a lucrative business, the break in the rhythm of HAA conventions was what really provided the push for other actors to try their hand at convention organization. For it was not only Mangafan that had jumped in to fill the void that the cancelled autumn convention had left, but this was also the point of entry for HoldfényTeam [Moonlight Team], a well established SF-fantasy-horror-comics-anime-manga figure and trading card shop.

Changing up their established practice in 2009 *HAA* decided to have the summer convention in Budapest, expanding it into a three day event, and to let the autumn convention be held by a fan organization outside of Budapest, in this case Székesfehérvár. After the Székesfehérvár organization and *HAA* both backed down from holding the autumn convention, members of the *Fejér Megyei Animések* [Anime fans of Fejér County] were of course left unsatisfied not having been able to host a convention in their home town. HoldfényTeam at the time had a shop in Székesfehérvár, and they stepped in to patch things up by holding the first ever HoldfényCon in the city in the January of 2010, which would also serve as a smaller scale test run for their own convention series to follow.

The *HAA* teamed up with Mangafan for the 2010 spring SakuraCon/MondoCon held at MondoCon's regular venue the HUNGEXPO Budapest Fair Center. Followed by the *HAA*'s summer AnimeCon held in the city of Pécs and co-organized by the *Pécsi Anime Fanclub* [Pécs Anime Fanclub]. The summer of 2010 also saw the first large-scale HoldfényCon held at the SYMA Sport and Events Centre in Budapest.

This second HoldfényCon was unique at the time in bringing together the thus far widest range of geek fandoms and fan organizations within Hungary, resulting in a lasting impact on the development of the wider geek culture in the country. Whereas Mangafan came from publishing HoldfényTeam came from trading card, figure and games retail – neither of those anime-manga specific in nature –, and their aim was to expand the anime-manga fan market towards a more overarching geek spectrum of interests, in line with their core business offerings. While anime-manga fandom was – and still is – clearly one of the largest active fandoms and markets in the country, and could be counted on to act as the backbone of such a convention, HoldfényTeam aimed to bring together a host of different fan cultures from anime-manga and US comics to science fiction and fantasy oriented fan societies, etc. This move has since been emulated by MondoCon as well, who are now also drawing in and



hosting more and more related interest groups and cultures in an explicit attempt at cross-marketing and cross-pollination.

The autumn of 2010 not only brought about the merging of *AnimeStars* into *Mondo Magazine* following the publication of their last independent issue end of August, but also what would be a pivotal showdown between the *HAA* and Mangafan, as the two actors could not agree on holding a joint convention, as they did in spring, and both had decided to hold a large-scale fall convention, which had so far been unprecedented. As all involved parties had expected, the market could not support two events of this scale so close to each other in time, and in the end MondoCon emerged the winner, and the *HAA*, having used up a large portion of its resources, ceased to be a defining actor in relation to the convention scene.

The *HAA*, nevertheless, remained the most important fan organization in the country, and returned to its roots supporting the fandom. They also organized a mid-size convention in Budapest each summer during the following two years. By the summer of 2013 the *HAA* had regained enough momentum to organize a large-scale AnimeCon celebrating their ten year anniversary once again at their hallmark venue, Petőfi Hall, which was a resounding success.

Meanwhile MondoCon would go on to become the defining anime-manga convention series in Hungary. End of 2010 saw a unique collaboration between Mangafan, HoldfényTeam and the *Hungarian Comics Association* (Magyar Képregény Szövetség) in the form of the joint Anime Christmas & HungaroComix<sup>113</sup> convention at Millenáris. Spring and autumn MondoCons and a summer HoldfényCon started off 2011, with the end of the year witnessing the first joint PlayIT<sup>114</sup> & HoldfényCon event and the annual MondoCon Anime

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113 HungaroComix is the Hungarian Comics Association's annual comics exhibit and market, running since 2005.

114 PlayIT is the successor of the Budapest Game Show and is the leading video games focused convention series in Hungary.

Christmas both seeking to attract partly overlapping segments of the convention attending geek audience.

Most of 2012 saw the concurrent staging of major events by HoldfényTeam and Mangafan. The spring and fall featured further joint PlayIT & HoldfényCon events and MondoCons. During the summer HoldfényTeam together with the Alex Menrich Gaming Community (AMGC) held the first cosplay focused large-scale convention in Hungary, Cosplayer Expo, and Mangafan added the fourth annual event to their convention roster in the form of a summer MondoCon. The fall of 2012 also brought about a shift in the *Mondo Magazine* publication schedule to a bimonthly plan from the previous monthly output. The accompanying revamping of the magazine also resulted in the discontinuation of retaining the distinction between *AnimeStars* and *Mondo* content in the form of special page layouts for the former. 2012 ended with the fourth and final MondoCon for the year.

2013 also provided a number of major events for the convention going audience within anime-manga fandom. A HoldfényCon and a MondoCon in spring started off the year, followed by another MondoCon in the summer, which also saw the staging of the already mentioned 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary AnimeCon of the HAA. The autumn featured Cosplayer Expo 2 once again organized by HoldfényTeam and AMGC, and the regular fall MondoCon, with the year also ending with the customary MondoCon Anime Christmas. With the market strategy and attention of HoldfényTeam shifting by 2014 in a way that led to their Hungarian conventions going on hiatus, Mangafan remained as the only business actor organizing large-scale anime-manga fandom based conventions, the four annual MondoCons, which by this time grew to events attracting five to six thousand visitors each.

#### 4.5. Summary and periodization

As a form of summary to my overview of anime broadcasting, manga publishing and the fandom in Hungary, I offer the following periodization – which I will also build on in my analysis in Chapter Six – touching on the major turning points explained above and highlighting the make-up of the defining actors in relation to the anime-manga fan market. The first *pre-HAA phase*, until 2002, is characterized by the predominant role of anime on domestic broadcast and foreign satellite television. The second *HAA phase* between 2003-2006 lays the foundations for the anime-manga fan infrastructure with the founding of the *HAA* and the conventions organized by them. The fall 2006 AnimeCon heralds the next, *mixed phase*, starting from 2007 and lasting till the summer of 2010. This period is characterized by the continued importance of the *HAA* conventions, with an increasingly relevant role played by various for-profit subcultural producers in the shaping of the fandom and related market. The period from the fall of 2010 till the end of March 2014, the *Mondo/Mangafan phase*, is defined by the MondoCon convention series and Mangafan becoming the leading manga publisher in the country. Finally, with the closing down of Animax Eastern Europe at the end of March 2014, a new *post-Animax phase* has started, which I will not discuss in the following, but which is characterised by the lack of a specialist Hungarian language anime television channel supporting the domestic fandom.

##### *Pre-HAA phase (-2002)*

Notable fan activity in Hungary starts out with some of the first domestic fans of anime creating the *Hungarian Anime Guide* website in 1996. This site and later its mailing list gradually became a focal gathering point for the increasing number of fans, who were often drawn to anime as a result of their exposure to *Doragon Bōru* and *Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn* on Hungarian broadcast television from 1997 onwards. This led to the inception of the *Budapest Anime Meet* in 1999, with the defining Hungarian scanlation site, Manga.hu also starting around the same time.

#### *HAA phase (2003-2006)*

2003 marks not only the start of the *Japanimánia* radio show, but even more importantly the establishing of the *Hungarian Anime Association* by members of the *Budapest Anime Meet*. The *HAA* started to participate in organizing ever more successful events. The successes of which were in part fuelled by the increasing amount of anime being broadcast on Hungarian commercial television channels and just as importantly the Hungarian language specialist cable channel *Anime+* starting its programming from 2004. The 2006 autumn *AnimeCon* heralded the end of this phase, with both its size of almost two and a half thousand visitors and the emergence of official Hungarian *tankōbon* format publishing of mangaesque works.

#### *Mixed phase (2007-2010 summer)*

2007 marked the beginning of a new period in the development of the Hungarian anime-manga fan market not only because of the explosive growth of manga publishing during that year. The arrival of *Animax Eastern Europe*, the start of the two anime-manga fandom oriented print magazines *AnimeStars* and *Mondo* all also signalled a new level of market maturity. I call this period the *mixed phase*, due to the way the voluntary contribution driven and amateurism centred fan logic and the business logic gaining ground in the fandom and market during this period coexist and jointly contribute to further developing anime-manga fan culture in the country. The merging of the more hardcore fan oriented and run *AnimeStars* into the more mainstream and market focused *Mondo Magazine* is symbolic of the end of this coexistence. This is mirrored in the stepping down of the *HAA* as the defining convention organizing organization following their Autumn 2010 *AnimeCon*, and the first large-scale *HoldfényCon* signalling the entrance of *HoldfényTeam* on to the convention market alongside *Mangafan's MondoCon*, which takes over as the market leader in anime-manga conventions from the *HAA's AnimeCon*.

*Mondo/Mangafan phase (2010 autumn-2014)*

The period from the autumn of 2010 onwards into 2014 is first and foremost characterized by the increasing dominance of Mangafan in relation to manga publishing and the anime-manga fan magazine and convention market. Indeed, HoldfényTeam are the only other business actor during this period, who demonstrate a willingness to try their hand at further developing the fandom and market with their HoldfényCon and Cosplayer Expo conventions up till 2013. Second, this period is further characterized by the economic stagnation that was the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis impacting a number of fledgling anime-manga fandom oriented businesses in a negative way. Third, the repositioning of Animax Eastern Europe from 2011 onwards as a general youth channel as opposed to being a dedicated anime channel also influenced the development of the fandom and market during this period, culminating in the termination of the channel in 2014, and heralding the end of this period.

## **5. Pathways of learning that lead to working in anime-manga fandom**

Mainstream opinions regarding subcultural and fan cultural participation look upon the intense involvement of youth in activities outside the bounds of school and parental supervision and authority as a youthful waste of time at the best and as a threat drawing young people into potentially dangerous and even illegal activities at the worst. It is quite easy to see why this is the general understanding of the status of these activities as mainstream media images surrounding subcultures tend to focus on the sensational, the illegal and the dangerous. The early works setting the stage for English language academic discussions on subcultures also dealt almost exclusively with deviance and juvenile delinquency (e.g. Becker 1991 [1963], Cohen, A. 1971 [1955]). Learning, if addressed in these works, tended to focus on the acquisition of deviant (Becker 1991 [1963], Polsky 1967) or counter-productive skills (Willis 2000 [1977]).

Learning and especially the idea that skill and knowledge acquisition in youth subcultures and fan cultures can be an important and positive contribution to the development of young people, has so far not really been addressed directly in the English language literature on subcultures and fan cultures. Lately there have been a number of works, which do to a certain degree mention aspects of learning (Hills 2002, Hodgkinson 2002, Jenkins 1992, 2006, Kahn-Harris 2007), but so far an explicit and detailed analysis of this phenomenon is missing. The work of Vályi (2010) does deal with learning within the crate digging scene, but focuses on the role learning plays in creating affective attachment rather than the classification and possible convertibility of the actual skills and knowledge themselves. It is to German language research on youth cultures that we have to turn in order to find a detailed attempt at assessing the importance and impact of learning in these social settings (Hitzler et al. 2004, Hitzler & Pfadenhauer 2007). Indeed, my awareness of and interest in the role of learning in subcultures and fan cultures was inspired by this German body of work. Thus this chapter

will combine the results regarding learning from the English and German language literature on consumption and leisure oriented youth cultures in relation to the career pathways of subcultural producers within anime-manga fandom.

While Vályi's formulation of the interrelated nature of learning and social belonging is currently one of the most developed and well articulated, it acknowledges and builds on a number of previous key works – such as Becker (1991 [1963]), Jenkins (1992) and Macdonald (2001) –, which have all touched on learning to some extent. Vályi building on Jenkins regarding learning already introduces the possibility of turning to fan studies for further insights in relation to understanding the practices of scenic participation. Expanding on this possibility I found learning to be an undeveloped subtheme in a number of works on fan cultures as well.

Bacon-Smith (1992) cites examples of how participants in Star Trek fandom learn to accommodate the multiplicity and complexity of both the narrative universe and the interpretations created by fans of the series. The social aspect of this learning process is highlighted in *Enterprising Women* (Bacon-Smith 1992), but is examined in even more detail in Jenkins' *Textual Poachers* emphasizing the process of mastering the appropriate techniques of interpretation, “learning “the right way” to read as a fan, learning how to employ and comprehend the community's particular interpretive conventions” (1992: 91).

Having provided a few introductory examples in relation to the appearance of the discussion of learning within the literature on subcultures and fan cultures, I will now turn towards a more detailed examination of the phenomenon of learning within subcultures and fan cultures in general and anime-manga fandom in particular. In the first subchapter I will provide an overview of the characteristics of learning within subcultures and fan cultures, positioning these patterns and qualities in relation to the field framework introduced in

Chapter Two. First I will examine the way subcultural and fan cultural learning can be seen as a form of *informal education* followed by an argument for the way these environments are actually conducive towards learning as a result of an innate *appreciation of learning*. The second half of this subchapter will deal with the question of *the right way of learning* within subcultures and fan cultures, first highlighting the significance of *being self-taught, peer-learning and the social relations of learning* and then focusing on the *DIY* nature of these cultures and the corresponding ethos of *learning by doing*, and finally closing with a brief look at the *subcultural/fan/scenic work ethic* present in these cultures. Building on the framework developed by Hitzler and his colleagues the second subchapter will provide a discussion of the various skills and knowledge acquired within anime-manga fandom and the ways these relate to career development for subcultural producers. Finally, a brief look at the influence of competences acquired within the framework of formal education on subcultural and fan cultural activities will round out my discussion of learning in relation to subcultural producers in particular and subcultures and fan cultures in general.

## **5.1. Learning in subcultures and fan cultures**

### *5.1.1. An informal education*

ZK: What are the types of skills and knowledge you need for your activities?

Olivér Frank ‘Case’ (37, HAA, creator and host of the radio program *Nippon Groove* and the website SoundOfJapan.hu, concert and party organizer, *Mondo Magazine* columnist): A lot of things, but these are also all things, which came with the years. The stuff I’ve learned now with concert organizing, what backline means and the like [...], the amounts you need of different things according to the size of the concert, how tour organizing is done, what you need to order for a band; and in party organizing, the types of CD players you need, and you also have to know the music, to know what the crowd



will dig, because you can't play for yourself at a party. *Not really stuff you can learn in a school.* [my emphasis]

Case's explanation above – echoing Thornton's formulation that “subcultural capital [...] has long defined itself as extra-curricular, as knowledge one cannot learn in school” (1996[1995]: 13) – is far from unique, as quite a few of my interviewees stressed that a portion of their activities rely on types of skill and knowledge, that cannot be acquired through formal education, but rather depend on learning within the actual settings that these types of knowledge are relevant in. A further point in relation to the types of knowledge and skills learned within subcultures and fan cultures exemplified by the above quote is that these forms of know-how are in no way less relevant or demanding than those sanctioned by formal education – in fact some of them are exactly the same skills and knowledge, as I will discuss later on –, but are rather of a non-legitimate and therefore devalued or invisible type.<sup>115</sup> As already discussed in Chapter Two, subcultures and fan cultures are precisely *that* as a result of the position they occupy within the hierarchy of cultural legitimacy. Should the given activity's status shift within a more overarching consensus<sup>116</sup> we would find the given culture to be no longer necessarily considered subcultural or fannish in nature, but rather of the accepted body of arts for example with participants seen as demonstrating a correspondingly appropriate engagement with that given cultural field (cf. Jenson 1992). It is this line of thought I would like to expand on here in order to better understand the invisible nature of learning within subcultures and fan cultures. Carrying on from Bourdieu's example of jazz music (1978 [1965]), it is easy to see how that particular type of music-making, its compositional, performance, instrument handling and further elements, which previously were seen as a lack of proper former training and of appropriate restraint and control, is now

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115 As Fiske also points out: “at times fans wish to distance themselves from the official culture, at other times, to align themselves with it. [...] [Y]et the fan's objects of fandom are, by definition, excluded from official cultural capital and its convertibility, via education and career opportunity, into economic capital” (1992: 42).

116 Bourdieu discusses the example of photography and jazz music (1978 [1965]).

understood to encompass a range of far from trivial skills and knowledge, which are taught at the highest level of formal music education in jazz departments around the world, among them at the Hungarian Liszt Academy of Music.<sup>117</sup> It is not that the complex set of skills and knowledge required of jazz musicians were not present before, rather that just as the *appreciation* of non-popular form jazz music was to be found tucked away from public sight,<sup>118</sup> so too these sites and events served as important *sources of learning* for the next generation of jazz musicians. In the words of Miles Davis – one of the internationally recognized defining jazz musicians of the 20th century – recalling his exposure to the pioneering sounds of the “founding fathers” of bebop at the now famous Minton’s Playhouse club and bar in Harlem:

Minton’s was an institute of higher learning, maintains Miles, where “We was all trying to get our master’s degrees and Ph.D.’s from Minton’s University of Bebop under the tutelage of Professors Bird [Charlie Parker] and Diz [Dizzy Gillespie].” (MacAdams 2002: 44)

The experience of participants in subcultures and fan cultures mirrors the way Miles Davis recalls his experience at the Minton’s as a form of education.<sup>119</sup> Vályi’s crate diggers talk about *getting one’s foundations* in digging (2010), and Macdonald (2001) explains the details of the *graffiti education* writers go through in order to both learn their craft and become accepted and recognized within their communities. While not necessarily formulated in the terms and metaphors of the educational system the element of learning and its importance in subcultural and fan progression is an ever present element in personal stories

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117 On the institutionalization of jazz in Hungary see Havadi (2011).

118 See Becker’s already referenced discussion (1991 [1963]) on how Jazz musicians faced a constant dilemma between playing for the general public and thus making a living, or playing for themselves – playing “real jazz” – but thereby marginalizing themselves within the market for musicians.

119 Indeed, in line with the argument put forward above, the world of jazz music was subcultural back then, as it lacked the type of recognition and status it enjoys today.

of participation (see Muggleton 2000, Vályi 2010). This is one of the reasons I wanted to explicitly focus on and ask questions about learning and skill acquisition in my interviews and to try and unpack the different aspects of why and how learning in subcultures and fan cultures is serious business.

In order to underline and support my argument regarding the equally complex nature of subcultural and fan learning I would like to turn to one of the early key texts of popular music studies, Finnegan's work on music-making in Milton Keynes in the early eighties (2007 [1989]) – one of the few works within the English body of literature on subcultures, scenes and fan studies to actually address the question of learning explicitly. Finnegan's book provides a detailed examination of the tension between the common assumptions and the actual reality of informal modes of music learning and the genre specific embeddedness of these practices. Her focus is on the different worlds or scenes of music making found in the lives of people, and as such her study is also one of the few works to provide a comparative viewpoint on subcultural and non-subcultural forms of everyday practices of creativity, socialization and production/consumption. She identifies a number of different scenes, among them the classical music scene, the jazz scene, the rock scene and the folk music scene. She goes on to provide a detailed ethnographic description of the practices, social conventions, modes of learning, composition and performance, among other things, characteristic of the different music scenes. For my current discussion the most important overarching finding of her study is the way different music-making worlds had very different conventions and thus notions of appropriate forms of learning, composition and performance. With regards to skill and knowledge acquisition the two most distinct models of learning were to be found in relation to classical music training and rock music learning.

On the one hand there was the hierarchical and highly literate classical music training, with its externally validated system of grades and progress, entered upon primarily by

children and strongly supported by parents, schools and the local network of paid teachers, with the aim of socialising children into the traditions of classical music theory and compositions through instruction in instrumental skills *via written forms*. Against this was the other mode: embarked on as a self-chosen mission primarily by adults and teenagers; not necessarily approved or encouraged by parents or schoolteachers; lacking external official validation, central bureaucratic organisation or any ‘career’ through progressive grades; resting on individual aspiration and achievement in a group music-making and ‘oral’ context rather than a hierarchically organised examination system; *leading to skills of performance and variation by ear rather than the execution of already-written-out works; and finding expression in performance-oriented rather than written forms*. (Finnegan 2007 [1989]: 140, my emphases)

Finnegan found that although from within the world of classical music-making and learning the self-taught participants of the rock scene often seemed to be taking the easy route by foregoing a more rigorous formal music education, for some “the self-learning process meant immense commitment and discrimination” (2007 [1989]: 137) with certain rock musicians even alluding to how they “envied those who had ‘learnt the easy way’” (2007 [1989]: 138), even to the point of considering having their own children taught within the classical system. This is not to imply that informal learning is completely missing from the classical music scene or that rock musicians never have histories in formal music training or never seek out formal guidance from professional teachers, as Finnegan makes clear, but rather that the *dominant ideology* of these two scenes overshadows these aspects of learning in relation to the working of the given music scene. What’s more, as opposed to the general understanding, it is the formal classical training which is the newer form of learning as opposed to the self-study of rock musicians (2007 [1989]).

Thus we can see that according to Finnegan’s findings it is not necessarily that the formal and legitimate system of music education is better or easier/harder than the informal self-

taught path of rock musicians, but rather that the ensuing skill set for making music is different. While both formally trained and self-taught musicians will be able to play their instruments, the former are better versed in reading sheet music and the conventions of classical music, while the latter have more experience at improvisation/variation and the performance conventions of rock music.

There are two important points here, which resonate both with my own findings and the points discussed in the following sections on *appreciation of learning* and *the right way of learning*. First the non-regimented nature of learning in subcultural and fan environments can be appealing to a number of participants. Second while some of the knowledge and skills acquired in these contexts are indeed more specific to the world of anime-manga, a number of them are actually quite general in nature and thus fulfil the role of a parallel education (Hitzler et al. 2004, Hitzler & Pfadenhauer 2007), with the constraint that often the acquired knowledge and skills will not fully mirror those taught within formal programs, which is both an advantage and can be a drawback in certain cases.

Both the do it yourself nature and the level of engagement found by Finnegan (2007 [1989]), but also Vályi (2010) and Hitzler et al. (2004) and further prevalent within the personal narratives of learning in my interviews demonstrate a high level of fit with the results of Ito et al. (2010) examining the engagement and learning experiences of teenagers and young people with electronic new media, the topic I will be turning to next.

#### *5.1.2. An appreciation of learning*

ZK: How did you start doing translations for Manga.hu?

Hajnal [Dawn] (33, former acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): I was inspired by other people also doing it, I read a lot from there [= the scanlation site

Manga.hu]. At the time I was only beginning English, and then when my English was good, and I got involved in the whole thing, then image editing was a challenge, that was an IT challenge for me, to be able to realize it well. I wanted to learn these applications, it's like English, for me that was a challenge too, I learn a lot by myself, on the level of trying out. Image editing was really a challenge. And there were one or two manga, which nobody was translating there, and they were really cute, and they were worth introducing to the [Hungarian] audience. And there was one, which somebody had started and had left [unfinished] and it belonged to no one, and I picked that one up and carried on with it.

As Hajnal's account demonstrates not only did most of my interviewees pursue learning in informal settings they found it an enjoyable and rewarding challenge. Getting more and more involved in a fan culture, subculture is the equivalent of entering a (sub)field in the Bourdieusian sense, and as such entails learning the rules and values, the present state of the field problematic, but also the necessary skills for being able to meaningfully participate within the activities of the given field. Gravitating towards certain types of fields and certain positions within said fields relies on pre-existing attitudes, or in Bourdieu's terms one's original habitus. One of the predisposing attitudes, based on my interviews, that seems to be present in participants who go on to contribute to the producerly core of these cultures, is the drive for learning. And this attitude towards learning seems to be characteristic of subcultures and fan cultures in general as the findings of Ito and her colleagues (2010) suggest.

Ito et al. examined the results of a number of research projects dealing with various groups or aspects of new media use, such as "fans of Harry Potter and Japanese animation, video-game players, hip-hop creators, video bloggers, and participants on YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook" (2010: 5). As can be seen from the list of studied interest groups their

comparative analysis of a number of different case studies also involved *fans* of anime and also young hip-hop creators, who in other contexts would be discussed within the framework of *scene* or *subculture*. Thus not only is this work particularly relevant for my current discussion as it deals with learning practices within scenes, subcultures and fan cultures, but it is further invaluable as Ito and her colleagues have also incorporated the analysis of non-interest group affiliated youth in their study and thus in the formulation of their theoretical framework as well.

Their understanding of the concept of learning and its relevant environments is perfectly aligned with the accounts found in the literature on subcultural and scene research, and at the same time relates to research on engagement and active audiences – including but also going beyond fan cultures – within media studies (cf. Csigó 2009, Jenkins 2006). Building on situated-learning theory the authors emphasize that learning is “an act of social participation in communities of practice” (Ito et al. 2010: 14), closely mirroring Vályi’s (2010) account of how learning is strongly tied to developing a *sense of belonging* within the crate-digging scene.

By shifting the focus away from the individual and to the broader network of social relationships, situated-learning theory suggests that the relationships of knowledge sharing, mentoring, and monitoring within social groups become key sites of analytic interest. In this formulation, people learn in all contexts of activity, not because they are “internalizing” knowledge, culture, and expertise as isolated individuals, but because they are part of shared cultural systems and engaged in collective social action. (Ito et al. 2010: 14)

Ito et al. introduce a framework to account for the differences found in young people’s experiences with learning in relation to new media and the corresponding technologies in

line with the suggested emphasis on the social embeddedness of learning experiences. Corresponding to the discussions on new literacies and fan engagement (Jenkins 2006) the framework centres on the concept – proposed by the authors – of “genres of participation” to delineate between “friendship-driven” and “interest-driven” genres of participation (2010: 15).

A notion of participation genre addresses similar problematics as concepts such as habitus (Bourdieu 1972) or structuration (Giddens 1986), linking activity to social and cultural structure. More closely allied with humanistic analysis, a notion of genre, however, foregrounds the interpretive dimensions of human orderliness. How we identify with, orient to, and engage with media is better described as a process of interpretive recognition than a process of habituation or structuring. We recognize certain patterns of representation (textual genres) and in turn engage with them in social, routinized ways (participation genres). (Ito et al. 2010: 15)

Three distinct genres of participation were proposed by the authors, which each correspond to a different style of learning, with distinct goals and differing types of knowledge being mastered. The first purely “friendship-driven” genre of participation was titled “hanging out” referring to the most distinct quality of this type of learning activity, that it was usually aimed at social participation with skills and knowledge being picked up from socially close peers in the context of spending time together. The second genre of participation is “messing around” alluding to the way this style of learning often involves solitary engagement with different software and media channels within the space and time afforded by the environment of the participants (whether it’s access to a home computer or the possibility to use school infrastructure relatively freely) leading to trial and error DIY style learning often in an unfocused fashion, but still relevant enough in relation to its skill and knowledge outcomes to warrant a separate treatment as opposed to the other two genres of participation.



Although “hanging out” was quite widespread among the young people participating in the research projects and “messing around” was also found to be prevalent, the third genre “*geeking out*” was the least frequent of the three genres of participation. This third genre of participation identified by Ito et al. was named “geeking out” as a nod to the term geek – often used to refer to “an intense commitment or engagement with media or technology, often one particular media property, genre, or a type of technology” (2010: 65) in common parlance as well (see Chapter Eight for a detailed discussion) – and also pointing to the above average prevalence of this style of engagement found within groups in the study, which are generally described as being geek cultures (e.g. anime fans, harry potter fans and hardcore gamers). The three most defining characteristics of this form of learning and participation were regular engagement with new media contents and/or technologies, with “[1] *high levels of specialized knowledge* attached to [2] *alternative models of status and credibility* and a [3] *willingness to bend/break social and technological rules*” (Ito et al. 2010: 66, my emphases and inserted numbering). This description immediately resonates with the discussion of subcultures and fan cultures in Chapter Two, and rightly so, as the young people who demonstrated this type of genre of participation were often aligned with media fandoms or other subculture-like groups. *High levels of specialized knowledge* such as video editing, translating, drawing skills, knowledge of genres of manga and anime, etc. are central to anime-manga fandom, and a detailed catalogue of the different specialized skills and knowledge being cultivated within these fields will be discussed in the following subchapter. While the third finding of how these participants demonstrated a higher propensity to break rules is noteworthy and corresponds to unauthorized forms of mediation, dissemination and reworking in fan cultures in general (e.g. Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992) and anime-manga fandom in particular (e.g. Condry 2013, Leonard 2005b, Mihara 2010), it is on the second characteristic of *alternative models of status and credibility* that I would like to focus on for my discussion of learning within subcultures and fan cultures.

The fact that out of the three identified modes of engagement and learning “geeking out” involves an element of *status* and also *credibility*, which could arguably also be read as *authenticity*, indicates a strong fit with one of the central issues of subcultural affiliation discussed in Chapter Two. Namely, that subcultures are the terrain of claiming recognition and that the concept of authenticity is central to the constant renegotiation of the distribution of status within subcultures. Furthermore, it is equally important here that learning and demonstrable mastery are *associated with* claiming status within this genre of participation. This indicates that environments in which this style of engagement and learning is present in an accepted or even dominant way are clearly *conducive to learning*, as the outcome of learning is valued highly and is positively reinforced by the attribution of status. Often times, I would like to argue, it is not only the end product of being able to demonstrate a certain level of mastery that is assigned positive value within these cultures, but also the actual endeavour aimed at attaining it. This element of valuing effort and a sustained interest and investment in these cultures is discussed within works on subcultures and music scenes (Muggleton 2000, Macdonald 2001, Hodgkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007) increasingly under the heading of a particular subcultural or scenic *work ethic* (Vályi 2010, Tófalvy 2008), explained in more detail below.

Ito et al. (2010) found that participants who demonstrated a *geeking out* mentality regarding learning often prided themselves on being self-taught. While it is beyond the bounds of the current project to be able to answer whether the propensity for self-learning is generally higher among subcultural and fan participants or is rather only characteristic of the subset of actors who eventually emerge as subcultural and fan producers, I would nevertheless like to emphasize that the majority of my respondents also highlighted their willingness and even fondness for self-study and DIY knowledge and skill acquisition. This is the next aspect of learning in subcultures and fan cultures that I will now turn to.

### 5.1.3. *The right way of learning I: being self-taught, peer-learning and the social relations of learning*

Roland Markovics ‘Luggeriano’ (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): [A]nd then after one or two cons [Anime Music Videos (AMV)] started to interest me to the degree that I didn’t just want to passively watch them, but also to create. And for this I first started to read, wade my way through, practice those advice, learning materials, etc. which were there like a common experiential info treasure house already on the website. And then that was like a foundation of sorts for me. And then it was the 2008 SakuraCon when I also appeared actively as a creator [...] that’s when the *Hungarian AMV Horrible* [Magyar AMV Rettenet] first came out, but you’ve surely heard of this, it’s like the American *AMV Hell*, the Americans started to do it first, it’s basically like a parody, like cutting gags to all sorts of anime, looking for soundtracks from stand up, films, which fits a situation, and that’s what the people from Art [referring to AMVArt2.0, the principal Hungarian AMV website] adapted. The first part of this series came out in 2008 and it’s been going persistently since. They adapted this concept to the Hungarian domain. That’s where I had my debut first, because for that I edited a couple of horsing around kinda things basically, because this is all light hearted parody. They asked for maximum half a minute long videos for it, and for me this was basically the practice run, so I practiced the fundamentals of editing on those little videos. When I had the fundamentals – because I had already gotten in touch with and was actively asking from people – these social networks were starting to develop, I added new people on MSN [chat service], email, etc., I asked for help, an active communication started, I received new infos, technical help, a lot.

Luggeriano’s description of his increasing involvement in the Anime Music Video scene – the term he uses to describe it – provides an example of how fan participation and learning will progress through stages of learning and experimenting by oneself, joining groups of

like-minded peers and even being influenced by foreign fan products and practices – in this case the template provided by *AMV Hell* videos. His emphasis on the help provided by the community – both passively by making tutorials and help materials available on their websites, and actively via forums and personal contact through chat and email – is very telling of the way the learning experience and skill progression within these environments is structured very differently from that found in, for example, formal education.

To return once again to Finnegan's study of music-making scenes (2007 [1989]), as explained above, each scene had specific ideals regarding the proper form of learning expected of and mostly followed by its participants. One of the defining elements of the rock music scene was the self-taught nature of acquiring music related skills within that scene. Being self-taught however does not necessarily mean being completely cut off from the social aspects of learning. While the relations might not be as readily recognizable as in the case of the classical music scene, with its clearly delineated teacher and pupil roles, music scenes, subcultures and fan cultures generally rely on social interactions – whether direct or mediated (Vályi 2010) – for learning. In a similar fashion in relation to the genre of participation labelled “geeking out” Ito et al. (2010) found that while participants prided themselves on being self-taught, this ideal of independent learning often actually meant drawing on direct or mediated sources of help within specialized knowledge communities and networks. Highlighting the story of one such respondent Ito et al. found that

[d]espite his adoption of “self-taught” discourse, he nonetheless describes learning to use Photoshop, Flash, and Illustrator by making use of online tutorials and a network of graphic artists whom he met online. When makers describe themselves as self-taught, they are generally referring to the fact that they did not receive formal instruction, and they will acknowledge various sources of help they turned to in order to get started. (Ito et al. 2010: 262-3)

This description resonates not only with Luggeriano's story above, but a number of participants' experiences of developing needed skills and acquiring knowledge. The central role that learning and sharing of knowledge and experience plays in these communities is also evident in the way each community – or specialist sub-community, such as scanlation, fansub, AMV or cosplay enthusiasts – will have topics dedicated to the questions relating to the craft of their specific interest on their respective websites and forums (e.g. Manga.hu, Animeaddicts.hu, Amvart2.hu and Cosplay.hu), with a lot of knowledge sharing and discussion revolving around the minutiae of all aspects of learning, creation and participation. Online how-to videos, and different tutorials, ranging from professional and semi-professional content to those created by the not yet quite ready, but very enthusiastic participants can all be found explaining in detail all aspects of the skills and knowledge needed to participate in these cultures. Even *Mondo Magazine* – the premier high-profile Hungarian anime-manga fandom magazine – features how-to style articles regularly on a range of topics relevant to the community, like drawing, cosplay, etc. All these mediated and direct forms of knowledge exchange not only play a part in facilitating the entry into and development of participants within anime-manga fandom, but also contribute to the creation and strengthening of the social fabric that make up this culture, as Vályi (2010) explains.

Vályi's study of crate diggers (2010) provides the so far most direct and comprehensive treatment of the interrelated nature of scenic participation, learning and the development of belonging and a shared understanding of scenic values and practices. His discussion of the significance of direct personal contact with peers and mentors – both from within the immediate social environment of the participants or from within the wider world of the scene – in relation to the personal histories of scenic engagement and learning are not only new in the sense that they specifically focus on the ways learning occurs at the intersection of these social interactions, but also in that it provides a compelling account of how this socially embedded learning process is actually foundational with regards to developing the affective

ties that are the source of a sense of belonging in relation to the wider scene. Vályi further expands his discussion by also taking into account the way subcultural media and the mediated social connections they provide also play a significant role in these processes of learning and the forging of a sense of belonging.

Vladi (39, head of Fumax publishing and Comicsinvest, on starting out in comics publishing with the first volume of *Sin City*): First it was Tóni [Antal Bayer] who helped me in practice. I had no idea about anything, Tóni helped me with all of that, he knew about the charges, how to calculate a book's price, etc. He was even the one who suggested the press. He wrote to Dark Horse on my behalf.

The importance of both immediate peer/mentor relations and mediated connections – a recurring theme in the majority of my respondents' stories – can be seen in Vladi's account of starting out in the comics trade and publishing business. His first steps towards comics publishing, as explained in the above quote, were helped by a veteran of the Hungarian comics publishing industry, Antal Bayer, the first president of the Hungarian Comic Publishers' Association (Magyar Képregénykiadók Szövetsége). The running of his comics trade business, on the other hand, was influenced by the know-how shared in his column and newsletter by Chuck Rozanski, owner of the major American comics dealership Mile High Comics.

But it is not just examples from popular music studies and subcultural research like Finnegan's and Vályi's work, that we find congruous descriptions. Being self-taught and peer learning, whether direct or mediated, has also played an important part in fan cultures for quite some time now, as the following quote in relation to fan video art – a precursor of the Anime Music Videos of today – from Jenkins demonstrates.

Many of the earliest videomakers were self-taught, experimenting with their home video recorders, discovering for themselves what effects they could achieve. Increasingly, fan artists are holding workshops at conventions teaching other fans the secrets of their craft, though some insist that the peculiarities of different VCRs require newcomers to develop their own techniques. [...] Other times, the techniques are taught, informally, with new fan artists learning tricks working alongside more established videomakers. This process is particularly facilitated by the tendency of fans to work in video collectives which periodically initiate new members. (Jenkins 1992: 252)

It is not only technology related skills, which are disseminated within the framework of peer relations. Entrepreneurial and business know-how is also passed on within networks of cooperation and support, such as the how-to of publishing as evidenced by the previous quote from Vladi, or the ins and outs of event or party organization as highlighted in the following quote from Venom.

Balázs Lévai ‘Venom’ (31, *HAA*, head of Cosplay.hu, head organizer of MondoCon):  
Then I put together a regulation within an afternoon, laying down a bunch of directives, that this is how it should be. This didn’t come out of thin air, we looked through foreign cons. We looked at several and took from each what we liked, the categories, the nominations, etc. And I presented it to the steering committee of the *HAA* that this is my plan, and this is what I would like.

The process of learning is usually characterized by an ongoing back and forth between trial and error attempts at working out things by oneself often using offline and online resources and relying upon peer support and help. And while certain aspects of a given activity might be more heavily dependent upon peer learning, others might within the same relationship lean towards the DIY learning aspect of the spectrum. In the case of the party and concert organizing duo Olivér Frank ‘Case’ and Anita Petneházi ‘Ji’, the former had a major

influence on the musical education of the latter, but had mostly left Ji to her own devices when it came to learning the practical aspects of DJ-ing.

But as much as learning is intertwined with and embedded within social interaction and relations – either direct or mediated – the more straightforward connotation of being self-taught of doing something alone, by oneself, without external control or guidance, are just as important when evaluating the type of learning taking place within leisure and consumption oriented youth cultures. As we have already seen Finnegan highlighted the self-chosen nature and lack of external validation and organization of learning in relation to participants within the rock scene (2007 [1989]: 140). The fact participants undertake their own “course of study”, which often includes finding out about the “curriculum” and the best sources for learning seems to lend an extra sense of purpose and motivation towards the engagement in subcultural and fan practices, including learning practices. The lack of formal institutions, hierarchy and parental/educator/authority figure control opens up a space for exploring and experimenting, but at the same time subcultures, music scenes, fan cultures also offer relevant rewards through awarding status within the culture, as was discussed in Chapter Two, and also demonstrated in the following quote from Hodkinson:

Gaining and maintaining subcultural capital, and the social rewards it entailed, then, was a key concern and motivation for most goths. When it offered the prospect of such rewards, the system of classification we have been describing induced considerable encouragement for individuals to collect, learn about and exhibit examples of established subcultural style and behaviour. (2002: 82)

This is not to suggest that all learning within subcultures and fan cultures takes place as a result of participants striving for social recognition, rather it is to emphasize the fact that these settings, as described in the section on *an appreciation of learning* above, do provide



*further incentives* for mastering skills and knowledge.

The fact that participants can be motivated by both subcultural and fan cultural rewards and at the same time by internal and not external forces/pressures for participation contributes to an increased drive for learning demonstrated even in formal educational settings, should the specific cultural content and values of the given culture be accepted and incorporated within the educational program offered. In this way in one case study highlighted by Ito et al., where young people were involved in a hip-hop music-making training program the participants exhibited a high level of motivation, actively participating in setting goals and pushing to achieve those, as opposed to another similar extra-curricular training program offering training in new media and multimedia technologies, where youth relied “more on the adult educators to set the agenda and provide the cultural capital for their work” (2010: 305).

Translating motivation from engagement in anime-manga fandom to formal education was also demonstrated in five of my interviewees’ career trajectories. Examples of choosing higher education *programs* and/or bachelor’s, master’s thesis and doctoral dissertation *topics* based on a) an interest in anime, manga (and the languages they were consumed in) and/or based on the b) types of activities engaged with within the framework of fandom (such as event organization) were not only all found within my sample of interviewees, but were also common among the stories of other participants related to me during the course of the interviews.

Motivation is not only due to subcultural and fannish participation, however, and is something that can help build skills prior to or parallel to subcultural engagement. A number of my respondents explained how they participated in extracurricular school activities – working on the school newspaper, or in the school lights and sound studio – which directly

fed into skills they later utilized both in relation to their subcultural but also in relation to their work activities. The presence of this type of motivation seems to correspond to the “geeking out” attitude towards skill and knowledge acquisition identified by Ito et al., which did not necessarily have to relate to subcultural engagements. People who demonstrated this type of attitude were likely to exhibit a certain pride in having been self-taught – meaning that they relied on a mix of experimentation, tutorials, manuals and the knowledge and possible help of expert communities, peers and even teachers as already discussed – which corresponds to findings regarding the attitudes and values of professionals working in information technology (Ito et al. 2010: 262). In a similar way some of my interviewees who were reluctant to identify with a subcultural or fan position still spoke in very similar terms regarding their experiences in relation to learning, as the following example illustrates.

Csaba Boros (34, head of Mangafan): It has to be added that I really did build everything from the ground up myself, this type of knowledge. When I didn’t know how to do something in a given software, or how to send a postscript down, or how to produce print ready material in print quality, what CMYK was, what RGB was, what vector graphics was, what the standard resolutions for vector graphics, greyscale, CMYK were, these things, what bleed mark, bleed, slug, stuff like that were, a million things, which if you open up any publishing software get shoved in your face, so that it’s decision, decision, decision, what do you want to do. Those things I really like gathered step by step from online guides, partly from help, from here, there and everywhere. We did two shit publications, the third one was already passable, and the fourth one was positively good. And then I went back, when we did a reprint on the first one, and what happened was that except for the graphics material we threw everything out the window and redid the whole thing completely.

However it might not just be a geek sensibility that contributes to the emphasis on being self-taught for a number of my respondents, but rather a trait of the “entrepreneurial personality”

(cf. Chell 2008) characterizing all the entrepreneurs in my sample, a heightened sense of self-reliance and pride in getting things solved by oneself, as Vladi's example also demonstrates below.

ZK (asking in relation to book editing): You haven't done this previously?

Vladi (39, head of Fumax publishing and Comicsinvest): No, I was forced to do it completely in this kind of self-taught way. I've read a ton of books throughout my life and we have a proofreader of course, spelling mistakes and typos are done by him.

The emphasis on being self-taught in this stricter sense and the corresponding reliance on one's capacity to navigate the challenge of acquiring the required and relevant skills and knowledge as they become necessary seems to be a recurring theme in a large number of the career stories recounted by entrepreneurs, freelance professionals and employees. It is this DIY aspect of learning that I will explore in further detail in the following section.

#### *5.1.4. The right way of learning II: DIY and learning by doing*

Bene (25, leading member of the Alchemist Laboratory club): The idea of ordering a loli [= lolita<sup>120</sup>] dress for my girlfriend came up. We went on the internet and it turned out that they are super expensive. My girlfriend said she would like one like this, and it turned out that for the money it would cost us to buy it and have it delivered I could even sew her two loli dresses. And I started to watch on YouTube how to sew a zipper, do a turn-up, do a hem, etc. And I also figured a lot of things out, like how to use a sewing machine, my mum also showed me things. As soon as I got home from work I sat down in front of the sewing machine, took a piece of cloth, folded it back, folded it this way, folded it that way, and sewed all over the

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120 Lolita fashion is a primarily female subculture originating in Japan that draws inspiration from Victorian and Edwardian styles of clothing.

place. The first dress was finished, it wasn't that good, but I received a lot of compliments. But by the time my girlfriend got to her first loli meet she already had two or three dresses.

Another important aspect of learning in subcultures and fan cultures is the learning by doing approach, which is prevalent throughout every aspect of anime-manga fandom. Bene's story of how and why he learnt to sew is not exceptional, as one of the main driving forces behind this type of learning is the lack of resources and a strong desire for participation. The gradual nature of DIY learning demonstrated in this example is also present in a number of my respondents' accounts in relation to mastering video editing, learning editorial, organizational and even entrepreneurial skills.

The DIY element, however, is very much present in anime-manga fandom in general, with for instance the presence of arts and crafts centred activities, including the production of, for example, fan art, fan fiction, cosplay, AMVs and *dōjinshi*,<sup>121</sup> along with the proliferation of fan translations of both anime and manga. The roots of a DIY sensibility within anime-manga fandom can be traced to three different important influences. First is the tradition of producing fan fiction and fanzines running all the way back to science fiction fandom, with the boundaries between producers and consumers being blurred in the model of "writers to be" emerging from within the fandom through the incubating environment provided by fan fiction outlets (with established magazines also running competitions) (Bacon-Smith 2000, Jenkins 1992).<sup>122</sup>

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121 *Dōjinshi* roughly translates as "magazines made by like minded people," and most commonly refers to fan made manga, but the expression is also used to mean fanzines in general.

122 "Fan publishing has represented an important training ground for professional writers and editors, a nurturing space in which to develop skills, styles, themes, and perhaps most importantly, self confidence before entering the commercial marketplace. Marion Zimmer Bradley (1985) has noted the especially importance of fandom in the development of female science fiction writers at a time when professional science fiction was still male-dominated and male-oriented; fanzines, she suggests, were a supportive environment within which

The second line of influence is to be found within the Japanese anime-manga fandom itself, which is in part related to the previously cited tradition of science-fiction fandom within both the United States and in Japan (cf. Yoshimoto 2009). The first of the two most important elements here is cosplay,<sup>123</sup> emphasizing the creation of intricate costumes by fans,<sup>124</sup> which has had a major impact on anime-manga fandoms across the world, with cosplay being one of the most identifiable and immediately visible elements of the fandom for outsiders. And the second being *dōjinshi*, which encompasses a wide range of fan products from beginners' first attempts at creating manga within so called manga circles to semi-professional creations published in limited print runs for the *dōjinshi* conventions/markets.<sup>125</sup> *Dōjinshi* is generally seen as the training ground for upcoming talent in manga creation and is thus an integral part of the manga production culture in Japan (Condry 2013). Finally, the third strand of DIY sensibility to emerge from and inform anime-manga fandom, is the tradition of fan translation pioneered by fans in the United States and around the world (see Leonard 2005a, 2005b). The Japanese approach to copyright has been highly important for both the flourishing of *dōjinshi* works – often derivatives of popular anime and manga series – and the proliferation of *scanlations* and *fansubs* (Condry 2010).

But the case of anime-manga fandom is far from unique in this regard among consumption and leisure oriented youth cultures. As we saw earlier the rock music scene studied by Finnegan (2007 [1989]) was also characterized by a strong DIY sensibility. The role that

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- 123 women writers could establish and polish their skills.” (Jenkins 1992: 47)  
 123 The practice of cosplay originated from within US science fiction fan culture, and spread to Japan via the Japanese SF fandom (Yoshimoto 2009). The word cosplay itself, however, is Japanese in origin, and can be understood to be tied to the practice of cosplaying characters from anime, manga and Japanese video games, with further terms (e.g. historical costume, costume, uniform, equipment, etc.) invoked in the case of other non-anime-manga related costuming activities.
- 124 For a discussion of learning practices in relation to cosplay see Okabe (2012).
- 125 For more on *dōjinshi* and Comiket (*Komiketto*), the largest and most famous *dōjinshi* fair, see Tamagawa (2007).

DIY approaches and a corresponding informal learning process play in cultural industries rooted in youth subcultures is also noted by McRobbie in her study of young British fashion designers:

Westwood's design education came through the do-it-yourself ethos of the punk movement in the mid-1970s and is reflective of the kind of informal training I described in the introductory chapter as not unusual within the field of British youth subcultures. (1998: 109)

Chapter Seven will offer a more detailed discussion of the correspondences between subcultural producers and the world of creative labour, however, this example is an excellent reminder of the often parallel experiences found in relation to other areas of (sub)cultural production.

The DIY aspect of subcultures and fan cultures often also relates to the subcultural and fan ethic found within these cultures, as the following quote from Eng also emphasizes in relation to his experience of participating in the early anime-manga fandom in the US:

For us, being otaku meant that we were instrumental in bringing anime to the United States on our own terms, independently and sometimes irrespective of commercial interests. It had to do with our sense of individualism, a do-it-yourself attitude, a philosophy and ethic that delineated right and wrong within our community, as well as best practices and high standards. (2012a: 87)

It is this final aspect of learning within subcultures and fan cultures that I will discuss next.

### 5.1.5. *The right way of learning III: The subcultural/fan/scenic work ethic*

Roland Markovics ‘Luggeriano’ (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan, on creating Anime Music Videos): [T]his also had its own element of honour, if you wanted real quality, and you wanted to show off with something good, than you had to properly put eighty to hundred hours into a four-five minute [video] like this. This is why there’s so much disregard, for our little circle, we know, what this [= putting together anime music videos] takes, but the outside environment [= the wider anime-manga fandom] doesn’t appreciate it that much.

Luggeriano pointing out the significant time-investment required for creating acceptable to high quality AMV clips draws attention to the fact that learning and work in subcultures and fan cultures is serious business that requires dedication. Thus, although there exists the relative freedom of being self-taught, of setting individual goals and pace, as a result of the embeddedness of the learning process in social relations on the one hand, and a semi-objective element of required skill and knowledge progression for the mastery of certain levels of competence on the other hand, the different pathways within subcultures and fan cultures – while still demonstrating a large level of variance and individuality – are still fundamentally structured and follow different “training programs” (Hitzler et al. 2004).

For instance writing about the graffiti subculture Macdonald points out that “a writer’s experience of this subculture is a highly structured one”, participants “follow an established route or career path if you like” (2001: 63). Similar to how graffiti writers have to familiarize themselves with the tools and techniques of their chosen craft – the learning process customarily starting with practice on paper, moving on to *tagging*<sup>126</sup> before progressing to more complex forms of graffiti – not only as a result of the need to practice one’s style but

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126 The most basic and essential form of writing one’s name in graffiti.

also stemming from the understanding within the graffiti subculture that “[t]agging represents the first step of a writer’s career, his/her ‘roots’, the credentials that make him/her a writer” (Macdonald 2001: 75), so too Vályi highlights how within the crate digging scene the development of digging skills and musical appreciation go hand in hand.

The way in which one has to go through hundreds of bad records in order to find a good one is *a particular type of effort* through which one develops the “digging skills” and a particular appreciation for music and records that make a crate digger: a way to experience the “continuum of music”, to develop an “ear” for certain styles, to find out enough about the geography of “record spots” to know where to find particular records, and to soak up every little detail about music in order to be able to intuitively find records with breaks. (Vályi 2010: 180, emphases in the original)

There is a good fit between the above descriptions and Muggleton’s (2000) findings in relation to the expectations put forward by subcultural participants in relation to the experience of entering and transitioning between subcultures. Participants’ progression into and between different subcultural affiliations were deemed to be appropriate if they were gradual, with sudden shifts in stylistic ensemble and musical tastes seen as being inauthentic (Muggleton 2000). The reason too abrupt changes in subcultural allegiance are seen as being inauthentic is precisely, because the development of the necessary *foundations* or *roots* is predicated upon appropriate forms of learning,<sup>127</sup> which inevitably take time. Or to rephrase this in Bourdieusian terms, claiming a position and the corresponding status within a field requires the mastering of the state of the field and the internalizing of the appropriate habitus, both of which require time. Therefore, attempts at suddenly taking up positions anywhere other than the fringes of the field will be dealt with suspicion at the least and in most cases simply dismissed. Thus – as already mentioned in Chapter Two – the way a certain *work*

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127 What counts as the right way of learning and participating can itself shift and change with time as Vályi (2010) and Tófalvy (2008) point out.



*ethic* (Vályi 2010) is intrinsic to a number of subcultures (Macdonald 2001) and music scenes (Kahn-Harris 2007, Tófalvy 2008, Vályi 2010) is closely related to not only the fact that these environments are conducive to learning, but also the way they can be understood to operate as fields in the Bourdieusian sense.

## **5.2. Types of skills and knowledge acquired in relation to anime-manga fandom**

Understanding how learning takes place in subcultural and fan cultural contexts is important, as it helps ground in concrete practices and relations the process through which participants move from initiation within the culture to becoming subcultural producers. Having an overview of the types of knowledge acquired and skills cultivated within these contexts is just as important, since it helps assess the significance of the learning taking place within these environments compared to for instance formal education. As explained in the introduction of this chapter, I draw on German youth culture research for my discussion of the knowledge and skills acquired within anime-manga fandom.

The framework – informed by the German tradition of sociology of knowledge – developed by Hitzler’s research group differentiates between the following six types of knowledge and skills, which can be acquired through participation in youth cultures: basic scene<sup>128</sup> relevant competences; scene relevant competences capable of generating resources; general use everyday competences; non-qualification type job-relevant competences; quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences; formal and qualified job-relevant competences (Hitzler et al. 2004, Hitzler & Pfadenhauer 2007). They provide detailed descriptions of the actual contents of these categories for a number of different scenes (Hitzler et al. 2004). In the case of anime-manga fans I have created a breakdown of acquired skills and competences following the same, albeit slightly modified template. The following is a brief English summary based

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128 Hitzler and his colleagues use the term scene to denote a wide range of youth cultural formations (Hitzler et al. 2005).

on their detailed explanation of each category (Hitzler et al. 2004: 23-32):

- **Basic scene relevant competences:** these are the types of skill and knowledge needed to participate in a given youth scene.
- **Scene relevant competences capable of generating resources:** these are the types of competencies, which allow generating resources (perks such as free entry to events, gratis publications, clothes, equipment, etc. or even income), but are confined in their applicability to the given youth scene (or its related scenes).
- **General use everyday competences:** skills, knowledge and even behaviour traits or attitudes fostered within the given youth scene, which generally have no particular direct applicability in relation to employability either within or without the scene, but which nevertheless contribute to the development of the individual to the point of actually proving valuable in relation to working habits. It is notable that foreign language skills have been included in this category by Hitzler et al. even though that particular skill set is usually highly sought after in the labour market.
- **Non-qualification type job-relevant competences:** the skills and knowledge discussed under this heading relate to specific jobs and roles within the youth scene (such as team manager for skateboarders, or event organizer for the hardcore scene, etc.), which might be more or less transferable towards outside job opportunities, but which in Hitzler et al.'s view do not offer a specific portfolio of works to present outside the youth scene.
- **Quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences:** quasi-qualification here refers to the portfolio of works, which function as a form of substitute diploma, in the case of participants who pursue the particular skills and careers associated with producing such tangible works. These actors are thus most often creators

and editors of fanzines and websites, writers producing articles for these media, and also photographers, video and film makers.

- **Formal and qualified job-relevant competences:** This final category presupposes the existence of formal training programs within the scene that provide actual qualifications that are recognized and can be used either within the scene or beyond its bounds.

The most important reason for adopting this framework is that Hitzler and his colleagues' approach focuses on the transferability of these skills and knowledge in relation to the world of work. In this way their categorization aligns well with my own approach of looking at the career pathways of subcultural producers. Although this framework has proved to be quite inspiring and highly applicable for my own analysis of subcultural producers and their career paths, I would like to offer two minor modifications in relation to the above scheme. First, the distinction offered by Hitzler et al. between non-qualification type job-relevant competences and quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences seems to hinge on the presumption that elements on one's CV such as having been an event organizer or having operated a shop have no corresponding tangible products to demonstrate the actual effect or input the given person has contributed or the types of skills s/he might have acquired as a result. While it might be true that a photograph or an article can be more readily understood as providing evidence of the extent of the applicants capabilities, testimonials, attendance and sales numbers, fan responses, etc. can all provide feedback on the participants success and skills in relation to tasks such as event organization for example. Second, certain elements discussed under general use everyday competencies are so integral to potential employees' concerns – language skills being the most important –, that I feel it would be more apt to also discuss these within the category of job-relevant competencies.

Finally, before moving on to the detailed discussion of skills and knowledge within each category, I would like to emphasize that the following lists are far from complete. Indeed, the aim of the following discussion is not to produce airtight fully fleshed out lists, but rather to demonstrate the breadth of the skills and knowledge implicated in the participation in anime-manga fandom and the levels of varying complexity and transferability these skills and knowledge entail.

#### *5.2.1. Basic scene relevant competences*

Basic scene relevant competences fall into two main groups. The first group consists of the stepping stones to entering this culture, without which the core interests and stakes of the fandom do not make sense and are usually thus unenjoyable. As discussed in Chapter Two entering a field is tied to learning its conventions and understanding the present state of the field as a culmination of its prior history. This first group of competences is exactly that, *mastery of conventions and lore*. The second group of basic scene relevant competences revolves around being able to participate within the culture in a sustained manner, or to rephrase this, around *access to the culture*.

##### 5.2.1.1. Mastery of conventions and lore

Csaba Boros (34, head of Mangafan): And then manga came out of watching an anime series, which had a cliffhanger ending, the one called Berserk. And you could tell that they didn't intend on making more of it, it was only there to promote the manga. And I liked it so much that I started reading it. Learning to read manga, I still recall that experience exactly, of how difficult it was to learn to read manga. I didn't have an easy time, because it's a very ugly manga in the beginning, there are no two faces of the protagonist that look alike. I still recall the horror of trying to make sense of what is going on on the pages, the reading backwards, and the cut-upness, and the panel

compositions, and the freedom of the storytelling, and the changes in perspective. I really suffered, and I still have that in me, when I think about promoting manga. I had to read eighteen volumes to find out what happened.

Reading manga, watching anime requires a whole set of interpretative skills that are far from self-evident, especially in the European and North American context. As Csaba Boros' vivid description illustrates, learning to read manga can at times seem difficult even for readers, who are otherwise literate in the sequential art forms of US and/or Franco-Belgian comics culture. Cohn (2013) provides a well structured look at the differences that exist – on the morphological and grammatical levels – between what he calls Japanese Visual Language – the visual language of manga – and American Visual Language, the visual language of US comics. Furthermore he also offers experimental results that suggest that there is indeed a difference in the way readers of these visual languages approach reading works of sequential art. The works of authors like Lamarre (2009) and Suan (2013) also illustrate how Japanese anime is further characterized by a rich reservoir of conventions that – similar to manga – pervade the various forms of anime from genre conventions, character archetypes, narrative tropes, visual morphemes, grammar and rhythm, coupled with movement, voice, sound and music. The following quote from Luggeriano illustrates how the conventions – or in Cohn's term the visual language – and genre expectations pertaining to manga and anime can become the norm for even non-Japanese readers and viewers.

Roland Markovics 'Luggeriano' (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): Its effect is so dominant, that I've started to sometimes start reading Western comics from right to left and stuff like that, or an American horror or action superhero something, it seems so weird, seems frivolous compared to *seinen*. And there are also these small things, in anime, this gesture language, you're in the subcult, [so] you know what topoi, memes like this mean in a

given anime, you've learnt, gotten accustomed to over the years, and sometimes it'll be that in non-Japanese animation they will express themselves differently and you'll misunderstand or won't like it as much.

Learning to understand and appreciate these various aspects of representation, character design, world building and story development unique to manga and anime is probably the first and most fundamental skill that participation in this culture both requires and provides. Once, however, participants have entered into a sustained interest in either or both forms, they will inevitably gravitate towards mastering certain parts of the lore in relation to anime and/or manga. By lore I not only mean the history, breadth and genre breakdown of these forms on the one hand,<sup>129</sup> but also the corresponding fan canons, evaluations and hierarchies that have arisen around major works, fictional worlds and genres or even the forms as a whole.<sup>130</sup>

Danci (36, first editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine*): The other thing I really lacked was the knowledge about anime. If I would start this [= working on *Mondo*] now, for whatever reason, then I would start by watching anime during the first year according to some well thought-out system and reading manga. I would become very well versed in the mainstream and would simply just write the articles myself.

[...]

When I had to write an article about something, for which we didn't have an author, *Kaleido Star* was the first one like that, I watched all episodes of that plus the special in two weeks, that was a pretty intense experience.

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129 "These elements, present in the text and learned by the reader, together compose an "encyclopedia" of the fictional world that forms, in cult television fandom, the basis for interaction with the deterritorialized fiction itself." (Sara Gwenllian-Jones 2004: 91)

130 "[T]he conventions of fan criticism, moving from factors shaping the inclusion of a particular program within the fan canon through the evaluation and interpretation of individual series episodes." (Jenkins 1992: 91)

The quote from Danci illustrates quite well just how intimidating the amount of learning one has to undergo can seem, if it is not something that happens as a part of an intense and prolonged fan engagement with the form. This is true both on the level of these forms as a whole, and on the level of individual franchises or series, as this example illustrates. Danci, who had arrived at the helm of *Mondo* with a rich background in SF, horror, fantasy and role-playing games, having previously worked as a contributing writer for one of the major role-playing game magazines in Hungary during the nineties, had very scant previous exposure to anime and manga, and thus had to learn everything on the go. His example is thus also an illustration of the potential for converting knowledge and expertise from related areas of interest, and at the same time highlights the limits of this type of access and convertibility, underscoring the boundaries – however porous they may be – that exist between these cultures.

#### 5.2.1.2. Access to the culture

Balázs Lévai ‘Venom’ (31, *HAA*, head of Cosplay.hu, head organizer of MondoCon): I had been a drawer; I started to draw very early on. And around ’93-’94 I suffered from a creative block, I didn’t know where I should be heading. I had already started to be subscribed to various gaming magazines, *576Kbyte* and so on. And one of Martin’s writings there, which was one of the first in Hungary to introduce manga. And that’s where I saw one or two illustrations, which I really-really liked. I had no idea where it was from, but I liked the style a lot. I started to practice drawing it too. I took it to school and showed it to people, to see how they liked this style, and they said they like it, it’s interesting, new. Because up to that point it was towards the realistic, the fantasy that we drew was more *Lord of the Rings* and the like with realistic tones, and here we had completely simplified lines. And I ran out of source materials, because there were only these one or two magazines, which I had. And that’s when the internet started to come in, and I found it, and I got loads of reference pictures for myself. And then I

became interested in what this is. I only knew American cartoons before that, or at least that's what I thought at the time. And in one year it happened, I went from being a complete layman to becoming an amateur expert. And that's how I found the others.

Venom's story of how he started along the path into anime-manga fandom is illustrative of both the previous section's points in relation to the mastering of the conventions of anime and manga – in this case in the literal sense of learning how to draw anime-manga-like characters – and also of the need to find and access the wider culture in order to be able to feed and sustain one's interest in these forms.

Finding the shops where one could buy or order anime VHSs, DVDs, manga or related figures, finding out about the television channels, the online resources where one could access these contents are vital to being able to satisfy the craving for anime and/or manga and to be able to develop a deeper understanding of and relationship with these forms. The corresponding technical skills required for accessing said content also belongs to this level of skills and knowledge: solving DVD regional encoding problems, learning about codecs, media players, applying subtitles, downloading and so on. Finally, finding out about the social aspects of the culture, the meets, clubs, fan organizations, and learning to stay informed about the wider anime-manga fan culture are also vital skills and knowledge for developing a sustained relationship to these forms and the corresponding fandom.

Just like *mastery of conventions and lore*, the skills and knowledge related to *access to the culture* are a must for all subcultural and fan cultural participation, and the stories of interviewees, who had started out in various other subcultures and fan cultures, all referenced the stages of learning about specialist shops, clubs, fanzines and so on, as in the following initiation story related by Tulok.



Ákos Szécsi ‘Tulok’ (28, member of the Alchemist Laboratory club, head of the United Hungarian Colonial Marines,<sup>131</sup> certified M41A Pulse Rifle<sup>132</sup> replica builder): My parents were invited by some Canadian friends of theirs for us to go and stay with them for two weeks and have a good time, to which we agreed. In Canada I was taken to a mall, where I mistook a Games Workshop shop for a modelling shop, and I liked what I saw there very much, and I bought a box of figures and got pamphlets, and I got very much into this. And when we came home, I got my “older brother” DASCO involved, and he is just as stupid as I am, and he also got into it. But we were still not enough, the two of us, and we started to look around on the net, and we went to see the Hungarian retailer, which was Trollbarlang [Troll’s cave]. We went in, these figures are available at home [= Hungary] as well, wow, it’s also affordable, tralala. And then we started to look for a community, because if there is a shop, there must be a community, which this shop services. And this is how we got in contact with the *Club of the Knights of the Tabletop* (Terepasztal Lovagjainak Klubja), where both of us started to attend, and there I buried myself in this hobby for life. I haven’t been able to separate from it ever since. There I was surrounded by people who where all stupid in the same way, they were interested in the same thing as I was.

### 5.2.2. *Scene relevant competences capable of generating resources*

One of the arguments I would like to offer corroborating my claim in Chapter Two that the producerly side of anime-manga fan culture is a subfield of the field of cultural production is that there are almost no skills and knowledge I would readily assign to this category. The reason for this is that *scene relevant competences capable of generating resources* are almost always *non-qualification type job-relevant competences*, precisely because if developed they are transferable skills and knowledge not limited in applicability to the domain of anime-manga fandom. This transferability of competences is a strong signal of the embeddedness of this culture within the wider field of cultural production, and I will further elaborate on this

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131 The Hungarian chapter of the official *Alien* fan organization.

132 One of the iconic weapons from the *Alien* franchise.

is relation to the exit trajectories of my respondents from anime-manga fan culture in the following chapter. The two competences I have nevertheless decided to include in this section, a) *cosplay building*, and b) *creating and running clubs*, have proved to be the most tied to the immediate fandom environment within the accounts of my interviewees. I must stress, these skills can and do have applicability outside the fandom, such as theatrical prop and costume creation in the case of cosplay building, however, they cross over far less readily than those listed under *non-qualification type job-relevant competences* and *quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences* below.

#### 5.2.2.1. Cosplay building

This category is an umbrella term for a vast variety of skills related to designing, sewing and fabricating costumes and props for cosplay purposes from all manner of materials. The practical know-how in relation to sewing and working with tools would also qualify this category to be included in *general use everyday competences*, its specificity nevertheless warrants its inclusion, I would argue, in the present section. Developing high enough skills in relation to these competences one is able to either secure wins in cosplay competitions – notably there is a craft category in which these skills are highlighted specifically – or be able to work for hire or even both. While winning cosplay competitions usually entails rewards more closely tied to fan cultural participation, creating pieces for other cosplayers or collectors will usually involve monetary rewards – even in this later case, however, the potential market is firmly tied to and limited by the fandom itself.

#### 5.2.2.2. Creating and running clubs

Similar to event organization skills discussed below this competence has a significant overlap with *management and people skills* and *administrative skills* – explained under *quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences*. The reason I decided to include it as a separate competence category is because I wanted to emphasize the way this type of activity

is both prevalent within anime-manga fandom, and is also an important source of *status*, one of the non-tangible resources coveted within the culture – this is a point I will return to in more detail again in Chapter Seven.

### 5.2.3. *General use everyday competences*

The knowledge and skills, but also traits and attitudes fostered within the fandom, which fall within this category are marked out by their general lack of well-defined convertibility towards generating resources (which is not to say that these traits cannot contribute to higher chances of employability or increased earnings), but which nevertheless contribute to the development of the participants as individuals. The following could be seen as examples of this category in the case of anime-manga fandom: a) an increased level of general media literacy; b) a higher exposure to foreign languages and an increased knowledge of and exposure to foreign cultures, which generally both contribute to c) an increased level of openness; and finally d) the development of native – in this case Hungarian – language skills. The following quote from Hajnal [Dawn] provides a very good example of these types of development experienced within the fandom.

Hajnal [Dawn] (33, former acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan, explaining regarding the types of things learned in relation to the fandom): Primarily the IT knowledge, the editing programs, the techniques, retouching, I can use these anywhere else in my life, this is an internalized attitude, which counts when working with pictures, even with the editing of pictures at home. The other is the Japanese vocabulary I absorb, the culture, really this is plenty by itself. And I've also developed a lot with regards to my [native] language abilities, and since I write on a hobby level the fact that I work so much here with the Hungarian language means a lot. I learn a lot stylistically, either from the remarks of the proofreaders or that of the domesticators,<sup>133</sup> and also by looking

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133 Proofreading stylistic editors, who work with the finished translation, and rework it, if

at what doesn't work. My spelling has greatly improved.

#### 5.2.4. *Non-qualification type job-relevant competences*

The competences in this group, while often not as independently presentable as those in the following category of *quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences* are nevertheless highly applicable to various work related tasks and roles just as much outside the fandom as within its boundaries. These competences include a) *foreign language skills*, b) *management and people skills*, c) *administrative skills*, d) *commerce, marketing and sales related competences*, and e) *industry related background knowledge*; with foreign language skills being the most prevalent by far.

##### 5.2.4.1. Foreign language skills

Balázs Lévai 'Venom' (31, HAA, head of Cosplay.hu, head organizer of MondoCon): I was learning English around the time when I bought my first manga, *Outlanders*. At first I only drew from it, but I became interested in the story. I spent a whole summer translating the whole thing with a dictionary [...]. I was simply interested in what the story was. This was back when I was in secondary school. The next school year I went to English class as if I had jumped a level ahead, from beginner level to intermediate level, and the teacher didn't understand what had happened during the previous summer, and suddenly... I was never good at English, it was always art, biology, IT for me, and all of a sudden I became one of the best students in English in the class just by translating manga.

A large part of my interviewees have similar stories of acquiring proficiency in various languages through engagement with special interest materials. Subcultural and fan activities with foreign roots and a global following prove to be highly conducive to language learning

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necessary, to make it flow and sound more natural in Hungarian.

especially for participants who are more involved than others. While translating materials such as manga, like in Venom's example above, or role-playing books and so on have been cited by several of my interviewees as a source of their language skills, the intense consumption of these and similar specialist materials is in itself enough for high levels of foreign language proficiency to develop, as the following example also illustrates.

ZK: How did you learn English?

Olivér Frank 'Case' (37, HAA, creator and host of the radio program *Nippon Groove* and the website SoundOfJapan.hu, concert and party organizer, *Mondo Magazine* columnist): From comics and specialist film magazines. I don't know how I acquired it when I was little, but in primary school we had a more or less compulsory English course, but there I already knew more than the class, and they made me sit in the back so as not to disturb them. There wasn't any English learning later on either. [...] [In secondary school] I spent way more time reading English language film and music magazines, because those things weren't available in Hungarian. And also tons of comics. And I watched the movies and that's where the pronunciation came from, that's why you can't feel the Hungarian accent on my English pronunciation, but you can feel all kinds of crazy slang. I already knew English really well, it was only basic grammar that was missing. And then there was an acquaintance of an acquaintance, who was an English teacher, and then I sat down with him for a year every fortnight in a tea house and we went through all the grammar from the beginning.

Similar to Case a number of participants related comparable tales of having acquired language skills prior to or even completely independently of formal or non-formal education. The experience of turning to private lessons to shore up their extensive but slightly unruly language skills was also mentioned by a couple of other respondents as well.

This is, of course, not to suggest that learning languages for the sake of learning languages or that the role of formal education was negligible in the case of all participants, as there were respondents, who reported having mastered language skills at the secondary school level as a result of both an interest in language learning and the opportunity provided by attending special secondary school programs for foreign languages.

Language skills picked up through formal education, private classes or subcultural and fan participation were important for most all participants in their involvement with anime-manga and their participation in the production side of these fields. Whether it was keeping up to date with international information and technical skills, self-education, sampling and reviewing materials, or ordering products, conducting interviews, and building professional relationships foreign language skills were both a product of and a prerequisite of ever deeper involvement in these cultural worlds. Independent professionals often mentioned that their main sources of information are foreign websites and forums, and thus they would depend on their foreign language skills – mostly English – to further their knowledge in their field of expertise and keep up to date with current trends and innovations.

In the case of anime and manga the language of origin is of course Japanese. Even though there are a significant number of words circulating throughout the fandom taken directly from the Japanese language (genre names such as *seinen* or *shōjo* for example) and the individual works themselves (such as names, expressions, names of attack modes, etc.), Japanese seems to be too difficult to pick up through only casual exposure for Hungarian participants, thus alongside the presence of Japanese, anime-manga culture in Hungary is usually experienced in relation to a mediating language as well. As a result of the size of the market and the intensity of fan activity English will often be this mediating language, however it is important to note, how in Hungary during the nineties German and to a lesser extent Italian satellite television channels were also an important source of anime for the first

fans. For instance, Dalma Kálovics recounts how her knowledge of the German language grew out of an intense engagement with German language anime series broadcast on the German RTL2 channel, which she would tape and watch with a dictionary repeated times to understand the stories better. Her German knowledge acquired in this way was one of the reasons she later went on to study a combined BA and MA program in German alongside Communication studies.

Dalma Kálovics (31, co-creator and co-host of the radio show *Japanimánia*, translator, editor of *Mondo Magazine*): There was no Internet back then, come to think of it, things happened completely differently than now, so I depended on only television. When I was still watching anime on TV we also had an Italian channel that aired some, that was Italia Uno. And after a while I started hunting [for anime] there too, and then Italian words also just stuck in my head like this. Then unfortunately they took that [= the TV channel access] away, so I don't know Italian. But it was because of RTL2 that my German knowledge increased so much. We could say that the reason I did German studies [at the university level] was because I already knew German very well based on this, so it did have an effect like this.

For others the entry point to anime-manga fan culture was more tied to the first feature length animations coming from the US, which were usually dubbed in English. In a similar fashion, fans finding materials on the internet would usually start consuming English fansubbed anime and English scanlations of manga. As English fansubs and scanlations are the easiest and fastest to obtain, furthermore, since Hungarian fansub groups and scanlators will themselves often work from these materials as well, the English (almost) Hepburn Romanization of Japanese is seen as somehow being a more authentic and appropriate form of transliteration than the official Hungarian rules for the transcription of Japanese, which is both a hotly debated topic within the fandom and one of its defining quirks in relation to

Japanese.<sup>134</sup>

Although English dubbed anime, and English fansubs and scanlations did play a part in the language acquisition histories of some of my participants, a major theme in their personal stories relates to learning English through role-playing games, fantasy novels, and computer games (often role-playing game based).

Máriusz Bari ‘Damage’ (32, co-creator of the Nippon Shoxx party series, former columnist for *Mondo Magazine*, creator of the websites LD50.hu and PLANET://DAMAGE<sup>135</sup>): My old man was really pushing that I should learn a language, and so let it be English, there was the Bádi-Véges English language learners’ book from the “Let’s learn languages” series. We went step by step and he was teaching me things, and then they sent me to a language school, more like a language course. During elementary school Sky Super Channel [= Sky Channel, Super Channel] came in, I sat there in front of the TV, and I picked up a lot of things in relation to pronunciation, vocabulary, everything. And also there was, and this is also thanks to my family, that I got AD&D [= *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*] books in English, and I was extremely into that, and I looked up everything in the dictionary. I had big vocabulary booklets [I had made myself], which contained nothing but words.

Damage’s recollection of the booklets he filled with vocabulary lists from role-playing game books illustrates the motivating power various interests can provide in relation to language learning. Role-playing games, fantasy and science-fiction literature all proved to be important entry points and reasons for acquiring the English language for a number of participants involved in anime-manga fandom. Although role-playing games (and their

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134 For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Kacsuk (2011).

135 LD50.hu was a cyberpunk, underground music oriented website that grew into a social network for a number of related subcultures. PLANET://DAMAGE ([planetdamage.hu](http://planetdamage.hu)) is Damage’s personal website on mostly cyberpunk and underground music related topics. Both sites feature(d) anime related news items and articles.



computer game versions), fantasy and SF are not the same as anime-manga, the connections between these interests and the nature of fannish engagement with these interests is similar to and was often a precursor to the interest in anime-manga in my respondents stories of personal involvement – a point I will return to again in the next chapter in relation to subcultural clusters.

Alongside English – and to a lesser extent German, Italian, French and Spanish – participants in the anime-manga fandom also experienced and pursued learning Japanese.

Roland Markovics ‘Luggeriano’ (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): I’m sticking to the Japanese voice track, because it helps with word retention. This model [= watching anime in Japanese] also helps, because my vocabulary has increased a lot, and you can also hear the pronunciation from them. And I started to learn by myself out of interest, partly words, which I had learned from the anime, and then I also got hold of a language book, etc., and I also looked up things on the internet. And there was an opportunity in Slovenia [where I was studying at the time], at the faculty of humanities there they had an Asian languages department and one year they launched a Japanese language course, and I started to attend, and I attended for one and a half years. We got from the basics to the first fifty kanji. And I mostly got stuck at that level, because I didn’t work on it further. With the grammar and vocabulary I picked up I understand quite a bit by ear. Sometimes I don’t even wait for the subtitles to come out, I just watch it raw, and then you only have the Japanese voice track, especially for feature films, I understand around sixty-seventy percent by ear. Although the language of these is not complicated. I don’t know whether I will want to or be able to expand my knowledge in the future, but I do have a little foundation, and I didn’t allow this to get as rusty as my French, I actively practice this due to the anime. And it also comes in handy, if for instance I have to look for materials for an article or something, and there is no English reference and then [I

have to check out] the Japanese official page, and then I can mostly make out from there what I need, how the person spells their name, copyrights, stuff like that, you can look them up on these pages. Japanese is not that alien for me, for me not to be able to use it.

While the early waves of anime to reach domestic audiences were mostly dubbed into Hungarian (domestic terrestrial television channels), German (European satellite television channels) or English (imported videotapes and DVDs) with an increasing shift towards accessing fansubbed anime with original sound from the internet fans started to grow familiar with consuming anime in Japanese. Almost everybody coming from an anime-manga fan background mentioned, similar to Luggeriano above, how they have grown fond of the Japanese voice tracks and have come to both like the sound of and be able to recognize Japanese should they happen to hear it. Furthermore, most fans developed at least a limited vocabulary of words and expressions, which they are able to identify and understand while watching Japanese language anime. A number of participants have also at one time or another – or even repeatedly in some cases – started to learn Japanese as a result of watching anime or reading manga. They are usually motivated by the desire to better understand the Japanese voice tracks (the fan subtitles enable understanding the episodes), or in the case of manga in order to be able to read manga in the original, as some more obscure or less popular series are lacking in scanlations, or they wish to have unmediated access to the originals. However, it is only a dedicated few who actually end up mastering the language as the required effort for Hungarians to master Japanese is so much greater than in the case of Indo-European languages.

#### 5.2.4.2. Management and people skills

A large part of the operations of both the organized fandom and the fan market revolve around organizing and managing people. Convention organization, and running fan organizations and clubs are quite communication and management intensive tasks, and as

such necessarily lead to developing these types of skills. This aspect of working in relation to the fandom and the fan market was so important that it was repeatedly emphasized by several of my interviewees coming from the anime-manga fandom.

#### 5.2.4.3. Administrative skills

Although probably the most unglamorous aspect of subcultures and fan cultures, some participants will take responsibility for the administrative tasks surrounding the running of fan organizations, clubs or organizing conventions. Fan organizations are also sometimes able to apply for special grants, which again bring with them the burden of various administrative tasks. Participants who take on these tasks are usually involved with the steering committees and the financial positions within these organizations. The more general aspects of administrative knowledge and skills that are acquired as a result of these activities can be applied to work in other areas in general, and in certain cases even the more specific facets, such as how a particular grant application works, can also be transferred over to other activities and work.

#### 5.2.4.4. Commerce, marketing and sales related competences

Starting shops will, of course, lead to participants developing skills related to sales, commerce and marketing, but there are a host of activities which nurture competences related to this skill set way earlier than that stage or form of involvement. Fans will often collect, buy, sell, trade various items related to participating in the fandom. Whether its manga, anime DVDs, figures, cards, posters, cosplay wigs, etc. they are usually mostly expensive items compared to the disposable income available to participants and as such often lead to participants developing knowledge in relation to channels of access, prices and patterns of changes in market value. Helping out at conventions with retail activities, also contributes to involved participants learning about handling cash, receipts, inventory management and so on. Finally, even fan made and run non-professional events, clubs,

websites, products, etc. need to be advertised and positioned in order to attract new members, potential participants and buyers. Fans will start to develop an extensive knowledge and experience in relation to social media marketing, cross-promotion, direct marketing, brand building and so on, even before they become aware of the marketing vocabulary describing these activities.

#### 5.2.4.5. Industry related background knowledge

M. (30, HAA, translator): I started to develop an interest in a lot of things that had sort of interested me, but there was no motivation to go after it. For example the animation part of the whole thing itself, how is it produced, what's in a studio and where, what does a director do, what does a writer do, what do episode directors do. The production side of the whole thing itself, which interested me on a hobby level.

Another two respondents besides M. explicitly drew my attention to the fact that they are drawn to the background knowledge in relation to various cultural industries, and that their engagement with fannish activities is in part informed by and related to this interest. This type of knowledge can certainly be seen to enhance their enjoyment and appreciation of the various forms they enjoy (cf. Jenkins 1992, Okada 1996), it is also something that forms a potential backdrop to the types of jobs they end up pursuing.

#### *5.2.5. Quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences*

Quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences are the types of skills and knowledge that through the process of acquiring them also usually lead to the amassing of works (e.g. scanlated manga, pieces of art and illustration, created web pages) or items on a resume (such as events organized) or both (founded enterprises for example) which can then be presented as proof of one's proficiency in relation to the competences in question. This is the

most important difference in relation to the previous group of skills, and as already explained above the distinction between the two types of competences are more gradual than categorical. The following competences will be discussed in this section: a) *performance skills*, b) *translation and localization related skills*, c) *content, design and media production skills*, d) *IT skills*, e) *event organization skills*, and f) *entrepreneurship skills*.

#### 5.2.5.1. Performance skills

Zsuzsanna Zentay (24, co-creator of Moonlight Meido Tea House, cosplayer, head organizer of HoldfényCon and Cosplayer Expo events, creator of the Cosplay Charity initiative): There was a [training] with thirty participants and one with a hundred, and because they were gamified trainings I was conducting them, but this was the first time I had to do it without the head trainer behind me. And with the thirty participants group we didn't ask for a microphone, and it was kinda so-so. And then the hundred participants training came and we asked for a microphone, and the instant I had the microphone in my hand I became unstoppable. And this is probably due to the [experience of having been a] presenter at Mondo and Holdfény [conventions]. That microphone just gave me such a sense of security, as if I was standing there [= on the convention stage], and I was fooling around, and this is from there, I couldn't have learned it from elsewhere. And the program organizer girl was laughing "Zsuzsi, from now on you'll always get a microphone". It was very interesting, I still have it in me, that feeling of how much security that microphone gave me.

These types of skills are most common to cosplayers, who regularly both appear on and off stage enacting and presenting their characters and posing for photographs. As Zsuzsanna Zentay's example also demonstrates, however, the routine that one can acquire hosting events at conventions – either on the main stage or in any number of side or secondary venues – can be just as important and transferable in relation to work outside this setting.

Other settings in which participants also acquire performance skills include presenting radio programs, podcasts, videos and so on.

#### 5.2.5.2. Translation and localization related skills

Other than the already discussed foreign language skills, and strongly related to those, translation and localization related skills are among the most prevalent competences among participants in anime-manga fandom. Scanlation and fansubbing both involve a host of different skills from translation, typesetting, retouching (in overlap with image editing from the next section) to timing, subtitling, etc. But the learning with regards to translation and localization related skills also continues on into the professional involvement with these forms as the following quote illustrates.

M. (30, *HAA*, translator): This is a pet peeve of mine ever since, this is the other part of why I usually don't [like] Hungarian fansubs. Although it's different digitally. From the perspective of a lot of people subtitling means cutting up the text, getting it out there, getting it up on the screen, and thank you, and this is aaargh. You have to condense it, reformulate it, this also has an art to it. It has to be properly arranged, formulated, but you still have to pay attention to the way the character speaks. Would it say something like this? How do we translate this expression? If it doesn't fit, it's not that we reduce the font size, but rather, I don't know[, something]. This is a profession, you have to learn this, this also has parts which are not self-evident, special software. And then I had to learn how to write dubs, which came in handy later, when I had to work with dubs. That's the kind of skills I picked up.

The above quote from M. also demonstrates the potential tension between fan practices, expectations and professional approaches to translation, localization and presentation.<sup>136</sup>

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136 For a more detailed discussion of this tension see Cubbison (2005).

### 5.2.5.3. Content, design and media production skills

This group of competences is probably just as prevalent as translation and localization related skills, and includes everything from writing, journalism, photography and film making to image, sound and video editing. The development of these skills is tied most closely to fan fiction, fan art, AMV, *dōjinshi*, cosplay, cosplay photography, website creation and so on.

Zsuzsanna Zentay (24, co-creator of Moonlight Meido Tea House, cosplayer, head organizer of HoldfényCon and Cosplayer Expo events, creator of the Cosplay Charity initiative, regarding whether her background in cosplay is relevant for her career in photography): [...] But it does help a lot. Young girls come to me to have their portfolio made, well it's absolutely not irrelevant that I know how they should put their hands or how to stand, what's favourable what's not favourable. Also of course we ps-ed [= photoshopped, meaning image editing] our pictures ourselves, and that was really when I started to learn photoshopping, when I still cosplayed, it was definitely very good photoshop-wise.

The above quote from Zsuzsanna Zentay not only demonstrates another aspect of translating performance skills over into non-fandom careers – working as a professional photographer drawing on the experience of having been photographed in relation to cosplay –, but also highlights how the acquisition of skills in relation to media, image editing and creation can be strongly motivated by the desire to be able to present one's work, in this case cosplay creations, to the wider fandom. In other cases, such as fan fiction, fan art, AMV, *dōjinshi* creation or cosplay photography, the mastering of production tools and technology is a central aspect of the activity itself. Since a lot of these production tools are now digital, this skill set is often strongly related to the following set of competences.

#### 5.2.5.4. IT and technical skills

ZK (asking in relation to the overhaul of the soundofjapan.hu webpage): Do you know how to program enough, to be able to [create] the database, back end, front end?

Olivér Frank ‘Case’ (37, HAA, creator and host of the radio program *Nippon Groove* and the website SoundOfJapan.hu, concert and party organizer, *Mondo Magazine* columnist): Well, I kinda do it and I learn it as I go along. I’ve already had experience with WordPress [= content management and publication platform], because my street art blog, I have a street art graffiti kind of blog, streetartbp.hu, so I had already had to work with that because of that. That’s a simple blog, but I saw how WordPress worked, and that was still easy to do. My page [= soundofjapan.hu] was a nightmare to get done. I worked on it for two-three months. A lot of my spare time was spent on it. I read in to it during the process, of how to do what. And even the base template is not free there, you have to pay for it, and when I got stuck with something it has a really good support forum, or if I got completely stuck, I would ask around, that’s how I managed to bring the page together.

The creation and administration of websites – as illustrated in the above quote – was the most commonly cited activity among my respondents in relation to the acquisition of IT related competences. It is important to remember however, that different IT skills were also internalized in relation to working with various media formats and materials – an overlap with the skills in the previous group –, and as already noted, also in relation to basic scene relevant competences. Technical skills regarding the setting up and operating of lighting, projection and sound equipment on the scale of events was also mastered by participants who were involved in running events that required these.



#### 5.2.5.5. Event organization skills

Similar to the case of the previously discussed creation and running of clubs, even though this skill set has a major overlap with the already enumerated *management and people skills* and *administrative skills* I decided to include it as a separate heading in the present section on *quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences*, because event organization skills not only go beyond the other two overlapping areas of competence, but also produce a readily recognized body of work, namely the list of events the person has organized. The fact that event organizers were approached based on their previous events with work offers is an indication of the way this is a special skill set in itself, which also provides the organizers with a resume of reference works.

#### 5.2.5.6. Entrepreneurship skills

Out of my eleven respondents who pursued entrepreneurial activities only one had started out in a business outside of subculture and fan culture related enterprises. For the other ten their subculture, fan culture related businesses were their first ventures. This is quite a remarkable number and is a testament to the conduciveness of this environment for starting out in entrepreneurship, as the following quote from József Tóth explains.

József Tóth (33, head of Vad Virágok Könyvműhely): And as a first enterprise, I started my first enterprise with certain preferences [= wanting to publish comic books], and when I started my second enterprise, the third, [the second] doesn't matter, because the second one was sort of the shop [= Komikon comic book store was the joint venture of a number of domestic comics publishers]. When I started the third one, then the whole story started completely differently, and I could do it much more professionally, which I couldn't have learned anywhere else, if not in a sort of playground like this, a lighter scene [= comics and manga publishing]. You don't go into the InterContinental or the Gresham Palace [= now a Four Seasons Hotel] as a novice entrepreneur. [...] You can

start out with more experience in an enterprise that requires a sort of quite big preparedness. [...] And this environment was an environment, where you didn't [have to], this is a very light environment, a playful environment, with accepting people. It wasn't like we had to deliver a very high level service in all aspects. If there was a spelling mistake, or a publication had a problem, it was accepted, because we were young like that, and the buyers too. It was a kind of playful environment. And then when the next enterprise is considerably more pressing, there it's about more serious investments, then you can participate in these things in a much more experienced way, in this way also this environment was a good school.

Building on his experience with Vad Virágok Könyvműhely in comics and manga publishing, and also drawing on his professional experience with the press industry József Tóth started his second (third) venture by acquiring an on demand international newspaper print and delivery business that services the major hotels in Budapest. This move of both staying close to, but at the same time one step removed from the original subcultural business is characteristic of my respondents who are or became serial entrepreneurs. This pattern of career progression that both builds on the experience and potential resources accumulated in relation to the fan market, but which moves beyond that towards the wider field of cultural production will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

#### *5.2.6. Summary of skills and knowledge acquired in relation to anime-manga fandom*

The following table offers a visual summary of all the different levels and types of competences acquired in relation to anime-manga fandom explained above.

<b>Categories of skills and knowledge introduced by Hitzler et al.</b>	<b>Examples of competences acquired in relation to the anime-manga fandom and market</b>
<i>Basic scene relevant competences</i>	Mastery of conventions and lore
	Access to the culture
<i>Scene relevant competences capable of generating resources</i>	Cosplay building
	Creating and running clubs
<i>General use everyday competences</i>	Increased level of general media literacy
	Higher exposure to foreign languages and an increased knowledge of and exposure to foreign cultures
	Increased level of openness
	Development of native language skills
<i>Non-qualification type job-relevant competences</i>	Foreign language skills
	Management and people skills
	Administrative skills
	Commerce, marketing and sales related competences
	Industry related background knowledge
<i>Quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences</i>	Performance skills
	Translation and localization related skills
	Content, design and media production skills
	IT skills
	Event organization skills
	Entrepreneurship skills

**Table 5.1.** Summary of skills and knowledge acquired in relation to anime-manga fandom

Although further research into learning in anime-manga fandom would no doubt lead to an even richer enumeration of skills and knowledge mastered in relation to fan participation, the present overview is nevertheless ample enough for arguing the two most important points leading on to the following chapters. First, the common misconception regarding the folly or even dangers of participating in youth subcultures and fan cultures in general and anime-manga fandom in particular can be put to rest based on the richness of learning experiences and the motivating power these environments engender. Second, based on a detailed

understanding of the various competences that participants can come to master within this fan culture we can better appreciate the deeply intertwined nature of the subcultural and educational/employment trajectories of subcultural producers, to be explored in Chapter Six. The following subchapter will provide a further look at this interrelationship, this time focusing on the applicability of competences acquired within formal education.

### **5.3. The uses of competences acquired in formal educational in subcultural and fan cultural careers**

Although, the main focus of the present chapter is learning within fan cultures, it is important to also acknowledge the relevance of competences acquired within the realm of formal education in relation to subcultural and fan activities. The two most important skills in this regard – based on the accounts of my interviewees – were foreign languages and IT skills. In the case of foreign languages, however, as discussed previously, learning in relation to subcultural and fan interests often overtook or enjoyed predominance over the learning that happened within the formal educational setting. The synergies between the language acquisition taking place in the two settings were nevertheless present in a number of cases, and some of my interviewees attributed their foreign language skills to participation in formal (or non-formal<sup>137</sup>) education.

IT skills, especially web programming and systems administration knowledge, acquired within the framework of formal education, were put to good use by all, who studied these areas and tools. Creating a website for subcultural/fan content and interaction was both a way of applying these skills to a personally meaningful project, and an extension of the learning process itself, as the following example demonstrates.

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137 Non-formal education is used to refer to the various arrangements beyond formal education, which nevertheless take place in a manner that is structured by actors other than the participant (as is the case in informal learning), such as extracurricular or private courses and classes.

Meglivorn (39, HAA, creator of Manga.hu, typesetting editor at Mangafan): I was attending an IT school anyway, so, great, straight away we learn HTML and then later PHP and the rest. And I started to create a page about my hobbies, which would have also contained SF and fantasy and all kinds of other things back then. This [= Manga.hu] would have only been a part of it, but then somehow it turned out that this grew-grew-grew more and more, because this was what was coming in constantly at the time, had an effect on me as something new, while the fantasy market started to slide downwards right at the very same time, and the role-playing market also had its downturn and the like. So after a while I technically gave up on the other [stuff] and deleted it as it made no sense. This, however, increasingly grew-grew-grew, so much so that technically it grew beyond being my hobby page, and that's when I rewrote it in PHP, so that others could also write reviews and translations and such.

Meglivorn's example also illustrates how becoming increasingly involved in the fandom – moving from a personal hobby page to something that other users can also upload content to – can provide a push towards further exploring IT skills, in this case learning more about the scripting language PHP. Although website development was the most common outlet and training ground for IT skills – whether learned within formal education or otherwise – participants with educational backgrounds in information technology could call on these competences in relation to a number of other tasks, as the following quote from Zetto illustrates.

ZK: Have you taken advantage of your IT background within the fandom?

Zoltán Boda 'Zetto' (36, HAA, co-founder of the Miskolc Anime Club and the Miskolc Nihon Club, head of Migoto Cultural Association,<sup>138</sup> MondoCon organizer): We had to quickly put together a registration page for a LOL [= *League of Legends*] tournament

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138 The Migoto Cultural Association (Migoto Kulturális Egyesület) is a non-profit organization aiming to promote Japanese culture in Hungary. The association has a number of clubs across the country, the biggest of which is the Miskolc Nihon Club (Miskolci Nihon Klub). The focus of the clubs' activities usually revolves around anime-manga culture.

just recently. And then I did the database design and the back end development and my girlfriend developed the front end. I have a system, for instance, that helps with the administration of the matches, truth be said it can only handle linear tournaments. There were several occasions when we installed forums for organizing and etc. We now only use Facebook in the case of organizing in Miskolc [= Zetto's home town], for organizing things in Budapest it's still the forum, but it's a so-so thing, because it's simpler to post something to Facebook, so now we rely heavily on these things.

It is interesting to note that while a significant number of respondents completed further and higher education related to their activities as entrepreneurs or professionals, apart from the strong applicability of IT skills, only few participants felt that they profited in any significant way from their formal education. József Tóth<sup>139</sup> was one of the exceptions, whose educational background in press engineering and economics – and the work experience following on from that – was well aligned with the profile of book publishing and the types of tasks running such an enterprise entailed. A more common theme running through the interviews, however, was the lack of usefulness of formal education in relation to actual tasks in everyday operations. This was especially pronounced in relation to the necessary skills and knowledge required to run a business venture. A number of interviewees who had completed further and higher education studying commerce, business, economics and management all seemed to agree that the reality of how things are actually done and the material taught in schools has little overlap and the most important sources of knowledge for entrepreneurship came from accountants, relatives with experience in business or finance, and personal experience. This stands in stark contrast to the relevance of the skill acquisition taking place in the context of fandom related activities, which is a further testament to the importance of informal learning in subcultures and fan cultures.

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139 József Tóth (33, head of Vad Virágok Könyvműhely)

#### 5.4. Summary

When examining the emergence of subcultural producers from a career pathway perspective, it is important to understand how vocational skills and knowledge are acquired not only via participation in formal education, but also within the subcultures and fandoms these actors come from. The importance and role of learning within such cultures, while often acknowledged and hinted at, has been so far an under-examined topic within English-language scholarly accounts of subcultures and fan cultures. This chapter provided a discussion of two main facets of learning in relation to subcultural producers: first, *general aspects of learning in subcultures and fan cultures*, and second, *types of skills and knowledge acquired in anime-manga fandom*. The chapter also offered a cursory look at *the uses of competences acquired in formal educational in subcultural and fan cultural careers* – emphasizing the relevance of foreign language and IT skills mastered within these settings.

In the first subchapter on aspects of learning in subcultures and fan cultures I examined the way knowledge and skill acquisition takes place in these environments. Learning is an important element of subcultural and fan-cultural participation precisely because it is *appreciated* within these cultures. While being self-taught is a defining characteristic of such learning, peer learning and the social relationships that learning engenders, are equally important. Being self-taught is also tied to the “learning by doing” and DIY mentality common to subcultures and fan cultures. Anime-manga fandom is especially rich in examples, stretching from cosplay to scanlation and fansubbing, to name just a few such activities. Finally, learning is strongly linked to a subcultural/fan/scenic “work ethic”, expressions of which can be found within anime-manga fan culture as well.

In the second subchapter on types of skills and knowledge acquired in anime-manga fandom I offered an exploration and categorization of skills and knowledge participants master within anime-manga fandom, based on the typology created by Ronald Hitzler and his

colleagues. My examination of the competences mastered in relation to anime-manga fandom highlighted both the breadth of these skills and knowledge and their potential relevance for work-type activities. This link between fan cultural participation and educational/employment trajectories in the case of subcultural producers will be the topic of the following chapter.



## 6. Patterns of engagement and interests of subcultural producers in the anime-manga fandom and market

Most participants in anime-manga fandom engage in some form of informal learning within the bounds of the culture, as described in the previous chapter. It is only a smaller number of fans, however, who become so involved that they start to engage in producerly activities and go on to become subcultural producers. In the present chapter I will embark on an examination of the career patterns of subcultural producers – coming from anime-manga fandom and from related cultures – servicing the anime-manga fan culture.

ZK: And what was your parents' reaction to your decision [on moving into the business of trading card distribution]?

András Müller (37, head of HoldfényTeam): “Son, this is what you want to make a living off of, these stupid cards?”

Roland Markovics ‘Luggeriano’ (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): To this very day they [= parents] still haven’t grasped how big this is. They haven’t grasped how many people I deal with, and how much work I have with each issue, and how many thousand people it’s published for. Oh, and sometimes they see the [ad] spot I made on Animax, if they happen to switch over there. They’re not really interested, but they also don’t fully understand just how many things I’ve gotten myself into, they didn’t see that this would have a future.

As illustrated by the above quotes from András Müller and Luggeriano the choice to pursue a career – whether full-time or part-time – in youth markets is time and time again met with bewilderment or even negative feedback at first from parents and family. This recurring theme in a number of interviews is often a result of a mix of the lack of understanding of what these markets actually are, the view that children’s and teenagers’ interests are necessarily childish in nature, and the unprecedented and unknown nature of these possible

career paths. Entering full-time careers within these fields is indeed often a risky move and one that commonly involves a strong draw on the part of the participants in relation to the object of interest. This is one of the reasons why the career and consumption patterns of participants are often strongly interrelated in these markets. In the present chapter I will therefore offer a parallel discussion of the career patterns of subcultural producers and the changes in their interests and corresponding free time activities and consumption as related to their contribution to the anime-manga fandom and market. Finally, I will discuss how these two sets of patterns are not only interrelated, but also point towards the embeddedness of anime-manga fandom in the geek subcultural cluster. The patterns discussed in the present chapter in relation to career trajectories, changes in interests and connections within the subcultural cluster, will not only provide an overview of these phenomena, but will also serve as a springboard for the following two chapters, in which I will try to explain the logic behind these patterns.

### **6.1. Patterns of engagement of subcultural producers in anime-manga fandom**

ZK: Have you been to a meeting like that? [Referring to the *Budapest Anime Meet.*]

Hajnal [Dawn] (33, former acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): Yes, sometimes I attended.

ZK: When did you start to attend?

Hajnal: Ten years ago, approximately, it was then that I would actually go, because once I started working, I didn't spend my weekends on it any more, although I still did translations, so I did spend my evenings on translating and doing retouching.

The entry into late teen consumption patterns of shifted priorities along with the entry into higher education and/or work during early adulthood, post-adolescence often signals the end of intense subcultural participation (Macdonald 2001, Hodgkinson 2002). This is also true of

anime-manga fandom. This, however, does not mean that all ties will be severed, or that the practice and/or consumption of related activities and goods will not carry on to a certain degree (cf. Muggleton 2000, Hodkinson 2002, Bennett 2006), but time and other resources will be reallocated according to new priorities. It is at this point – which again, I can't emphasize enough, is not a certain age limit, but rather a new phase in the individuals own life – that certain subcultural members and fans will find themselves gravitating towards jobs or even certain career paths within their choice of vocational or higher education – as I discussed in the previous chapter –, which would allow for a continued engagement with the culture and for a “rate of return” on their acquired skills, knowledge and subcultural capital. For others the transition from subcultural or fan participation towards more formalized and central roles within the production side of these cultures comes about as a natural progression from volunteer work, paid work or private initiatives already undertaken during the height of participation within the given culture. Again, for some, there is a break in participation with a return to subcultural or fan cultural activities related to or inspiring a semi-professional, professional engagement with the infrastructural or business side of these cultures. It is important to keep in mind, however, that not all relevant actors in these markets actually come from within these cultures themselves, but rather often from related fields or in some cases even from further areas not necessarily directly related to these cultures, as will be discussed in the following.

Based on my interviews, both the engagement and interest patterns among subcultural producers active in the anime-manga fan culture and market demonstrated a striking structure in relation to the positions occupied by the participants within the fandom. As a result these patterns of engagement will be discussed as a function of the position occupied by the participants with regards to the different social circles of fandom. Actors from different positions played distinct roles during the different periods of the development of the fandom and market (introduced in Chapter Four). This subchapter will not only analyse how

different actors moved towards part-time and full-time work in the anime-manga fan market, but also how they moved away from these positions as their careers progressed and as the anime-manga fan market entered its decline. The examination of outward trajectories is especially important as it demonstrates the lasting impact that participation in this fan market has on the personal career progression of participants.

#### *6.1.1. Positions in relation to anime-manga fandom*

As explained in Chapter Four, one of the defining institutions of the development of Hungarian anime-manga (and Japanese rock and pop) fandom was the weekly *Budapest Anime Meet* held at fast food restaurants in Budapest from 1999 onwards. A large number of the core participants of these meets would go on to found the non-profit organization *Hungarian Anime Association (HAA)* in 2003 and participate in organizing the first anime conventions in Hungary. While the *HAA* seems to be the most important environment for the older generation of participants, who now dominate the anime-manga market as subcultural producers, there are other career pathways within the fandom – some related and some distinct from the hub of people and activities surrounding the *Anime Meet* environment –, and importantly, also from without its looser bounds. Within an increasing radius of distance compared to the *HAA* these would be:

- (1) *Budapest Anime Meet / Hungarian Anime Association*;
- (2) interest and activity-specific sub-communities formed by or around certain *Anime Meet/HAA* participants with members from within the *Anime Meet/HAA* crowd, but also from beyond those circles;
- (3) clubs, communities outside the orbit of *HAA*;
- (4) individual actors disconnected from the Hungarian fandom;
- (5) actors from related fields;
- (6) actors from distantly related fields.

#### 6.1.1.1. Budapest Anime Meet / Hungarian Anime Association

One of the most typical career patterns is having attended *Budapest Anime Meets* (*Anime Meet* in the following) and participated in the *HAA* and thus contributed to the fandom and either continuing to work on a volunteer basis within the *HAA* or moving on to working part-time or full-time within the anime-manga market. Participation in *Anime Meets* and the *HAA* contributed both to the development of a rich social network for the individual participants and to training and practice in a number of skills, which would later be useful in a number of different facets of the anime-manga market, as already discussed in the previous chapter.

The social networks and the experience of interacting with each other within the informal meets and the formal organization of the *HAA* have been important in providing actors with a ready pool of participants, whom they could trust and have had experience working together with. In this way the events organized by the *HAA* served not only as a training ground for participants, but also as a world within which proto-professional relationships could be forged, which could later be turned into fully fledged professional working relationships based on the recommendations and preferences of the actors working in more central roles, a point I will return to in the following chapter.

Defining members from the *Anime Meet/HAA* strata have played and still play an important role in the fandom, both as the leading figures of the most important official anime fan association, and in a number of cases as the founders and supervisors of further more specialized interest groups – to be discussed next –, but also going on to work for various companies servicing the fan market, most notably Mangafan/Mondo.

#### 6.1.1.2. Interest groups, sub-communities formed by or around certain *Anime Meet/HAA* participants

The distinction between *Anime Meet/HAA* itself and interest groups or sub-communities formed around certain *HAA* participants might seem slightly strained as the overlap in membership in these groups and *Anime Meet/HAA* members is sizeable, however, the reach and significance of these groups for members often overshadows the *Anime Meet/HAA* itself. Furthermore, the number of potential participants from within these groups is significantly larger than the attendees of *Anime Meets* or *HAA* membership, and thus warrants a discussion of its own. Nevertheless, it is important to note that core participants within these groups were/are often regular guests at *Anime Meets* and/or *HAA* members themselves.

Examples of such sub-communities or interest groups are the former audience of the scanlation site *Manga.hu*, which started around 1998-1999, and the Hungarian cosplay community originally organized around the site *Cosplay.hu* from 2007 onwards. As already mentioned in Chapter Four, *Manga.hu* was created and maintained by Meglivorn<sup>140</sup> – one of the first members to attend the *Anime Meet* from the very beginning and one of the founders and first steering committee members of the *HAA* –, and became the leading site for Hungarian scanlations for around fifteen years. The site's readership – due to its resource-like nature – far outstripped the core community participating in the discussions on the site's forums and contributing fan translations to the ever growing range of available titles on the site. The site not only provided Hungarian fans with Hungarian scanlations long before the wave of official Hungarian manga publications started from 2006 onwards, but has also contributed to both the training of future translators and editors working within Hungarian manga publishing, and creating a network of participants, which extends beyond the circles of *Anime Meet/HAA* membership. The site has thereby contributed to the establishing of an available pool of skilled and experienced participants, who could become a ready source of

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140 Meglivorn (39, *HAA*, creator of *Manga.hu*, typesetting editor at *Mangafan*)

recruitment. As Hajnal<sup>141</sup> enumerates, most all of the translators working for *Mangafan* were former participating members of the *Manga.hu* website community – contributing translations, taking part in the discussions in the forums – or were related to *HAA* members in one way or another.

*Cosplay.hu*, while almost ten years younger than *Manga.hu*, also grew out of the work of *HAA* participants – Venom, Yuriko and Salome –, leading to Hungarian cosplayers establishing their first own “formal” community under the aegis of the website. They have acted as the principal organizers of anime-manga cosplay events and competitions at various conventions, and are thus central to the Hungarian convention circuit, as cosplay is one of the showiest and crowd drawing aspects of these events. The *Cosplay.hu* community also stage their own smaller cosplay get-togethers and events, and produce media such as CosplayTV in relation to their area of interest.

These two communities are also excellent examples of the way the anime-manga fandom is further structured according to specific interests such as scanlation, cosplay, creating fan art, fan fiction, anime music videos and so on. This point will be further discusses in section 6.3.3 on *communities within communities* below.

#### 6.1.1.3. Interest groups, clubs, communities outside the orbit of *HAA*

The third group – interest groups, clubs, communities outside the orbit of *HAA* – have unfortunately received the least attention within my research as a result of much of the Budapest semi-organized fandom having some form of contact with the *HAA*, and also the limits of my research. One of the most notable such groups is the circle of fan translators and writers coming together around *AnimeStars Magazine*, introduced in Chapter Four. Further examples of these types of communities are the various smaller anime-manga fan

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141 Hajnal [Dawn] (33, former acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan)

associations and clubs around the country. These examples demonstrate that the Hungarian anime-manga fandom is not as strictly unipolar as my description might lead to believe. The dominance of the *HAA* (and Budapest) are nevertheless a reflection of the population distribution of the country, as discussed in Chapter Four.

#### 6.1.1.4. Individual actors disconnected from the Hungarian fandom

Dalma Kálovics (31, co-creator and co-host of the radio show *Japanimánia*, translator, editor of *Mondo Magazine*): I would orient myself towards the foreign net not the Hungarian, so what happens in Hungary, are there any communities or not, these things did not concern me at all for a long time, I didn't run into them, maybe once I checked whether there were any Hungarian language websites dealing with the topics I like and there really weren't any. That's around the time when the mailing list was starting out, probably it was the MAU list [*Magyar Anime Útmutató – Hungarian Anime Guide*], but since it seemed so embryonic, and also it didn't provide anything new, anything extra compared to the foreign content, so I just left it, so I went towards the foreign sources, and I also had no contact with the Hungarian fans for a long-long time.

[...]

And then we started [*Japanimánia*, the radio show] here in the E building of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics in November 2003, and that's when I first met the Hungarian fan strata, because the *HAA* too had formed in the summer of 2003 in Sopron, and in the autumn of 2003 the first convention was held in Budapest at that time still together with some science-fiction one I think at Radnóti [Miklós] Grammar School, and that's when we first met, and that's when I first attended a meet [= *Budapest Anime Meet*], which is held on Saturdays here-there-somewhere. That's when I first met these defining figures, who had started the *HAA*, and who organize conventions to this day, etc. And that was for me... as it turned out they too had started out like I had, and around the same time, a lot of them with German television, and there were also people with Italian TV experience and I could go on. [...] And that was



the first time we were at a convention as a radio, and we've been following things since, and it is also from [that point on that] I have experience with Hungarian fans.

The fourth group of participants are often among the most committed to the forms of anime and manga and at the same time demonstrate a highly professional attitude in relation to working within the anime-manga market, should they choose to do so. Several of my interviewees belonged to this strata. Similar to Dalma Kálovics's story above Roland Markovics 'Luggeriano',<sup>142</sup> for example, also related his personal journey within anime-manga fandom as initially a solitary one, with potential international sources of information and materials playing a more important role in the development of his engagement with anime and manga than contact with Hungarian sources or communities for a long time. In both their cases a more intense engagement with the Hungarian fandom came about in a markedly later stage of their involvement with anime-manga coinciding with their gradual entry into the productive side of fannish practices, clearly demonstrated in Dalma Kálovics's account above.

While lacking the embeddedness within the circles of domestic fandom of participants of the previous groups these actors nevertheless show a great propensity for establishing themselves within the fandom once they start actively participating. Dalma Kálovics has gone from starting the first Hungarian radio show about anime and manga – together with Antal Solti – to working as the translator for a number of manga titles and as an editor and regular columnist for *Mondo Magazine*. Luggeriano has also moved from the position of solitary fan to the centre of producing the fandom, through becoming a defining figure within the AMV scene first, and then establishing himself as a regular writer for and finally editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine*.

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142 Roland Markovics 'Luggeriano' (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan)

#### 6.1.1.5. Actors from related fields

The fifth group, *actors from related fields*, were quite numerous among my respondents, responsible for over a third of my interviews, thirteen in all. I would like to emphasize that the marked presence – although it would be hard to provide exact figures – of actors from related fields is probably a correct representation of the structure of this market.

Three of these actors came from the comics world, one of them selling foreign manga to the Hungarian audience, another broadening their comics publishing business with mangaesque titles, and the third involved in both of these aspects of expanding a comics trade and publishing venture. Another four participants came from a role-playing games background – which also entails an interest in SF and fantasy films and literature: with previous work writing for one of the first role-playing magazines in the country during the nineties and later translation work in science-fiction publishing in the case of one participant, a long history of involvement with role-playing game development, magazine editing and fantasy publishing in the case of another respondent, and general fan consumption in the case of the third and fourth participant, which then lead to starting a radio program on role-playing games for one of them. Three respondents came from a background in video games, SF and tabletop wargaming, one from SF and horror figure collecting; another respondent had been a leading figure of the underground/industrial/goth music scene and cyberpunk culture in the country. Finally, the owner and head of the biggest Hungarian collectibles and figure shop, with a history of successive shifts through sports towards fantasy/science-fiction/horror collectibles, to now incorporating also anime-manga related figures and accessories, although not embedded in geek culture on the level of personal interests, definitely belonged to this strata with regards to his position and career vis-a-vis anime-manga culture in particular and the wider geek culture in general.

Actors in this group are increasingly characterised by full-time employment, often running their own businesses. They are embedded in and draw on professional networks outside the field of anime-manga fandom. Also their goals often lie beyond the immediate horizon of the expansion of the anime-manga market in Hungary and their share within it, as in the case of entrepreneurs venturing into the field of anime-manga as an extension of previously well established core competences and businesses, or in the case of professionals for whom this can be seen as an opportunity for converting previously accumulated specialized knowledge and capital.

Actors coming from related fields will often demonstrate subcultural and fannish sensibilities as a result of having themselves been involved in subcultural and fan cultures. This can be seen in a number of cases, such as the way Danci, the first editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* was very much aware of the significance of *moral panics* (Cohen, S. 1980 [1972]) for the internal discourse of subcultures and fan cultures, having experienced firsthand the way defamatory articles in relation to role-playing games during the nineties helped heighten a sense of community within role-playing gamer circles. Or in the way certain titles will be selected for publication not necessarily based on market potential, but rather based on the sentimental value they hold for the publisher.

#### 6.1.1.6. Actors from distantly related fields

Finally, *actors from distantly related fields* are individuals who come from fields, which are related with regards to format, but not necessarily content, such as journalism, publishing or media retail and services. While these actors are initially the furthest away from the given market they can with time develop both valuable expertise within the field and networks, which can facilitate further career development.

The one interviewee among my respondents who clearly belonged to this group worked at HoldfényTeam's store, the largest domestic collectible figure and card game shop, and had come from a background in video rental. Over the years he had developed an interest in and understanding for the figure collector and collectible card gamer market and clientele, emphasizing the importance of being able to relate to and engage in meaningful conversation with their customers, and even engaging in collecting practices of his own. His career story is an example of the fact that not all participants within these markets will necessarily come from a subcultural or fan background, but also demonstrates how the particular nature of these markets – such as the importance shops play as focuses of subcultural or fan engagement and activity (see Vályi 2010) – is experienced as a special environment<sup>143</sup> even by participants who are not necessarily insiders themselves.

### *6.1.2. Longitudinal trends*

The following discussion will build on the periodization introduced in Chapter Four, distinguishing between the *Pre-HAA Period*, *HAA Period*, *Mixed Period* and *Mondo Period*. Although the changes in the personal histories of each and every one of my respondents do not strictly conform to the boundaries of these periods, this approach allows for a more accessible summary of the trends. However, as a result of the period boundaries corresponding to important changes in the fandom and market as explained in Chapter Four, a large portion of the changes in participants' engagement with the anime-manga fan culture and market and their personal career trajectories does map on to these periods quite well.

#### 6.1.2.1. Pre-HAA Period (1996-2002)

This period is the dawn of anime-manga fandom. As a result there are only a few people involved in servicing the culture either on a volunteer basis or from the business side. The most important volunteers are the people responsible for the creation of the first fan websites

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143 Further discussed in the following chapter.

like the *Hungarian Anime Guide* or *Manga.hu*. On the business side we find actors from related fields, specifically shop owners and staff of comics and figure shops, who are most strongly involved with the anime-manga fandom during this period. This level of involvement is nevertheless quite marginal for these businesses as the demand for anime-manga related goods, such as DVDs, manga volumes (often English and German editions) and figures, is still very low.

Since my sample of interviewees, as explained in Chapter Two, was based on producerly involvement with the fandom and market between 2006 and 2014 a number of businesses servicing the fandom during this early period like the tabletop wargaming and comics store Trollbarlang [Troll's cave] no longer existed by the time of my research. In a similar fashion, some of the early formative fan actors in the field active during this period had already exited the fandom by the time of my interview research. On the flip side most of the businesses I talked to did not yet exist, and quite a number of fan actors were not yet present in the anime-manga fandom during this period. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that nobody was making a living off of the anime-manga fan market during this first period, and engagement coming from within the anime-manga fan culture was limited to nonprofit contributions.

It is worth pointing out, however, that among my interviewees, there were volunteer contributions during this period from among all four strata of anime-manga fandom described above, creating websites, fansubbing, scanlating, and distributing fansubs. It can be assumed that in this first period, in this regard, there was no difference in the intensity of contribution based on the position of fans in relation to the core of the Hungarian fandom. The formation of the *Budapest Anime Meet* during this period, however, will lead to altering this configuration during the next period.

#### 6.1.2.2. HAA Period (2003-2006)

This period is clearly driven and dominated by the activities and people emerging from the anime-manga fandom itself, especially the Budapest core, with at the same time shops from related areas also experiencing a boost to their sales in relation to anime-manga goods. As I explained in Chapter Four, the establishing of the *Hungarian Anime Association* quickly led to a string of increasingly larger events being organized by the association. This resulted in a significant portion – and especially the more central and active members – of the *Budapest Anime Meet/Hungarian Anime Association* crowd participating in organizing and running these events on a volunteer basis. All my interview participants who had been members of the *Anime Meet* and *HAA* from early on were engaged in nonprofit activities during this period. Some of my respondents from outside of the core of the *HAA* also started to participate in nonprofit activities during this period, the most prominent example being the running of the *Japanimánia* radio show by Dalma Kálovics and Antal Solti. Furthermore, the first example of entrepreneurship from within the anime-manga fandom, the AnimeStars webshop was also established during this period.

Although, this period is characterized by anime-manga events establishing themselves as stand-alone affairs, that bring an increasing number of fans to the stalls of shops from related areas such as HoldfényTeam, Comicsinvest and Trillian, the market is still too small for individuals or businesses to depend on it as a sole source of income. This period is nevertheless highly influential for the career and engagement trajectories of a significant number of participants both from within anime-manga fandom and from related areas. First, while the previous period is characterized by the acquisition of basic scene relevant competences for many of my respondents, this is the period in which much of the learning related to non-qualification type job-relevant competences and quasi-qualification type job-relevant competences, discussed in Chapter Five, is initiated and undertaken. Second, alongside the *Budapest Anime Meet*, the *HAA*, and websites like *Manga.hu*, further channels

such as the *Japanimánia* radio show contribute to both strengthening the collective identity of the culture and to forging an increasingly dense network of connections among key actors. Third, the growing momentum of the *HAA* events helps catalyze the entry of business actors both from within and without the immediate fandom on to the fan market.

#### 6.1.2.3. Mixed Period (2007-2010 summer)

Although, as I explained in *Chapter Four*, the global financial crisis in the autumn of 2008 and the years of recession in its wake have had a lasting negative impact on the development of the anime-manga market – not the fandom, however – the *Mixed Period* is characterized by growth and optimistic plans on the part of most organizations, businesses and participants. The end of the previous *HAA Period* is heralded by the *HAA*'s and the Hungarian fandom's coming of age party, the 2006 autumn AnimeCon, where four out of the five main domestic manga publishers make their debut, signalling the entry of a new range of actors from related areas on to the anime-manga fan market.

Whereas during the previous two periods it was only actors working in retail from related areas who participated with a growing intensity in the anime-manga fan market, the Mixed Period boasts the largest number and range of actors contributing to the fandom and market. First, this is also the only period during which there is a real interest in the potential of this market from distantly related actors, such as book publishers, indicating that this is indeed the boom period of this market. It is not only Lára Books Corporation trying their hand at manga publication with Mangattack, but also publishers like Józsoveg Műhely, who published a number of manga related books, starting with the Hungarian translation of Jérôme Schmidt and Hervé Martin Delpierre's *Les Mondes Manga* [Manga Worlds] (Hu: *Manga*) for the 2006 Christmas season, again already signalling the end of the *HAA Period*.

Second, the arrival of the five main manga publishers on to the market is closely followed by the start of first *AnimeStars Magazine* and then *Mondo Magazine*. The three publishers coming from comics and SF/fantasy/role-playing games respectively significantly increase the portion of mangaesque publications within their portfolios before starting their withdrawal from the market during the end of the period. While none of the owners or employees of these businesses can be said to rely on the manga market exclusively for their living, the financial contributions from this market are at their peak during this period for all three of them. While Mangafan increasingly depends on people from within the fandom, such as participants around the scanlation site *Manga.hu*, *Mondo Magazine* initially provides work for both actors from within the fandom, but also coming from SF/fantasy/role-playing gamer backgrounds, such as the first editor-in-chief Danci, chosen in part for his experience with the long lived Hungarian role-playing magazine *Bíborhold/Holdtölte* during the nineties.

Third, the increasing volume of mangaesque publications, the demand for articles in both *AnimeStars Magazine* and *Mondo Magazine* and the translation and localization needs of Animax Eastern Europe, also starting from 2007, meant that more and more people from within the fandom could work in freelance, part-time and in a few cases even full-time employment positions. The involvement of actors from within the fandom in the market is also increased during this period by the arrival of a number of further fan established ventures such as the tea house Moonlight Meido Teaház or the figure and manga shop AnimeLand.

Finally, as explained in Chapter Four, this period is also when Mangafan and HoldfényTeam both start towards convention organization. Both rely on organizers with experience from HAA events, and also the network of helpers those organizers can mobilize. Thus, in effect, their entrance on to the convention market increases the demand for staff and organizers on the one hand, and provides a small number of further employment opportunities for actors



coming from within the fandom.

As a result of all these developments during the *Mixed Period*, some participants from the *Meet/HAA* core of the fandom start to move towards business positions within the fan market – as entrepreneurs, freelancers and employees – while still pursuing nonprofit contributions at the same time. Compared to the previous period when seven of the eight respondents who belong to this stratum were involved in only non-profit activities, only two of these interviewees reported having only pursued voluntary activities during the *Mixed Period*. This is mirrored in the wider fandom (strata 2-4) as well, with four out of six respondents who were active during the previous period in the fandom having only pursued some form of voluntary activity at that time. Whereas nine out of ten of my interviewees from the wider fandom (strata 2-4) pursued some form of for profit activity during the *Mixed Period*. It is important to keep in mind that my sample focused on subcultural producers, so it is to be expected that a large portion of them engaged in some form of for profit activity, however, the shift in the career stories of my respondents, especially those coming from the *Meet/HAA* core, is very telling of the changes that happened during this period.

#### 6.1.2.4. Mondo Period (2010 autumn - 2014 March)

The boom of the *Mixed Period* was followed by the stagnation and decline of the *Mondo Period*. As explained in Chapter Four, Hungarian manga publishing was declining, Animax started to cut back its anime content, and according to the accounts of all publishers and vendors fans were spending less and less on anime and manga related goods. The result of this was the exit of most outside business actors from the market. Actors from distantly related areas were the first to lose interest, and this was followed by the gradual retreat of actors from related areas of interest. According to the accounts of shops that had serviced the fandom from its early days the increase in demand they had experienced in the growth periods of the *HAA Period* and the *Mixed Period* had all but disappeared, which meant that

anime-manga related events became far less important revenue-wise, and their stock of anime-manga related goods was decreased accordingly. It wasn't just outside actors, however, who suffered from the decline, fan run businesses like Moonlight Meido, AnimeStars were forced to close down, while AnimeLand lowered its profile by becoming a webshop. Freelancers and employees also felt the downward turn, with paychecks getting smaller or workloads being renegotiated and increased. This has meant that even those participants who remained active in relation to the business side of the anime-manga market started to consider their options should the market disappear completely. I will discuss these exit trajectories – both planned and realized – of my respondents in the following section.

Looking at the trends in relation to engagement with the fandom and market according to strata, there are a number of interesting points beyond the general picture of decline I just described. First, examining the core *Meet/HAA* participants there is a clear pattern of polarization. Whereas during the *Mixed Period* most of these participants occupied an in-between position of both engaging with the fandom on a voluntary basis and trying their hands at various forms of for profit activities from entrepreneurship to freelancing and employment, the *Mondo Period* accentuates the process of separation started earlier. While some core participants go on to working full-time on the business side of the fandom for *Mangafan/Mondo*, relinquishing their voluntary work, others return to firmly position themselves on the nonprofit side of the divide determined to carry on the legacy of the *HAA*. This polarization replicates the same processes which have already occurred in relation to the related fandoms and subcultures, such as SF, fantasy, role-playing games, comics from which businesses emerged to service the fledgling anime-manga market, a point I will discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

Second, based on the participants in my sample the make-up of people engaged in part-time and full-time work in relation to the anime-manga market demonstrates a marked tendency.

During the *HAA Period* it is only actors from related areas who could be said to be in this position, then starting from the end of that period and continuing into the *Mixed Period* there is a pronounced influx of actors both from related areas and from various strata of the fandom towards different forms of part-time and full-time work. Finally, during the *Mondo Period*, with the exit of for profit actors from related fields, actors from the core of the fandom (strata 1) and individual actors disconnected from the Hungarian fandom (strata 4) seem to occupy part-time and full-time work type positions the most.

Third, even as the for profit actors from related fields retreat from the market, nonprofit actors from related areas can still emerge to service the fandom. This is the case with participants from the Alchemist Laboratory club, who represent a cross-section of geek cultural interests, with founding members coming from SF, fantasy, tabletop wargaming, role-playing games, anime-manga fandom and so on. Their club has a workshop space where anime-manga cosplay building also takes place, and they have been active in organizing various events aimed at both bringing together people from different backgrounds and facilitating the sharing of knowledge and expertise especially in relation to craft practices.<sup>144</sup>

### *6.1.3. Outbound trajectories*

Starting to work in fan cultures and subcultures has already been discussed by several authors (e.g. Kahn-Harris 2007, Hodkinson 2002, Vályi 2010), leaving work in these domains, however, has so far received almost no attention. One of the reasons for this is that most studies of subcultures and fan cultures dealing with actual participants are not longitudinal in nature. As a result researchers will approach respondents who are active in the given culture during the time of the study, but will not have access to people who have left the culture, since they are already gone, and will not know what happens to their

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144 In this way they are actively promoting both DIY and peer learning, discussed in the previous chapter.

respondents as they progress in life further. Thus, one of the most unique elements of my interview material is the perspective it provides on exit trajectories.

Following Bourdieu's lead, who emphasizes how the "numberless individual histories can be replaced by *families of intragenerational trajectories* at the core of the field of cultural production", in other words "typical forms of specific ageing" (1996: 259, italics in the original), I also try to identify the patterns found in relation to subcultural and fan cultural careers. I will address the entry into these markets, the problem of finding work within anime-manga fandom in the following chapter in detail, for now however, I would just like to note the overall trends.

Participants coming from within the fandom will generally move through phases of increasing involvement, usually leading to participating in some form of voluntary work, which then leads to skills, experience, contacts and reputation, all of which then help secure possible freelance or employed work, or in the rarer case the participant decides that s/he will pursue establishing their own enterprise. In the case of participants coming from related cultures the most common pattern is that of already working within that related culture and expanding into anime-manga fandom as a result of realizing the possible market potential there. The other less common pattern is having accumulated skills, experience, contacts and reputation within a related area of interest, one is contacted with job offers from the anime-manga market.

But what happens when participants leave the anime-manga market and what kind of effect does their former participation have on their further career trajectories? In the case of actors coming from related areas the answer is mostly that it has no significant effect. The majority of these participants never truly left their original field while participating in the anime-manga market, thus an exit from this market will just be a return to their former state of

concentrating on their core activities elsewhere. The most striking exception being Antal Solti,<sup>145</sup> whose career progression – discussed below – mirrors those of participants coming from within the fandom, in part as a result of his in between position of having entered the producerly side of the fandom from related interests, but having done so during the early stages of the fandom, and becoming so involved as to become a member of the *HAA*. In the case of serial entrepreneurs coming from related cultures – like József Tóth<sup>146</sup> cited in the previous chapter regarding entrepreneurial learning – their foray into the anime-manga market can be seen as either a sidetrack, as noted above, or a part of a natural career progression as explained below in relation to participants from within the fandom.

In the case of actors from within the fandom, the picture is quite different, with the impact of participating in the producerly side of the fandom and the fan market more pronounced. This is, in part, a result of the same differentiation in relation to moving towards full-time work versus remaining within the non-profit core of the subculture – explained above in relation to anime-manga fandom – that has already taken place within the related cultures from which subcultural producers cross-over into the anime-manga fan market. Naturally, it is mostly actors who have chosen to work on the business side of their respective cultures, who are interested in moving into the markets of related cultures.

Out of eighteen respondents who I categorized as belonging to one of the four strata of anime-manga fandom, four had remained stationary in their position, carrying on with their mundane work while pursuing their subcultural careers alongside it. One of them had no intention of being more involved in the fandom than she had already been in running the *HAA*, three of them expressed a desire to move into pursuing their subcultural careers full-

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145 Antal Solti (30, *HAA*, co-creator and co-host of the radio show *Japanimánia*, worked with A+ and then Animax Eastern Europe at AXN in various positions, former press coordinator for the *HAA*, editor of *Mondo Magazine*)

146 József Tóth (33, head of Vad Virágok Könyvműhely)

time should the opportunity arise, but had mostly resigned themselves to this not being a real possibility. A further two of these eighteen participants from within anime-manga fan culture returned to their former professions – distinctly different from the activities they pursued within the fan market. Finally, the remaining twelve of these participants all experienced either partial or full changes in direction with regards to their careers and/or a natural career progression stemming from their participation in the fan market. I will examine these careers progressions and changes in more detail as they share a deeper pattern underlining the embeddedness of anime-manga fan culture in the wider field of cultural production.

By natural career progression I mean a movement through stages of involvement and learning that frequently lead to jobs outside the fan market that are, nevertheless, often based on the skills and experience accumulated within the fandom, but at the same time are also aligned with the original educational and work trajectories of participants. The most model-like examples of pure progression are those of Antal Solti – from a related fields of interest background – and M.,<sup>147</sup> who comes from the *Meet/HAA* strata. By the end of the *Mondo Period* both of them had left the fan market behind, working in positions that are natural fits for their tertiary education in journalism/communication studies and English language and literature respectively. Their career stories are nevertheless not about entering the fan market and then exiting to pursue careers that are more suited to their original educational attainments. Rather their participation in the fan market is an organic part of their trajectory leading from education to employment. Antal Solti, as already mentioned, started the *Japanimánia* radio show together with Dalma Kálovics, this led to his exposure to anime-manga fan culture and his subsequent application to work on the anime television channel A+ for Minimax. Following the acquisition of A+ by Sony Pictures Television, and the launch of Animax Eastern Europe, he became responsible for overseeing the channel and its contents in various positions throughout the years. With the impending exit of Animax

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147 M. (30, *HAA*, translator)

Eastern Europe Antal Solti was gradually assigned new roles at AXN, a family of specialist television channels also owned by Sony Pictures Television, where his experience with acquisition, localization and broadcast programming through his work on the anime and later youth channel was translated over to a more general field of broadcast programming and all-round TV channel management. As he explained to me:

Antal Solti (30, *HAA*, co-creator and co-host of the radio show *Japanimánia*, worked with A+ and then Animax Eastern Europe at AXN in various positions, former press coordinator for the *HAA*, editor of *Mondo Magazine*): I've watched way more anime and have engaged with the topic much more than the average viewer, compared to the average fan, however, way less. I was somewhere in the middle, not in a scientific way, but I could use my knowledge in a practical way in the field. Looking at what I am engaged with now, it is the programming that I've learnt and stuff like that, that I can apply to other genres. And based on that whether it's a channel broadcasting nature programs or movies, it's the same, you have to do similar things with them. You have to be knowledgeable about them and you have to immerse yourself in the topic, you have to learn the things the channel is about, but I could work with any channel, that is what I have learned. It's now not because of my specialist knowledge [in anime] that I can work with a given channel.

M.'s story is quite similar in the way her participation in the fandom and later the production side of the anime-manga market provided an organic route towards positions that were in line with her original studies and background. She had attended Japanese classes during her studies towards her master's degree in English language and literature, and had gradually taught herself Japanese on the side. She was an active scanlator in the fandom, and this was the reason she was contacted to work on the official versions of anime and manga in Hungarian. Her work at Animax first involved proofreading other translators' works, later on however she started to work full-time on translating anime series for the channel. This led

her to work as head of production for the company which at the time had been producing the subtitles for Animax, but now working on BBC series, which then led to another position working for a dubbing studio, again outside the field of anime. M.'s career in translation, subtitling and dubbing started out with anime and manga, but similar to the career of Antal Solti, shifted to the more general field of cultural production no longer anchored to anime and manga, as a result of the skills and contacts acquired along the way.

The case of career trajectory shifts provide an even stronger argument for the embeddedness of the anime-manga fan culture and market in the larger field of cultural production. I will again offer two examples from among my respondents' career stories, which exemplify in a model-like fashion the impact that participating in the production side of the anime-manga fandom can have on one's career trajectory. Both Szilvia Pravda 'Uran' and Roland Markovics 'Luggeriano'<sup>148</sup> originally came from educational backgrounds in the natural sciences, but now both of them see their possible employment futures based on the skills and experience accumulated working within the anime-manga fan culture and market. Uran, a founding member of the HAA, who came to be the head organizer of a number of the association's conventions, and one of its most defining members, originally studied towards a degree in biology. After discontinuing her studies in the natural sciences she later completed a degree in marketing specializing in event organization, which was directly related to her long-time involvement with organizing HAA events and conventions. Luggeriano, who, as already discussed above, was one of my respondents who developed a strong engagement with anime and manga disconnected from the Hungarian fandom, went on to pursue a PhD in physical geochemistry after completing a degree in environmental management. After having to discontinue his doctoral studies he gradually got actively involved in anime-manga fandom, first producing anime music videos, then going on to

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148 Roland Markovics 'Luggeriano' (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan)



write articles for Mondo, which led to him becoming editor-in-chief of the magazine. Although, like most respondents working full-time in the anime-manga fan market he also expressed an interest in continuing to work within this field if possible, when I asked him where he would turn to should he have to look for other employment, his answer reflected the fact that his career trajectory has now been altered as much as that of Uran.

Roland Markovics ‘Luggeriano’ (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): So far I haven’t been able to find a job in my profession, five years have passed and I have nothing on my resume, I would basically be an entrant level employee, so I’ve given up on ever ending up being there. And the past years have taught me things and I can see what I am good at. And this organizing and coordinating type work suits me really well. And I can also take the stuff it entails, the monotony, having to talk to a lot of people, keeping track of and keeping deadlines.

Although natural career progression and career trajectory shifts offer a very good description of the twelve participants’ stories, who coming from anime-manga fandom experienced a major impact on their careers as a result of their participation in the fandom and market, I would like to draw attention to the way certain career stories may fall in-between the two models, resembling either the one or the other based on the stress one places on the particular episodes of the story. The former AimeStars webshop operator, and founder and editor-in-chief of AnimeStars magazine, Péter Keczei’s trajectory is a perfect example of one such story. He graduated with a master’s degree in economics, and now works full-time as a graphic designer for Formatex Ltd. Although his foray into entrepreneurship with the AnimeStars webshop, does seem to be a natural fit for a degree in economics and would follow the natural career progression model, and thus him ending up working as a graphic designer would seem like a major career trajectory shift, when asked about his move towards the latter profession his story offers a picture of natural career progression once again.

Péter Keczei (27, former head of AnimeStars webshop and founding editor-in-chief of *AnimeStars Magazine*): This was Formatex Ltd. They had a contract with Spin Master, and then they contacted me, because I think they decided that this [= *Bakugan*] is in some way related to Japan, and that they would advertise in our magazine [= *AnimeStars*], when the toys will arrive. And one or two months later they decided to license the *Bakugan Magazine* as well, and they asked me to edit it, because I already have a couple of years of experience in this culture and also magazine editing. In that I already had more, because I had actually started newspaper editing during the end of high school, the school newspaper in 2001. And then in 2002 and 2003 I still went back to edit the school newspaper during my university years. And after that I edited websites. The real magazine editing started with *AnimeStars*. *Bakugan Magazine* started in September 2009, and from that point on I was constantly involved in the marketing work of Formatex, editing catalogues, posters, banners, the Hungarian localization of toys' boxes, translating instructions and editing them with regards to graphics if it was necessary.

In light of Péter Keczei's emphasis on his long-time involvement with editing and graphic design it is rather his education in economics, which is positioned as a detour. And indeed he explained that his choice to pursue that degree was more based on the popularity of economics degrees at the time, and his lack of interest in the other fields of study on offer in his home town of Miskolc, where he wished to remain during his university years. This example also highlights the way previous creative endeavours and interests can also feed into subcultural and fan cultural engagements.

## 6.2. Patterns in the interests of subcultural producers in anime-manga fandom

A further unique aspect of my inquiry related to career progression is the examination of shifts in the interests of producerly participants. Since participation in subcultural and fan markets is often tied to having an interest in the focal concern of the given culture, especially among subcultural producers, I wanted to understand how this interest related to other interests, and how it changed over time. During my second round of interviews I was especially curious to see how the changes in the market and the life-stages of my interviewees had affected their interest in and actual consumption of manga and anime. In the following I will first discuss the patterns in the interests of participants coming from the fandom, and then focus on actors from related areas.

### *6.2.1. Changes in interests for participants from within the fandom*

The single most important trend for actors coming from the fandom (strata 1 to 4), is that over the years the majority of these participants have demonstrated a declining interest in anime/manga. This is in line with the interviewees' life-cycles, as changes in interests and work and family commitments step in. The question is, are there any patterns within this overarching tendency? Although this is a small sample, it does lend itself to constructing a typology of engagement with geekish interests. The majority of my respondents seemed to adhere to the following four main categories.<sup>149</sup> There is no value hierarchy among these patterns; they simply represent different modes of engaging with interests over an extended period of time.<sup>150</sup>

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149 I have excluded one participant from this categorization, as he does not adhere to any of these patterns. This also signals the potential limits of the present categorization.

150 Furthermore, even though in some cases these patterns align well with individual participants changes in interests, in a number of cases it is more an in-between position among two of these types, in which cases I have categorized participants based on markers I felt were more significant in that particular case, but which could surely be argued both for and against.

- (1) **“Connoisseurs”** were heavily engaged in a small number of interests, which they would consume in depth and in an ongoing manner. These participants did not stop consuming anime and/or manga if it figured among their interests.<sup>151</sup> (six respondents)
  
- (2) The group I name **“Vanguard”** are in sync with the latest waves of interest sweeping across European and North American geekdom, and as a result have mostly stopped watching anime and reading manga by 2014, and named current European and North American fantasy and science fiction television series as their main foci of interest. (four respondents)
  
- (3) **“Omnivores”** have always been interested in the widest possible range of geekish endeavours and have always consumed all those forms. For them new preoccupations merely get added to all their previous interests; as a result they still watched anime and read manga, although more selectively than during the height of their initial introduction to these forms. (five respondents)
  
- (4) **“Makers”** are focused on creating things, and as such when anime and/or manga are no longer conducive to their drive for creating, they will move on to a different interest. (two respondents)

This typology not only reflects the individuals’ relationship to anime and/or manga but also their connection to other interests. According to a number of my interviewees, one of the defining characteristics of the Hungarian anime-manga fandom was the background most older participants – born in the early eighties or before that – had in SF, fantasy and role-

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151 For Japanese music fans anime and manga can be secondary interests, despite their strong connection to the fandom.

playing games. This seems to be confirmed by my sample, as seven of my respondents from within the fandom had mentioned they were interested in these areas prior to or alongside their interest in anime and/or manga. The other two most often cited preceding or parallel interests were computer games (seven cases) and comics (six cases). Other than these interests animation, films, literature, and politics were all mentioned by at least one participant, with history cited by two as early interests. Music was, of course, named as an interest by the two Japanese music fans in my sample. Football was also mentioned by one participant.<sup>152</sup> Finally, floorball, ballroom dancing, fishkeeping and collecting ornamental plants were the most surprising prior or parallel interests mentioned.

Concerning their interests during the second round of interviews, the most common change had been the popularity that European and North American television series now enjoyed in the consumption patterns of a number of respondents. While seven interviewees mentioned that they follow television series, four explicitly emphasized the prominence of Western TV series for their leisure pursuits. Gaming also became more pronounced with two more participants citing video games as an important pastime. Finally, three participants had a markedly different set of interests by 2014, revolving around sports, and creative endeavours like photography or cabinet-making.

Despite the changes there is a surprising level of consistency in the patterns of interest reported by my interviewees, and this is a point I will return to in the section below on subcultural clusters. Another noteworthy point is the distribution of these four types with regards to the four strata of fandom identified in the previous section. The “vanguard” pattern was found only among core *Meet/HAA* participants (strata one), while three out of four actors disconnected from the Hungarian fandom (strata four) demonstrated the

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152 The fact that it was only mentioned once is in itself noteworthy, as it is one of the most popular sports in Hungary.

“connoisseur” pattern. Although, I must stress again, that these are very small numbers, and all inferences should be treated more as hypothesis on this level of analysis, these two points regarding the distribution of these patterns seems to correspond to the role of the social aspect of fandom. Community, like the *HAA* and the various networks it spawned, on the one hand can have a strong power of retention, with regards to participation and contribution to the fandom, as clearly demonstrated in Kíra’s explanation.

Kíra (28, *HAA*, originator of the idea that led to the *Budapest Anime Meet*, treasurer of the *HAA*, explaining about the *Anime Meet*): During the first couple of months we really did mainly discuss manga and anime. That’s where I got to know the *Slayers* anime and *Oh My Goddess!* through Meglivorn, I received *Bastard!!* on videotape from Mufurc. I learned about manga and anime that were already considered classics at the time. Then after two or three months, if you meet with people weekly, you start talking about other things as well. Friendships also developed. And then during the course of a couple of years this became a circle of friends, and to be honest I haven’t been watching anime, manga for two, three, five years now, but the friendships have remained for the most part.

This quote also helps draw attention to the way fandom participation can mean very different things for people. Even though my present discussion centres on interests, the roles these interests fulfil can vary greatly. This is also probably why the “connoisseur” pattern is dominant among the group of participants who have developed their interests separate from the Hungarian fandom. In their case the engagement with the subject matter itself is significantly more important than the social interactions that can develop around shared interests related to those topics. On the flip side people demonstrating the “vanguard” – and also the “omnivore” – pattern are usually more integrated within the wider geek culture, whereas “connoisseurs” are more strongly attached to one or two areas of interest in particular.

In relation to their embeddedness in geek culture, “makers” seem to be the least attached, which stands in stark contrast to the central creative role they can exert within the fandom, while it is still the focus of their creative energies. Indeed, it was this very tension, coupled with the strong connection between career progression and interests that warranted the creation of this category. The two participants that adhered to this pattern, Zsuzsanna Zentay and Péter Keceli, both took on central roles as entrepreneurs and organizers within the fandom, which at the same time served as an outlet for their creativity – to name only the most prominent of these activities, cosplay and magazine design, editing respectively. Their enterprises, the tea house *Moonlight Meido Teaház* and the *AnimeStars* webshop and magazine both played important roles in the development of the Hungarian anime-manga fandom. And even though – following the closing down of Moonlight Meido – Zsuzsanna Zentay returned to working within the fandom as the head organizer of a number of HoldfényTeam’s conventions and even started the *Cosplay Charity* initiative,<sup>153</sup> both actors had almost completely left the fandom behind by 2014. Zsuzsanna Zentay went on to pursue a career in photography, and Péter Keceli moved into working in graphic design full-time.

Turning towards the relationship between career trajectories and patterns of interest, it is clear – based on the way I’ve defined the category – that “makers” leave the fandom once their creative energies are channelled elsewhere, however, it seems that actors demonstrating the “vanguard” sensibility still remain active within the fandom alongside “connoisseurs” and “omnivores”, even when they have moved beyond their interest in anime and manga. While “connoisseurs” are inherently bound to the form, it is interesting to explore the types of motivation and rewards that keep “omnivores” and the “vanguard” working in relation to anime-manga fandom. In the previous quote from Kíra we have already seen that the social aspect of participating in anime-manga fandom can exert a strong power to retain actors even

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153      Cosplay Charity aims to harness the exposure and attention some of the most well-known Hungarian cosplayers enjoy in order to raise donations for various causes.

after they might have lost interest in anime and manga. There are, however, further non-monetary incentives (such as the *sense of satisfaction* stemming from the work being done, the opportunity to *express one's identity*, the *recognition* garnered in relation to these activities, and finally, the appeal of *giving back to the community*), which contribute to keeping participants active in relation to anime-manga fandom, and which will be explained in relation to a more detailed look at the rewards – and the underpinning subcultural field logic – fan subcultural markets entail in the following chapter.

#### *6.2.2. Changes in interests for participants from related areas of interest*

The thirteen respondents coming from related cultures had very similar structures of interest to those coming from within the anime-manga fandom. Science fiction (seven cases), fantasy (six cases), comics (five cases), role-playing games (four cases), video games (four cases) were the most often cited initial interests. Music (three cases), wargaming and air plane modelling (two cases), films (two cases), figure collecting, martial arts, cyberpunk, motocross and sports were all also mentioned as prior and parallel interests. It is worth noting that only one of my respondents did not mention any prior interest other than sports. The twelve other participants seem to be just as entrenched on the interest side in geekdom as they are in relation to their work activities, career trajectories and voluntary contributions.

The changes in interest for these respondents was in part related to their exposure to the wider anime-manga fan culture, but also connected to the overall trend observed in relation to participants from within the fandom. Members of the Alchemist Laboratory, for example, were inspired to take up cosplay building or pursue it more than they had before. Four people said they watched TV series, although one of them had already developed an interest for the form, prior to the current wave of popularity they enjoy. There was even a case in which there was interplay between the two effects of an exposure to anime and manga, and the rise of European and North American TV series within the wider geek culture. One respondent



noted how watching anime had helped him develop an interest in TV series, as he mainly preferred reading prior to that. Over the years respondents also developed interests in other related areas of geekdom, such as wargaming, or fantasy novels. And of course some completely unrelated new interests were also reported like driving and cycling. Although, on the whole the picture seems pretty consistent with an overall geekish sphere of interests, I was also curious about anime and manga consumption among this group of interviewees as well.

Although the above introduced categories of “connoisseurs”, “vanguard”, “omnivores” and “makers” provides a good description of the patterns of interest of all but two of these participants, granted we replace anime-manga with their original spheres of interest. For this very reason, I will instead discuss their consumption of anime and manga along a different and more appropriate axis. Their relationship to anime and/or manga falls in three well-defined categories. 1) First, there are those participants who generally do not read manga or watch anime, as it is of no interest to them, and is not necessary for their work in relation to the anime-manga market. 2) Second, there are respondents who read manga and/or watch anime initially purely for work reasons. 3) Third, participants coming from related areas, who nevertheless have an interest in anime and/or manga, and as a result watch and/or read them in small to moderate amounts.

1) Three of the four respondents who in general do not read manga, nor watch anime work in retail, the fourth participates in running the non-profit Alchemist Laboratory club. Neither of these participants’ jobs or activities depend on a detailed knowledge of the contents of anime or manga. Furthermore, their specific interests lie elsewhere, even vocally preferring US comics over manga or Western cartoons over anime.

2) The four actors who started to read manga and/or watch anime mainly for work purposes all had jobs in relation to the content industries, such as magazines, publishing and broadcasting. In Chapter Five I have already quoted Danci in relation to his struggle to familiarize himself with anime and manga as the first editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazin*. His example is a perfect illustration of how important it becomes to be intimately familiar with the actual contents of manga and anime series, if one is to translate, localize, publish, broadcast them or write about them according to high standards of quality – I will return to this point again in the next chapter. As a result it wasn't just these four respondents, who read manga and watched anime due to work requirements, but rather all participants involved in such work both from within the fandom and from related areas. The following quote – leading on to the third group of participants – illustrates, how such work related pressure to consume manga and/or anime could encroach on one's enjoyment of these very forms.

ZK: Do you still read comics?

József Tóth (33, head of Vad Virágok Könyvműhely): I read some, I am now again in that stage, when I can read comics just for the fun of it. While I was publishing, it wasn't always out of enjoyment that I read comics. But then often it was – the main profile of Vad Virágok are comics aimed at mainly female readers, which I can't say I was that well read in, and I had to read a lot of series for professional reasons, I wouldn't say it's my favourite. But now I can reread or finish my favourite Urasawa Naoki series and for my pleasure only, and I can even enjoy it. You know, when you were in one of those harder situations with the distributor or I don't know, it was hard to read comics in a care free manner. [...] I can read comics carefreely again, a little more than when I was publishing, because I always had to read what had to be read, and sometimes quite big quantities. When a title comes up, you have to read all the volumes, then you don't read your favourites, rather what you have to.

3) As the above quote indicates, József Tóth is one of the five participants from related areas who demonstrated an active interest in anime and/or manga. These respondents all enjoyed and had knowledge about these types of works. Their interest in them, however, was usually focused on a particular series, or as in the above quote a particular author, and did not warrant their identification with anime-manga fandom. In the case of József Tóth, for example, reading manga was understood in the wider context of enjoying comics (with emphasis on US and European comics in the Hungarian context), the world with which he identified as belonging to. In other cases participants had completely different interests, such as wargaming and airplane modelling for DASCÓ, which acted as the primary source of identity, and consuming anime or manga just happened to be an activity that one does, but which does not warrant any special attention.

The way an interest in anime and/or manga was either cultivated by actors from related cultures alongside their primary passions or was developed as a result of participating in the anime-manga fan market on the one hand, and the pattern of continuing working in relation to anime-manga fandom even after having lost interest in these forms on the part of participants from within the fandom on the other hand both point toward the overarching connections that bind all these related cultures together. This interrelationship among the cultures of the geek subcultural cluster in general and the position of anime-manga fandom vis-a-vis these other subcultures and fandoms in particular will be the topic of the following final subchapter.

### 6.3. Anime-manga fandom embedded in geek culture

Szilvia Pravda ‘Uran’ (29, HAA, head organizer of HAA conventions, regarding her future preference for possibly working with fandom specific events as opposed to general event organization): I would get along with gamers, ‘cause half the anime people are stone geek, my husband’s also a programmer, I also do HTML design, no problem with that. I’ve just ordered a *Diablo III* t-shirt, geekness overflows with us. We’ve always had good relations with SF-ers. With Tolkienists, we have contacts in fantasy circles. These, really like, it’s hard to sum up, Comic-Con is the best I could describe it with, San Diego Comic-Con, what you find there, the TV fans, the cinemaphiles, [everything] that simply has an explicit fandom, this can be anime, it can be series, it can be TV, any kind of comics, but we understand each other, this is one gang. We might diss each other because you like Marvel and I’m into DC, you like Korean manga and I like Japanese, but it still stems from the same stalk. I think Trekkers started the expansion of the subculture on the, like, convention level back in the day in America, and since then this has spread out to all the subcultures, and this is great, this is why I would also like a similar [event], this is why I liked HoldfényCon [= referring to the first large-scale HoldfényCon in the summer of 2010], really bringing these together, because there are really a lot of common points. Most anime [fans], as I see it, are also the members of at least one other subculture as well, either a gamer or trekkie or anything, I’m constantly hanging out on series junkies, I’m very into Ameri[can] series now, so something extra geekness accompanies it.

Uran’s account echoes Jenkins’ description (1992) of television series fans, with participants enjoying involvement in a number of fandoms concurrently. But as Uran’s wording and examples makes clear the boundaries of these fandoms generally fall within what is understood as the wider *geek culture*, encompassing among others anime, manga, science-

fiction, fantasy and superhero comics.<sup>154</sup> As Acheron, founding *Anime Meet* and HAA member and later MondoCon head organizer, pointed out to me – echoing my own research approach – the so called wider geek culture has undergone shifts in interest and focus during the past thirty years.

The continuity of this meta-formation can be traced especially well when looking at the work and career trajectories of subcultural and fan producers. Participants who were influenced in Hungary by the SF boom of the seventies and eighties – with *Star Wars* reaching Hungarian cinemas in 1979 and the speculative fiction magazine *Galaktika* published from 1972 onwards – would go on to operate the shops and magazines, which would be formative for the next generation of geek cultural enthusiasts. The major defining influence for this second wave of participants was the arrival of role-playing games, with fantasy literature and cyberpunk – usurping traditional space operas within SF – becoming the defining genres of the nineties. A moral panic emerging in Hungary during the mid-nineties regarding role-playing games further helped cement the subcultural group consciousness of this generation. The vanguard of anime and manga enthusiasts grew out of this wider culture of SF, fantasy and role-playing game aficionados and would go on to create and operate the organizations and infrastructure for the newest generation of geek cultural fans, whose main interests revolve around manga, anime and online multiplayer computer game environments (in lieu of tabletop role-playing games).<sup>155</sup>

The present subchapter will therefore offer a more detailed exploration of how the geek subcultural cluster is constituted and its relevance in relation to anime-manga fandom and the development of the pertaining fan market. The first section exploring *the importance of*

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154 The point that she also includes IT related professions and skills as markers of geekness will be taken up in detail in Chapter Eight.

155 The fact that this progression of geek cultures is not a Hungarian specific characteristic can be seen via a number of examples from Poland (Bolałek 2011), the US (Eng 2012a, 2012b) and even Japan (Okada 1996, 2008, Yoshimoto 2009, discussed in detail in Chapter Eight).

*genre, theme and format* will address how and why linkages can come to be formed among related cultures. The next section on *the relevance of the geek subcultural cluster for anime-manga fandom* will broaden the horizon of the present discussion by offering a summary look at the connections of the wider anime-manga fandom in Hungary to related cultures and interests. The third section on *communities within communities* revisits the problem already raised in Chapter Two regarding the level of focus for discussing these cultures. Finally, the summary provides insights in relation to the effect the embeddedness within the geek subcultural cluster has on the development of the anime-manga fandom and market and leads on to the discussions in the following final three chapters.

#### *6.3.1. The importance of genre, theme and format*

One of the reasons for the prominence of this group of actors within the market is the significance of the overlap in genre and format when it comes to anime-manga and western comics and an interest in SF, fantasy and role-playing-games. Manga and western comics both share the comics format of panels containing pictures and words arranged on each page. Although manga has a certain number of distinguishing features (cf. McCloud 1994, Cohn 2013), which sets it apart from western comics it is still more readily accessible to readers, who are already familiar with the medium on the one hand, and easier to adopt for publishers, who have experience with comics layout and editing on the other hand. Thus as a result of an overlap in the audience of western comics and manga and the relatively small size of these respective markets in Hungary it was comics retailers, who were the first to start to cater to the emerging manga buying audience, and it was comics publishers, who started to branch into manga publishing seeing the increasing interest in the format.

ZK: How did you start out [in anime and manga]?

Meglivorn (39, HAA, creator of Manga.hu, typesetting editor at Mangafan): A good ten-fifteen years ago, even more, because this isn't an instantaneous like thing. Ever since I

can remember, literally, we could go back to third year in elementary school, I was into SF and fantasy like this, at the time mostly into SF, because of Nemere<sup>156</sup> and co., and then later fantasy and role-playing games and the like came into the picture one after the other, and anime and manga can quite easily slip into these in their own way.

As illustrated by the above quote, fantasy and science-fiction enthusiasts and role-playing-gamers – while often fans of western comics as well – were more ready to embrace anime and manga as a result of the genre fit found with a large number of the flagship films and series to reach European and North American markets – specifically chosen for this very reason –, such as *AKIRA* (En: *Akira*) from 1988 and *GHOST IN THE SHELL / Kōkaku Kidōtai* (En: *Ghost in the Shell*) from 1995, both depicting more or less dystopian cyberpunk futures. The western traditions these movies and series would draw upon were readily understood by these audiences, thus providing a large field of mobilizable and convertible knowledge in relation to them, even if the East Asian or specifically Japanese references might not have been straightforward for them. Similar to the interest of horror fans in East Asian horror, so too fans of fantasy and science-fiction demonstrate an interest in East Asian masterpieces from within these genres, which can lead to an increasing involvement with further works from within these domains. The way interests feed into each other along lines of thematic connection is well illustrated in the following quote from DASCO:

DASCO (27, leading member of the Alchemist Laboratory club): It started with the love of flying, from that came scale model building, and parallel to that I started out in aeromodelling [= remote controlled airplane building and flying], and I stopped scale modelling, but instead I started out in tabletop wargaming, and the SF mania and meeting anime are thanks to the wargaming career, which led to the Alchemist Laboratory and meeting cosplay.

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156 István Nemere is a highly prolific Hungarian writer and translator, who is best known for his science fiction novels.

As a child the closest DASCO could come to airplanes was with scale models and aeromodelling. His friend and fellow modeller Ákos Szécsi ‘Tulok’ mistaking a Games Workshop shop in Canada for a hobby model store stumbled upon Warhammer 40,000, the iconic miniature tabletop wargame set in a dark SF setting. Transitioning to tabletop wargaming was a natural fit based on their background in modelling, but it also acted as an entry point to the wider SF and geek culture in general for DASCO.

Correspondence between stylistic and thematic elements and focal interests is the first dimension linking the various cultures that belong to the same subcultural cluster, but as we can see in this example also to cultures beyond the borders of the cluster. It is important to remember that subcultural clusters are never hermetically sealed off from each other, rather it is the higher level of internal interconnections compared to external connections that set them apart. Granted enough steps even distantly related areas of interest can be reached along lines of stylistic and thematic connections, the important point, however, is the frequency of these connections. The best example of such a distant trajectory towards the heart of geek culture from among my respondents is the story of András Müller, who came from an initial interest in sports to now running the largest figure, collectibles and card shop in the country, HoldfényTeam.

ZK: Do you still stock sports merchandise?

András Müller (37, head of HoldfényTeam): Yes, close to my office there are still some sports goods, it's close to my heart, it's no coincidence that our sports wall is next to us [= his office, where we are talking]. [...] But on the demand side basketball and ice hockey are disappearing.

ZK: But what sells?

András Müller: The NFL [= National Football League], the American football, because those are the matches the Sport1 TV broadcasts. They also broadcast the NHL [=



National Hockey League], but it is the NFL which became so fashionable, like anime in the past four or five years. [...] I have less and less time to practice sports, but at least I look at the sports figures. It comes from the fact that I started out with sports cards, and this kind of remained.

Format, similar to the case of modelling and wargaming above, can be just as important a link as this example also demonstrates. Although, starting out in sports trading cards András Müller then moved on to other popular trading cards in his business, which happened to be *Doragon Bōru* (En: *Dragon Ball*), *Poketto Monsutā* (En: *Pokémon*) and later *Yū-Gi-Ō!* (En: *Yu-Gi-Oh!*) cards at the time. This led to his business building towards both sports collectibles and action figures and collectible card games. Again the theme of collectibles and the format of both cards and action figures provided the link between the range of goods catering to most likely separate markets. By the start of the boom of the anime-manga fan market HoldfényTeam was already well established as the major provider of horror, SF, fantasy and comics collectible figures in the country, and could seamlessly extend its range to incorporate more anime-manga figures and collectibles, which also meshed with their profile featuring anime-manga related collectible card games.

### *6.3.2. The relevance of the geek subcultural cluster for anime-manga fandom*

The structure of interests found among my respondents, both from within anime-manga fandom and from related fields, as described in the previous subchapter, demonstrated a strong co-occurrence and relationship between interests in SF, fantasy, role-playing games, video games, comics and anime and manga. This level of interrelationship is, however, not only true on the level of the core of subcultural producers, but is also replicated in the case of the wider fandom.

In the following I will briefly summarize some of the trends in relation to the Hungarian anime-manga fandom<sup>157</sup> in general based on the data gathered within the *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*, conducted by Szilvia Pravda ‘Uran’, Ádám Dobay and Viktória Láda, who were kind enough to allow me access to a portion of their data for analysis.<sup>158</sup> The questionnaire for their research was posted online, and advertised on a number of Hungarian fan websites, the survey received 3168 responses in total. The gender and age distribution of respondents were as follows:

Age distribution	
Under 15	8%
15-18	35%
19-23	34%
24 and over	23%

Gender distribution	
Female	65%
Male	35%

**Table 6.1.** Age and gender distribution of the respondents of the *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*<sup>159</sup>

A number of questions dealt with the interests and activities of respondents. One of these questions contained the following options in relation to further interests. (Note that there was a separate question in relation to comics cultures, discussed below; furthermore, fan level interest denotes a higher level of engagement than hobby level interest.)

157 Generally, finding out about a survey dealing with anime and manga consumption advertised on fan websites, and being interested enough to take the time to answer is a tell-tale sign of a certain level of fan involvement. However, the survey did also include questions on the number of anime watched and manga read, and based on those numbers, it is probably safe to guess that the majority of respondents would identify as fans of anime-manga.

158 “Nagy Anime és Manga Kutatás 2013” (Big Anime and Manga Research 2013), research and questionnaire design by Szilvia Pravda, head organizer of AnimeCon, and Ádám Dobay cultural studies researcher, data processing by Viktória Láda, market researcher. I was granted access to aggregate results for a select number of questions, and not the database itself. I will also be citing results based on the first overview provided by the authors of their results (Pravda et al. 2013), this will be indicated in the footnotes accompanying the concerned tables.

159 Pravda et al. 2013.

	<b>fan level interest</b>	<b>hobby level interest</b>	<b>total</b>
computer and console games	34%	37%	71%
fantasy (classic and urban)	31%	46%	77%
television series	22%	48%	70%
SF, steampunk, dieselpunk, cyberpunk	18%	37%	55%
Western animated films	17%	54%	71%
Western live action films	15%	48%	63%
role-playing games (tabletop, LARP)	14%	29%	43%

**Table 6.2.** Interest in other cultures (excluding comics), *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*<sup>160</sup>

Although we cannot be sure how each respondent interpreted the categories and answer options, based on the above self-categorization it seems that around a third of the respondents identified as video game fans and almost a third of them claimed to be fantasy fans. Over a fifth identified as television series fans and almost a fifth also marked SF as a fandom they belong to. Also taking hobby level interests into account it is clear that there is a marked overlap between interest in anime and manga and all of the listed options above. SF and role-playing games seem to attract a slightly lower rate of interest co-occurrence with anime and manga. One might expect this to be a result of both SF and role-playing games being more popular among older and male participants, groups which are underrepresented based on the age and gender composition of the survey respondents. Examining the age and gender breakdown of the data, however, reveals a surprising twist, with SF indeed conforming to the previous presumption, but the data on interest in role-playing games within this survey defies the popular image of who role-playing gamers are. SF did demonstrate a marked male dominance with 25.7% claiming fan and 41.2% answering hobby level attachment as opposed to 14.6% and 34.8% among female respondents respectively, and both the fan and hobby level interest in SF was characterized by a growing

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160 Pravda et al. 2013.

tendency according to age (see table 6.3. below). Interest in role-playing games was far less male dominated with 17.3% claiming fan and 31.4% designating hobby level attachment, with the corresponding figures among female participants being 12.4% and 28.3% respectively. The big surprise however is the fact that young people demonstrated a higher level attachment to role-playing games than older respondents, especially within the category of *fan level interest*, as shown in table 6.3. below.

	<b>Under 15</b>	<b>15-18</b>	<b>19-23</b>	<b>24 and over</b>
SF, fan level interest	11.8%	15.4%	17.7%	26.3%
SF, hobby level interest	31.2%	33.8%	38.9%	40.9%
SF, no interest	57.0%	50.8%	43.4%	32.8%
total	100%	100%	100%	100%
role-playing games, fan level interest	18.3%	15.7%	12.3%	12.8%
role-playing games, hobby level interest	36.5%	28.8%	30.2%	26.9%
role-playing games, no interest	45.2%	55.5%	57.5%	60.3%
total	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Table 6.3.** Interest in SF and role-playing games according to age, *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*

US and European comics also figured high on the list of related interests enumerated by the subcultural producers I spoke to, the *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013* included an even more detailed question in relation to respondents' interests in various forms of sequential art other than Japanese manga. (Note that the reason the expression "comics culture" is used in the table, is because this is how the questionnaire was worded, explicitly pointing out that

animation and film adaptations were also to be subsumed under the heading by the respondents.)

	<b>not interested</b>	<b>interested, but have not engaged with it</b>	<b>interested and know it</b>	<b>interested, know it, buy it</b>
Korean comics culture	38.0%	27.4%	27.8%	6.8%
American comics culture	42.0%	22.1%	32.0%	3.9%
Hungarian comics culture	42.1%	37.7%	17.7%	2.5%
European comics culture	48.5%	34.3%	15.5%	1.7%
Chinese comics culture	50.7%	36.2%	11.4%	1.7%

**Table 6.4.** Interest in comics, *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*

Based on the high share of manhwa in the Hungarian manga market, as explained in Chapter Four, the clear lead that Korean comics enjoy when it comes to actual purchases is somewhat understandable, especially among anime-manga fans. Although the questionnaire question does not explicitly specify what is understood under “interested and know it,” I would assume that knowing means reading works (or watching adaptations) from that particular domain. Based on an understanding of Hungarian comics fandom it is probably safe to assume that an overlap with US and European comics culture exists, but is not that strong. This is further confirmed by Grif’s observations, the owner of the longest running and biggest comics store – with an actual physical shop presence – in Hungary, Trillian Képregénybolt [Trillian Comic Book Store]. In the following interview excerpt he points out how the *Comics Exchange* (Képregény Börze), a twice yearly grass-roots comic traders’ fair is much more the domain of US, European and Hungarian comics fandom, with only a minor presence of mangaesque works and their audience – further confirming the related, but

nevertheless separate nature of these cultures.

ZK: This is a separate community, the comics people, not anime-manga fans?

Grif (29, head of Trillian Comic Book Store): That's a good question. We only have one big dividing line, that between manga-anime and everything else, or rather I should say between manga-manhwa-manhua, the Far Eastern type and everything else. And in this regard it's true about the [Comics] Exchange, although there are in fact also manga people, the comics publishers also go and sell [their publications], and then the girls also go and buy things. It was never forced to be like that, because the new manga is published for MondoCon and Anime Christmas, not for the Exchange, but they are still there, they sell a little, you can buy older manga volumes, you can see one or two familiar faces, but it's really not about that, they are only present in minimal numbers. But everything else is there from the Hungarian through to the European.

The numbers from the *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013* also help illustrate the connection anime-manga fandom has with Japanese rock and pop music fandom. Not only do Japanese rock (J-rock) and pop (J-pop) music, and lately also Korean pop (K-pop) music,<sup>161</sup> serve as the soundtrack to the parties held at anime-manga conventions, but based on the following figures a high number of fans also regularly listen to these types of music.

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161 C-Pop and T-Pop in table 6.5. denote Chinese pop music and Taiwanese pop music respectively.

	<b>never</b>	<b>not yet, but interested</b>	<b>used to listen, but not anymore</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>regularly</b>	<b>don't know what it is</b>
J-Rock	12.3%	3.8%	6.5%	32.6%	40.4%	4.4%
J-Pop	17.0%	3.9%	7.4%	36.2%	30.9%	4.5%
K-Pop	31.5%	6.7%	7.0%	25.7%	20.0%	9.1%
Visual Kei	28.7%	8.9%	7.7%	21.8%	18.3%	14.6%
Japanese jazz	43.2%	23.2%	4.4%	15.1%	4.2%	9.9%
C-Pop	47.7%	13.6%	4.9%	12.7%	3.4%	17.6%
T-Pop	48.6%	14.8%	3.9%	10.0%	3.0%	19.8%

**Table 6.5.** Interest in Asian popular music, *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*

Anime opening and ending songs have been an important entry point for anime-manga fans towards an interest in Japanese rock and pop music, as Luggeriano also explains in the following interview excerpt.

Roland Markovics ‘Luggeriano’ (31, editor-in-chief of Mondo Magazine and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): A lot of people reply to the question, how you came to know, like the music, the bands, well, opening, ending [credits of anime]. This is the industry standard, and then you become interested, and then you look up the discography for the given performer. Since then I have all kinds of music from J-pop through to *visual kei* that is related to anime that I like. Half of my playlist is anime related music. And AMVs [=Anime Music Videos] provided a kind of plus music-wise, the further genres, because there AMVs have a wide range of music edited under them. And there also I listen to the whole palette all the way through to classical music, because I hear it during an AMV and then you go check it out. Really, from metal core to trance, all kinds of music.

This music is so intrinsic to the fabric of anime-manga fan culture in the Hungarian context, that the *Budapest Anime Meet* became a venue for not only anime and manga fans to meet and exchange ideas and materials, but fans of Japanese popular music also became regulars at these gatherings from early on. Olivér Frank ‘Case,’ the most important driving force behind the popularization of all genres of Japanese popular music in Hungary even became a member of the *Hungarian Anime Association*. It is nevertheless important to note, how fans of Japanese and later Korean popular music constitute a separate culture within the orbit of anime-manga fandom, but with no significant connections to other cultures within the geek subcultural cluster, as depicted on diagram 6.1. below.

Another domain of interests that lies outside the geek subcultural cluster, but which is nevertheless linked to anime-manga fandom in the Hungarian context is Japanese traditional culture. The table below summarizing numbers from the *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*, again illustrates the many possible linkages that are present along the lines of theme – in this case Japaneseness – in relation to a culture such as anime-manga fandom.



	<b>practicing</b>	<b>know it, tried it</b>	<b>total</b>
traditional Asian music (listening and also performance)	23%	30%	53%
gastronomy (cooking and also eating)	11%	36%	47%
martial arts	7%	30%	37%
origami	6%	57%	63%
traditional games (go, shōgi, hanafuda, etc.)	3%	19%	22%
Buddhism, Zen	3%	9%	12%
calligraphy	2%	19%	21%
Shintō	2%	11%	13%
tea ceremony	2%	16%	18%
ikebana	0%	7%	7%

**Table 6.6.** Interest in Japanese traditional culture, *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*<sup>162</sup>

Trying out origami, calligraphy (*shodō*), go and other traditional games are a mainstay of anime-manga conventions, with both organizations like the *HAA* and various traditional Japanese culture associations and clubs providing guidance and materials. This probably contributes to the high rate of respondents who have tried origami (57%) for instance. Creating *bentō* has also become popular, and sushi is not only more and more available in the country, but is also often served at conventions. Finally, it is important to note how martial arts are also an important point of connection for a smaller number of participants to anime and manga, again underscoring the relevance of theme in relation to connections between different interests and cultures. This correspondence is nevertheless far weaker – with only seven percent practicing some form of martial art – than the relationship towards other geek cultures or to Japanese popular music as evidenced by the figures from the previous tables.

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162 Pravda et al. 2013.

Finally, although Japanese language learning is not included in the above table, it was dealt with in a further question in the questionnaire, and is another obvious related interest with regards to anime-manga. Once again confirming the fact that my findings in relation to my research participants are reflected in the wider fandom, Japanese language learning – discussed in Chapter Five – proved to be just as prevalent among the respondents of the *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*: 1% replied that they no longer study the language, but use it, 20% were learning it at the time, 11% had studied it previously, 58% had not learned the language so far, but would like to in the future, and only a mere 10% answered that they had neither studied Japanese before nor did they intend to.<sup>163</sup>

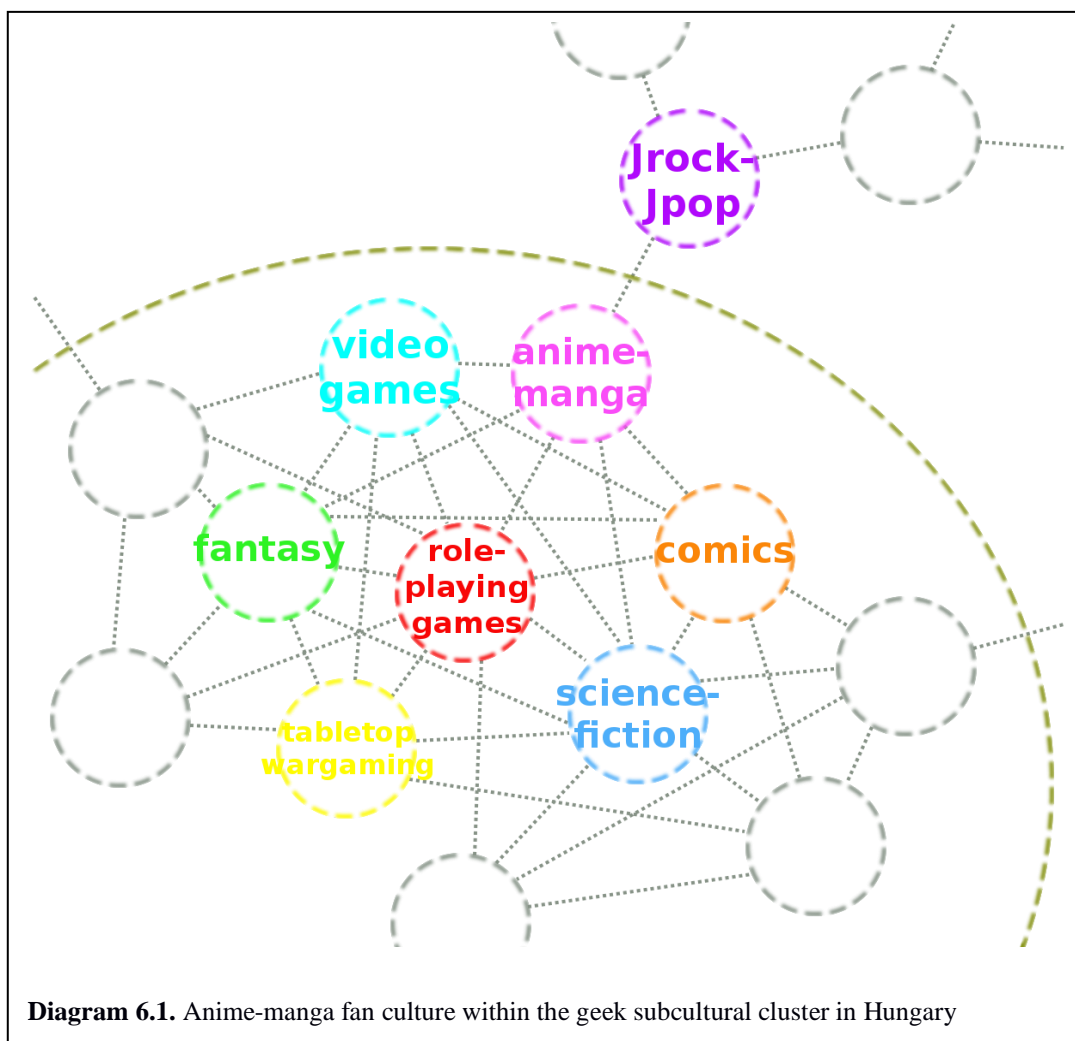
Thus, not only do the work and subcultural career trajectories of my research participants outline a particular structure in relation to the web of interrelated cultures making up the geek subcultural cluster, but this structure is further evidenced in the results of the *Big Anime and Manga Research 2013*. Based on these results we can see how the anime-manga fan culture in Hungary – but arguably also in other countries in Europe and North America<sup>164</sup> – is embedded in the wider geek subcultural cluster. Diagram 6.1. below is an attempt at offering a visual illustration of how the various cultures that make up the geek subcultural cluster – including anime-manga culture – have a significantly stronger level of interrelationship within the subcultural cluster as opposed to connections that lead beyond the cluster boundaries.<sup>165</sup>

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163 Pravda et al. 2013.

164 See for example Bolalek (2011) regarding Poland, Woo (2012) in relation to Canada, Eng (2012a) regarding the US.

165 Woo (2012) provides a map of connections among his research sites and research participants in relation to a “nerd-culture scene” in Canada, which conforms to a similar structure.



These connections and overlaps among related cultures, however, are not without tension. And these tensions are themselves a testament to the proximity and distance that characterize these relationships, as illustrated by the following quote from Acheron in relation to advertising MondoCon on video gamer websites.

Acheron (32, *HAA*, head organizer of *HAA* conventions and later MondoCon, in relation to incorporating programs beyond anime-manga fandom in MondoCon): It was very obvious in relation to [video] gamers, when we were already trying to push this on gamer sites for some time. And the reactions to a news item, of course this is the vocal minority, but almost fifty percent of the reactions are “boo, why do we need to take

gamer things among anime [fans],” and the other half are like “I go [regularly] anyway [to MondoCon], great that this’ll be there.” And at times like this we start to think that maybe we are not winning any new markets.

Tensions, of course, exist not only between related cultures, but also within the particular subcultures themselves:

ZK: For the first large-scale HoldfényCon you brought together the various fantasy, SF, etc. [organizations]. What was the reaction of the domestic market to this integration in your view?

András Müller (37, head of HoldfényTeam): I was somehow enthusiastic at the time, what’s more this enthusiasm held up for around two more years, but I’ll be honest with you, it turned out to be more than I can chew, it was simply very hard to work with everybody like this. Quite simply because, if I only take *Star Wars* for example, biggest fan base, they have the biggest fan community, no question about that, but still here [in Hungary] according to the good old Hungarian tradition there is such a dissension among clubs, between people, which we could simply not bridge. It wasn’t just once that *Star Wars* [fans] would not stand on the stage together with [other] *Star Wars* [fans] at our events; well that is also a bothersome thing. Nevertheless, I haven’t given up.

András Müller’s remark regarding the dissension one can find in even a single fandom draws attention to the way subcultures and fan cultures are far from homogeneous entities. Indeed, although I have so far conveniently omitted discussing the complex structure of what I simply refer to as anime-manga fandom, it is important to keep in mind that like most social entities, subcultures and fan cultures are also characterized by a number of dimensions along which they internally differentiate themselves. To name only some of the most obvious: a) the intensity of participation (discussed in Chapter Two), b) position in relation to the field specific logic and market logic (also examined in Chapter Two) c) geographical location, d)

focus and form of activity, e) positions in relation to canon debates and interpretations, f) group rivalries, and so on. For my present discussion, other than the two dimensions already discussed in detail in Chapter Two, I will only elaborate on the question of *focus and form of activity* below, as it is strongly linked to my overall framework of subcultural clusters and a Bourdieusian field approach to subcultures.

### 6.3.3 *Communities within communities*

One aspect of subcultural and fan cultural formations I've so far only briefly touched upon in relation to subfields in Chapter Two is the way they are not only embedded in larger subcultural clusters, but are themselves also composed of smaller distinct interest groups or cultures. In the case of anime-manga fandom cosplayers, fan art creators, fan fiction writers, scanlators, fansubbers, anime music video creators, karaoke enthusiasts, collectible card game players, dance video game players (most notably *Dance Dance Revolution*), and the list goes on, were all recognizable subgroups with specific interests and investments beyond the shared enjoyment of anime and manga. The following interview excerpt from Luggeriano not only highlights how he ended up being invited to contribute to *Mondo Magazine*, but also the sense of identity that these subgroups further engender.

Roland Markovics 'Luggeriano' (31, editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* and acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): During the 2008 July meet in Pápa<sup>166</sup> I asked the following question, that we are really happy that the paper [= *Mondo*] provides such a platform of expression for the subculture, during that time the drawing, cosplay, music columns were already running as permanent fixtures, so the various creative content had space, and at that time I was already up to my head in the AMV [= anime music video] community things, and I also had some competition experience by then, and by that time I had this image in me, that we resent it somewhat that the organizers of the time,

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166 A north-western town in Hungary.

that our ideas aren't taken into account [...], and then I asked Danci [= then editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine*] the question, couldn't we have something about AMV as well? I brought up as an example that although there are [AMV screenings] at the conventions, but there is no innovation, so we felt a little sidelined, like the whole thing is just a passive program for our scene, that there are screenings according to some kind of logic, and there is a one and a half hour long competition and that's it, there is nothing extra in it. The inner core [= of AMV creators] collectively felt – not just me – that this scene is not seen as being equal. Compared to the other competitions or scenes it is used as some kind of second rate time filler, cause like it's spectacular and there's loud music and it preoccupies people and that's it. So there's nothing extra. Yet those who are in this scene know that it involves a lot of work, just like with cosplay.

In this excerpt Luggieriano is clearly identifying with the AMV scene – in his words – *within the context of* the larger anime-manga fandom. And this I think is the key to the question, why draw the line at anime-manga fandom, why not for example cosplay or AMV creators? Indeed, depending on the context, a participant might identify as a cosplayer, an anime-manga fan, and even a geek (this is also exemplified by Uran's quote above). Why do I treat anime-manga fandom as the unit of analysis, as opposed to these various more specialized interest groups? As explained in Chapter Two, fields are nested within supra-fields and likewise contain subfields. Anime-manga fandom could indeed be treated as a cluster of further smaller subcultures, just as fandoms and subcultures organized around science fiction, fantasy, role-playing games and so on, are also all made up of smaller interest groups based on focus of interest or mode of engagement with the source material, as illustrated vividly in the following quote from Bacon-Smith's discussion of SF media fandom in the US.

As they grow more knowledgeable in the community, members will participate in a variety of groups, while retaining a primary identity with the group that matches favorite genres and delivery channels to the activities the participant enjoys most. As

with any social organization, establishing an identity in a group is a matter of compromises, and of varying emphases. One fan in a given group may identify herself as a fanziner, while another in the same group will identify herself as a media fan; each establishes her personal identity based on the facet of the structure that is most important to her. At the same time, each may participate in a variety of activities, or pursue her activity in a variety of genres, while still identifying herself by her main interest. For example, many fanziners costume, but if asked, even when they are preparing for a masquerade, they will tell you they are fanziners who also costume. They do not suddenly identify themselves as costumers because they are wearing Starfleet uniforms or an elf's forest greens, nor will a costumer identify herself to you as a fanziner because she also reads the community's literature. (Bacon-Smith 1992: 23)

The fact that Bacon-Smith references "the community's literature" in the above quote highlights the existence of such a reference point, *a shared community*. In the case of the geek subcultural cluster in Hungary I repeatedly found people aligning themselves with anime-manga fandom, comics, role-playing games, video gamer culture and so on as *primary* forms of identification, with both the overarching category of geek and the more specialized subcategories of for example AMV creator (as in Luggeriano's example above) being secondary to those. Such identifications weren't necessarily exclusive, but they did signal the level of meaningful distinction commonly invoked across the field (Uran's quote at the beginning of this subchapter is again a good illustration of this). The expansion of fan cultures and subcultures will often result in the formation of new sub-communities within those cultures, however, the emergence of distinct new cultures is slightly rarer.<sup>167</sup> Cosplay seemed to demonstrate the highest potential for becoming a similar primary identification, nevertheless, it too was still firmly anchored to more fundamental lines of division such as anime-manga versus SF and fantasy based costuming practices.

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167 This is a question I will address again in more detail in Chapter Eight.

#### **6.4. Summary: Implications for market development**

Carrying on from the previous chapter's examination of learning within anime-manga fandom, in the present chapter I offered a discussion of the career trajectories of subcultural producers both in relation to their work in the fandom and fan market and beyond, and the corresponding changes in their interests and modes of engagement with anime and manga. In relation to these patterns I then examined in more detail the way anime-manga fandom is embedded in the geek subcultural cluster in Hungary.

The differentiation in relation to positions of actors coming from anime-manga fandom – proceeding towards either the business or the non-profit side of the fan market as it matures – on the one hand, and the movement towards and then away from the anime-manga fan market exhibited by actors from related cultures (and beyond) on the other hand, underline the connection – both proximity and distance – of anime-manga fandom to related cultures within the geek subcultural cluster, and also illustrate the parallel presence of the field specific logic and market logic exerting their influence on the development of these markets. Furthermore, as a result of these changes, things are coming full circle in Hungary both in relation to work and subcultural producers and the reconfiguration of the geek subcultural cluster. On the one hand, the producerly actors coming from anime-manga fandom who have taken up full-time employment within the producerly side of the culture, have now also started to work in relation to servicing related cultures – most visible in the way MondoCon now also builds on and caters to a number of related cultures as explained in Chapter Four –, mirroring the way actors from related worlds/fields participated, and to a certain extent still do, in the anime-manga fan market. On the other hand, the anime-manga fan culture and market is now acting as the driving force behind the development of the geek subcultural cluster just as fantasy and role-playing games and prior to that science fiction fandom once had. Furthermore, both HoldfényTeam and MondoCon have started to orient themselves towards the video game culture and market, which is, of course, in no way new or hardly a



fledgling market, but which a number of my interviewees have noted as the potential successor to anime-manga fandom as the next dominant culture within the geek subcultural cluster. In a parallel move Fumax, after having exited manga publishing, have now found success publishing – among other genres – video game based novels.

Beyond the connections in relation to their position within the geek subcultural cluster discussed in the present chapter, another aspect that greatly facilitates the cooperation and competition of actors among these cultures and markets is the similarity of the scale and mode of operation of these markets and the labour relations they entail. These characteristics of the anime-manga fan market and related cultures' markets will be the topic of the next chapter.

## **7. The logic of subcultural fan markets: Between creative/cultural industries and ethnic markets**

So far, first in Chapter Five I have examined the way learning is an inherent part of consumption and free time oriented youth cultures in general and anime-manga fandom in particular, and the possibilities for harnessing the types of knowledge and skills – and even attitudes – acquired within these settings within the context of working in subcultures and fan cultures either along the lines of voluntary contribution or heading towards employment, freelance professional careers and entrepreneurship. Second, in Chapter Six I explored the patterns found within the individual career paths of actors who make the move towards either the defining positions within the non-profit world and/or towards the for-profit business end of the community, also taking a look at actors entering these markets from related fields, and the way these individual career paths, along with the consumption patterns of these participants contribute to outlining a structure of interrelated and overlapping cultures and markets that make up a subcultural cluster.

I will now turn towards an examination of these markets, both building on and integrating the points made in previous chapters, but also highlighting some of the aspects of careers and entrepreneurship left unexplored so far. In order to draw out some of the further characteristics of these cultural formations, and the position of market actors within them, and to provide points of reference within more developed studies of work, entrepreneurship and markets of these kind, I will proceed by offering two models of comparison – creative/cultural industries<sup>168</sup> and immigrant ethnic markets –, which both share a large number of features with subcultural and fan markets, but which are also distinct from them, as a result of the in-between status which – as I shall demonstrate – characterizes the types of

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168 Approaches focusing on the industry aspects of these markets usually use the expression cultural industries (e.g. Hesmondhalgh 2007), whereas works which analyze the labour conditions and careers of people working in these areas prioritize the term creative labour (e.g. Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011, McKinlay & Smith 2009). I use this concatenated form to signal the indebtedness of my framework to both bodies of work.

markets, which are the subjects of the current study.

### **7.1. Introduction: subcultural fan markets, creative/cultural industries and ethnic markets**

In Chapter Two I argued that the producerly side of subcultures and fan cultures can be understood as dominated subfields of the field of cultural production, in the sense of occupying a low level of cultural legitimacy. The way subcultural and fan markets in general and the anime-manga fan market in particular can be seen to occupy an in-between position in relation to creative/cultural industries and immigrant ethnic markets is a direct extension of this interpretation. I will start with the more straight forward case of creative/cultural industries.

Since creative/cultural industries, if examined through a Bourdieusian lens,<sup>169</sup> are also located within the field of cultural production – most commonly associated with its heteronomous side (cf. Hesmondhalgh 2006) –, they necessarily share a number of traits with subcultural and fan markets common to the field in general. Even though certain subcultures will actually define themselves by the very distance they cultivate from what they understand to be the creative/cultural industries, for example punk or indie (see Hesmondhalgh 1999). However, media fan cultures generally consume and rework the texts created by often the biggest media conglomerates (Jenkins 1992), and are thus intrinsically tied both in relation to consumption and production to the creative/cultural industries. Furthermore, if we examine descriptions of creative labour – such as the following example – they match those of subcultural and art practices.

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169 As Hesmondhalgh and Baker point out there have been three main disciplinary approaches in relation to cultural production, that of a) political economy, b) business studies, and c) cultural studies; with the recent rise in Bourdieusian scholarship in the field, however, “Bourdieu’s ‘field theory’ [...] can be thought of as a fourth tradition or approach” (2011: 55).

[C]reative labour is *craft like*, it requires working within a tradition or established form, which acts as an externalised and institutionalised set of normative rules that the individual is required to learn and follow. But once the technique or style is mastered by the individual, there is then room for ‘innovation’ and interpretation that may be different from the received standard, and reflect the individual’s unique talent, or a new ‘school’ of practice and technique that the individual shares with other originators or revolutionaries within the field. (Smith & McKinlay 2009: 33, emphasis in the original)

The above text makes no reference to either Becker or Bourdieu, yet its observations regarding the creative process mirror those discussed in relation to the central notions of convention and innovation in relation to art worlds, the field of cultural production and subcultures in Chapter Two. This is no mere coincidence, but rather once again underlines the intrinsic link between the world of art, subcultures and creative/cultural industries, which can all be mapped onto the various positions in the field of cultural production. While it is their positions in relation to the autonomous and heteronomous ends of the field that set art and creative/cultural industries apart, it is the lack of cultural legitimacy or consecration and their tendency towards an in-between position in relation to autonomy that characterizes subcultural and fan production practices.

This lack of cultural legitimacy or consecration within the field of cultural production corresponds to a “minority-like” status of subcultural and fan cultural markets. It is this aspect that aligns them with immigrant ethnic markets as the second point of comparison. This is indeed far less intuitive<sup>170</sup> and much harder to argue without actually taking a look at what the scholarship on immigrant ethnic markets and ethnic entrepreneurs – often focusing

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170 I have Tibor Kuczi to thank for drawing my attention to the possibilities opened up by exploring the connection between the body of work on ethnic entrepreneurs and my own examination of subcultural and fan producers.

on *immigrant* communities – has to say about the topic.<sup>171</sup>

The initial market for immigrant entrepreneurs typically arises within the immigrant community itself – the immigrant *community has a special set of needs and preferences that are best served, and sometimes can only be served, by those who share those needs and know them intimately*, namely, the members of the immigrant community itself. (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 21, my emphasis)

While the similarities between ethnic and subcultural and fan markets are numerous and varied, as I hope to demonstrate in the subchapters to come, the above quote renders the choice to compare these social formations as self-evident as the previous case of examining the connections with creative/cultural industries. The tastes and consumption practices of both immigrant ethnic minorities and subcultures and fan cultures are some of the most immediately recognizable elements, which mark these groups out as being different from the larger society, and provide a strong basis for a shared social reality for their members.

Furthermore, if we examine the definition of ethnicity provided by Waldinger et al. (1990b) we find a remarkable compatibility with subcultural and fan identities in the sense of being just as much adopted and socially constructed identities as the latter, with no actual need to reference any sort of initial biological or cultural commonality and heritage generally ascribed to ethnic groups. In fact Waldinger et al. actually claim that they are specifically interested in the “subcultural dimensions of ethnicity” (1990: 34) for their definition of

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171 Although I will be exploring the connections with Japanese research on otaku in the following chapter, I would nevertheless like to point out that Morikawa also draws a parallel between ethnic enclaves and the otaku town that Akihabara came to be during the end of the nineties (2003). Furthermore, both Morikawa (2003) and Yoshimoto (2009) emphasize that early SF fans in Japan and otaku all shared a minority consciousness. Although these ideas are not elaborated upon in detail in Morikawa’s and Yoshimoto’s work, they nevertheless underline the relevance and appropriateness of invoking and examining in detail the correspondences of migrant ethnic markets with otaku, and by extension subcultures and fan cultures in general.

ethnicity.

[E]thnicity – that is, self-identification with a particular ethnic group – is neither primordial nor imported prior to contact with a host society. Rather, ethnicity is a *possible* outcome of the patterns by which intra- and intergroup interactions are structured. Our central contention is that ethnicity is acquired when the social connections among ethnic group members helps establish distinct occupational, industrial, or spatial concentrations. Once established, these concentrations promote frequent and intensive face-to-face interactions that breed a sense of commonality and identification with members of the same ethnic group. Ethnic concentrations may also give rise to common ethnic interests, reinforcing a sense of identity. In addition, industrial or business concentrations foster competitive cross-ethnic contact, which in turn promotes ethnic consciousness and solidarity. (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 32, emphasis in the original)

In a sense then, consumption and leisure oriented subcultures and fan cultures can be seen to have analogue traits in the way identity formation and the rise of specific aesthetic and ethical concerns along with social structure and organizational and infrastructural background spring from not any sort of psychological<sup>172</sup> or social determining traits<sup>173</sup> – as already discussed in the second chapter on subcultural theory –, but rather a cultivation of common interests and an engagement and commitment towards the social and practice based aspects of these cultures (cf. Vályi 2010, Woo 2012).

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172 See for example Hodkinson's (2002) discussion of the misplaced significance on psychological traits in interpreting goth culture.

173 Although social factors do not have a determining effect, they do play a part in influencing the probability with which individuals will gravitate towards certain subcultures and fan cultures, as explored for instance by Kahn-Harris (2007). See also Bourdieu's original discussion in relation to creators and the art field (1996 [1992]).

The parallels with both creative/cultural industries and immigrant ethnic markets will be further explored and made even clearer in the following three subchapters detailing different aspects of subcultural and fan-cultural markets. The subchapter on *market initiation and development* will discuss the growth of these markets from the first appearance of products and practices to the entry of actors from large-scale outside markets. The following subchapter on *resource mobilization and employment* will further some of the themes already explored in the previous chapter on individual career paths and subcultural clusters. The third subchapter on *meaningful worlds of work* will explore the different forms of non-monetary rewards that participants from within these cultures enjoy when participating in the producerly side of these cultures, while also offering a look at some of the pitfalls of subcultural and fan cultural work and careers. Finally, the chapter summary will offer a re-examination of the arguments from Chapter Two, positing that the peculiar characteristics of subcultural fan markets can also be understood as a result of sharing the traits of both creative/cultural industries and ethnic markets at the same time, and thereby constituting a new, third type of market.

## **7.2. Market initiation and development**

### *7.2.1. The significance of small-scale businesses for subcultural fan markets, creative/cultural industries and ethnic markets*

Small-scale entrepreneurship in subcultural and fan markets is characterized by a significant overlap with specificities found in ethnic markets on the one hand and creative/cultural industries on the other hand, however, all three of these markets/industries share a number of common features characteristic of most small-scale and family enterprises. The most important reason for also mentioning the question of small-scale businesses is that *size* seems to be a defining feature in all three of the markets/industries to be compared. This point is so important that it merits a slightly lengthier discussion.

In relation to the delineation of subcultural and fan markets, and insider and external actors within them, the pattern seems to be that on the insider end of the spectrum we tend to find small-scale businesses and at the external business actor side of the scale we find the larger, more capital rich companies. Although I am sure that a number of exceptions will escape a generalization such as insider enterprises operating in subcultural and fan markets are small-scale enterprises, the fact that the growth of subcultural and fan businesses implies a move towards more and more mainstream markets in the sense of relying less and less on niche tastes, sensibilities and relatively obscure knowledge elements and harder to access interpretative frameworks for the consumption of given cultural products and practices, the businesses will find themselves – sometimes even involuntarily – repositioned as more mainstream enterprises than subcultural/fan businesses.

In a similar fashion, and along the lines of a similar logic, ethnic enterprises seem to generally be more prevalent towards the small-scale end of the spectrum (Boissevain et al. 1990: 141). This is not only due to the fact that in general we find a larger number of small businesses on one end of the spectrum and an increasingly fewer number of larger businesses as we move upwards in size, measured in the number of employees. Rather it is the result of larger businesses shedding their ethnic identity as they grow and move away from patterns of employing coethnics, servicing only coethnic markets, and participating in the economic life of the smaller coethnic community. Light and Gold (2000) mention a number of examples of larger companies owned by ethnic proprietors, which are generally not seen or discussed as being ethnic enterprises. This form of excluding certain companies from the field of analysis might be seen as a form of bias on the part of the researchers dealing with these fields, but are in fact justified by the way these companies become or are disembedded from within the coethnic community and economic circuit to the extent that their discussion within this context is only relevant as a way of signalling possible growth paths beyond the boundaries of the ethnic community. Thus, this phenomenon is not unlike what we find in relation to



subcultural and fan enterprises, which can also move beyond their initial communities and markets. In music scenes this move of a band, label, festival, venue, etc. growing beyond its initial audience is generally labelled *selling out* (that is selling to outsiders)<sup>174</sup> – an internal discursive move of the community related to the maintenance of scenic boundaries and the claiming of subcultural capital by its participants (see Tófalvy 2008), which leads to the third point of comparison with creative/cultural industries.

Again, size has an important significance in creative/cultural industries. In a sense the initial tension of the expression “the culture industry” as coined by Adorno and Horkheimer (1990 [1947]) – culture, meaning art, understood as the product of individual human expression, and industry as a repetitive and standardized form of production – is still very much present in the current terms “creative industries” or “cultural industries.” This tension can also be seen in the way the discussion of small independent companies in the cultural industries literature are often dealt with as an addendum, which do not merit too much attention as the area they occupy is not central to, but is rather a fringe of the cultural industries (see Hesmondhalgh 2007). Creative industries and labour approaches, often focusing more on the actual people working within these markets, do tend to pay more attention to discussing the characteristics and challenges facing small enterprises and freelancers in these fields (Florida 2002, Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011, Pellandini-Simányi 2012), but often the distinction between the large firms and the small businesses and/or individual actors is still quite pronounced and important.

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174 Thornton (1996[1995]: 124) – see Chapter Two footnote 28 for the verbatim quote.

7.2.2. *Products, tastes and market demand: From core to mainstream and the relevance of subcultural and fan knowledge*

Vladi (39, head of Fumax publishing and Comicsinvest): *I didn't get what I needed for my taste to develop further in Hungarian, and I didn't have money for it in English, and you also didn't have information, there was no internet [...], second half of the nineties was just blank for me comics-wise, but I didn't sell my collection, I knew that it would be of value, and maybe I knew, that this would come back for me, and maybe I even looked at them from time to time. [my emphasis]*

Vladi recounting the development of his comic book collecting career notes that he reached a limit in relation to the publications available in Hungarian, specifically pointing out that he needed something more for his taste to further develop. In other words, he had reached a point in the move towards comic book connoisseurship where he was now ready for works, which were not yet available on the market, which led to his interest waning in comics for a period. This episode in Vladi's career is significant in that it underlines the centrality of certain types of commodities for most subcultures and fan cultures, and also highlights the position most such Hungarian cultures occupy in relation to foreign markets, namely that they are adopters of foreign trends and thus the first wave of specialized commodities are generally imported into the country. Hungary's position is in no way special in this regard, as most subcultures and fandoms are exported from their country of origin to other countries.<sup>175</sup> And countries of central importance to one such culture, such as Japan in the case of anime-manga, are just as much importers of other subcultures such as skateboarding or hip-hop culture from the US, and vice-versa. The point I would like to stress for now, however, is the centrality of specialized commodities to the cultural practices of subcultures and fan cultures, such as anime and manga series – or *visual kei* and Japanese pop music – for the fandom in

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175 See for example Chang (2005) on the export of different elements of hip-hop culture.

question.

The significance of both the commodities making their way into Hungary, and the people bringing them home along with the accompanying knowledge regarding consumption practices and tastes, is well documented in relation to the development of consumer culture in general (see for example Hammer 2002) and youth cultures and subcultures in particular (Havasréti 2006, Vályi 2004) during late socialism and the early period of the regime change.<sup>176</sup>

In the case of anime-manga culture the first instances of anime, which were recognized as such, were seen by the vanguard of the fandom on foreign television channels broadcast in Hungary via satellite, such as the Austrian *ORF1* and *ORF2* channels and the German *RTL2* channel and the Italian channel *RaiUno*, as already explained in Chapter Four. VHS cassettes and later DVD discs were purchased from hobby stores, such as *Trollbarlang* [Troll's cave], which specialized in miniature tabletop gaming but also carried a selection of comic books and graphic novels for a number of years. In a similar manner the first sources of foreign manga – mainly German and English publications – were comic book stores and online vendors, who would carry a number of titles and order on demand for their customers. Thus the first businesses to achieve a presence in the anime-manga market in Hungary were small scale retailers from related fields of interest, as explained in the previous chapter, who would import the goods sought out by the early participants of the culture. These shops would provide the necessary goods for the growth of the fan culture, gradually making it possible to support more businesses, and the entrance of non-retail actors on to the market.

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176 Similar descriptions in relation to the role the flow of special commodities and tastes played in the development of subcultural formations can be found in a number of cases, such as the following quote from Sara Cohen in relation to rock music in Liverpool: “The outward-looking character of Liverpool made it more susceptible to American cultural trends brought over by sailors in the 1950s and 1960s and by American servicemen based at Burtonwood. Some of them brought records and guitars which at the time could not be found anywhere else in Britain [...]” (1991: 12)

In a similar fashion immigrant ethnic communities create a demand for specialized ethnic commodities – such as food ingredients, herbs and spices and cultural products, like magazines, books, films, etc. – which is then satisfied usually by ethnic entrepreneurs:

[T]he demand for exotic goods among the native population allows immigrants to convert both the contents and the symbols of ethnicity into profit-making commodities. [...] [I]mmigrants have a special product that only they can supply or, at the very least, present in conditions that are seemingly authentic (Palmer 1984)[...]. [...] Ethnic consumer tastes provide a protected market position, in part because the members of the community may have a cultural preference for dealing with coethnics, and in part because the costs of learning the specific wants and tastes of the immigrant groups are such as to discourage native firms from doing so, especially at an early stage when the community is small and not readily visible to outsiders (Aldrich, Carter, et al. 1985) [...]. (Waldinger et al. 2000: 363-4)

This paragraph could have been written about subcultural and fan markets, one would only need to substitute the words “subcultural” or “fan” for “exotic” and “ethnic”. In a certain way even the expression exotic seems appropriate as the practices and tastes of subcultural and fan participants are often seen as being exotic and mysterious by members of the larger society. This paragraph also sums up a number of main points regarding ethnic goods and tastes; let us examine these more closely.

First of all, ethnic markets – which are often immigrant markets – are likely to develop gradually, with first only a small community being present in the larger or host society. In a similar fashion fan cultures and subcultures, whether imported from abroad, or developing within the domestic fringe culture, as a rule start out small, often going under the radar of both mainstream media and potential commercial interests for quite some time. The first

businesses in both ethnic and subcultural/fan markets set out to offer products to this niche market of consumers.

Generally, the businesses that develop first are purveyors of culinary products – tropical goods among Hispanics, for example, or Oriental specialties among Asians. Businesses that provide “cultural products” – newspapers, recordings, books, magazines, clothes, jewelry – are also quick to find a niche in the immigrant community. The important point about both types of activity is that *they involve a direct connection with the immigrants’ homeland and knowledge of tastes and buying preferences* – qualities unlikely to be shared by the larger, native-owned competitors [...]. (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 22-3, my emphases)

As this second quote again underlines, these initial ethnic businesses are often started and run by coethnics, as a result of the required cultural and often social capital necessary for the appropriate servicing of these markets. Light and Gold also emphasize that the demand for these types of products and “native language services [...] shields the newly established proprietor from competition with more experienced and better capitalized majority-owned businesses” (2000: 120). Later on within this section I will return to this point and examine how and to what extent specialist tastes provide protected market positions for entrepreneurs coming from within subcultures and fan cultures.

In the first paragraph cited in relation to ethnic markets above Waldinger et al. also point out how “members of the community may have a cultural preference for dealing with coethnics” (2000: 363-4), which translates over into subcultural and fan markets in the way businesses can serve as a point of attachment to the culture (cf. Vályi 2010), and participants in these cultures learn to distinguish between shops, magazines, and so on based on how “authentic” the shop, the medium, the organization, etc. or its staff are. This last distinction is important

in that employing the right staff can increase the attachment felt towards certain businesses, which is one of the reasons why subcultural shops will be staffed by participants, as I will discuss in the following subchapter.

This relates to the way Light and Gold distinguish between the *tool kit perspective* and the *boundary perspective* in relation to the way the topic of “how membership in an ethnic group can yield economic resources” (2000: 107) is dealt within the literature on ethnic economies. I will discuss the latter of these in the following subchapter as it relates more to questions of *employment and voluntary labour* and concentrate on only the *tool kit perspective* for now. This perspective focuses on

the unique skills and outlooks shared by members of an ethnic group in their homeland or enclave: the “tool kit” of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews that people may use in varying configurations to direct actions and solve different kinds of problems.

[...]

For example, members of various ethnic groups, by virtue of their socialization, come to possess *specific forms of knowledge and skill*: Jamaican immigrants know about Reggae music, Mexican immigrants can cook Mexican food, and Israelis are well prepared to work as Hebrew teachers.

[...]

The tool kit may also include *norms* that facilitate pooling money, sharing resources, or working together. Finally, ethnic groups maintain *unique means of evaluating the costs and rewards* of economically relevant activities—which endeavors are desirable or prohibited for which persons. (Light & Gold 2000: 107-8, my emphases)

This description corresponds not only to how Hitzler and his colleagues (Hitzler et al. 2004, Hitzler & Pfadenhauer 2007) discuss the various aspects of learning in youth scenes, as discussed in Chapter Five. But the tool kit perspective also translates almost seamlessly over

to further aspects of subcultures and fan cultures, which beyond providing both culture specific and more general or transferable skills and knowledge, also foster certain character traits within participants, either as a result of the nature of the activity being pursued (e.g. engaging with a foreign culture and languages in the case of anime and manga), and/or through the presence of group norms and values. As discussed in Chapter Five, certain skills and knowledge are necessary for certain types of roles, and desirable in others. Finally, the “unique means of evaluating the costs and rewards” of activities is also characteristic of subcultures and fan cultures as well, to be explained in relation to the non-monetary rewards found within these cultures in the fourth subchapter below.

Returning to the example of shop employees again, it is not an uncommon practice for enterprises – irrespective of how embedded within the culture the owners might be – to facilitate the connection with participants by employing older, or even established participants of the culture, who can “present [commodities, services] in conditions that are seemingly authentic” (Waldinger et al. 2000: 363-4), and/or provide guidance in relation to the commodities and practices of the culture themselves. Such a connection based on the way younger and newer participants might be drawn to the subcultural/fan standing and experience of the insider owners and/or employees not only serves to increase customer loyalty and potentially increase the number of visits (and thus purchases), but also facilitates the flow of information between the customers and the owners/employees, which can be crucial in markets, which are somewhat volatile with regards to cultural trends.

The two way communication between customers and insider owners/employees when dealing with younger/newer participants often entails on the one hand a passing on of subcultural/fan lore and evaluations, informing and moulding the tastes and choices of the customer, but also includes an element of learning on the part of the business as well, receiving highly valued information on customer needs and preferences. A number of

businesses I interviewed informed me of how important this form of customer feedback was for being able to plan ahead in these markets. Vladi, the head of Fumax publishing, for instance, decided to publish *boys' love* (BL) manga, and set up the specialist BL imprint Maxxx precisely because he was aware of the demand for the genre through his comics trade activity.

Furthermore, these forms of owner/employee-customer discussions – especially among peers – can also be experienced by both parties as a meaningful aspect of their participation within the subculture/fandom, and valued highly within the range of exchanges within the culture.<sup>177</sup> However, it can also become a burden at times, as the expectation to socially interact with customers in relation to shared areas of interest can take up considerable amounts of time and energy.

One of the reasons a close rapport with customers is so important in these markets is because, as Waldinger et al. point out in relation to ethnic enterprises, they are often set up in *markets which are characterised by “instability or uncertainty”* (1990b: 26, my italics).<sup>178</sup> Subcultural and fan markets can be seen to conform to this description, especially during the initial establishing phase of these markets, when indeed these markets may not even yet exist, and as such they are highly uncertain with regards to profitability or even the survival chances of enterprises within them. As a result, initially these non-existent markets are not

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177 This is also found in ethnic enterprises: “Self-employed retailers and artisans are tied to their place of work through the pressure of business and the long hours they must put in. Thus, more than most occupational groups, they depend on customers and suppliers to satisfy their need for friendship and sociability (Boissevain 1981; England 1980: 269-313).” (Boissevain et al. 1990: 144)

178 This aspect of reducing uncertainty through establishing good connections with the clientele also ties back to the point regarding the meaningful and burdensome double nature of shop owners' and staff's relationship with customers, as also found in relation to ethnic enterprises: “Customers and clients play a central role in owners' strategies, as building a loyal following is a way of offsetting the high level of uncertainty facing ethnic small businesses. Some owners provide special services, extend credit, and go out of their way to deliver individual services to customers. Often, however, providing special services to coethnics causes trouble for owners, who then are faced with special pleading to take lower profits for their efforts.” (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 47)



appealing to outside actors. Once a subcultural or fan market is established, however, it will attract outside investors, who will then have to face the special knowledge and communications barriers specific to the given cultures.

The advantage of subcultural producers from within the culture and those coming from related cultures compared to outside market actors is not only their immediate better understanding of the norms, demands and evaluations of subcultural and fan cultural market audiences, but also their overall knowledge of what it means to be a part of a subcultural or fan cultural world. In this way they have a better “sense of the game” in Bourdieu’s words (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 118), which translates to a better evaluation of what to invest in. It is, nevertheless, important for these actors to also be self-reflexive about their own subcultural or fan positions, as paying too much attention to the expectations and evaluations of the core of the subculture can lead to infeasible businesses decisions.

Vladi (39, head of Fumax publishing and Comicsinvest, explaining the changes in the decision making process regarding the selection of books for publication following Fumax’s repositioning from comics and manga to novel publishing focusing on video game based, fantasy and young adult genres): With the comics we, it wasn’t about what we wanted to publish, I even set my own tastes aside, and now if I think back on what was the closest, really close, to [my own liking] among comics we published, than I can force myself to say *Punisher: Confederacy of Dunces*. I really liked the Punisher at the time, but this story not so much, but we chose this one because it had Spider-Man and Daredevil in it, this was the most marketable. [...] But now this attitude has completely changed, now I practically only publish books, that I personally also really like. [...] So we’ve further raised this quality expectation, and plus, that I really have to like it as well. And this has really worked out. But I also pay attention to it being well received by the wider audience abroad, and if the two coincide then I take it on. Because a lot of the time I

like books, which aren't appreciated by the wider audience, those I keep to myself for my own pleasure, but I don't force publishing them at any cost, because it's a favourite of mine. That's not a professional attitude, which led to the collapse of the whole comics market [in Hungary], that this was the attitude, that people didn't care whether the wider public was interested or not, because they liked it themselves.

The above quote from Vladi reiterates the importance of both having an eye for evaluating potential works to be published, while at the same time being reflexive enough about one's own position as an insider to be able to distinguish between potentially disastrous self-gratifying business moves and good investments. The notion that being on the inside needs to be balanced by a measure of distance from a pure subcultural or fan position was reiterated by a number of my respondents in relation to how they see themselves as being professionals, similar to Vladi's invocation of the term above.

Another point, I would like to draw attention to in the above quote is the way the potential success of works in the Hungarian market is in part evaluated by Vladi based on the success those works have enjoyed abroad. The development of subcultural and fan markets in Hungary, as already noted before, is quite specific in this sense that these markets almost always have precursor models in other countries, and the possible success of certain products in neighbouring countries can contribute to entrepreneurs deciding on pursuing a previously un-pioneered market in the country. While the first attempts at servicing an as yet non-existent or only fledgling market will not necessarily come from within the culture, there is still a strong drive from practitioners and aficionados of the culture to help increase the availability of the desired products, not least for one's self and immediate circle of fellow participants.

In the case of anime-manga – as we saw in the previous chapter – the fan market has been dominated by actors coming from fannish and subcultural backgrounds and from related fields of interest. Major external actors such as the book publisher and retailer Lára Books Corporation also tried to capitalize on the boom in interest in manga during the end of the naughties, but have since suspended the operation of their manga imprint Mangattack. According to some of my respondents the choice of titles published by Mangattack might have contributed to the lacklustre reception they received, an example of how either a lack of knowledge regarding specialized consumer tastes or an overly hasty attempt at securing publishing rights can lead to a failed market strategy.<sup>179</sup> Others, however, have pointed out that the role of Mangattack had been positive in relation to its effect on various retail channels, including the largest chain book stores, which became more receptive towards stocking and featuring manga and comics as a result of the negotiating power that the publisher was backed up by compared to the other smaller independent businesses.

A number of actors, nevertheless, expressed their frustration at larger external actors having entered markets, also in areas other than manga publishing, which they see as having been created from within the respective cultures. Such examples, pointed out by my interviewees, were the entry of book retail and publishing group giant *Alexandra* into the comics market with their *Cartaphilus* publishing house, or the entry of mainstream concert organizing companies on the *visual kei* and Japanese pop scene.

Anita Petneházi ‘Ji’ (25, party and concert organizer, leading member of the Para Para Fake Starz dance group<sup>180</sup>): The LM.C and Miyavi [concerts] were organized by

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179 The fact that the publisher employed editors, who were knowledgeable about manga, would seem to imply that it was rather the latter cause. The pressure to perform according to the scale, time frames and expectations of major companies seems to be detrimental in relation to appropriately engaging with these specialist markets, which are usually of a smaller scale with slower and lower rates of return on investments.

180 Para Para is a form of synchronized dancing from Japan, sometimes featured in anime

Concerto, and I really like them, but the thing that's slightly annoying in this is that it was us who worked a lot for this, so that these bands would come, so that they would have an audience and that [people] would go to the concert, it was us who worked a lot for this. True, we wouldn't have taken on Miyavi for financial reasons, but in the case of LM.C and D'espairsRay we could [organize it] as well for sure.

Thus while in the case of manga publishing it seems that "knowledge of tastes and buying preferences" (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 22-3) has indeed contributed to "consumer tastes provid[ing] a protected market position" (Waldinger et al. 2000: 363-4), in *visual kei* and Japanese pop concert organizing this does not necessarily hold true.

Furthermore, the above interview excerpt is from 2010, and by 2014 Ji had developed a close rapport with Concerto helping them with their business decisions and concert promotions in relation to Japanese music acts. This demonstrates how external actors who remain within the field can come to learn the relevance of the expertise possessed by subcultural producers and develop working relations with them, in effect bringing them closer to the field specific logic. Indeed, one of the most troubling aspects of the entry of external major businesses emphasized by my interviewees was their sudden appearance *and then abrupt exit* from subcultural markets like manga or comics publishing. Leaving series unfinished, publishing in too large quantities compared to the potential uptake of the market and then offering huge discounts on titles to clear out stock are all seen as damaging to the development of these markets. It is not only external actors, however, who can exert negative pressure on potential market development.

A number of my interviewees also highlighted the detrimental effect well intentioned subcultural participants can have on the long-term prospects of subcultural businesses. In

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opening and ending sequences as well.

rare cases, for example, participants specifically start micro-business-type retail operations in order to help service the community. These forms of “businesses,” are great for buyers, as they will make a point of providing goods at near whole-sale prices, but at the same time can hurt other subcultural producers, who by trying to run their enterprises as actual businesses in order to be able to stay operational in the long run – taking into consideration labour costs and overhead – will never be able to compete with those same prices.

Grif (29, head of Trillian comic book store): You can put an end to the debate, regarding how serious somebody’s idea is of opening a comics store, organizing LAN [parties],<sup>181</sup> publishing manga, with a single question. In our case [= opening a comics store] all you have to ask is, for them to please list the Hungarian comic book stores of the past ten years, and explain why they went bankrupt, and what they intend to do better. In our case [= referring to an actual previous conversation] the person’s answer was, s/he doesn’t know and doesn’t understand why this is relevant, and this is an absolutely common response.

In this quote Grif is emphasizing the lack of business thinking and planning on the one hand, and/or relevant knowledge of the market on the other hand on the part of most people who would like to enter the comics trade in Hungary. Although outside actors are usually more prepared in relation to business planning and insiders might have a better grasp of the interests of comics fans, it is an intersection of both business acumen and subcultural knowledge that enables Grif to be “the best there is at what he does” – to rephrase the Wolverine quote<sup>182</sup> he likes to describe his position in relation to the comics market in Hungary. Grif’s position in this way is that of the subcultural insider, who has a professional approach to running his business, this is what provides him and his comics shop with an

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181 Computers or gaming consoles connected via a local area network (LAN) in order to allow for multiplayer gaming.

182 “I’m the best there is at what I do. But what I do best isn’t very nice.” (Wolverine in *Uncanny X-Men* issue 162 [[https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Uncanny\\_X-Men](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Uncanny_X-Men)])

advantage over other actors who time and time again try to enter the market of brick and mortar comic stores in the country. This same conversation with Grif also leads us on to the next subchapter's topic in relation to resource mobilization and employment.

### **7.3. Resource mobilization and employment**

Grif (29, head of Trillian comic book store): These role-playing game, card gaming etc. shops all go bust due to the very same thing they found their business success on, which is that it is acquaintances, friendships and good relationships and love that holds everything together, and well, and you have to forget that, because you can't support a shop by trading magic cards, you can't support a shop by trying to sell all the existing thirty Hungarian [comics] publications, which all cost four-hundred [Hungarian] Forints in such quantities as to be able to yield some kind of rational amount each month. It won't yield anything.

Although Grif's argument in the above quote is a plea for drawing on business sense in relation to starting an enterprise in subcultural and fan markets, the present chapter will be a discussion of the very elements he points out as acting as a misplaced foundation for such ventures. His stressing of the importance of business considerations and rational planning is definitely validated by my own research data, however, the reason people might indeed fall into the trap of counting too much on the elements of friendship and the like within these markets, is precisely because they indeed play a significant role in contributing to the reproduction and development of these markets and the businesses active within them.

When it comes to possible resource mobilization for starting off in small-scale entrepreneurship it seems to be an overarching theme across research results from different countries and cultures that entrepreneurs will mostly draw on a) personal savings, and/or b)

borrow financial resources from family and friends, and capitalize on c) hard work – to the point of self-exploitation – and the often times d) unpaid labour of family members (see Boissevain et al. 1990, Kuczi 2000, Light and Gold 2000, Waldinger et al. 1990b).

Kuczi (2000: 73-77) summarising his own and further research on small-scale entrepreneurship in Hungary emphasizes the central role family savings and loans from within the extended family<sup>183</sup> play in setting up an enterprise of this type. Similarly, Kuczi reports on the importance of voluntary labour from family members (a third of all small-scale entrepreneurs starting out claimed to have received such help), and underlines the often non-quantified, but nevertheless essential element of family solidarity and support helping the fledgling entrepreneur. And finally, citing Czakó et al. (1994 in Kuczi 2000: 77), he points out the degree of self-exploitation found among entrepreneurs, with half of the respondents in the former research claiming to work regularly outside normal working hours, and only a third reporting having enough free time to go on holiday.

If we take a look at the literature on ethnic economies and entrepreneurship, we find very similar results. Both Boissevain et al. (1990) and Light and Gold (2000) summarize the findings in the field with fledgling entrepreneurs having “acquired the bulk of their capital through their own savings” (Boissevain et al. 1990: 137). Members of immigrant ethnic groups will rely more on self-exploitation rather than capital intensive production methods (Waldinger et al. 2000). Again both Light and Gold (2000) and Boissevain et al. agree that “[h]ard work is the most basic financial resource making savings possible” (1990: 140), with family labour being just as important for ethnic businesses (Boissevain et al. 1990: 142). Another common link between small scale entrepreneurship in general and ethnic enterprises

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183 During socialism family members and relatives could provide further help by pooling their foreign currency and/or import quotas – the latter in order to reduce the payable customs on imported goods – towards the necessary investments of the fledgling entrepreneur (Kuczi 2000).

in particular is the primacy of family ventures.

The ethnic enterprises we examined were overwhelmingly of small scale. When they were not one-person operations, they were often “mom-and-pop” enterprises. Many had grown from very humble origins, but virtually without exception they were family affairs. Ethnic entrepreneurs rely heavily upon family, kin, and coethnics for the cheap, loyal labor essential for their survival and success. (Boissevain et al. 1990: 141)

*Kuczi (2000) provides a strong argument for the primacy of the nuclear and extended family in the life and career of small-scale entrepreneurs, and demonstrates the way certain dynamics within the spouse relationship interact with the development of an entrepreneurial career. Perren & Ram (2004) also underscore the importance of taking into account the interactions within the household unit in the case of micro-businesses. Although I would have liked to extend my own research project to encompass the spouses and partners of the entrepreneurs I interviewed, it seems this particular dimension of the dynamics of entering into and working within a subcultural or fan cultural career will have to be left unexamined for now, as the further work this would require are beyond the scope of the current project. I would, however, like to note that at least eleven of my thirty-two respondents had reported being in a long-term relationship with a partner who was also from the same subcultural or fan cultural background.<sup>184</sup> Such a relationship could contribute to the subcultural work career of the participant in two significant ways. On the one hand, partners sharing the same cultural background and interest generally demonstrate a higher level of tolerance towards the demands and sacrifices that a subcultural or fan cultural work career entails. And on the other hand they were more readily involved in and mobilized to help out with the*

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184 As not all of my respondents were in long-term relationships, this is indeed a high ratio, which underlines the subculture like nature of these domains. As Hodkinson (2002) points out in relation to commitment, one of his four elements of (sub)cultural substance discussed in Chapter Two, the social relationships of subcultural participants will also revolve to a great extent around the culture.



*undertakings of the partner or spouse who was more active within the culture.*

One of the driving forces behind the employment of family members and kin is the issue of trust in all small-scale enterprises. As Kuczi notes every small shop owner has to deal with the problem of control and accountability in relation to the shopkeepers being employed (2000: 80), and the requirement of trust and loyalty is no different in other forms of small-scale businesses whether it is production, service or retail oriented. This is why ethnic enterprises will often also first draw on family labour before employing coethnics (Boissevain et al. 1990: 143). While trust can be one of the major factors pushing small-scale entrepreneurs towards drawing on the family as a work force, the other driving force according to Kuczi (2000) – as alluded to earlier – is the lack of other resources.

Networks beyond that of the extended family and neighbourhood connections can be just as important for small-scale entrepreneurs in general as in the case of ethnic markets, creative/cultural industries and subcultural and fan businesses. The significance of networks linking coethnics (Waldinger et al. 1990b, Light & Gold 2000), those working within the arts and creative/cultural industries (e.g. Becker 1982, McRobbie 1998, Smith & McKinlay 2009) and subcultural and fan participants (Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010, Jenkins 1992) within these worlds of work, is stressed in examinations of each of these communities/markets. These network connections are often further reinforced by a number of further ties, such as neighbourhood connections in Kuczi's example of carpenters (2000), or in the case of ethnic businesses:

among ethnic communities, various spheres of life often overlap. Individuals live near one another, meet in business and leisure pursuits, rely on the same religious and communal institutions, and consume ethnic media. (Light & Gold 2000: 109)

Similarly subcultural and fan communities (Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010, Jenkins 1992) also provide a rich background of intersecting dimensions of connectedness among participants. And the connections of my interviewees and those found within the wider environment of the Hungarian anime-manga fan market also underlines the way participants in these fields are bound together through a number of different common bonds and communities beyond that of the subcultural or fandom environment itself, such as school ties or connections of locality. Also through socializing, playing together, helping each other out and so on, both in relation to but also beyond the context of subcultural or fan cultural engagement – which is one of the aspects that make work in these markets *meaningful* as will be discussed in the fourth subchapter below.

First, however, in the present subchapter I will examine the way *voluntary labour can lead to employment* in the fan market. The next section offers a discussion of the way *voluntary labour is a significant resource within subcultures and fan cultures* and the pertaining markets. In the last section I will provide an overview of *further resources which are mobilized among participants within subcultures and fan cultures*.

### 7.3.1. From voluntary labour to employment

Meglivorn (39, HAA, creator of Manga.hu, typesetting editor at Mangafan): What I see is, that those acquaintances of mine who were involved in this, and interestingly enough, those who actually work with this, *it wasn't even the very active activist type figures, so the people who were organizing the cons, but rather the ones in the background, so the almost background worker types*, so they would hold lectures and be there, but not the actual organizers, so it is they who are now translating things like this and doing the stylistic proofing on things like this. Of course in the case of the translator, stylistic proofer they also have had to somehow learn the language [referring to Japanese], I

don't have that, but that is important to a certain degree. Also *what was mainly important in all of this was that they were visible, that they're there at the cons, and when this topic comes up their names come up in one way or another*, and although this isn't always good, because I see on forums and blogs that this really is a sore in some people's eyes, that my or other people's names always pops up here and there, but at the same time, anybody with a right mind can see the bottom line from the posts, and can see who is like what and can decide based on that whether they want to deal with the given person or not. Now if somebody is present lots of places and is in the lime light a lot, and indeed Csaba [Boros] isn't an unapproachable person either, especially during cons, so if they, shall we say, feel around then for certain they will find their thing, because if I understand correctly all the translators, stylistic proofers at Animax also all come from these so-called fan circles. (my emphases)

Meglivorn's description of how participants from within anime-manga fandom would find their way to different forms of employment within the anime-manga market provides a good summary of the general template found in my interviewees' career stories: subcultural and fan cultural involvement is followed by an increasing involvement in the producerly side of these cultures first in a voluntary fashion, and then based on the experience, renown and contacts acquired through participation in this way different opportunities for getting involved in for profit work arise.

Similarly to the way ethnic entrepreneurs can call on not only kinship, but also ethnic ties for cheap labour (Waldinger et al. 2000, Pécoud 2004) so too subcultural entrepreneurs can depend on their respective cultures to provide different forms of labour substitutes and a possible cheap – or in some cases even free – source of labour to draw upon. Furthermore we can see that just as we find networks of support and cooperation organized around some form of shared background (going beyond ethnic ties I would here again like to refer to Kuczi's (2000) work, who provides examples ranging from networks of former colleagues

and locality based familiarity to shared educational background), we can also see a similar phenomenon within the cooperation patterns of entrepreneurs and freelancers from subcultural and fan cultural backgrounds, as the following examples illustrate.

Róka [Fox] (20, member of the Alchemist Laboratory club, MondoCon organizer):  
Right in this small town where I grew up, Szentlőrinc, there right in the neighbouring street a very good anime friend of mine had already been into con organizing earlier, and one time he notified me, that the person he asked to be his helper, just won't be able to make it, but he knows that I'm good with video games, and wouldn't I like to help with organizing the next anime con.

Yardain (46, former editor at Delta Vision): And you know informal connections are very important everywhere, especially in this region, especially in Hungary, especially in areas like this, RPGs, fantasy, manga, stuff like that. Everybody knows everybody, and if there's some kind of gig, and I can't do it now, do you want to? Etc. That's how things work, and at the time, of course, I took on as much as I could.

The quote from Róka above is an example of the way ties that common interests engender are often further enhanced by geographical proximity, a theme that recurred in a number of other respondents' stories. Yardain's emphasis on the network of informal connections among people working within subcultural and fan cultural markets not only underlines the importance of professional ties, but also highlights the parallel and interrelated nature of these markets.

In the previous section I discussed the *tool kit perspective* in relation to the reasons for economic value stemming from ethnic or subcultural group membership, I will now turn to the *boundary perspective* (Light & Gold 2000). This perspective emphasizes that economic gains are to be found as a result of the establishing of group boundaries, which increase

solidarity and cooperation among group members – not unlike in the case of Bourdieusian fields.

Ethnicity is a powerful determinant of cooperation and solidarity because it is regarded as biological in origin, is reflected in social stratification, *shapes numerous elements of social life*, is frequently institutionalized (in religious practice, language, nationality, residential location, group myths, and government policy), and often *constitutes a basis of personal identity*. (Light & Gold 2000: 108, my emphases)

Compared to the above list subcultural and fan communities and markets are far less strictly bounded, but they do share some important characteristics with ethnic communities in relation to the above listed to warrant the consideration of the applicability of the boundary perspective to the possible economic impact and value of subcultural and fan affiliations. Hodkinson (2002) and Jenkins (1992) have demonstrated in detail that while subcultural and fan attachments are mostly not regarded as biological in origin they can still have a significant impact on a number of aspects of participants' everyday life, such as social ties, spending of disposable income, consumption habits, etc. Furthermore, just as ethnic ties are "frequently institutionalized (in religious practice, language, nationality, residential location, group myths, and government policy" (Light & Gold 2000: 108) so too subcultural and fan participation can be institutionalized in the form of club and association memberships (and even in negative terms in the form of moral panics – as discussed in Chapter Four – leading to policies aimed against the practices of the group, through which participants realize that they occupy a shared space of subordination and oppression). Finally, subcultural and fan identification, as discussed in the second chapter in relation to the framework of subcultural and fan studies, "constitutes a basis of personal identity" (Light & Gold 2000: 108). All these elements contribute to subcultural and fan participants being favoured as helpers and employees, immediately after the possibility of employing family members and relatives.

ZK (asking in relation to the helpers at conventions): Where do the helpers come from?

Tamás ‘Yakumo’ (32, head of AnimeLand): Circle of acquaintances, strictly. I would never entrust somebody to do it, who doesn’t know about these things, because a lot of people do that, I don’t think it’s a good thing. It’s easier not to care about it. Somebody stands in front of you and asks whether you have this manga or that manga. If it’s a person who doesn’t know anime, but learns the titles, they will be able to answer, whether you have it or not, but they will have no idea, what they’ve just been asked. So far we’ve only employed people, who are into this topic, only people like that stand behind the stands [at the conventions], except for one, my younger brother, but he sells the food.

Yakumo’s explicit preference for recruiting helpers from within his network of friends and acquaintances from anime-manga fandom is in part a result of his expectations in relation to the appropriate handling of customers. A helper at his stall has to be able to act as more than just an “interactive vending machine,” as an engaged expert, who can interpret the questions and comments of customers in meaningful ways. Both suggesting further titles the customer might be interested in based on his questions, and/or engaging them in meaningful conversation regarding their interests. These elements are important in not only (re-)establishing the authenticity of AnimeLand, but also building rapport with customers by providing the meaningful social experience that is characteristic of subcultural and fan commercial exchanges, but is often lacking in a general shopping scenario. This point was also emphasized by a number of other respondents. This is why the family member, his younger brother, who is not into the culture, is actually placed in a less demanding and relevant position, selling food stuff. This reversal of the common pattern of family members being entrusted first and subcultural/fan participants second, is very telling of the significance attached to subcultural and fan knowledge explained in Chapter Five.

However, this preference for helpers from within the fandom is also a result of the economic necessities facing small-scale fan enterprises, as was evidenced in a number of my respondents' stories. The non-monetary rewards of participating in events and/or receiving subcultural goods can make up for the lack of monetary forms of compensation. Paying market-price wages for helpers would be both unfeasible for the enterprises and probably less appealing for the helpers themselves, not to mention how detrimental it could be for the social relationships involved. This is true for the majority of businesses in these markets, and will be discussed in further detail in the next section on *voluntary labour as resource within subcultures and fan cultures*.

Even relatively larger ventures such as MondoCon still demonstrate a strong preference for helpers coming from within the fandom:

ZK (asking in relation to the organizers working on MondoCon): Did they all come from the *HAA*?

Acheron (32, *HAA*, head organizer of *HAA* conventions and later MondoCon): No, one of the formations were the cosplay helpers, within the *HAA* there had already started to form an independent crew of ten people for cosplay, we brought them along, it was the people who were on friendly terms with us that came. [...] We've produced our own crew, new people came, we came to like them, they stayed.

ZK: Were they also from the fandom?

Acheron: Absolutely.

ZK: And from outside the fandom?

Acheron: No, nobody. Everybody came from the fandom.

Discussing the background of MondoCon organizers with Acheron it is clear that even though MondoCon prides itself on being a professionally run convention, contributing to its steady presence in the market, there still remains a strong preference for organizers coming

from within anime-manga fandom. Even though the make-up of the organizing team has changed over the years it still retains its strong ties with the fandom, not necessarily as a result of any explicit policy requiring a fan background, but rather as a result of this type of work attracting people from within the culture, as will be further explained in the fourth subchapter and in the following.

As already discussed in the previous section on the commonalities between subcultural and fan, ethnic, creative/cultural and general small-scale entrepreneurship, it is not uncommon to employ immediate family members – followed by more distant relatives – in both small-scale ethnic and subcultural/fan enterprises. While in the case of ethnic enterprises entrepreneurs employing kin also implies a connection of shared ethnicity (Waldinger et al. 1990b, Light & Gold 2000), this extra element of shared relationship is not as straightforward in subcultural and fan cultures, where even among immediate family members there might be a lack of understanding in relation to the actual content of the enterprise, as we saw in the example of Yakumo's brother above. Nevertheless, I found more entrepreneurs, who actually worked with family members – most commonly partners or spouses, or siblings – who shared their interest and enthusiasm for the contents and practices of the subculture or fan culture, than those, who employed family members along the more common lines of trust and the shared economic interest of the (in some cases extended) family unit. In certain cases the shared interest was also an important element of the couple relationship, which again underlines the significance of these cultural attachments for individuals' everyday lives. In cases where siblings or couples shared the interest they would often co-own and manage their enterprises.

In the case of ethnic markets following relatives the next logical pool of employees is the ethnic community (Boissevain et al. 1990, Light & Gold 2000, Waldinger et al. 1990b). While often the added value arising from hiring coethnics is the securing of “lower-priced



labor” (Boissevain et al. 1990: 141), there are further gains and considerations at work. An ethnic link between employer and employees will mean that there is a shared cultural understanding of values and norms, and often of social relations (e.g. neighbourhoods), institutional affiliations (such as churches), which will on the one hand increase the smoothness of the interactions and negotiations among the different actors, but will also constitute “relationships of meaning suffused with expectations that actors have of one another” (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 38). What this means is that on the one hand employees will potentially be more loyal, work harder, earn less, and be willing to work hours, which might be considered too long or uncomfortable in other ways (as a result of unplannable sudden spurts of work, with erratic downtimes for example) (Boissevain et al. 1990: 142). While on the other hand “workers can anticipate that the standards of conduct prevailing in the broader ethnic community will extend to the workplace as well” (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 38-9), which also means that the work environment will shield the employee from some of the less easily negotiable elements of the larger society.<sup>185</sup>

All of this again more or less translates over to subcultural and fan markets. A large number of the enterprises, if they employed non-relatives, did so from within either the immediate subcultural or fandom environment or from related fields as discussed in the previous chapter. And just as ethnic enterprises have no problems attracting a coethnic work force, so too subcultural and fan cultural enterprises seem to generate enough interest within their respective cultures that participants actually seek out businesses for an opportunity to work there, as the following quote also illustrates.

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185 “The immigrant firm is also likely to offer an environment where the worker is sheltered from some of the rules and regulations of the host society: a place where hours are not carefully watched, wages are paid in cash or under the table, and machinery is used for personal needs (Gold 1985). [...] In return for the immigrant worker’s effort and constancy, the immigrant owner may be expected to make a place for newly arrived relatives, to help out with financial problems, or even to provide a loan needed for starting up a new business.” (Waldinger et al. 1990b: 38-9)

Péter Keczei (27, former head of AnimeStars webshop and founding editor-in-chief of *AnimeStars Magazine*, in relation to how the team of *AnimeStars* grew): We didn't advertise for people to become contributors, those who felt an affinity, a few applied [by themselves].

Working within the fandom is a big pull for a number of people, and companies like *Mangafan* and *HoldfényTeam* are approached regularly by interested members, who would like to work at their companies, from within their circle of customers and even beyond. Although there are only a limited number of places, *Mangafan* provides work for several participants from within the fandom, and even *HoldfényTeam* has an employee, who used to be a regular customer. András Müller, head of *HoldfényTeam*, who also understands what it means to have a collector sensibility – still displaying the most prized pieces of his limited but valuable sports card collection in his office –, explained that although it is important for employees to have a certain degree of knowledge in relation to card and figure collecting, it is actually a negative trait if employees are collectors themselves, as that would go against the logic of the business.

András Müller (37, head of *HoldfényTeam*): In the case of every single guy this was stipulated, that there is no collecting, because lots of people would have come to work at *Holdfény*, and getting figures cheaper and getting cards cheaper, well this doesn't work here, although I too have become much-much more lenient. My colleague Tamás is an NHL [= National Hockey League] nut, so a hockey figure here and there pops in for him as well, Csabi collects Terminator [figures] and I don't know what else, my colleague Balázs [collects] horror figures, but not every week, this really is like, gently, but not hardcore collectors. This [= referring to employees being fans] wasn't a primary concern during hires.

The way András Müller gradually enumerates how his employees are indeed invested in collecting is also a testament to the embeddedness of HoldfényTeam in the geek subcultural cluster and market. As discussed in the previous chapter Vladi, the head of Fumax publishing and Comicsinvest, displaying a clear fan and collector position understands the limits of collecting in relation to business in a similar light. His enterprise is also similar to the above two in the way his only employee is a long time customer turned assistant, who left a career in public administration to pursue one in comics.

In the previous chapter I've already touched on the relations and networks between actors in the anime-manga fandom. Unsurprisingly enough, employment opportunities often arose along the lines of these established connections. A common topical thread among my interviewees' answers is the way employment opportunities and decisions seemed to rely on subcultural and fandom based connections and referrals. Employers already knew who they wanted to work with based on previous experience working with the given person, based on referrals regarding and/or personal connection with the hired employee/freelance professional, and based on the specific set of specialized skills required for the job. In certain cases hiring would also mean access to the publicity channels<sup>186</sup> and or subcultural standing of the employee/freelancer, which as explained in the previous section on *ethnic goods and tastes* can act as a further asset – beyond the skills and labour power themselves – for the development of the business. The way businesses would gain access to each other's promotional channels and audiences was characteristic of cooperation patterns among various actors, not just of employment relationships.

As I've already discussed at the beginning of this section in relation to Meglivorn's quote, participants from within these cultures will often transition through involvement to voluntary

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186 Also discussed in section 7.3.3. on *further resources within subcultures and fan cultures* below.

participation in the producerly side of these fields to potentially more central positions within the fandom and/or paying part-time or full-time jobs. This is just the most basic model though, with a whole number of different variations to this pattern. For instance, Yardain, former editor and translator at *Delta Vision*, initially worked as a research biologist, and was contacted by an acquaintance – knowing his fondness for the genres and for role-playing games – working in SF and fantasy translation, whether he would like to try himself out. He would thus slowly take up translation work and transition to a full-time editorial position at his publisher, a significant move into work, which fit his fan interests, and away from his original training as a biologist. His second major change would come about again as a result of his activities outside of work, with one of his pieces written for the Hungarian fantasy role-playing game M.A.G.U.S. ending up in the hands of Csanád Novák, one of the original designers and the then head of M.A.G.U.S. development. Novák liked the material so much, that he offered Yardain a position in M.A.G.U.S. game development and administration, a position he gladly took up.

Demonstrating commitment, preparedness, ability and gaining contacts are all important elements of participation in subcultures and fan cultures – as illustrated by the above example of Yardain – and this is also true of taking part in voluntary producerly activities. For example, Anita Petneházi ‘Ji’<sup>187</sup> recounts how her enthusiasm for and involvement in the parties and concerts organized by Olivér Frank ‘Case’<sup>188</sup> together with Máriusz Bari ‘Damage’<sup>189</sup> would lead to her being chosen to help Case as a DJ and organizer following Damage’s decision to withdraw from this aspect of involvement in the *visual kei* and Japanese pop music scene.

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- 187 Anita Petneházi ‘Ji’ (25, party and concert organizer, member of the Para Para Fake Starz dance group)
  - 188 Olivér Frank ‘Case’ (37, HAA, creator and host of the radio program Nippon Groove and the website SoundOfJapan.hu, concert and party organizer, *Mondo Magazine* columnist)
  - 189 Máriusz Bari ‘Damage’ (32, co-creator of the Nippon Shoxx party series, former columnist for *Mondo Magazine*, creator of the websites LD50.hu and PLANET://DAMAGE)

The non-profit radio show *Japanimánia* played a key role in the career development of both Dalma Kálovics<sup>190</sup> and Antal Solti,<sup>191</sup> as has been discussed in the previous chapter already, but the network of connections acquired there would not only lead to work opportunities for the presenters, but recurring guests like Case would also benefit from the relationship, for instance by being taken on board *Mondo Magazine* – based on Antal Solti’s knowledge of his website and articles there – to write a column on Japanese music for each issue.

Roland Markovics ‘Luggeriano’ who now works full-time at *Mangafan* and is the editor-in-chief of *Mondo Magazine* also started out by first getting involved in helping out Case with the AMV screenings at conventions and also by accepting Danci’s – the then editor-in-chief of *Mondo* – call to write something to submit to the magazine, after having voiced his grievance at the lack of content for and about the AMV culture at a *Mondo* editor-reader questions and answers session at one of the conventions (quoted in the previous chapter). His understanding of his increasing involvement with first the “AMV scene” – as he calls it – and later the wider fandom is that of a series of small, gradual steps, which were aided both by his proactiveness and willingness to put in work before the actual rewards were present.

Beyond the proactive pursuit of involvement, his fan specific knowledge was also an important element in the case of Luggeriano’s entry into the producerly side of the fandom, mirrored in Hajnal’s<sup>192</sup> case as well. After getting involved with *Mangafan*, and helping out at events, there came a point where she took over some of the retouch work on a volume of *Shin Angyō Onshi*.<sup>193</sup> This led to her increased involvement in the production side of the manga publication business, first, by working as retoucher on a number of further volumes

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- 190 Dalma Kálovics (31, co-creator and co-host of the radio show *Japanimánia*, translator, editor of *Mondo Magazine*)
  - 191 Antal Solti (30, *HAA*, co-creator and co-host of the radio show *Japanimánia*, worked with A+ and then Animax Eastern Europe at AXN in various positions, former press coordinator for the *HAA*, editor of *Mondo Magazine*)
  - 192 Hajnal [Dawn] (33, former acting head of manga publishing at *Mangafan*)
  - 193 En: *Blade of the Phantom Master*, Hu: *Árnybíró* [Shadow Judge]

for the same series, and then gradually moving into proofreading as well. Finally, with other engagements for the head of the company increasing, being handed the supervision of the whole manga publication branch of *Mangafan*. The first step of getting involved hinged on her working knowledge of image editing software and retouching, which she had picked up as a result of previously working on scanlations for *Manga.hu*, as already discussed in Chapter Five.

In a similar fashion the fan translator of the Hungarian scanlation of the series *Sengoku Otogizōshi Inuyasha*,<sup>194</sup> which had already appeared on *Manga.hu* was contacted whether they would like to contribute to the official version in the role of stylistic editor, based on the quality of their work on the scanlations.<sup>195</sup> In the case of *Rurōni Kenshin Meiji Kenkaku Romantan*,<sup>196</sup> another series published by *Mangafan*, a fan reader had sent in such an extensive list of errors and problems found in the first volume, that she was invited to become the copy editor and proofreader of the series. Both of these examples again underline the role of voluntary labour, fan knowledge and in the latter case proactiveness in relation to moving from a fan position to working in manga publishing.<sup>197</sup> Such willingness to contact companies in relation to issues of quality, demonstrated on the part of subcultural and fan participants, can even lead to work opportunities with major foreign companies, as evidenced by Róka's following example.

Róka [Fox] (20, member of the Alchemist Laboratory club, MondoCon organizer):

Since I was very little, when I didn't know English yet, I was always looking for the Hungarian localizations. Which games might have Hungarian translations, and a lot of

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194 En: *Inuyasha*, Hu: *InuYasha*

195 The series in question, however, was eventually not licensed.

196 En: *Rurouni Kenshin: Meiji Swordsman Romantic Story*, Hu: *Rurōni Kenshin*

197 McRobbie (1998) examining the career pathways of young British fashion designers found similar patterns in the way voluntary labour could lead to possible further jobs in the case of fashion journalism for example.

them didn't have any, and I started to learn English, so that I can show them and make Hungarian translations for those games anyhow, which previously didn't have any, and which I wanted to play. We were doing it, we were doing it, and I've now even formed my own group, in which there are a quite a few of us, and we make Hungarian subtitles for anime, and dub them into Hungarian, and translate and dub video games. I could get into this company back then, because an official translation was put out, which wasn't that good, because I told the company, that the translation isn't bad, but the translators don't know the game, and so there are many instances where they didn't know what they should have translated. And to this I received a nicely formulated response, then I should do it better if that's what I'm saying, and [just] like that, I got a job opportunity with them.

Such work opportunities are, nevertheless, often only project-like temporary work (this was the situation in Róka's case as well), and only rarely lead to long-term part-time or full-time employment. As a result, careers within fan and subcultural markets are not necessarily the main source of income for participants, as evidenced by my own research results, but also in line with Hodkinson's findings on the UK goth subculture. While some interviewees did depend on their jobs within these markets to make a living "others received a significant top-up to their salary, student loan or other sources of income" (Hodkinson 2002: 121), or in certain cases participation was almost or completely non-profit, with participants actually investing money from external sources to continue contributing to the given culture. Only *full-time employees* seemed to rely solely on their earnings from within these markets to sustain themselves, some *entrepreneurs* also managed to make a living from running their business only, while others were merely supplementing their earnings from other sources, much like in the case of independent professionals, who – with the exception of one participant – were mostly unable to support themselves based on their activities within these cultures for extended periods of time.

To put it in numbers, out of the thirty-two people I talked to, at the most only ten during the *Mixed Period* and seven during the *Mondo Period* could be said to have been earning their living solely from the anime-manga market, and on the whole nobody was making a living off of purely anime and manga in the *Pre-HAA Period* and only one participant started to do so during the *HAA Period*. Much like Bourdieu notes regarding the relationship of bohemia to artistic production, which constitutes an “intellectual reserve army” whose members are “often obliged to live off a second skill” (1996 [1992]: 57), subcultural and fan participants also usually find themselves in a position where they earn their livelihood outside the culture, while at the same time cultivating a career within the subculture or fandom. This situation is quite common in relation to creative labour in general (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011, Smith & McKinlay 2009). In the fourth subchapter on *meaningful worlds of work* I will explain in more detail how the non-subcultural career can be a source of financial security, while the subcultural career can provide meaning and fulfilment in relation to work.

But voluntary labour is not only important as a pathway towards more central and possibly paying jobs within these cultures. On the whole voluntary labour plays a far more important role as a constant resource helping the culture flourish in different ways, with the creative and productive contributions of participants contributing towards the growth and functioning of these cultures. This is the aspect of voluntary labour I will be discussing next.

### 7.3.2. *Voluntary labour as resource within subcultures and fan cultures*

Balázs Lévai ‘Venom’ (31, *HAA*, head of Cosplay.hu, head organizer of MondoCon): At Cosplay.hu and CosplayTV everybody does what they love. If you start getting money for your hobby, then it’s no longer a hobby, it’s work, and I’ve noticed with a lot of people, when they started to get money for their work, they started to vanish really fast, because the money will never be enough. That’s why I



say, whoever joins us, does charity work.

Such “charity work” acts as one of the pillars of subcultures and fan cultures. We find a wealth of contributions within anime-manga fandom, as already discussed in the current and previous chapters, from fansubbers to scanlators, from the non-profit radio show *Japanimânia* to Case’s *Sound of Japan* show on Radio Tilos, from the tireless work of convention organization by HAA participants to the anime music videos and cosplays created by enthusiastic participants, and so on, all these elements and more each contribute to making the fandom a richer experience for everyone. The following example of the Alchemist Laboratory illustrates how the individually small contributions of participants can add up to something far greater than the sum of the separate parts.

Bene (25, leading member of the Alchemist Laboratory club, in relation to how the club was built): We were working in alternating shifts; ten of us did it in two weeks. There was a twelve strong group at Golem Works (Gólem Művek),<sup>198</sup> approximately the same people later formed this club, we would go every Monday, Tulok worked there. There the club itself was Tulok, even the role-playing gamers would gather around him, even though his job there was to do demonstration games and to paint [wargame figures]. When Tulok left, these people started to come less and less. I lived five minutes from Golem, when I finished with my work and went down it wasn’t the same. These people started meeting elsewhere, and it developed into a circle of friends, and this group of friends decided finally, that we need a place, and the father of one of the guys said that they have this place.

[...]

Since there were many of us, everyone could bring a little to add to the whole, time, whitewash, paint. In the school I was working they threw out a bunch of tables and chairs, and then I said, I would like to take them, and they said, I should take them.

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198      Strategy and board game shop, club and café in Budapest.

To once again turn to the parallel with ethnic economies Boissevain et al. point out that access to a pool of possible employees can be seen as a form of ethnic resource ethnic businesses can draw upon:

Ethnic resources are sociocultural features of a group that coethnic business owners utilize in business or from which their businesses passively benefit (Light and Bonacich 1988: 178). Ethnic resources characterize a group, not just its isolated members. Typical ethnic resources include *predisposing factors* – cultural endowments, relative work satisfaction arising from nonacculturation to prevailing labor standards, and a sojourning orientation – and modes of *resource mobilization* – ethnic social networks and access to a pool of underemployed coethnic labor. (1990: 132, emphases in the original)

In the case of subcultures and fan cultures it is less a question of underemployment, but rather pre-employment, as the pool of participants businesses can draw on for help and contributions are generally made up of young people, who are often still in education and who have yet to start out in their adult life, and as a result face fewer pressures and constraints and have a higher amount of disposable free time and energy to devote to tasks related to these cultures. Drawing upon audiences and consumers as resources for production is, however, not restricted to just subcultures and fan cultures, but is in fact a more prevalent characteristic of the changed landscape of content production and distribution.

The phenomenon that audiences, and fans in particular, are involved on a voluntary basis more and more in the curating, production and management side of content industries, has already been discussed in some detail within media studies (e.g. Csigó 2009, Jenkins 2006). Ito et al. also point out how this trend is just as prevalent in digital content production:

In digital-culture studies, theorists have been describing the growth of various types of unpaid digital work, including open-source software development (Weber 2003), “non-market peer production” (Benkler 2006), “crowdsourcing” (Howe 2006), virtual economies (Castronova 2001; Dibbell 2006), and other forms of noncommercial free culture (Lessig 2004). In many of these kinds of new media work practices, the unpaid labor of youth is a significant factor. (2010: 300)

And similar to how Ito et al. discuss “young people work[ing] in virtual worlds and with new media, motivated by reputation, learning goals, a sharing ethic, and their own satisfaction rather than economic gain” (2010: 300), Hodkinson (2002) points out the importance of the voluntary contribution of a larger number of subcultural participants in the production and maintenance of the infrastructure of the given culture.

The importance of profits, though, should not be allowed to obscure the role of cultural motivations for the goth scene’s subcultural producers. As well as playing a major role, alongside financial incentives, in inducing the involvement of those whose practices were profitable, *cultural factors comprised the sole source of motivation for the efforts of scores of others, who made little or no money from their exploits.* (Hodkinson 2002: 122, my emphasis)

In the following I will engage with Hodkinson’s discussion of the topic in more detail as it provides a number of points that help us understand the logic of voluntary participation in subcultures and fan cultures. Hodkinson found four distinct reasons among the responses he received from entrepreneurs and subcultural producers active within the UK goth scene on why they participate above and beyond monetary rewards (2002: 122-127). The first of these, *the perfect career*<sup>199</sup> as well as the last element *contributing to ‘the scene’* will be discussed

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199     The chapter heading summaries of Hodkinson’s explanation are given in italics in order to signal their use as technical terms for the following discussion.

in the following subchapter on meaningful work. The second reason for becoming a subcultural producer was the availability of *subcultural perks*. These perks would range from waived entrance fees at certain venues – or in the case of more well-known and central participants the possibility of being able to get on the guest list for most events – to promotional CDs, or the opportunity to keep certain items, which were originally ordered for retail purposes at wholesale prices. Hodkinson rightly points out that the fact “that such subcultural goods and privileges constituted desirable personal rewards again underscores the personal interest in” (2002: 124) these fields and activities for participants who then go on to become subcultural producers, since outside the subculture the value these perks represent is marginal at best.

As can already be inferred from the enumerated different perks, various forms of rewards correspond to distinct positions within the infrastructure of the subculture. For instance fanzine producers might gain access to “bands for whom they, every bit as much as their readers, were enthusiastic fans” (2002: 124). Perks like this can even be vital in forwarding the research of scenes and subcultures, as Kahn-Harris’ account (2007) demonstrates on how his research was facilitated to a great extent by becoming a writer for *Terrorizer* magazine, the premier print medium for extreme metal in Great Britain. But, as already discussed in chapter three, Hodkinson (2002), Kahn-Harris (2007), Vályi (2010) and myself included have all benefited from an insider status and connections when accessing our respective research fields.<sup>200</sup>

But most importantly *subcultural perks* can serve as a form of reward and payment on all levels of subcultural and fan participation. In the following example Ji explains how she was able to attend – thanks to her work contribution – a number of concerts that would have been

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200     And it would be safe to venture that it is not only insider status, but also the position of researcher, which provides further research perks, see Thornton (1996[1995]).

too expensive for her to go to otherwise:

Anita Petneházi 'Ji' (25, party and concert organizer, member of the Para Para Fake Starz dance group): If I hadn't worked at the LM.C or the Miyavi concerts, I wouldn't have gone, I wouldn't have spent six-thousand five-hundred and seven-thousand Forints, okay for Versailles, yes, because I had already been to a Versailles concert abroad in München in 2009, and that was really good, I would have gone because of that in any event, even if it's not us organizing it, but I'm lucky to be able to work at concerts. There's Sandra, and her company is called Catering Queen, and it was through her that I was able to get in to concerts like NIN and Miyavi and LM.C, and it seems I'll also be helping at D'espairsRay and Skinny Puppy, and I'm really happy I have an acquaintance like this, through whom I can get in this way.

These forms of subcultural rewards are the currency of subcultural and fan participation not only because they provide a way to get free or in certain cases exclusive products, experiences or rights, but also because the way something is acquired is often just as important as the actual artefact or thing itself.<sup>201</sup> Often the fact that one receives *subcultural perks* is topped off with the reward of the accompanying *subcultural capital* these perks entail, which is the third type of reward identified by Hodkinson.

Alongside factors such as appearance, knowledge and ownership of the right consumables, being seen to undertake subcultural organizational or productive activities constituted strong evidence of subcultural commitment and tended to raise the general profile of those involved. As such, it was a key source of subcultural capital. (Hodkinson 2002: 124)

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201 See Vályi's (2010) discussion on the distinctions between buying a record at full price on eBay and managing to hunt it down at a record fair or a dusty basement for a fraction of the price.

*Subcultural capital* as a possible reward is again like *subcultural perks* something that is valuable within the given culture and for participants committed to it, as Hodgkinson points out “[s]tatus and friendships within the confines of such a subculture would constitute little reward for those whose social lives revolved outside it” (2002: 126). This is key to understanding not only why the system of non-monetary rewards and the draw of working within subcultures and fan cultures are so intrinsically tied to each other, but also points to the field-like nature of these formations. Non-monetary rewards which offset the costs and lack of remuneration found in these settings are valued precisely because they are meaningful within these cultures, whereas they have little to no value outside them. Just as the stakes and rewards of a given field are specific to it, and are mostly void outside its boundaries, as explained in Chapter Two. This further corresponds to Light and Gold’s point regarding the *tool-kit perspective* of understanding the advantages (and limitations) conferred by ethnic group membership discussed in the second subchapter above, which involves “ethnic groups maintain[ing] unique means of evaluating the costs and rewards of economically relevant activities” (2000: 107). In this case subcultural participants’ evaluation of the non-monetary rewards related to working in these markets is distinctly different (assigning positive value) from that of the general populace (perceiving little to no value), who have no interest or stakes in the given culture.

Voluntary labour is not only a resource for the community at large, but also for the fledgling businesses. In certain cases just working for a company or organization within the respective culture is enough of a reward in itself – with the accompanying subcultural capital and perks, as discussed above, of free entrance, complimentary copies of publications, etc. – for participants to want to take part and volunteer. This form of volunteer labour is most visible in relation to conventions and events in anime-manga fan culture. From the volunteers at *HAA* organized conventions to those working at *MondoCon* and *HoldfényCon* all help out as a result of a commitment to anime-manga fandom. While less numerous than those helping

at conventions and events, businesses will depend upon the work of volunteers for smaller tasks and will again remunerate those volunteers with different forms of *subcultural perks*, not to mention the bragging rights (i.e. subcultural capital) associated with working for a given company.

These *subcultural perks*, such as free entrance or a free product for volunteers are barter-like arrangements. And these forms of non-monetary transactions also characterize some of the exchanges between subcultural producers, which I will discuss in the next, closing section of this subchapter on resources other than labour power that contribute to sustaining the vibrancy of these cultures.

### *7.3.3. Further resources within subcultures and fan cultures*

The labour contribution of participants in the Hungarian anime-manga fandom has to be by far the most significant resource being mobilized for the development and reproduction of the culture. There are nevertheless a number of further important forms of resource mobilization that also help sustain and enable the growth of anime-manga fandom. In the following I will offer a brief overview of the most common types of resources mentioned in one way or another by my respondents: a) money, b) barter arrangements, business and communication channels, c) physical infrastructure, c) location and events, d) personal development.

#### 7.3.3.1. Money

This is the most straightforward form of resource, yet it can be deceptively hard to trace for a number of reasons. The main one being, that money is an especially sensitive topic in Hungary. As a result I refrained from asking too many question regarding financial matters. Nevertheless, I was able to identify the significance of financial contributions on three different scales, which all play an important role in contributing to the development of

anime-manga fandom and related subcultures and fan cultures.

First, there are large-scale investments and contributions ranging from upwards of half a million Hungarian Forints.<sup>202</sup> These, of course, include the investments required for the establishing of the enterprises run by subcultural producers. Furthermore, they also include the types of loans and investments that people, who themselves might not be entrepreneurs, or not even subcultural producers, are willing to contribute towards the establishing or the growth of such ventures, as a result of being fans or subcultural participants themselves. Small-scale entrepreneurs often draw on family resources – including financial assets – to start up or maintain their businesses (cf. Kuczi 2000), and this too is, of course, a relevant factor in subcultural and fan markets as well. However, it is just as often resources along the lines of subcultural and fan commitment that are mobilized in a similar way in the case of subcultural and fan enterprises – again mirroring examples of financial resource pooling found within ethnic economies (Light & Gold 2000). Instances of such commitment towards investing in subcultural and fan businesses were found in relation to not only the anime-manga fan market, but also comics, role-playing games and SF culture. These loans and investments share the characteristics of monetary resources provided by family members, most importantly in that they are not provided with a profit incentive, and will have very low to zero interest rates attached. Indeed, contributors are often more interested in seeing the businesses and the wider culture thrive than the returns on their financial support or investments.

Second, there are the mid-level financial contributions. These are somewhere in the range of fifty thousand to several hundred thousand Hungarian Forints. Most monetary contributions on this scale were found within the non-profit fandom proper. Members of fan organizations

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202 Large-scale relative to the size of these markets and the enterprises active in them. Investments required for the setting up of a subcultural business are usually on the scale of starting other small-scale or family businesses.



could provide loans (with no interest rate of course) for their organizations in order to allow for the staging of larger events. Or if an event should turn out to be unsuccessful financially, the burden of the loss could be split among members willing to contribute for the sake of holding the event irrespective of its financial feasibility.

Finally, small-scale contributions range from a couple of thousand to several ten thousand Hungarian Forints in size. Not taking into account all the purchasing power going towards products and services offered within the anime-manga fan market, these small-scale contributions still play an important part in enabling the operation of fan organizations and clubs. Organization and club membership fees, one-time or repeated donations – towards events or operation costs – all add up to keeping subcultural and fan organizations and clubs afloat and working.

#### 7.3.3.2. Barter arrangements, business and communication channels

Another resource, which is often shared and made use of among different participants are the communication channels various actors preside over. Websites, Facebook pages will put up news items advertising events, organizations, new releases and so on. Posters, adverts and websites will feature the logos of all organizations, who contribute to a given event. These are the two most commonly cited examples among my interview materials. Putting up news items often benefits both parties, since the website or Facebook page owner needs to both demonstrate their leading role as a source of up to date information, by being among the first to break the news, and also require a steady stream of content, such as news items they can publish on their site or page. Not featuring a certain news item can be a strategic use of a communication channel, but is a mostly dispreferred move, as it is seen to possibly harm the reputation of the channel itself.

The featuring of logos of contributing organizations is a form of non-monetary reward that can be leveraged within the complex system of barter agreements and subcultural perks that hold the network of subcultural producers together. In a similar manner offering products for promotional purposes (as a prize for a competition for example) can also serve to both popularize a given event (with tickets offered) or publication, etc. and at the same time provide materials to be given away. Barter agreements in relation to business channels, such as vendor's tables at conventions are also fairly standard. It is not only products that participants can contribute to a prize pool in exchange for tables, but also organizing programs or bringing other forms of content to a given event.

Finally, in certain cases already established channels of business can be mobilized to service either fledgling businesses or non-profit organizations in a similar bid at extending the overall vibrancy of the culture by sharing, volunteering and bartering goods and services among actors.<sup>203</sup> One such example is the way DASCO's enterprise – focused on aeromodelling – could serve as the business background enabling the Alchemist Laboratory (Alkimista Laboratórium) to become the Hungarian distributor of the skirmish game *Bushido*.<sup>204</sup> Although in effect it is DASCO's enterprise that acts as the Hungarian distributor, this allows the Alchemist Laboratory club to claim a skirmish game as their own flagship product, and thereby further strengthen their profile as a club in relation to miniature tabletop wargaming.

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203 The way the Hungarian anime-manga fan market's explosive growth depended in part on the already existing networks and infrastructure of businesses from related cultures, as explained in Chapter Four, can also be understood as a large-scale example of this form of resource mobilization.

204 Skirmish games are a subtype of tabletop wargaming, which – true to their name – usually involve a smaller playing field, fewer units and a shorter average game length.

#### 7.3.3.3. Physical infrastructure

The sharing and mobilization of physical infrastructure, most notably technical equipment, such as computers, projectors, sound systems, game consoles and similar electronics owned by individual participants and by organizations is a common element of most events and conventions, and contributes to lowering organization costs and raising the technical quality of these events. Another usual form of providing help with infrastructure is the way anime-manga fandom related websites are often hosted by businesses, whose owners or co-workers are also members of the culture, and thus provide friendly or pro bono rates.

#### 7.3.3.4. Location and events

It is easy to forget that places and events are themselves a resource, which can be utilized for a number of purposes. Events provide direct sales opportunities for publishers and creators; they also offer exposure for shops and organizations. To the temporal location of events (cf. Bacon-Smith 1992) correspond the physical location of shop and club spaces (see Vályi 2010). Shops, like the one's run by HoldfényTeam, can provide space for players to come together, while businesses like Moonlight Meido Teahouse are designed to facilitate small-scale gatherings and events.

Moonlight Meido Teahouse was especially significant during the time it operated as a venue where regular cosplay centred events or *Mondo* meet-ups could take place. Such events were mutually beneficial for both parties, bringing in customers to the teahouse, which could provide a thematically appropriate and safe space for cosplayers and anime-manga fans in general. It is easy to take for granted the availability of spaces where such events can take place, but as the example of the *Budapest Anime Meet* with its history of sojourning between various fast food restaurants in the city demonstrates, it is far from trivial to find a space that is both accommodating and affordable. The Alchemist Laboratory club was established precisely for this very reason: to provide an appropriate space and workshop for role-playing,

wargaming and cosplay building among other activities. And similar to for profit businesses, the club is supported and kept afloat by its members and visitors and at the same time acts as a shared resource for the wider community of geek cultures.

#### 7.3.3.5. Learning and personal development

Learning, as discussed in Chapter Five, is a central element of subcultures in general and anime-manga fandom in particular, and in a sense all the effort and resources that are channelled towards enabling self-study and peer learning also often act as a shared resource within the culture. However, in relation to personal development, I want to draw attention to the way a significant portion of participants resources earned both from within and without the fan cultural market is then spent on subculture related consumption, which in turn contributes to the given actors becoming more proficient at servicing the subculture.

### **7.4. A meaningful world of work**

ZK: Will you have time for four conventions a year while working [in a regular job]?

Hajnal [Dawn] (33, former acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): Plenty, and it feels so good to break out of the daily routine, and this is such a different lifestyle and everything, being there gives me a boost, this is actually a wellness weekend, okay, you don't get to sit down the whole day and there's lots of work, but somehow it's a different feeling, and it's far from monotony.

Even though Hajnal left working in the anime-manga fan market to go back to her previous full-time job in her original profession, she told me that she still plans on taking part at the major conventions helping out at the Mangafan/Mondo tables as she has for the past years. She could go back to hang out and socialize with her friends from the subculture without

taking on the burden of the volunteer work of helping out at one of the stalls, but as evidenced by the above snippet from our conversation she was quite adamant about her preference for working at the convention. This work as opposed to her day job is its own reward it seems.

The idea that work can and should be more than just a daily grind is an important ideal and motivation behind part-time and full-time participation in the producerly side of subcultures and fan cultures, and even in the case of participants who contribute their time and resources on a voluntary basis, the ideal of meaningful activity as opposed to – in their words – mindless consumption is often cited as a reason for contributing.

The three aspects of these markets I will explore in this subchapter are all related to a sense of meaning found in work and work-like activities. First I will examine the question of *meaningful and desirable work*, looking at the rewards and characteristics of these activities that contribute to them being perceived as such. Second, I will break down in more detail the driving forces and logic behind *giving back to the community* – a topic already touched upon in the previous chapter on career patterns – which is another aspect of what makes participation in work-like activities meaningful in the context of subcultures and fan cultures. Third, I will examine the downside of the draw that these meaningful worlds of work exert on participants through a look at *self-exploitation and other pitfalls of subcultural and fan careers*.

#### 7.4.1. *Meaningful and desirable work*

ZK: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of working in this position with the things you do?

Edmond Etlinger (27, former writer for *AnimeStars*, editor of *Mondo Magazine*,

dubbing project manager at Mangafan): There are no real drawbacks, well, maybe explaining to grandma or my mother-in-law what I do. But there are far more advantages. I get to engage with what I love. I've met a bunch of new people thanks to this; I have access to a bunch of things for free, which I had to pay tens of thousands [of Forints] for before, to only mention video games now. I get in to places for free, I get books and DVDs for free, and these are all advantages. But the biggest advantage is still that I do what I love.

The above list of advantages and lack of disadvantages – other than the esoteric nature of these activities for outsiders – enumerated by Edmond Etlinger is quite typical of the answers I received from the majority of my respondents. Although the list of subcultural perks figure prominently in the above answer, Edmond Etlinger emphasizes that they are still only secondary compared to being able to work with something that he loves. The point that these activities provide a meaningful, creative and desirable outlet for people was cited again and again by my respondents and evidenced in the activities and attitudes of subcultural and fan participants at events throughout my years of research.

Although this might seem self-evident, it is nevertheless important to examine, what exactly makes work surrounding subcultural and fan activities so enjoyable. In order to approach this question I will build on both Hodkinson's (2002) already cited pioneering account of the different non-monetary rewards enjoyed by subcultural producers and Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) exploration of a wider concept of "good work." In the previous subchapter I discussed two of the rewards identified by Hodkinson, *subcultural perks* and an increased level of *subcultural capital*. I will now turn to the first element cited by him amongst the non-monetary returns on working within subcultures: *the perfect career*. The fourth and final element of his list of non-monetary rewards, *contributing to 'the scene'* will be examined in Section 7.4.2 on *giving back to the community* below.

By becoming subcultural producers people had an opportunity to experience *the perfect career* in the sense that they were able to “combine their occupation with their personal enthusiasm for the subculture” (Hodkinson 2002: 122-3), which allowed an unhindered form of participation within the subculture in both the sense that these entrepreneurs did not have to conform to mainstream standards of work apparel or appearance – indeed one might venture to guess that appropriate goth make-up, hairdo and dress would only enhance the attractiveness of such an enterprise – and the fact that such a job allowed participants a greater flexibility in participating in subcultural events. A similar appeal was also identified by Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) in relation to the music journalists they interviewed.

In anime-manga fandom, and all related cultures within the geek subcultural cluster I found a similar attitude towards working in relation to the objects of one’s interest. It is often described as being not work at all, or the best possible work that one could ask for. In this sense it does seem to be *the perfect career*, however, I want to explore in more detail why and how this work is so satisfying beyond the fact that one can work with one’s interest and does not have to conform to mainstream standards regarding appearance – although this latter element is far less relevant for anime-manga fandom. I also wanted to pay attention to the possible drawbacks of such a perfect career, which are often under-emphasized precisely because it can be hard to admit that even a dream job can at the end of day be just a job and have negative aspects. Indeed, these negative aspects of coveted careers are addressed far more often in work on creative labour (e.g. Florida 2002, Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011, McRobbie 1998, Pellandini-Simányi 2012, Smith & McKinlay 2009) than in research on subcultures and fan cultures (e.g. Kahn-Harris 2007). For these reasons I will now turn to Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s (2011) attempt at analysing coveted work in the creative/cultural industries.

In their examination of creative labour Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) attempted to identify the elements of “good work” and “bad work” in order to address both the allure and rewards of jobs in the cultural industries and the negative aspects of these jobs, which have according to their view either been neglected or overemphasized (focusing on self-exploitation) in the works surrounding creative labour and the cultural industries. The table reproduced below is the most concise summary of their framework offered in their book.

	Good work	Bad work
Process	Good wages, working hours, high levels of safety	Poor wages, working hours and levels of safety
	Autonomy	Powerlessness
	Interest, involvement	Boredom
	Sociality	Isolation
	Self-esteem	Low self-esteem and shame
	Self-realisation	Frustrated development
	Work-life balance	Overwork
	Security	Risk
Product	Excellent products	Low-quality products
	Products that contribute to the common good	Products that fail to contribute to the well-being of others

**Table 7.1.** “Table 2.1 Conceptualising good and bad work” (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011: 39)

As can be seen from the above table, Hesmondhalgh and Baker distinguish between the characteristics of the work *process* itself and the qualities of the *product* being created. Both of these elements contribute to making different forms of work within the cultural industries good or bad work, and quite often both good and bad at the same time as Hesmondhalgh and Baker found. In a similar fashion the different forms of work pursued by subcultural producers often show signs of both good and bad work concurrently. In line with Hesmondhalgh and Baker’ findings typically on the plus side autonomy, interest and



involvement, self-esteem and self-realisation and a satisfaction in relation to the products being created or disseminated are more common in the responses I received, while on the negative side to a certain degree poor wages, working hours and levels of safety, a higher level of risk and most definitely overwork were the defining pattern.<sup>205</sup> Similar to Hesmondhalgh and Baker's results both isolation (e.g. working from home) and sociality (e.g. working in a shop or organizing people) came up as positive – as in the quote from Edmond Etlinger above and Hajnal below – and negative aspects related to the types of work being pursued. All of these aggregate results not only resonate with those of Hesmondhalgh and Baker, but are also consistent with Florida's (2002) description of the creative class.

For now, in this subchapter I will only focus on the aspects of work in subcultural and fan cultural markets, which contribute to it being experienced as good work in the above sense, and in section 7.4.3 on *self-exploitation and other pitfalls of subcultural and fan careers* below, I will examine the negative elements of work experienced by my interviewees. The reason I chose the term “meaningful work” in the title of this subchapter as opposed to simply adopting the above framework wholesale and just invoking the concept of “good work” is because the fact that this type of work is not simply *good* but rather *meaningful* is an important distinction. The term good work, as can be inferred from the above summary is a much wider concept than that of meaningful work, and indeed my respondents would point out this distinction to me unprompted in their discussions of previous jobs or parallel full- or part-time jobs.

In certain cases respondents who held more than one job, usually one as subcultural producers (for instance, Case organizing Japanese rock, pop events to mention just one activity) and one as regular employees (working in a travel agency for Case), would explain

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205 Even though there were differences according to the types of activity and the position the participant enjoyed, these trends were more or less consistent throughout my interviews.

the reason both jobs were “good work,” but for complementary reasons. Typically the non-subcultural job was seen as good work for its ability to provide security, regular pay, good working conditions, while also allowing for the pursuit of the subcultural producerly activity – to the point of even being able to pursue subcultural work related activities at the workplace to a certain extent (for instance in the form of being able to listen to relevant music during working hours for Case). Whereas the subcultural producerly activity was described as good work in the sense of providing an outlet for self-realisation with higher levels of autonomy, interest and involvement.

This points to the important distinction that although there are different forms of work, which can qualify as good work in people’s views, the cultural industries in general and subcultural and fan markets more specifically offer work opportunities which are experienced as *meaningful* by participants. This is the reason I refer to *meaningful work* as opposed to simply *good work*, which denotes a subset of the characteristics outlined by Hesmondhalgh and Baker, namely: autonomy, interest and involvement, self-esteem, and self-realization in relation to the process type elements of work, and both the experience and feeling of working on excellent products and products that contribute to the common good in relation to the work output itself. This was further accentuated by the social aspect of subcultural involvement, which also contributed to this type of work being experienced as meaningful. In the following I will flesh out the meaning of these elements of good work in relation to anime-manga fan culture based on my respondents’ explanations of their relationship to work and participation in the fandom and market.

The five main elements that contributed to work in relation to the anime-manga fandom being experienced as meaningful were a) the *strength and relevance of the social ties* developed within this environment, b) the sense of satisfaction stemming from *being able to work with something, one has interest in* and the often *tangible nature of successfully*

*completing work*, and c) the fact that this type of work can act as a *formalized expression of important aspects of one's identity* and d) provide *recognition*, and finally e) the sense of *giving back to the community*.

The social aspect of subcultural and fan cultural environments are highly important, as already discussed in relation to the element of sub(cultural) substance *commitment* (Hodkinson 2002), and this also often extends to the experience of working in relation to these cultures. The quote below from Hajnal illustrates just how strong the ties developed within the context of working in these cultures can be, especially when compared to those engendered within more typical job environments.

Hajnal [Dawn] (33, former acting head of manga publishing at Mangafan): I usually go to the cons, if I can manage, because I can't always make it, and on the level of keeping in touch regularly, so many friendships and contacts remain that I am connected to these people on a daily basis. [...] I talk to Meglivorn, Luggi [= Lugeriano], Acheron on a daily basis, I also play with Meglivorn and Acheron. [...] Tons of friendships remained, which is surprising, because my experience with other workplaces is that friendships form and when I change workplaces, then they disappear. Here this didn't happen, I disappeared from the workplace and the friendships remained, and quite strongly at that, getting together type friendships too, role-playing, MMO-ing [= playing Massively Multiplayer Online games].

The *strength and relevance of the social ties* developed through and involved in working in anime-manga fandom is the first element that a number of my respondents mentioned in contexts that suggest that it is an important reason for and reward of this type of participation – Edmond Etlinger also highlights this aspect in the quote at the beginning of the present section.

The second element that makes this type of work meaningful, and indeed, one of the biggest appeals of working in anime-manga fandom – even if only part-time or on a voluntary basis – is the sense of satisfaction and fulfilment it provides for those involved. This sense of satisfaction and fulfilment highlighted by most of my interviewees stems from two main factors and can manifest itself in different ways.

The first and most important element is the joy of *being able to work with something one has interest in*, is invested in furthering and is genuinely connected to. The worst days of working in these fields can seem better than the best days in an office somewhere in public administration or financial services, as highlighted by a number of interviewees from within the anime-manga market. This work provides both interest and involvement, and acts as a source of self-esteem and self-realisation, which is the reason it is *the perfect career* (Hodkinson 2002), apart from allowing for the pursuit of the subcultural interest itself.<sup>206</sup>

While this first element of working with something one loves stands out as the most defining component of the sense of satisfaction expressed by participants, there is at least one more aspect, which I was able to identify, which contributes to the fulfilment working in these areas provide. This second element is the often very *tangible nature of a work well done*. Whereas in business administration there is no closure or feeling of lasting accomplishment – Hajnal explains – a manga volume after all the translation, retouching, editing, proofing, etc. actually gets printed and is an object one can hold in one's own hands, and display on the bookshelf. The appreciation of the “thingishness of things” (Straw 1999) holds sway not only in cultures oriented towards the unearthing of material artefacts – as in crate digging for example (Vályi 2010) – but in all kinds of cultures of collecting (cf. Berta 2006). Florida also emphasizes in relation to creative workers, that “it's very important for them to work on

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206 Which can actually drop off for certain participants, as was already mentioned in the previous chapter and will be discussed in section 7.4.3 again below.

things that will see the light of day” (2002: 92).<sup>207</sup>

Meglivorn<sup>208</sup> is a collector of books, going to extra lengths to produce single volumes of chosen pieces to be displayed and cherished in his private collection, and as such is also particularly pleased by the feeling of having produced an actual volume of manga, which is then published and is a tangible piece of accomplishment and pride. A sentiment also shared by among others Yardain, for example, working in translation and editing. But it is not only the material artefacts being produced that provide this sense of satisfaction of having created something. As Szilvia Pravda ‘Uran’ – a defining member of *HAA*, who has been involved as head organizer in the staging of a number of anime conventions – explains, the rush of excitement before the gates open at a convention is unlike anything else, to feel that so many people have gathered to attend something the organizers have worked so hard on putting together. This sentiment was expressed by most every organizer working on events and conventions, as the following quote from Zetto also demonstrates. Furthermore, it also echoes Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s findings that “the attraction of producing work that is widely consumed” is one of the elements that contribute to creative work being experienced as *good work* (2011: 186).

Zoltán Boda ‘Zetto’ (36, *HAA*, co-founder of the Miskolc Anime Club and the Miskolc Nihon Club, head of Migoto Cultural Association, MondoCon organizer):  
It’s very good when an event is successful and you see that people are coming and they are happy and enjoying themselves, and that it perhaps also broke even [financially]. It’s hard to describe that positive feeling. And for you to feel that way at a, say, six hours long event, for that you maybe had to work for several months.

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207 Hesmondhalgh and Baker also emphasize the “sense of reward and satisfaction” creative workers “gained from completing high-quality work” (2011: 135).

208 Meglivorn (39, *HAA*, creator of Manga.hu, typesetting editor at Mangafan)

The element of professional identification as a *formalized expression of important aspects of one's identity* along with the *recognition* received in relation to this type of work both correspond to the aspect of *self-esteem* in Hesmondhalgh and Baker's framework, and are the third and fourth points of appeal of working in these fields. For some, like András Gábor a freelance writer for *Mondo*, this job while only having been supplementary to his other work activities, fitted in nicely with his freelancer lifestyle, and provided a sense of identity and pride. Working on anime and manga reviews provided a formal and productive manifestation of the aspect of his identity immersed in geekish interests, and it is also much more vivid and interesting as a conversation starter, he explained, than his other jobs were as English teacher or freelance consultant. This sense of importance *Mondo* articles hold for him, also translates over into the amount of work he is willing to invest in these articles, compared to what would be a rational choice based on only financial pay-out. This again highlights the blurry boundaries between work and play, employment and subcultural and fan involvement found in relation to both the utilization of voluntary labour discussed above and the self-exploitation so common in these markets, discussed below in section 7.4.3.

This aspect of expressing one's identity through work also relates to how working in the cultural industries is often seen as *cool and glamorous* in the words of Hesmondhalgh & Baker, "a sense of being on the inside of an industry that most of us are outside [...] the pleasure of freebies, and of being ahead of others" (2011: 126). Although subcultural work is often only seen as being cool or glamorous by members of the culture themselves, for András Gábor including the point that he writes articles for *Mondo Magazine* on his curriculum vitae, has also led to an unexpected mini-experience of fame, as he recounted to me:

András Gábor (35, writer for *Mondo Magazine*): There was another job interview, I would have had to do accounting in Spanish, and I went in for the interview, and I

now have [listed] in my CV *Mondo* and the articles, and when the twenty-something HR [= human resources] guy noticed that I write for *Mondo*, he turned into a fan girl.

This episode recounted by András Gábor, also illustrates the fourth element that makes working in subcultural and fan cultural markets meaningful for participants, receiving *recognition*. As explained in Chapter Two, claiming status and recognition is central to subcultural and fan cultural participation in general. It is important, however, to further note how the producerly side of these cultural formations is also a fertile ground for reaping recognition that might or might not be lacking in other domains of one's life, as pointed out and emphasized by several of my interviewees both in relation to their own and other actors' experiences.

The fifth element that makes this type of work meaningful is the sense of contributing to the development of the wider culture and community. This aspect of meaningful work is so important and specific to subcultures and fan cultures that it is discussed in detail in the following separate section.

#### 7.4.2. *Giving back to the community*

The most striking element of meaningful work in relation to subcultural and fan cultural work that is not present in the case of creative labour in general,<sup>209</sup> but has strong analogies in discussions of ethnic enterprises is the element of contributing to the culture itself. Hodkinson (2002: 126) highlighted this aspect of working as a subcultural producer in the Goth subculture as one of the key rewards that motivated such activity, which he called *contributing to 'the scene.'* Kahn-Harris also found in relation to extreme metal that an

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209 Even though giving back to the community corresponds to “products that contribute to the common good” within Hesmondhalgh and Baker’s framework of good work, the crucial difference is that it is specifically directed towards the subculture or fan culture itself, whereas in the case of creative labour this is usually not necessarily so.

“altruistic commitment to the scene is part of a scenic ethic, adherence to which is itself a powerful source of subcultural capital” (2007: 124). This is mirrored in the way “ethnic communal life features a moral element that mandates mutual obligation and prosocial behavior” (Light & Gold 2000: 168)

Light and Gold (2000) specifically emphasize the importance of the relationship between ethnic economies and ethnic communities by dedicating a whole chapter to discussing the different aspects of this connection. Based on their discussion it seems that there is no straightforward rule of association between ethnic businesses and coethnic customers or a coethnic workforce. In the case of subcultural and fan markets, however, the connection between the subcultural and fan businesses and the cultures themselves seems far more evident, even to the point of seeming to require no analysis at all. Nevertheless, as discussed in the above section on the patterns of market development, subcultural and fan businesses, unless they are dedicated to staying small and only catering to the core of the market, will find themselves expanding towards the concentric circles of customers constituting the outer core of the culture, its fringes, its overlaps with other cultures and markets, and finally the so called “mainstream.” At the same time even big companies, who might have their primary interest and stakes in the mainstream, non-specialized end of the market, might find themselves pushed towards addressing relationships with subcultural markets. These movements and shifting levels of alignment in relation to the subculture or fandom are on the one hand a strong indication of both the power of the field logic and that of the market logic exerting a firm influence on the various actors in these cultures and the pertaining markets, and at the same time results in most actors investing at least a certain amount of their resources in the general development of the culture beyond their immediate business interests.



In many cases, the non-job related communal impacts of ethnic economies affect far more people than are employed within them. For example, many more Jews in New York or Chinese in San Francisco (as well as members of the larger society) make use of coethnic institutions, agencies, businesses, and neighborhoods than earn their living in these ethnic economies. In fact, *some of the primary beneficiaries* of ethnic communities, including children, the elderly, the infirmed, recently arrived immigrants, the jobless, and homemakers *are not employed at all*. However, *through their grant of effort*, funds, and in-kind donations, nonemployed persons *are also major contributors to enriching the quality of ethnic communal life*. (Light & Gold 2000: 168, my emphases)

Subcultural and fan businesses have a similar effect on and relationship to the cultures they service. First and foremost they contribute to the continued existence of the culture by providing what Hodgkinson (2002) identified as one of the four elements of (sub)cultural substance characterising subcultures: *autonomy*. The reproduction of an independent infrastructure made up of shops, publishers, venues, media, etc. which cater to a subcultural or fan market even when it falls out of the sight of public interest is probably the most important overall contribution of these actors, alongside non-profit actors who dedicate their energy and resources towards these goals.

Second these businesses alongside non-profit actors will contribute to creating a visible presence for the subculture or fan culture, and to fostering positive representations of these cultures within the mainstream media. As already discussed in relation to the founding of the *Hungarian Anime Association* changing the representations of anime in Hungarian mainstream media was one of the original goals behind the establishing of the association. Not only was this goal accomplished via writing letters of complaint regarding negative misrepresentations, and appearing on radio and TV programs to promote anime, but also via

the positive media coverage garnered in relation to conventions. This second mode of impacting the representations of anime-manga culture and the wider geek culture in the mainstream media in Hungary has also been furthered by MondoCon and HoldfényCon respectively.

Thirdly, these actors and businesses will support and contribute to the development of infrastructure, events, etc. for these cultures, the benefits of which are often enjoyed beyond the immediate circle of direct customers, and as such have spillover effects similar to those described above in relation to ethnic markets. The most obvious of these are media channels, shops and events, which will be discussed below.

Fourth, just as the above quote underlines the fact that contributions from the community also enhance the quality of community life, so too – as we have seen in the previous section on employment and resource mobilization, and the previous chapters on learning and personal career paths – the contributions of participants either directly in the form of voluntary labour, at for instance events supporting a specific organization or business, or more generally in the form of contributing to the larger community, by creating cosplays, translating manga, writing reviews, organizing clubs, sharing how-to guides, etc. also increase the overall richness and potential growth of the community and culture.

Usually established as a profit-making enterprise that advertises the goods and services of ethnic entrepreneurs, ethnic media are ethnic businesses. They play a major role in the *creation of communal solidarity*, offer valuable *information*, and shape *group members' opinions*. The role of print media in organizing ethnic life is well established. Book publishing, the recording industry, and the film industry also exert considerable influence. Ethnic food stores almost always distribute audio- and videotapes, CDs, books, newspapers, and magazines along with traditional foodstuffs in a location where

they can be readily acquired by community members. [...] Scholars interested in transnationalism frequently cite the importance of pervasive, rapid, and low-cost *media as linking expatriate communities with their countries of origin* on a daily basis. (Light & Gold 2000: 183, my emphases)

Subcultural and fan media, that is meta-content revolving around the primary interests of the culture, are usually among the first elements of the subcultural and fan infrastructure to appear alongside shops, as the creation of cheap fanzines, and now websites, offers a very low barrier to entry, while the lack of information and the role to be filled offers a high incentive to do so. The importance of subcultural and fan media have been discussed in great detail by scholars in both fields, emphasizing the role it plays in introducing new members to these cultures (Thornton 1996 [1995], Jenkins 1992, Hodkinson 2002, Vályi 2010), in cementing ties of belonging and developing subcultural/fan tastes (Jenkins 1992, Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010), and in creating and maintaining trans-local and international connections between participants (Hodkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007, Vályi 2010). As the quote from Light and Gold above also highlights in relation to ethnic communities, subcultures and fandoms, especially in countries like Hungary, will often have a strong attachment to the country of origin of the particular culture, keeping track of important news and innovations coming from the “centre,” in this case Japan.

[E]thnic businesses are not simply places where customers purchase goods and services and owners earn a living. Instead, they are embedded in a wide variety of communal and personal relationships that are central to collective life. Business is the means whereby communal life is oriented. (Light & Gold 2000: 188)

The significance of subcultural and fan shops and events as hubs of information and places of interaction have been discussed in both the literature (see especially Vályi 2010) and in

the previous subchapter on resource mobilization. An aspect of giving back to the community in relation to shops and events is the way shops and publishers will regularly participate in events even if this means making a loss. There are a number of reasons for this behaviour, first there is usually no guarantee for how much a vendor can make at a given event, although there are rough expected estimates based on the size and type of the event. Second, appearing at an event serves as a form of publicity for the given actors and provides a direct sales channel for publishers. Third, as already discussed, the non-monetary rewards of participation can offset the actual costs involved. Nevertheless, because the presence of shops' and publishers' tables or stalls can greatly increase the gaudiness of an event, I would definitely consider the commitment demonstrated on the part of most actors to take part in as many events as possible as another aspect of contributing to the overall vibrancy of the community.

#### *7.4.3. Self-exploitation and other pitfalls of subcultural and fan careers*

So great are the intrinsic rewards and the attractiveness associated with this type of meaningful work that, as has been discussed in the debates over (self-)exploitation in relation to creative labour (e.g. Florida 2002, Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011, McRobbie 1998, Pellandini-Simányi 2012, Smith & McKinlay 2009), people are willing to forego certain other elements associated with good work such as job security or higher pay in order to pursue these types of activities.

The profundity of this attachment is signified by extraordinary displays of commitment and pleasure: extremely long working days combined with the acknowledgement of poor or no pay and uncertain career prospects. This contrast between an awareness of the precarious nature of employment and careers in the creative industries is used to underscore the depth of the individual's attachment to their aesthetic practice. (Smith & McKinlay 2009: 44)

The same is also true of work and careers in relation to subcultures and fan cultures and their respective markets. The willingness to put up with uncomfortable schedules or work arrangements, not to mention the lack of job security and long-term prospects, is on the one hand incorporated into personal narratives of authenticity and dedication, and on the other hand romanticized as self-realization, as camaraderie, and as a sign of autonomy. Indeed most of the elements of good work we find in relation to subcultural and fan markets act as justifications for the acceptance of the elements of bad work associated with it. But as opposed to the elements of bad work that people consciously acknowledge as being bad – in relation to their normal day jobs for example – there is a slight reluctance and time-lag in admitting to oneself that the elements of bad work found in subcultural and fan cultural careers can be just as taxing and problematic.

In relation to creative labour and cultural industries “[d]iscourses of creativity [...] play an important economic function” (Hesmondhalgh 2007: 207) in sustaining the ideals that drive this kind of commitment to creative work. The young British fashion designers in McRobbie’s study also followed the values of “artistic integrity, creative success, recognition, approval by the art establishment” as opposed to focusing on “wealth creation and business” considerations (1998: 177).<sup>210</sup> There are further elements to the ethos of creative work such as the long working hours and all-nighters – finishing projects in the early hours of the morning –, which add to the perceived coolness of these fields (Pellandini-Simányi 2012).

Pursuing creativity, art or a cool career are all elements, which play a part in keeping participants in subcultural and fan markets invested in these fields and the corresponding markets. Furthermore, in the case of these cultures the idea that work is play is just as

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210 A similar tension between artistic autonomy and the demands of the market were already noted by Becker in his study of Jazz musicians (1991 [1963]).

pronounced as in relation to creative and artistic work, and is often underscored by the very fact that what ends up being work often started out as being play. As we saw above, the change from voluntary contributions to part-time and full-time work can be quite gradual, and in this way the point where play becomes work can be hard to register. This is one of the main reasons for both the reluctance and the time-lag in relation to acknowledging the elements of bad work that are present in relation to work in subcultural and fan markets. And this is also why it would be misleading to think that participants working in these markets suffer from a form of false-consciousness or that they are somehow deluded. The rewards they enjoy, as discussed above, are real. However, as the role the participants play in the market shifts, the evaluation of the sacrifices involved is often still evaluated according to the norms of voluntary participation as opposed to those associated with the world of work.

In the following I will highlight three forms of backlash encountered in relation to subcultural and fan careers based on my respondents' accounts. These three problems also correspond to time-frames of engagement with these cultures and their pertaining markets. The first negative side of participation is *self-exploitation*, which is also the first problem to emerge and seems to be a staple element of careers within these fields. The second element is a *backlash in relation to participation*, which emerges in the mid- to long-term, when the contribution and work becomes an end in itself, first hindering engagement with the object of interest itself and finally leading to the subcultural career becoming nothing other than a chore or a "normal" job. The third is the most long-term effect, in which the lack of pay and job security coupled with a path-dependency in relation to the *career of the participant can seem like or act as a trap* that puts the costs of participation and the elements of bad work in a very sharp perspective. Neither of these downsides is specific to subcultures or fan cultures, they are rather inherent to the field of cultural production in general.

In relation to self-exploitation I will touch on the insufficient amount of remuneration on the one hand, and the irregular and often overextended work hours on the other. Although I have already explained in the previous subchapter on resource mobilization, how important the voluntary contributions of participants are to the functioning of these markets, it is important to note here the way these contributions are also, on the other hand, costs, which are born individually by the contributing participants. Also, similar to the goth subculture described by Hodkinson, in relation to the Hungarian anime-manga fandom and market while the demands of the job were often seen as somewhat strenuous compared to the remuneration it offered – if any at all – “many commercial and voluntary producers were motivated by the sheer enjoyment of carrying out the particular activities in which they were involved” (2002: 123). When directly inquiring about the burdens these activities placed on participants, they readily agreed that it can indeed become taxing, nevertheless they were always quick to emphasize the positive sides of such tasks, as in the following interview excerpt by Bene:

ZK (Inquiring in relation to having to come in on weekends to open up and run the Alchemist Laboratory club): And isn't this burdensome?

Bene (25, leading member of the Alchemist Laboratory club): Yes, totally, if you have to come down on a weekend, you're here by eleven [in the morning] and go home by ten in the evening. But if others are here during that time who I play with, then I play two [games] and it's totally not burdensome, when everybody's ready tidy up and done.

However, it is not only that participants at all levels are willing to forego monetary compensation in relation to work in the anime-manga fandom and market, but they are also willing to accommodate irregular working hours and sometimes taxing schedules. As Florida explains a “flexible schedule [...] is also tied to the very nature of creative work” as much of it “is project work and projects tend to run in cycles, with periods of crunch time followed by

slower periods” (2002: 121). In the case of the anime-manga fan market in Hungary, and manga publishing in particular, the cyclical nature of work was defined by the major conventions. These conventions were so important for the publishers that the release schedule of new publications followed the convention calendar. This also meant that for those working in some way in manga publishing in Hungary, their yearly work rhythm would also entail spikes in their respective workloads prior to each of these conventions.<sup>211</sup>

It is, however, not only irregular work hours that characterize creative work. Creative labour is in fact one of the most demanding, and as Florida again points out “[o]ne of the defining elements of the no-collar workplace is that Creative Class people work the longest hours” (2002: 121-2). Péter Keceli’s answer to my question regarding his work rhythm sums up both aspects of irregular and long working hours in a similar fashion.

Péter Keceli (27, former head of AnimeStars webshop and founding editor-in-chief of *AnimeStars Magazine*): My whole life is work; I usually worked on the weekends as well, especially before sending [the magazine of to the print]. One or two weeks before submitting [to the print] that was always like, I would be working even until dawn. This is also because I have always done a lot of things besides. I still play floorball, so there I see to the matters and finances of the [floorball] association as well. And I also really like going to the cinema. I have a circle of friends here in Miskolc, with them we used to go out and play football a lot during my high school and early university years. I never organized my time to sit down at eight [in the morning] and work on the magazine till four [in the afternoon], so I often had the days and nights, work and free time bleed into each other. It’s still like that unfortunately or not unfortunately.

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211 Or to rephrase this from the other direction, the more one’s cash-flow in the case of enterprises and organizations and one’s workload and tasks in the case of individuals depended on and were a function of the major conventions, the more one could be said to belong to the field of manga publishing and the related fan market.



Such a blurring of the boundary between work and leisure can also become a problem, as will be discussed in the following point in relation to the backlash regarding participation. First, however, I want to round off the discussion of self-exploitation by turning to a third aspect pointed out by Hesmondhalgh and Baker in relation to work time and pay, the fact that people working in creative areas often have “to take on second jobs to make ends meet” (2011: 116). In a similar fashion the fact that participants will often also have mundane jobs to make a living, can be seen as a further aspect of the problem of not making (enough) money and the working hours involved in attending to responsibilities related to subcultural and fan cultural engagement.

Zoltán Boda ‘Zetto’ (36, HAA, co-founder of the Miskolc Anime Club and the Miskolc Nihon Club, head of Migoto Cultural Association, MondoCon organizer, in relation to how much time his fandom related tasks take up): On average you have to spend two more hours with it after work. You have to really rev it up around the events. This thing falls into three groups. Either MondoCon, or an event in Miskolc, or related to the club in Miskolc. Oh yeah, administrative things with the [Migoto Cultural] Association can also add to this.

Zetto’s example, who runs both the Migoto Cultural Association and Miskolc Nihon Club and even finds time to participate in organizing MondoCons, demonstrates just how much – often unpaid – work participants are willing to invest in building and managing various aspects of the anime-manga fandom. This level of commitment can, however, lead to burnout, where one realizes that the voluntary activity, which was a source of joy, has turned into a job and as such is now a nagging responsibility instead.

The *backlash in relation to participation*, when people realize that they are now working as opposed to playing, is one that often only arises through sustained participation, since

generally people will simply walk away and leave the culture should they feel it has become burdensome as opposed to a space of enjoyment. Arriving at such a realization is usually a product of moving through stages where the initial object of interest, in this case anime and manga is replaced by an interest in running the fandom and its infrastructure. I was surprised by how many of my respondents reported that they had stopped watching anime and/or reading manga around the time they started to be heavily invested in the producerly side of the culture, in part as a result of not having enough time – due to their new responsibilities in relation to the fandom – to do so anymore. It is somewhat ironic that the object of interest itself becomes obscured by the activity that is built around furthering both its appeal and its reach. For example, although one of the appeals of taking part in convention organization is the subcultural perk of receiving free tickets, the participation often becomes focused on the tasks of running the event as opposed to enjoying the programs on offer, as evidenced by the following quote from Róka.

ZK: Do you still have time to participate during cons in the programs that interest you?

Róka [Fox] (20, member of the Alchemist Laboratory club, MondoCon organizer):  
There are programs. If we can somehow manage to have extra people and there isn't any program which requires me to be there. Maybe very rarely you can agree that "sorry I'm interested in this program, and I would like to pop in a bit to listen to what's going on there, please watch over things in the mean time, and then should you have to, call me on the radio if something is broken and then I'll rush back." Very rarely you might have this happen. The event is two days for the visitors, for us this usually extends to four days, which we usually work through from morning till evening, there's not really any time.

Having worked at conventions and smaller events myself, I know that the rush and excitement these positions involve more than makes up for the time and effort required of

helpers. However, as the novelty of the experience starts to wear off, the cumbersome nature of having to for example stay at a stall for the most part of an event can start to make itself felt. As Kahn-Harris emphasizes “[t]here is a danger that a scenic career may simply become a job like any other” (2007: 65), and lead to symptoms of burn-out. This backlash in relation to participation can be particularly acute “for those who earn a living from the scene, who may be unable to simply leave” (Kahn-Harris 2007: 65). And it is these participants, who work full-time in relation to subcultural and fan markets, who are the most likely to experience the third and most long-term drawback in relation to subcultural and fan cultural careers.

The two versions of the *subcultural career seeming like or acting as a trap* I encountered in my interviewees both entail the costs of participation becoming all too clear in retrospect. The first variety of this backlash is the realization that the time, energy, money and other resources invested in the subcultural career would have had higher returns on investment in relation to other pursuits. The answers I received from Damage and József Tóth to my inquiry regarding the advantages and disadvantages of their producerly careers in relation to subcultures and fan cultures illustrate this opportunity cost approach.

Máriusz Bari ‘Damage’ (32, co-creator of the Nippon Shoxx party series, former columnist for *Mondo Magazine*, creator of the websites LD50.hu and PLANET://DAMAGE): And think about it, I’ve invested every single one of my weekends in parties from 2002 onwards, I’ve had relationships get wrecked [because of this]. For me the weekend was about [running] a party on Friday, maybe a party on Saturday. It did have its advantages, that I could get into every party for free, and I didn’t have to pay for any major concert for eight years, unless I wanted to honour the band or the concert organizer by paying for it, and it did happen.

József Tóth (33, head of Vad Virágok Könyvműhely): Disadvantages? [...] These festivals, if I have to lift a box [of publications] again... With the same energy I've put into this, if I would've done something else. People have become rich from the amount of work I've put into this. This requires a certain fixation too. [...] I know Csaba [Boros] is also a big *Monster* [= referring to the Urasawa Naoki manga series] fan. My parents bought me a comic book when I was twelve years old, and since then something got me. If I hadn't tried myself out [in comics publishing], it would surely have remained a thorn in my side.

Although the emphasis on having invested excessive amounts of time and energy in these careers and enterprises can be seen to act as a way of underlining the authenticity of one's position in relation to these undertakings – explicitly present in József Tóth's account, pointing out the fixated nature of people who pursue such work –, it also, nevertheless, shines a light on the way these actors bear the various costs associated with these forms of participation. Indeed, the flipside of the freedom enjoyed by the majority of those working in relation to these markets – especially freelancers and entrepreneurs – also entails being “responsible for their own development and training, pensions and social security; and [...] their capital equipment, their accommodation, lighting and heating” (Ekinsmyth 2002: 239 cited in Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2011: 121). And this leads on to the second version of a *subcultural career seeming like or acting as a trap*, the possibility of being left with less than bright future prospects as a result of years of low pay, savings and meagre contributions to social security or private pension funds. Participants working in subcultural and fan markets – similar to their counterparts in the wider cultural industries – are particularly vulnerable to this negative aspect of these careers as long-term sustainability is generally obscured by the immediate requirements and rewards of the jobs at hand. Yardain, the oldest among my interviewees, pointed out to me how easy it is to disregard this aspect of these careers, while one is still young.

Yardain (46, former editor at Delta Vision): A lot of my former colleagues, who are still working on this and are much younger, you don't feel it yet then, I didn't feel it either ten years ago. This is also why we worked, and I worked, where we were also working on these very good and beautiful things, and we got enough money to be able to live off of for the time being, but savings, pensions, etc. like this was completely hopeless, absolutely, but then you weren't that bothered by that, it wasn't that threatening yet, and of course we were making good things, and then you are willing.

This final emphasis in Yardain's account on the way working on good things will lead to disregarding long-term financial security also reemphasizes the principal difference in relation to self-exploitation in general found in subcultural and fan markets – aligned with the same phenomena within creative/cultural industries – and ethnic markets. As already discussed above, in the case of ethnic markets self-exploitation stems from the fact that it is one of the few resources available in order to get ahead (Boissevain et al. 1990, Light and Gold 2000, Waldinger et al. 1990b). On the other hand, in the case of creative/cultural industries and subcultural/fan markets we find a commitment to creative work, which seems to override the considerations for stable or comfortable working conditions, and can even lead to forfeiting attainable higher monetary rewards available in less creatively satisfying jobs.

### **7.5. Summary: Subcultural fan markets, between creative/cultural industries and ethnic markets**

In the present chapter I offered an examination of the characteristics of subcultural markets in general and the Hungarian anime-manga fan market in particular through a comparison with creative/cultural industries and ethnic markets. This approach allowed me to re-articulate through a different framework the particular position enjoyed by subcultural markets and producers within the field of cultural production introduced in Chapter Two. In order to re-emphasize this thread, which has been a running theme throughout the chapter, I will once again highlight the major commonalities and differences among these three markets.

Subcultures and fan cultures and immigrant ethnic cultures are both a) marked out by special tastes and consumption practices, b) often perceived as alien by mainstream society and can therefore easily become the subject of moral panics, c) often characterized by high levels of identity and commitment, and they both d) commonly develop and operate an alternative infrastructure (shops, media, venues, events, etc.).

As a result subcultural and fan markets and immigrant ethnic markets share the following commonalities: a) they are likely to develop gradually with first only a small community being present in the larger society, as a result these markets are b) characterized by instability or uncertainty, c) where specialist tastes, demand and pertaining knowledge can play a role in creating a semi-protected market position for actors coming from within these cultures, who often demonstrate b) a propensity for giving back to the community.

On the other hand subcultural and fan markets are often and in the case of anime-manga fandom most definitely linked to and part of the creative/cultural industries. Working in subcultural and fan markets as seen through the lens of Hesmondhalgh & Baker's "good

work – bad work” framework conforms to the patterns found in relation to work in the cultural industries and creative professions. Actors in these markets accept the elements of bad work such as lower wages, erratic work schedules and higher risk, not to mention potential overwork as a result of the elements of good work these settings offer, like autonomy, interest, self-esteem (or in this case identity), self-realization and satisfaction in relation to the products being produced.

This is also the most obvious difference in relation to immigrant ethnic markets, where the distribution of the elements of good work and bad work are incomparable to that found in creative/cultural industries, with the aspects of bad work associated with their mundane jobs by a number of my interviewees (e.g. powerlessness, boredom, frustrated development, low self-esteem) figuring prominently alongside overwork and poor wages and inconvenient working hours in these markets (cf. Light & Gold 2000, Waldinger et al. 1990b).

As a result the motivation structure found in immigrant ethnic markets is also starkly different from that of subcultural and fan markets and creative/cultural industries. Whereas participation in the latter two are characterized by an *internal motivation* structure, the draw of the elements of good work – or meaningful work in the case of subcultural and fan markets – present in these settings, entering immigrant ethnic markets is more often a result of the *external constraints* facing coethnics. Such external constraints, which can hinder participating in the mainstream job market can include a lack of necessary language skills, lack of acknowledgement of educational attainments or licenses from the country of origin, lack of local embeddedness in networks, and the lack of available resources (Light & Gold 2000, Waldinger et al. 1990b). Table 7.2. below offers a summary of the most important points of commonality and difference shared by subcultural and fan markets, creative/cultural industries and immigrant ethnic markets.

	<b>Creative/cultural industries</b>	<b>Subcultural/fan markets</b>	<b>Immigrant ethnic markets</b>
<i>Self-exploitation, precarity</i>	High	High	High
<i>Importance of coethnic/subcultural/professional networks</i>	High	High	High
<i>Specialist tastes, demand and pertaining knowledge</i>	Low	High	High
<i>Giving back to the community</i>	Low	High	High
<i>Main reasons for working in the market</i>	Internal motivation	Internal motivation	External constraints

**Table 7.2.** Summary of main commonalities and differences among subcultural and fan markets, creative/cultural industries and immigrant ethnic markets

To summarize the above – as depicted in table 7.2. – subcultural and fan markets are a unique type of market, precisely because they demonstrate the characteristics of creative/cultural industries (to which they are intrinsically linked), while at the same time also sharing a number of the characteristics of immigrant ethnic markets, most notably the high relevance of specialist tastes, demand and knowledge and the significance of giving back to the community. They are, however, also markedly different from immigrant ethnic markets in the way participation in the former is generally internally motivated whereas entering work in the latter is mostly due to external constraints.

I have already discussed at the beginning of the present chapter how the position of subcultures within the field of cultural production, characterized by a lack of cultural legitimacy or consecration, corresponds to a “minority-like” status of subcultural and fan cultural markets. However, this “minority-like” status also stems from the specialist tastes, demand and knowledge characterizing subcultures. This is why these cultures constitute well-defined subfields within the field of cultural production, with specific stakes and rewards, which are mostly meaningless and worthless outside their bounds. The way such a “minority-like” status coupled with the distance from the market dominated pole of the field



of cultural production is conducive to giving back to the community becoming highly valued within these cultural formations, is one of the themes also examined by for example Yoshimoto (2009) and Okada (2008) in relation to Japanese otaku culture, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

## **8. The interrelatedness of the European and North American geek subcultural cluster and Japanese otaku culture**

In the previous three chapters I concentrated on analyzing my interview materials and drawing out conclusions in relation to the wider literature on subcultures, fan cultures and non-Japanese anime-manga fandom to highlight the role of subcultural producers and subcultural clusters in understanding the way anime-manga fandom operates in the European and North American context. The present chapter will broaden the horizon of my inquiries by incorporating the Japanese literature on otaku culture.<sup>212</sup> The reason I decided to approach the Japanese theories and research results concerning otaku culture in a separate chapter as opposed to incorporating them alongside the other literature in previous chapters is because I not only want to examine them in relation to my own findings, but also compare them with the Anglophone literature on geek culture. In this way I will outline a wider framework for understanding the development of European and North American anime-manga fandom within the overarching context of the interrelationship of geek and otaku culture.

In the first subchapter I will focus on examining the relationship among the terms geek, nerd and otaku – both opening up the definition of otaku culture offered in Chapter One and re-examining my definition of the geek subcultural cluster in the process. Following on from the position of Tocci (2009) and Woo (2012) I will treat geek and nerd as synonymous, and argue that the expressions geek and otaku are related on three separate levels. First, the terms geek and otaku are invoked in similar ways in popular discourse, in everyday usage and in academic, critical discourse. Second, on the level of actual social relations and activities of groups commonly labelled as geek and otaku, a high degree of congruity can be found.<sup>213</sup>

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212 Otaku – similar to manga – is written in various forms (hiragana, katakana and Latin script) in Japanese to connote different positions regarding its implied meanings. For my present analysis these nuances are secondary and I therefore quote all instances of otaku in this single simple form. For a discussion of the connotations of the various forms in Japanese see for example Galbraith et al. (2015b) or Yoshimoto (2009).

213 As Aida notes “discourses on ‘otaku’ [...] and ‘actual otaku’ must be strictly distinguished”

Third, examining subcultural clusters, the geek subcultural cluster and the otaku subcultural cluster – explained below – are well aligned with each other.

Following on from these arguments, in the second subchapter, based on further examination of the pertaining literature, I will propose that these parallels among the terms geek and otaku and the cultures they denote are no mere coincidences, but are rather rooted in a) the historical interrelatedness of the development of these terms and corresponding cultures, b) the underlying aesthetic disposition<sup>214</sup> ordering the geek and otaku subcultural clusters, and finally c) their relationship to broader technological, economic, social and cultural change. Although a detailed discussion of these three dimension would transcend the bounds of the present work, and would require further research to adequately substantiate, building on Bourdieu's theory of aesthetic dispositions (1984 [1979]) I will offer a novel approach in relation to understanding the prominence of fantasy – which is often denigrated as escapism – in geek and otaku culture.

### **8.1. Geek, nerd, otaku**

All three terms, geek, nerd and otaku, are complicated by layers of meaning, not only in the way they are invoked in academic discussions, but also in popular discourse and everyday use. Tocci referencing Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of language reminds us that the expressions geek and nerd are after all language-games, which "have multiple uses which, at best, bear a "family resemblance" to one another" (Tocci 2009: 8). Evoking a similar point of view, but in this case from a more sociological perspective and drawing on Raymond Williams, Woo asserts that "there are no nerds, only ways of seeing people as nerds", emphasizing that both nerd and geek are ultimately nothing but labels, and as such "defined in use and subject to change over time" (2012: 22-23). Labelling theory is the approach that

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(2015: 105).

214 This is a concept introduced by Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) to approach different modes of aesthetic appreciation, which will be explained in detail in section 8.2.2 below.

Galbraith et al. also propose in relation to making sense of the word *otaku*, further pointing out how treating the expression “as something ‘taken for granted’ and already ‘known’” only helps occlude the disagreements in relation to its object and foreclose any meaningful debate surrounding it (2015b: 4). Woo also agrees that “the object of study is generally taken for granted in” works dealing with the image of the nerd (2012: 21). To the point that we can learn “more about “mainstream” culture than” nerds themselves (Woo 2012: 38) or “the analyst who organizes dates, events and names into a coherent narrative about ‘otaku’” (Galbraith et al. 2015b: 12) from these accounts, recalling both sides of Thornton’s critique in relation to how the notion of the mainstream is constructed in the discourse of subcultural participants and researchers alike (1996 [1995]).<sup>215</sup>

It is important to keep these overarching critiques in mind when approaching the type of discussion that follows, I will nevertheless attempt to re-purpose the terms *geek* and *otaku* – to further my arguments – in order to salvage them from the mire of over-saturation of meaning to which they have indeed become overly susceptible to (cf. Nomura Research 2005, Okada 2008, Woo 2012, Tocci 2009). One of the reasons I will examine in such detail the discourses – everyday, popular and critical/academic alike – surrounding *geeks* and *otaku*, as seen through the literature on these terms, is precisely because I want to circumvent the taken for granted nature of invoking these terms critiqued by Woo and Galbraith et al. above. At the same time I also want to provide a well grounded argument for both the way I wish to use the two terms and the connections I wish to point out between them.

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215 In this case instead of the subculture’s internal discourse constructing the mainstream it is the mainstream’s discourse constructing the subculture, with researchers acting complicit in both instances. Kam, however, also points out that the taken for granted nature of concepts like “normal” and “mainstream” are just as problematic in discussions of *otaku*, and the creation of *otaku* through labelling also co-creates the “mainstream” at the same time (2015), thereby in part echoing Thornton’s original argument as well.

Although, I will start out by providing a brief overview of the origin of all three terms, in the following I will be using geek and nerd interchangeably based on context, with preference given to the expression geek.<sup>216</sup> This is in line with both Woo's (2012) and Tocci's (2009) approach, the former opting to use nerd, while the later chose geek as the primary expression denoting geeks/nerds.

### *8.1.1. Origins and history of the terms*

The book *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Seuss from 1950 is most commonly credited with the introduction of the word nerd in published form, although its relation to spoken usage is unclear (Tocci 2009: 18, Woo 2012: 24). However, in 1951 it had already been in use in Detroit with a meaning approximating some of its current connotations according to *Newsweek* (Tocci 2009: 18, Woo 2012: 24). With the arrival of the eighties "more specifically science- and tech-oriented uses" became more prevalent, however, "it is possible that these usages were common in spoken English earlier" (Tocci 2009: 18).

The word geek seems to have a much longer history than nerd, with Tocci tracing its lineage all the way back to "16<sup>th</sup> century Britain, to the word 'geek' or 'gecke'" meaning fool (2009: 17-18). Later the term came to denote carnival or freak show performers whose main act consisted of biting off the heads of chickens or other animals (Tocci 2009: 18, Woo 2012: 24, McArthur 2009: 61). "By the 1950s, 'geek' picked up connotations for being "an overly

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216 An even more fine grained examination of the representations of nerds and geeks and the literature dealing with them reveals important nuances in meaning and usage that have existed and still persist in various contexts. For my present discussion, however, it would be overly cumbersome to attempt to incorporate a detailed explication of these distinctions as well. I would nevertheless like to offer the following summary by Varma, which encapsulates many of the most important aspects of connotational differences among the two terms, as they are commonly understood: "Generally, a 'nerd' is portrayed with pocket protectors, taped glasses, and plaid shirts. A nerd is fascinated by theoretical scientific knowledge and learning whereas a geek is more computer specific. A nerd aspires to become a 'true scientist' whereas a geek aspires to become a 'true technology user'. Though both have poor social skills, a geek maintains more social contacts than a nerd." (2007: 360) For a discussion of further distinctions see for example Kendall (1999b), Tocci (2009), Woo (2012).

diligent, unsociable student” or “obsessively devoted to a certain pursuit,” comparable to ‘nerd’” (Tocci 2009: 18). However, Woo points out that nerd was still the more prevalent term even during the eighties (2012: 24). This is both reflected in and is probably reinforced by the fact that *Revenge of the Nerds*, the film from 1984 responsible for “cementing the popular image of nerds and geeks” (Woo 2012: 25) uses the term nerd.<sup>217</sup>

The origins and history of the term otaku are far more well-defined than that of geek and nerd. Okada explains that the term originated within Japanese science fiction and anime fandom, where it had already gone through the cycle of being originally used by SF fans from Keiō University – some of whom went on to create *Chōjīkū Yōsai Makurosu* (En: *Super Dimension Fortress Macross*), which also featured the expression in dialogue between characters – and then appropriated by a wider strata of fans, which led to the phrase being taken up as a derogatory term mocking the inappropriate “other” within the fandom (Okada 1996: 8-9, also emphasized by Takekuma Kentarō quoted in Yoshimoto 2009: 174), and as a result later also being re-appropriated within the culture as a self-mocking term of identification (Yoshimoto 2009: 184).<sup>218</sup> This phase of the term’s history is followed by its endlessly retold appearance in *Manga Burikko* in the provocative four part series *Otaku no kenkyū* (Otaku research) written by Nakamori Akio (with the last piece written by Eji Sonta), the first instalment appearing in 1983.<sup>219</sup> This step is very similar to the way niche media often play a role in naming emerging subcultures, as explained by Thornton (1996 [1995]). This exposure, however, precisely because *Manga Burikko* was a niche medium of the culture itself, had an effect within the concerned fandoms, with an internal debate about the ethics of using the label otaku to denigrate others, and an ensuing strengthening of the trends

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217 For a detailed analysis of the *Revenge of the Nerds* movie series and its representations of nerds see Kendall (1999b).

218 This is similar to the way Western geeks (Jenkins 1992, Tocci 2009) and otaku (Eng 2012a) also often both resent the labels and implied stereotypes about themselves, but at the same time can also ironically embrace and flaunt them.

219 For discussions of the *Otaku no kenkyū* series see for example Ōtsuka (2015), Galbraith (2015) and Yamanaka (2015).

already described by Okada.<sup>220</sup> Yamanaka points out how the debate surrounding the *Otaku no kenkyū* series also led to people adopting in self-mocking fashion the term otaku (2015: 46-47), which is the first step towards the reclamation of the identity.

The next stage in the spread and evolution of the term is the infamous Miyazaki Tsutomu serial murder case, which brought about both mainstream exposure and a moral panic (Ito 2012: xxi) in relation to otaku – as is often the case in relation to the interaction between mainstream media and subcultures (cf. Cohen 1980 [1972], Thornton 1996 [1995]).<sup>221</sup> This negative image was further reinforced after the March 1995 sarin gas attack committed by members of *Aum Shinrikyō* on the Tokyo subway, and the discussions that followed regarding whether *Aum Shinrikyō* had been an otaku sect.<sup>222</sup>

Finally, after a series of events, such as the publication of Okada's *Otakugaku nyūmon* (En: *Introduction to Otakuology*) (1996) and his public appearances and lecture series on otaku culture at Tōdai University, the generational mainstream success of *Shin Seiki Evangelion* (En: *Neon Genesis Evangelion*), first aired between October 1995 and March 1996, and the society-wide popularity of the 2chan message board turned best-selling love story media franchise *Densha Otoko* (En: *Train Man*) from 2004, the term otaku came to be rehabilitated to mean people deeply engaged in very specific non-mainstream interests (cf. Kikuchi 2015,

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220 Ōtsuka asserts that Nakamori's use of the term otaku was a type of "semiotic differentiation" aimed at elevating the *shinjinrui* (the expression used during the eighties to denote the post-post-war generation in Japan) by marking off a group within their own generation they could look down upon (2015: xx). Yamanaka (2015) also underlines the fact that Nakamori's strategic use of the label otaku in this way was meant to solidify his position as a defining member of the *shinjinrui*.

221 See Kamm (2015) for a detailed analysis of the mass media representations, and the different actors engaged in creating the public discourse around otaku and Miyazaki. One of the most interesting points in Kamm's discussion is the way authors like Ōtsuka, coming from the otaku world themselves, were the first to make the connection between otaku and Miyazaki – trying to argue against and pre-empt the very connection they saw and made – before journalists from the mainstream media had. Thus providing another example reconfirming Thornton's model (1996 [1995]) on the different roles actors from niche media and mainstream media play in relation to the creation of subcultures and moral panics.

222 See Morikawa (2003) for a detailed analysis of *Aum Shinrikyō*'s affinity with otaku culture, and media representations of the cult.

Ito 2012).

### 8.1.2. *The geek subcultural cluster corresponds to otaku culture in the wide sense*

The English words closest in meaning to *otaku* are “nerd” and “geek.” The character type denoted by *otaku* is found in many nations and cultures, even though not every language has a precise name for it, and the common image the word brings to mind—an unattractive male obsessed with technology—can be traced back as far as Hephaestus, the ugly, crippled blacksmith-god of fire and the forge in Greek mythology. (Morikawa 2013: 1)

I would like to supplement Morikawa’s evocative tracing of both nerd/geek and otaku back to the image of Hephaestus, the Greek god of weaponsmithing, with another lineage from a different Greek god, Hermes, god of intellect, innovation and communication. If Hephaestus encapsulates as a metaphor the common negative stereotype of geeks and otaku, then Hermes represents the new positive image.<sup>223</sup> But even more importantly Morikawa is asserting the correspondences in meaning between the terms geek and otaku.<sup>224</sup> In the following I will argue that the connections run deeper than a pure parallel in meanings.

As already explained in the introduction I wish to draw attention to three different dimensions of analogies: 1) following on from Morikawa’s point above the terms geek and otaku are indeed invoked in similar ways in popular discourse, in everyday usage and in academic, critical discussions; 2) on the level of actual social relations and activities of

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223 It might just be a coincidence, but the protagonist in *Densha Otoko* is transformed from undesirable otaku to the symbol of a new type of masculinity by his love for “Hermes,” the heroine of the story, who is named – in the 2chan posts – after the brand of cups the male lead receives from her as a sign of her gratitude for saving her from a drunk on a train.

224 Geeks and otaku have been equated with each other in the works of other researchers as well (e.g. Taylor 2007, Ito 2012), however, the reasons for this parallel have mostly been treated as self-evident. The most important attempt at a grounded way of connecting otaku culture and Western geek culture is Okada’s *Otakugaku nyūmon* (1996), which I will refer to in more detail below.



groups commonly labelled as geek and otaku, we find a high degree of congruity; and finally 3) examining subcultural clusters, the geek subcultural cluster and the otaku subcultural cluster are well aligned with each other. I will examine all three of these aspects in the following sections.

First, however, I want to reflect on what is gained and what is lost by approaching these terms and the related phenomena in this way. Emphasizing similarity occludes specificities, whereas concentrating on unique features often results in overemphasizing difference. The reason I wish to pursue the first strategy – similar to Ito et al. (2012)<sup>225</sup> – in my present discussion is precisely as a countermeasure to the much more prevalent treatment of otaku culture as being unique and specific to Japan, both from within and without the country (cf. Iwabuchi 2002b, 2010, Lamarre 2004-5). This approach to otaku culture has been identified and criticized as being orientalizing and self-orientalizing depending on the position of the speaker (Iwabuchi 2010, Lamarre 2004-5, Tsuji & Okabe 2014, Ōtsuka 2015, Galbraith et al. 2015b).

By focusing on the connections and similarities between geek and otaku culture I wish to contribute to the circumvention of such orientalizing/self-orientalizing discourses. Although I will reference certain unique characteristics in relation to the meanings of the expressions geek and otaku and the corresponding social formations in order to signal the existence of differences, my overall discussion will lean more heavily towards highlighting the commonalities of these terms and cultures, for this very reason. This is, however, not meant to imply that examinations of what make otaku and geek culture unique are not worthy of

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225 As Ito explains in her introduction to *Fandom Unbound*: “We take a transnational rather than a comparative approach. Our interest is not to identify sources of national difference but rather to trace some of the contours of a transnational subculture. Following the lead of a growing body of work in transnational studies that looks at the flow of culture across national boundaries, we see otaku culture as a lens through which to disrupt the commonsensical isomorphism between culture, people, and places [...]” (2012: xx)

discussion, not to mention the richness of variation according to time (cf. Okada 1996, 2008, Yoshimoto 2009) and place, which the present examination will also overlook.

#### 8.1.2.1. Unpacking geek and otaku: layers of meaning

The way geeks and otaku have come to be represented in mainstream media and popular culture has been the subject of a wide range of studies (Eglash 2002, Freedman 2015, Innes 2007, Kendall 1999a, 1999b, 2011), Kamm (2015) even elaborates on the complexity of what “media” attention means. Other studies have examined people’s ideas and uses of these terms (Kam 2013, 2015, Kikuchi 2015, Tsuji & Okabe 2014), and that of communities labelled as geek (Bury 2011, Kendall 1999 Reagle 2015). In the following I will also draw on a further layer of representations, that of academics and of geeks (Tocci 2009, Woo 2012) and otaku themselves (Okada 1996, 2008), often times the two positions entangled in fan-academic and academic-fan positions (cf. Hills 2002). Such a joint treatment of representations within these three domains follows in the path of Galbraith et al., who also examine “the shared contingent enactments of ‘otaku’ by media, by ‘ordinary’ people and by self-identifying ‘otaku’” (2015b: 14).

Based on Tocci’s (2009) and Woo’s (2012) attempts at ordering the topic and my own examination of the related works I will discuss the following five main themes in relation to discussions of geeks and otaku:

- a) gendered & (de)sexualized:** masculinity/failed-masculinity/misogyny
- b) racially/ethnically/nationally coded:** whiteness/Asianness/Japaneseness
- c) roots in education:** excelling at school/being bullied at school
- d) socially inappropriate – technologically engaged:**
  - *unattractive, unhealthy bodies*
  - *communication deficient/communication savvy*

- *technological affinity*

**e) defined by interests:**

- *very specific interests*: hoarding information – deep engagement

- *relation to fan activities/subcultures*

- *children's culture, fantasy and escapism*

I will briefly summarize some of the main points in relation to these themes and the debates surrounding them, with a focus on highlighting the correspondences between uses and discussions of geeks and otaku. I will refrain from offering a detailed analysis of each of these themes and debates as my current aim is to emphasize the extensive structured parallels that exist between the meanings and connotations connected to the terms geek and otaku rather than engaging with the individual issues themselves.

a) Gendered & (de)sexualized: masculinity/failed-masculinity/misogyny

Both geeks and otaku are first and foremost identified as being male (Bury 2011, Kendall 2000) and as bearers of a failed masculinity (Eglash 2002, Galbraith 2015, Jenkins 1992, Kendall 1999b, Lamarre 2004-5, Quail 2011, Taylor 2007, Tsuji 2012, Azuma 2009 [2001], Yoshimoto 2009) – or in more recent representations and interpretations a new or alternative form of masculinity<sup>226</sup> (Tocci 2009, Woo 2012, Taylor 2007, Kendall 2000, Kendall 2011, Okada 2008), or even a third gender (Morikawa 2003: 251). To this corresponds an identified level of misogyny among both groups ranging from the implicit to the overtly aggressive (Bury 2011, Kendall 2000, Tocci 2009, Varma 2007, Woo 2012).<sup>227</sup>

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226 One that is nevertheless complicit with mainstream forms of masculinity (cf. Kendall 2000: 268, Woo 2012: 77-78). For a discussion of the historical changes in the dominant forms of masculinity see Hadas (2003).

227 Misogyny is far more overt in Western geek culture – the most recent high profile examples being the *fake geek girl* debate (see Reagle 2015), and *Gamergate* (a series of debates surrounding sexism in video games and the related cases of harassment directed towards outspoken critics of the phenomenon) –, than in Japanese otaku culture, and is thus discussed in relation to the former more explicitly.

Although being supposedly male domains, both geek and otaku history are replete with the presence of women in both formative roles and defining numbers in these cultures in general and in certain domains in particular (Kam 2015, Tocci 2009, Morikawa 2013) like *Komiketto* (Yoshimoto 2009),<sup>228</sup> Western SF (Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992) and anime-manga fandom (Malone 2010, Brienza 2009, 2011)<sup>229</sup> from early on.<sup>230</sup> The male dominance of these terms, however, is not only obvious from the occluded presence of girls and women in relations to these cultures, but also in the way the expressions *nerdette* (Kendall 2000) or *geek girl* (Reagle 2015) is used to specify non-male participants, with the term *fujoshi*<sup>231</sup> now being used in Japan to denote all female otaku (Sugiura 2006b).<sup>232</sup>

As a result of the male dominance of these areas women face a challenge of “a double bind of being too geeky and not geeky enough” (Reagle 2015: 2866), which is intrinsically related to the way the looks and sexual attractiveness of women in geekdom are discussed as either lacking or excessive (Kendall 2000, Reagle 2015). But as Varma reminds us, a number of sexist elements inherent to geek culture – and otaku culture I would add – are simply re-articulations of “very old notions of male and female in a new context” (2007: 362). Yet, at

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- 228 See also Galbraith (2015) on how yaoi and BL produced by female fans acted as inspiration for the pioneers of *bishōjo* style.
- 229 Galbraith citing Sasakibara points out that “girls and women were central to the formation of anime fan clubs in the early 1970s” in Japan as well (2015: 22).
- 230 Morikawa emphasizes that “more than half of the *otaku* population in Japan is female. About 70% of the participants of Comic Market are women. Japan is the only country where original modes of expression by amateur women have developed on this scale.” (2013: 15) It is important to remember, however, that female fans in the US and Europe have also developed genres similar to *yaoi* and *boys’ love*, with the major difference being the print format of *slash* fiction as it is commonly known (Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992), as opposed to the predominantly manga form of the Japanese works.
- 231 *Fujoshi*, a wordplay on “rotten girl” and the expression “women and children” or “wife” (implying respectability) was initially introduced as an ironic form of self-identification (not unlike the original use of *otaku*) among fans of the *yaoi* and *boys’ love* genres. In this original sense *fujoshi* denotes only a subset of female otaku, however, as a result of media attention and the ensuing popular usage, it eventually came to be used as a general term for female otaku (for a more detailed discussion see Sugiura 2006a, 2006b).
- 232 A further possible reason for the primary attribution of the geek and otaku labels to males might be found in school culture – an important ground for the development of geek and otaku cultures and identities in both the US and Japan, as will be discussed below – where sports play a more crucial role in the social ranking of boys than girls, which contributes in a way to girl geeks and otaku being less readily identifiable (cf. Morikawa 2013, Suitor & Carter 1999).

the same time, geek and otaku culture offer a space in which non-normative forms of femininity can also be articulated for some female participants (Bucholtz 1999, Currie et al. 2006, Kendall 1999b, Tocci 2009, Woo 2012).

Questions of masculinity are also inherently tied to issues of class, as Kendall points out, and according to her analysis “public discourse on nerds in the 1980s and 1990s may [...] represent a continuing uneasiness with and working through of the relationship between white collar corporate employment and masculinity”, which lacks “rugged physicality and total autonomy as primary indicators of masculinity” (Kendall 1999b: 265). The emphasis of intellectual power and feats – discussed below in more detail – can thus be seen as form of “substituting the intellectual for the physical as determinant of masculine prowess” (Woo 2012: 77).

The honing of the intellect and its skills, the amassing of large amounts of knowledge all require time and dedication. This almost monk-like devotion to the objects of one’s interest is sometimes cited as a reason for the lack of relationships and sexual contact in the case of both geeks (Eglash 2002, Varma 2007) and otaku (Okada 2008, Morikawa 2003, Yoshimoto 2009). This is, of course, but one of the many theories delving upon the sexuality or the lack thereof of the geek or otaku, whether they are male or female (e.g. Azuma 2009 [2001], Jenkins 1992, Kam 2015, Saitō 2011 [2000], Lamarre 2004-5). The presumed deficiencies of the sexual drive of geeks and otaku also tie into the way the Western racist imaginary positions these categories in relation to race and ethnicity.

b) Racially/ethnically/nationally coded: whiteness/Asianness/Japaneseness

Western geeks are commonly understood to be Caucasian (Kendall 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2011) or also Asian (Quail 2011, Tocci 2009),<sup>233</sup> at the same time otaku culture in Japan is again and again theorized as being intrinsically tied to Japanese culture or social and historical specificities – for example in Okada (1996) – (cf. Ōtsuka 2015). In relation to representations of geeks in reality TV Quail points out that what we repeatedly see is “the reification of the Asian nerd, the denial of the black nerd, and the unspokenness of whiteness in nerd culture prevail[ing]” (2011: 479). This self-evident nature of nerds being Caucasian also results in the way elements of “nerdiness come to signify whiteness as well” (Kendall 2000: 268). As evidenced by the way African American students have to negotiate “the burden of” being labelled as “acting White” if they excel at studies (Kinney 1993: 24) or demonstrate an “interest and identification with science and technology” (Eglash 2002: 59).

Building on Eglash’s distinction between primitivist and orientalist racism in the Western imaginary, according to which the hypersexualized and “compulsory cool of black culture is mirrored by a compulsory nerdiness for orientalized others such as Middle Eastern groups, groups from India, and Asian Americans” (Eglash 2002: 58), and incorporating Sherry Turkle’s ideas in relation to the way the machine has led to the human being defined not only via rationality in opposition to animals, but also via emotion versus machines, Nugent offers the following chart explaining Western racism and stereotypes, and its relation to the construction of the nerd and the jock<sup>234</sup> (2008: 73-4):

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233 Stereotypes and representations of Jews can also infer nerdiness (Nugent 2008). With the reverse also being true, as Kendall observes *Revenge of the Nerds* “also sometimes codes the white nerds (especially Lewis) as Jewish” (1999b: 267).

234 The North American term for athletic popular boys whose culture is often positioned as the antithesis of geek culture and vice-versa.

REALLY SENSUAL	HUMAN			NOT SENSUAL
Animals	Africans	Europeans	Asians	Machines
	jocks	nerds		

**Diagram 8.1.** Reproduction of “the racism chart” from *American Nerd* (Nugent 2008: 73)

According to this schema Asians and nerds are aligned with each other in the way they are both imagined as being more machine-like,<sup>235</sup> a point I will return to below in relation to technological affinity. Nugent – citing Stephen Beard – also draws attention to the way during the eighties two of the most emblematic works of cyberpunk, William Gibson’s novel *Neuromancer* and Ridley Scott’s movie *Blade Runner*, both contributed to re-imagining Japan as the locus of a high-tech future – not unrelated to American anxieties at the time regarding Japan’s economic and technological superiority (2008: 82-83), another point I will return to below.

From this non-Japanese geek perspective Japanese otaku could be seen as the global avant-garde of geekdom, geeks at the heart of an imagined future in the present (cf. Nugent 2008). In a reversal of Tsuji’s claims in relation to how in the case of Japan “the loss of occupied territories and the disbanding of the military meant the loss of the expansive space of the imagination, forcing youth to refocus their powers of imagination toward the temporal expanse presented by the society of the future” (2012: 11), temporal distance (the future) is replaced by geographical distance (Japan) as the locus of imagination. This spatio-temporal operation is also present in Japanese otaku discourse, however, in this case, as Lamarre points out, “the historical break between modern and postmodern is re-inscribed as a geopolitical break: Western modernity versus Japanese postmodernity” (2004-5: 178). In this way Okada’s emphasis on the success of Japanese otaku culture overseas, according to Lamarre, is a reiteration of “a well-established pattern of complicity between Western Orientalism and Japanese auto-orientalism” (2004-5: 179), later reiterated in the “brand

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235 See also Iwabuchi’s corresponding discussion of techno-orientalism (2002b).

nationalism” of “Cool Japan” as well (Iwabuchi 2010, Ito 2012).

What is remarkable about all of this, however, is that at the core of both geek and otaku culture there seems to be a fundamental lack of regard for ethnic or national identity (Nugent 2008, Morikawa 2003). This is especially striking in contrast to how much the new otaku Akihabara exudes a sense of “made in Japan” in its products, advertisements and even use of colours, especially when compared to those of Shibuya, as pointed out by Morikawa (2003).

c) Roots in education: excelling at school/being bullied at school

Morikawa echoing Cohen’s (1980 [1972]) and Thornton’s (1996 [1995]) claims regarding the role of media in the creation of subcultures, points out that even before Nakamori’s infamous *Manga Burikko* articles, the stereotype that would later be identified as otaku had already congealed – just waiting to be named –, as evidenced in an article from 1981 which appeared in *Fan Rōdo* (En: *Fan Road*), and which describes the participants and activities of “culture clubs” (2013: 4). Morikawa goes on to point out that similar to the piece from *Fan Rōdo* Nakamori’s first article also locates the figure of the otaku in relation to the school setting. Highlighting some of the hallmarks of the Japanese school system, such as after class club activities, which “became compulsory from the early 1970s” (2013: 6), Morikawa asserts that “school culture in Japan has played an enormous role in nurturing an ‘otaku culture’” (2013: 5). Indeed, Okada (2008) and Yoshimoto (2009) also highlight the importance of high school and university clubs in the establishing of SF and later anime fandom throughout Japan. However, the issue of bullying and the wider school structure of student hierarchy are not discussed in relation to otaku in Japanese literature (Ishii 2014, Suzuki 2012) as much as it has been analyzed in works on American school culture.

Tocci (2009) provides a thorough overview of a wide range of the Anglophone literature relating to school cultures and geeks examining the writings on peer harassment in the



school setting, works that deal with students labelled as geeks or nerds, research on school groups and the impact of teachers and parents. Similar to Morikawa's (2013) points and Ishii's (2014) and Suzuki's (2012) findings in relation to the position of otaku in Japanese school culture, geeks most commonly occupy a low social status within the school setting, which is dominated by the values and peer groups of the popular crowd (referred to as for example trendies, preppies, jocks), boasting high social skills and popularity with the opposite sex (cf. Bishop et al. 2003, Kinney 1993, Milner 2004).<sup>236</sup>

There is an important difference, however, in the way the geek/nerd label is used in relation to overly studious students in the US (Bishop et al. 2003, Kinney 1993, Milner 2004), whereas in Japan the label otaku is more strongly tied to consumption patterns (liking anime, manga, etc.), with a separate term *gariben* being employed to denote excessive effort in relation to learning (Ishii 2014). The common point, however, between groups denigrated for academic performance and those looked down on as a result of interests is their real or assumed lack of social skills.<sup>237</sup>

#### d) Socially inappropriate – technologically engaged

Kendall draws attention to the way the figure of the nerd first became a mainstay of Western TV and cinema as the “intelligent but socially inept” figure, which was only coupled with the stereotype of being “overly involved with, and skilled in the use of, computers” from the 1980s onwards (1999b: 262). What is the source of this co-occurrence of social

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236 Kinney (1993) found that in the US the high school environment with its wider range of student groups and activities – compared to the one dimensional middle school social order spanning from the social pariahs to the popular kids – provided ways to either embrace in a positive manner the previously endured negative nerd label, or shed the label and become “normal” in this more diffuse space of evaluations and opportunities. Furthermore, positive re-appropriation of the nerd label was tied to groups and activities, where one could be among like-minded older peers, recalling Morikawa's (2013) point in relation to the importance of Japanese school clubs in the development of otaku culture.

237 This is further underlined by Suzuki's (2012) findings in relation to school hierarchies in Japan, in which the presence or lack of social skills turned out to be one of the most important defining factors in relation to one's position in the school setting.

inappropriateness and technological affinity represented and repeated endlessly in relation to geeks (e.g. Kendall 1999b, 2011, Tocci 2009) and otaku (e.g. Azuma 2009 [2001], Lamarre 2004-5, Morikawa 2003, Okada 2008) alike? On the most abstract level Kendall offers the following insight into this relationship:

Sherry Turkle (1984) has suggested that people maintain an uneasy relationship to computers because of the ambiguity concerning whether computers actually ‘think’ or are in some sense alive. Their apparent ability to ‘think’ blurs lines between humans and machines. Contact with these liminal quasi-creatures itself conveys liminality. If computers are sort of like, but not quite, human, and therefore liminal, what status does this impart to people who understand and, worse still, enjoy computers? Uneasiness regarding the answer to this question fuels the current nerd stereotype. Aspects of the nerd seen as asocial and incompletely adult (sartorial disregard, bad hygiene and lack of social skills) create a category of human partitioned off from the rest of humanity, thus guarding against the taint of the potential compromise through close relationship with computers. (1999b: 263)

This idea of the nerd as a liminal figure between the machine and the human recalls Nugent’s interpretation of the position of the nerd in relation to the way the orientalist racism of the Western imaginary functions. And just as Nugent points out US fears and obsession in relation to Japanese technological and economic superiority during the eighties (2008: 82), which could be mitigated via recourse to this trope of orientalist racism (2008: 89), so too the fear of “the power of the computer”, and by extension that of the nerd – all too clear by the early 21<sup>st</sup> century – can be kept in check by “[r]epresenting nerds as lacking social and sartorial skills, obsessed with trivia, and interested in fringe cultural activities” (Kendall 2011: 521). Thus the self-orientalizing *Cool Japan* discourse (cf. Iwabuchi 2010) in part emphasizing the uniqueness of Japanese culture via otaku culture is an almost complete inversion – revolving around the axis of the image of the geek/otaku – of the previous US

orientalization and corresponding fear of Japan in relation to technological and market superiority (cf. Iwabuchi 2002b).

On a less abstract level I approach this trope of socially inappropriate and simultaneously technologically engaged from the angle of three interrelated subthemes: 1) unattractive, unhealthy bodies, 2) communication deficiency/communication savvy, and 3) technological affinity. The first of these, unattractive, unhealthy bodies, is one of the most often encountered tropes in relation to both geeks and otaku, especially in media representations (Freedman 2015, Kendall 1999b, 2011). Nakamori's *Otaku no kenkyū*, for instance, dwells on these particulars to the point of even referencing the way otaku are supposed to walk in an abnormal manner. The reason for the oft established connection between geeks and otaku and their unkempt looks and neglected physiques can be once again traced to the same logic of monastic dedication to the domain of the intellect and the shunning of the world of the flesh (Eglash 2002, see also Morikawa 2003) as was the case in relation to relationships and sexual activity, which has only become more pronounced with the rise of online communication and activities.

The second subtheme of being both communication deficient and savvy at the same time is seen to be strongly related to this very same characteristic. By turning towards a mastery of technology and online spaces, geeks and otaku fail to gain experience in the ways of the offline world, or in Lamarre's words, "while the otaku is always in touch (with the computer), he or she is always out of touch (with the actual world)" (2004-5: 183). As Taylor observes, the figure of *Densha Otoko* captures this dichotomy perfectly:

when communicating over the Internet, Densha Otoko is calm and eloquent. Such characterization typifies the common perception that *otaku* have come to rely on computers and cell phones for communication and that the result of this constant electronic mediation is

essentially a fissure of identity: a cool, confident “virtual” self co-exists with a socially inept “real life” self. (2007: 204)

In a way this confidence in relation to online communication relates to the way coding and talking are interrelated and in some cases interchangeable acts of communication within geek culture, as Kelty (2005) points out. Tocci also draws attention to the way patterns of geek thinking and communication are often seen to be intimately tied to ideals of “machine-like processing”, which can serve “to explain or excuse unusual social behavior” (2009: 216).

In her analysis of the Japanese scholarly discourse surrounding otaku Aida (2015) observes that the lack of appropriate communication competences lies at the heart of a number of Japanese theories concerning otaku. Interestingly, as Kam (2015) points out, Anglophone researchers like Ito (2012) and Condry (2013) emphasize the very opposite. This discrepancy is probably due to the way the first group of theories focus on communication in relation to everyday social contexts, while the latter emphasize the communication that goes on within subcultural and fan cultural settings, often foregrounding online communication.

Thus both the subtheme of unattractive, unhealthy bodies and the subtheme of communication deficiency/savviness are also intrinsically linked to the third subtheme of technological affinity. Although there is a difference in relation to the figure of the geek and that of the otaku, in the way the former is more strongly tied to technological expertise<sup>238</sup> than the latter – a point I will return to again below – both figures are steeped in an intimate rapport with technology. Geeks are seen to have a deep relationship with technology, from the “radio amateurs of the early twentieth century” (Eglash 2002: 50) all the way to the coders of Silicon Valley (Tocci 2009). The connection of technology to the term otaku in

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238 Even if Tocci is correct to remind us that “nerds [are] not all necessarily technically inclined” (2009: 71).

Japan is far less overt, but just as prevalent. From the early adopters of expensive new technology, like the Betamax video recorders sought after by the first generation of otaku (Okada 1996), to the producers of *dōjin* games (Yoshimoto 2009, Morikawa 2003), – not even mentioning the ever present SF themes – the development of otaku culture and genres are just as intensely intertwined with technology as their geek counterparts. The most spectacular articulation of this connection is, of course, the transformation of Akihabara from electric to otaku town, explained in detail by Morikawa in *Shuto no Tanjō* (2003), which was predicated precisely on the same affinity we find in Western geek culture, between personal computers (and technology in general) and the products of otaku culture (see also Azuma 2009 [2001]: 3) – as manifested in the patron strata of Akihabara during the nineties.

#### e) Defined by interests

Geeks and otaku are almost always distinguished by their interests and by their modes of engagement in relation to those passions. Again, in order to help break down the complexity of this dimension of identifying geeks and otaku, I introduce three subthemes: 1) very specific interests: hoarding information – deep engagement, 2) relation to fan activities/subcultures, and 3) children's culture, fantasy and escapism. For the sake of brevity, I will not engage with the second point here, as section 8.1.2.4 on the practices of geeks and otaku will be a discussion of the way both cultures relate to fan cultures and subcultures, however, it is important to note that the majority of discussions of Japanese otaku refer to specific subcultural and fan cultural interests (Aida 2015), and a significant portion of the literature on geeks as well (Tocci 2009, Woo 2012). Starting off with the first subtheme:

To be geek is to be engaged, to be enthralled in a topic, and then to act on that engagement. Geeks come together based on common expertise on a certain topic. These groups may identify themselves as computer geeks, anime geeks, trivia geeks,

gamers, hackers, and a number of other specific identifiers. (McArthur 2009: 62)

As the above quote from McArthur demonstrates geeks – and otaku I would add – seem to have very specific interests, in relation to which they hoard information and demonstrate a deep form of engagement.<sup>239</sup> The importance of enthusiasm for the objects of interest is emphasized again both in relation to geeks (Woo 2012) and otaku (Okada 1996, 2008, Miyadai 1994 in Aida 2015, Yoshimoto 2009), the negative extreme of which “can become fanatical, on the one hand, or narrow-minded, on the other” (Woo 2012: 55), the latter being taken up sadly too often in popular representations (cf. Jenkins 1992, Jenson 1992).

The objects of these intense passions can focus on technology (such as personal computers, railroads or military for instance), which on the surface should seem serious enough, but are nevertheless either tied to or seen to be tied to realms beyond the everyday, and in this way constitute a terrain for fantasy (cf. Tsuji 2012). In the case of other interests like SF, fantasy, comics, anime, manga, etc. there is an explicit relationship to fantasy, which is usually conflated with children’s culture and escapism on the part of the outside world and even analysts.

Let us then consider with Tocci, why certain activities, which on the surface seem very similar – for example cosplayers dressing up and sports fans putting on face paint, wigs and even costumes, or an extensive mastery of any expansive fictional universe and “an encyclopedic knowledge of fashion, or even sports” (2009: 299) – will be regarded as childish or freakish on the one hand, and as appropriate adult activities on the other hand. First, as discussed in Chapter Two the difference lies in the cultural legitimacy of these activities (cf. Aida 2015), with sports and fashion enjoying higher levels of legitimacy than

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239 In relation to American otaku Eng posits that “[o]ther subcultures use networks of all sorts for information sharing and socializing, but otaku are a special case because their primary motivation, goal, and object of desire is information itself” (2012a: 101).

cosplay and SF or fantasy for instance. However, there is another thread here, that of children's culture and fantasy, not unrelated, of course, to the problem of cultural legitimacy in the Bourdieusian sense – note, however, that legitimacy in the following quote is employed according to the general use of the term.

The barriers to legitimacy facing stereotypically geeky entertainment pursuits like comics and games, many enthusiasts fear, may be the public perception that they're for children. Would video games or comic books come under so much legal scrutiny as "obscenity," for instance, if not for the widely held belief that they're still just made for kids? The irony behind this, perhaps, is that much of the media targeted to the stereotypically geeky enthusiast has been constructed from the same building blocks as children's stories, but produced with the knowledge that the geek today is an identity claimed by adults. (Tocci 2009: 283)

This description by Tocci corresponds to Okada's argument on how otaku culture emerged as a result of some people choosing not to "graduate" from children's culture, while at the same time children's culture became so sophisticated that there was no need to stop consuming it (2008: 171).<sup>240</sup> Thus, as a result of the way geek and otaku culture are built in part from elements derived from children's culture, those who enjoy and align themselves with these cultures find themselves having to explain again and again how the major works of the pertaining genres are in fact on par complexity-wise with more established genres.<sup>241</sup>

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240 Okada (1996, 2008) also argues that otaku culture is in part a result of the special position children enjoyed in post-war Japan. I would contend that his arguments may not necessarily hold up to a rigorous comparison of children's status and conditions in various countries – the Japanese case possibly not being as unique as Okada would like to suggest. Nevertheless, his line of thought in relation to the role of pocket money, for instance, in the cultivation of sophisticated children's culture both emphasizes the strong connection otaku culture has to children's culture, and at the same time recalls arguments in relation to the connection between the sudden increase of disposable income among large sections of young people and the rise of post-war youth subcultures in Britain (cf. Cohen, P. 1972, Cohen, S. 1980 [1972]).

241 For Okada (2008: 138) this socially unrecognized nature of the objects of otaku culture lies at the very heart of what being an otaku means – it takes intellect and willpower to posit

There is a gradual change as both technological, economic, social and cultural changes – discussed in the second subchapter below – and the institutionalization of these forms act in tandem to raise the legitimacy (in both above senses of the word) of these forms.

Returning to the example above, fashion and sports also create fantasies, of status, desirability and competition for example, yet they are seen as being somehow more real and more valuable than the type of fantasy commonly attributed to children's culture, because they pertain to desires which are thought to be proper to mainstream adult society.<sup>242</sup> And the reason for this as Tocci observes is that geek (and otaku) interests “represent escapism, a substitute for real power among bookish and non-athletic boys” in the eyes of the wider society (2009: 300), leading us back to the problem of masculinity and school hierarchies discussed above. This problem of escapism is already present in the last instalment of *Otaku no kenkyū* written by Eji Sonta, in which he “argues that otaku are men who are unwilling or unable to grow up and accept reality”, and “by reality, he means the roles and responsibilities taken on by adults that make them full members of society” explains Galbraith (2015: 28).

Interestingly even researchers, who adopt a positive stance towards otaku culture, seem to reach similarly pessimistic conclusions concerning escapism. In *Shuto no Tanjō* Morikawa argues that otaku experienced the loss of the optimistic vision of the future as growth and development, and as a result retreated into the world of anime and games (2003: 234). Furthermore, this loss of the future is intertwined with personalization and the dissolution of the social (*hishakaika*) and a corresponding change in the vision of technology (Morikawa 2003: 229). In *Otaku wa sude ni shinde iru* Okada also points out how the emergence of

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242 value in the face of generally accepted denigration.  
As Aida points out, however, there is nothing more real about the one or the other. “‘The distinction between fiction and reality’ seems to be at first glance something that is self-evident to the extent that it does not require consideration. However, the fiction or reality we accept could be reduced to the problem of ‘reality’ that we individually attribute. There is no distinction between the two in terms of ‘reality.’” (2015: 112)



third generation otaku and *moe*<sup>243</sup> culture signify the end of Japanese society as it came to be understood during the *Shōwa* period (2008). In a later article Morikawa argues that for men turning towards “fantasy in *anime* or games, even after they had passed through adolescence” is a result of the way from the late 1980s onwards it was no longer possible to compensate for being “bad at sports and [being] unpopular” during adolescence through academic achievement and a good career (2013: 11). This argument, similar to Tocci’s above, once again echoes concerns regarding the problem of masculinity and school hierarchies discussed in the previous sections.

The seeming rejection on the part of geeks and otaku to grow up has often been misinterpreted as failure to distinguish fantasy from reality. I would, however, concur with Saitō (2011 [2000]) that it is not the case that otaku – and by extensions geeks – can’t tell the two apart, rather as Galbraith emphasizes they prefer fiction over reality (2015: 30). The fact that the first element of the “otaku mode of enjoyment” identified by Yoshimoto – and discussed in more detail below – is the primacy of fiction (2009: 36) seems to point to a similar interpretation.<sup>244</sup> This preference for fiction among both geeks and otaku I would like to suggest is a clue towards understanding these cultures in relation to an underlying aesthetic disposition, which will be the subject of the second subchapter.

Finally, the way otaku – and geeks – “represent a rejection of adulthood by resisting work, women, and the salaryman ideal” (Taylor 2007: 203) has been interpreted as a form of resistance to capitalism (Lamarre 2004-5) and/or the culture of reifying love relationships (Yoshimoto 2009: 199). According to Kam (2015) both the refusal of reproductive sexuality

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243 The word *moe* is commonly understood to denote the affective reaction of readers, viewers, players to the characters within works. For a discussion of the possible origins of the term see Morikawa (2003: 31)

244 Tsuji would also seem to agree with this point, as he observes that the reason train otaku “are assigned to the lowest caste” even below that of other otaku, is precisely because they “indecisively fail to fully commit to either reality or unreality” (2012: 4).

and the claiming of the power of auto-productive desire run counter to the logic of production and exchange under capitalism. In this way the prioritizing of fantasy over everyday reality aligns geek and otaku culture with countercultures in two distinct ways at the same time. On the one hand via its opposition towards the capitalist logic of production (also replicated in its subcultural practices as discussed in section 8.1.2.4 below), and on the other hand through its rejection of (middle class) cultural capital and the turn towards children's and popular culture for forms of expression instead (cf. Suzuki 2013). Furthermore, geek culture is infused with the countercultural ideals of the pioneers of personal computing and the Internet (Thomas 2009, Tocci 2009), while “those who created the genres and set the stage for the first generation of ‘otaku’” were “the people coming up during and in the fallout of the two failed student movements that occurred in postwar Japan” (Ōtsuka 2015: xvi). However, Ōtsuka also warns against too readily accepting positions that would position “subculture as ‘counter to the establishment’” for in his view “the ideology of ‘otaku’ culture in Japan since the 1980s is ‘marketing’” (2015: xvii).

#### 8.1.2.2. Making sense of it all: different levels of meaning

Based on the above the similarities between geek and otaku in relation to the way they are defined and discussed are quite clear, yet there are a small number of differences too, as seen in relation to studiousness and technological affinity for instance. In order to both narrow my discussion and to help make sense of the abundance of ways the terms are used I propose the following distinctions in the levels of meaning that can be distinguished in relation to the terms geek and otaku.

	<b>Geek</b>	<b>Otaku</b>
<i>Widest level of meaning</i>	- connoisseur/collector/expert	- connoisseur/collector/expert
<i>Wider level of meaning</i>	- studiousness - technological affinity - geek subcultural cluster	- otaku subcultural cluster
<i>Narrow level of meaning</i>		- otaku genre - otaku mode of appreciation - moe otaku

**Table 8.1.** Levels of meaning in relation to the terms geek and otaku

On the widest level both geek and otaku have come to denote people with a dedication towards a certain interest or activity, and with a corresponding expertise in that area (cf. Aida 2015: 105, Nomura 2005: 4, Tocci 2009, Woo 2012, Yoshimoto 2009: 8). In this way we can now even encounter the paradoxical categories of for example “wine geeks” or “health otaku” (Nomura 2005: 4). This use of the term derives from its narrower and earlier meaning denoting enthusiasts. Although the similarity in the way both geek and otaku have come to be taken up in this way is telling of the deeper structural connection between geeks and otaku, it is of little further interest for my present discussion (nor for any of the books and papers cited here, except Nomura 2005), as it dilutes the meaning of the terms to the point of meaning nothing other than connoisseur, collector or expert.

Moving on to the next level, we have a difference in meaning, as otaku are defined by their tastes, interests (Morikawa 2003, Yoshimoto 2009, Okada 1996, 2008) and consumption practices (Ōtsuka 2010 [1989], Azuma 2009 [2001]) even in the school setting (Ishii 2014, Suzuki 2012), while the term geek is invoked to denote a) overly studious students (Bishop et al. 2003, Kinney 1993, Milner 2004, Tocci 2009), b) a technologically adapt elite (Kelty 2005, Tocci 2009, Varma 2007), and c) fans of particular forms of popular culture and participants of specific subcultures (Tocci 2009, Woo 2012). In the case of the three uses of the term geek on this level there is probably a significant overlap in the membership of the

groups being identified,<sup>245</sup> which in part explains the affinity between these uses of the term, however, it is necessarily a wider group of people denoted than in the case of otaku. This is most evident in the way *gariben* are treated as a separate social group from otaku in Japanese school culture (Ishii 2014). At the same time the affinity between a strong preoccupation with technology and personal computers and otaku interests is one of the main points emphasized by Morikawa (2003),<sup>246</sup> and as such I would like to stress that it is probably rather a difference in the use of the terms, than a difference on the level of the social phenomena: *gariben* are discriminated against alongside otaku, similar to geeks, and an affinity for computers is aligned with otaku interests, similar to the way the use of the word geek implies.

In the case of the Japanese discourse on otaku, however, even though there is a seemingly overarching agreement in relation to the way otaku are defined by their tastes, interests and consumption practices, the object proper of these interests is nevertheless contested. This point of contention revolves around the development of otaku culture in time, and ties into the narrow level of meaning found in relation to otaku, which I will explain in the following by focusing on the positions of Okada<sup>247</sup> and Yoshimoto<sup>248</sup> in relation to otaku culture. For

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245 As Eglash points out in relation to the roots of geek culture, this overlap was augmented by various trends from the post-war period onwards: “After World War II the broad category of “electronic hobbyist” fused ham radio operators with dimestore science fiction, model trains, stereophonic sound, and mail-order kits. The Cold War era emphasis on science education (as well as veterans’ education funding) drove these hobbyists and their more scholarly counterparts closer together.” (2002: 51)

246 Azuma’s definition of otaku also highlights the relationship with computers (2009 [2001]: 3).  
 247 It is important to note, that although there is a strong continuity between Okada’s positions in *Otakugaku nyūmon* (1996) and *Otaku wa sude ni shinde iru* (2008), there is also a difference in relation to the emphasis on who otaku are. Whereas the former work seems to position otaku as different from simple fans of anime or manga and so on, as a kind of elite alpha fans, the latter work provides a more generous description locating all fans of the otaku subcultural cluster from the eighties up till the early two-thousands as being otaku. Okada’s position from *Otakugaku nyūmon* (1996) is closer to what I call the narrow level of meaning of otaku, and his interpretation from *Otaku wa sude ni shinde iru* (2008) corresponds to the wider level of meaning of an otaku subcultural cluster.

248 Yoshimoto also occasionally slides between the narrow and the wider level of meaning of otaku in *Otaku no kigen* (2009). Although he mostly talks about otaku culture in the narrow sense, by the end of his discussion he also invokes the term to refer to otaku culture in the

both Okada (2008) and Yoshimoto (2009) the emergence of otaku culture is seen as a result of the expansion and diffusion of SF culture, and both authors locate the emergence of otaku culture around the late seventies and early eighties. This is the narrow meaning of otaku culture. Yoshimoto identifies the “otaku genre” as being characterized by the presence of “*bishōjo*, mecha and further SF elements, magic and further fantasy elements, sexual elements and romantic elements” (2009: 8). For Okada otaku culture differs from specific fandoms, like SF, anime, *kaijū* or manga fandom in the way it operates on a level that requires a nuanced understanding of the canons and conventions of all these areas (1996: 28). In both approaches there is a sense of the coalescence of elements from various genres and media, but while Yoshimoto sees this coming together as the crystallization of a new genre on the level of works, Okada locates otaku culture in the mode of appreciation. This is probably the reason why Yoshimoto sees a direct continuity with the emergence of *moe* works, whereas Okada positions *moe* focused consumption in opposition to what he perceives to be the true otaku mode of appreciation.<sup>249</sup> Okada goes so far as to identify the rise of *moe* focused appreciation as the root cause of the dissolution of a feeling of community among otaku (2008). It is quite telling that for Yoshimoto looking at otaku culture from the vantage point of SF culture – and anime, manga and special effects movies or *kaijū* fandom – the break is located in relation to the emergence of otaku culture in the early eighties. Whereas for Okada examining otaku culture from the vantage point of the first generation of otaku, the break is identified in relation to the emergence of *moe* as the focus of otaku culture. While both authors try to identify otaku culture in the narrow sense, they are in fact at the same time also offering a model for understanding otaku culture in the wide sense as a subcultural cluster made up of the various interests commonly linked to otaku

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wide sense (2009: 196, 204), or in other words the otaku subcultural cluster.

249 The Nomura Research Institute Otaku Market Estimation Team also point out the changes in meaning that the term otaku has undergone, paying attention to the parallel expansion of the term to denote any form of specialist interest and expertise as explained in relation to the widest level of meaning above, and its concurrent narrowing down to refer to *moe* focused otaku only (2005: 3-4).

culture. Yoshimoto's discussion of the expansion and differentiation of Japanese SF fandom offers an excellent model for understanding the relationship between otaku culture in the narrow sense and otaku culture in the wide sense.<sup>250</sup>

Yoshimoto introduces the terms *core SF culture* (*shō SF shugi*, focusing on print science fiction) and *wide SF culture* (*dai SF shugi*, with a greater emphasis on SF works from visual media) (2009: 36). The history of Japanese SF fandom as related by Yoshimoto starts out with a small and dedicated subculture organizing itself around print works of SF, followed by the arrival of SF hits in visual media (most notably anime and movies) reaching a wider public and drawing in increasing numbers of participants and encompassing ever more fields of interest. The influx of new fans, who are not necessarily interested in print SF, transforms the fandom, eventually leading to a differentiation, with a reassertion of *core SF culture* on the part of a smaller number of fans, and the emergence of new fandoms among the majority of newer fans. This story of the expansion and differentiation of SF fan culture is not specific to Japan nor are the sentiments it evoked from older participants, as the following quote from Tocci illustrates.<sup>251</sup>

It is fair, however, to describe other sorts of organized media fandom as descended from science-fiction fandom. Researchers and insiders of science-fiction fandom typically regard other media fandoms, such as comics, as spin-offs or outcroppings (brown, J 994; Coppa, 2006; Siclari, 1981; Trimble & Trimble, 1994). Some have described this diversification as a “barbarian invasion,” in which the “core” fans perceived themselves as outnumbered at their own conventions by fan cultures which sprang from their tradition, such as comic book fans and sci-fi film fans (brown, 1994, p. 92). To some who count themselves among the core, these “other-media” fans represented a dilution of the purity of what fandom once was,

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250     Indeed, my own classification and terminology is indebted to Yoshimoto's work.

251     See also section 6.3.3 on *communities within communities* and subchapter 2.5 on *field theory and subcultural clusters* for my discussions of this same problem in relation to the geek subcultural cluster and in relation to field theory and subcultures in general.

“more enamored of nifty special effects than of imaginative ideas in literary form” (brown, 1994, p. 93). (Tocci 2009: 54-55)

Looking at this same story of development from the vantage point of otaku culture, however, *wide SF culture* is actually *otaku culture in the wide sense*. Precisely because of the way otaku culture both in the wide sense and in the narrow sense lies at the intersection of domains<sup>252</sup> such as SF, fantasy, *kaijū*, anime, manga, special effects and so on, it offers a better term to approach the parallel subcultural cluster that exists in Japan to that of the geek subcultural cluster. And nowhere is that connection more explicitly expressed, than in the almost manifesto-like 1983 *DAICON IV Opening Animation* with its tableaux-like enumeration of both Japanese and Western icons of otaku and geek culture.<sup>253</sup>

In Chapter One I offered Ito’s following definition of otaku culture as my starting point:

otaku culture references a constellation of “fannish” cultural logics, platforms, and practices that cluster around anime, manga, and Japanese games and are in turn associated with a more generalized set of dispositions toward passionate and participatory engagement with popular culture and technology in a networked world. (Ito 2012: xi)<sup>254</sup>

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252 I use the word domain, as this list juxtaposes both categories commonly understood to denote media and others referencing genre.

253 The *DAICON III Opening Animation* already references both Western and Japanese works, however, the number of references truly moves to the scale of enumeration in the *DAICON IV Opening Animation*. Yoshimoto (2009) offers a detailed discussion of the impact of both *DAICON III* and *DAICON IV* and the corresponding opening animations on the development of Japanese SF fandom, otaku culture in general and GENERAL PRODUCTS, *DAICON FILM* and *GAINAX* in particular.

254 Fannish in the English terminology – my own use of the expression included – simply means fan-like, as opposed to the meaning it has in the Japanese discourse and literature as the counterpoint to *sākon*. The latter is a portmanteau word of serious and constructive, denoting fans who research the objects of their fandom and/or create related works themselves. *Fanishshu* fans on the other hand prioritize enjoying themselves in relation to their participation in fandom. (Yoshimoto 2009: 11)

Having examined the facets and layers of meaning of the terms geek and otaku I hope to have elucidated why Ito's approach represents a good fit with my own understanding of otaku culture. Nevertheless, I would like to further delineate my use of the term otaku culture and geek culture in the following. For the purposes of the rest of the present work I will use the expressions geek culture and otaku culture – unless explicitly noted otherwise – to denote the geek subcultural cluster and the otaku subcultural cluster respectively. Also, when referencing geeks and otaku I will be referring to participants who demonstrate at least a fan cultural level of engagement – as defined in Chapter Two – in relation to any of the pertaining cultures. The following two sections of the present subchapter will thus only focus on demonstrating how the geek and otaku subcultural clusters mirror each other both in relation to practices and with regards to their subcultural cluster-like make-up.

#### 8.1.2.3. Practices of geeks and otaku

Examining the actual practices found within otaku culture in the wide sense based on the literature the similarities with Western geek culture – my own research results included – are striking. Okada's (1996) descriptions of the importance of video recorders and the sharing of taped material for early otaku could be easily interchanged with Jenkins' (1992) accounts of US fans from the same era. Furthermore, Okada's (1996) and Yoshimoto's (2009) explanations in relation to the way otaku were interested in understanding their favourite programs in relation to genre, form and production is a perfect match to Jenkins' (1992) description of how Western fans explore their favourite series with a similar rigor, and the way new fans are introduced to modes of fan viewing. There is a very strong parallel in the fanzine culture found in both Japan (Yoshimoto 2009) and in the West (Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992), not to mention the already cited correspondence between *boys' love*, *yaoi* in Japan and slash fiction in the European and North American context (Ito 2012).



As even such a short list of examples indicates, it would be impossible to offer a detailed overview of every aspect of the parallel nature of geek and otaku cultural practices within the bounds of this section. Thus, in order to provide a framework that both opens up and limits my all too brief discussion of the similarities between geek and otaku practices I will use Yoshimoto's summary of the main elements of "contents enjoyment" (*kontentsu no tanoshimikata*) developed within SF fandom, which according to him became the basis for the "otaku mode of enjoyment" (*otakuteki tanoshimikata*) (2009: 36) as my point of reference in the following.

The six key elements identified by Yoshimoto are 1) the primacy of fiction, 2) researching related areas as well, 3) face-to-face meetings and having fun together, 4) regular larger events, 5) desire to contribute to the genre, and 6) not losing sight of the object of fandom (2009: 36-39). The primacy of fiction, already touched on in relation to how geeks and otaku are defined by interests above, will be discussed in a separate section in the second subchapter below, thus I will refrain from engaging with it for now.

The second point, researching related areas as well, as Yoshimoto explains, stems from the fact that during the initial period of SF fandom and then later all other related fandoms the amount of material available in relation to the objects of interest were scarce. This scarcity was a driving force behind not only the interest that SF fans and later otaku of all persuasions (Okada 2008) demonstrated in relation to related areas of interest such as manga, anime, movies, etc. and even beyond, regarding the sciences for example, in order to find more material, but also with respect to fan produced content. This is also mirrored in the way

anime was scarce in the United States in the early days of the web, so fans extracted the maximum amount of entertainment value from every show they could get their hands on, whereas modern otaku have a plethora of titles and other entertainment options available to

them, making a depth-first approach less attractive than a wide-sampling approach. (Eng 2012a: 99)

The choice between sampling a wide range of works or focusing in-depth attention on a smaller number of them is what Eng calls the “Otaku’s Dilemma” (2012a: 99). The success of each subculture leads to its own undoing in this way, as the influx of new participants – as discussed above in the previous section and Chapter Six and Seven – and the corresponding increase in works produced to accommodate the tastes and interests of that culture will inadvertently lead to the impossibility of maintaining a shared core canon that everyone has read, seen or played, and will result in the differentiation described by both Yoshimoto (2009) and Okada (2008).<sup>255</sup> On the other hand this drive to find more materials is highly conducive to the flow of both participants and thematic elements between related subcultures.

The third element identified by Yoshimoto in relation to the “otaku mode of enjoyment”, face-to-face meetings and having fun together was originally – before the rise of the Internet – tied to the way materials could only be shared physically on the one hand, and the fact that communicating with like-minded peers required finding and meeting others with whom one shared the same interests on the other hand. Both Yoshimoto (2009) and Morikawa (2013) point out the importance school clubs played in Japan in creating contexts for engaging with like-minded peers. Yoshimoto also mentions the regular meet-ups (2009: 19), the various semi-organized club networks – such as the SF clubs forming around *Uchūjin* (2009: 17-18), or the manga circles initiated by *Gura-Kon* (2009: 66-67) –, and even the way certain spaces like the café *Manga Garō* served as a gathering place for a host of actors related to various fandoms. The importance of regular small-scale meet-ups is emphasized in both Jenkins’

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255 This also took place in the Hungarian anime-manga fan culture, with the initial fandom being characterized by the circulation of a few works that everybody would enjoy sooner or later. The increasing supply of available anime, manga and games, however, inevitably led to the ratio of this shared core body of works becoming smaller and smaller and the consumption of individuals and groups becoming increasingly specialized.

(1992) and Bacon-Smith's (1992) description of Western SF and media fandom, and in Leonard's (2005a, 2005b) and Eng's (2012b) accounts of the development of anime-manga fan culture in the US. It is important to note that the Internet has not made face-to-face meetings superfluous, rather it has contributed to the facilitation of like-minded peers finding each other not only online but also offline (cf. Hodgkinson 2002), as also evidenced by the story of the *Budapest Anime Meet*.

The fourth element of regular larger events follows naturally from the propensity for periodic face to face meetings among participants and the increasingly organized nature of fandoms as they mature, as demonstrated by the development of the *Hungarian Anime Association* in Chapter Four, by Bacon-Smith's (1992) and Jenkins' (1992) descriptions in relation to American SF and wider media fandoms for example, or Yoshimoto's (2009) accounts of the roots of SF conventions and *Komiketto* in Japan (see also Tamagawa 2007). SF conventions have served as the model for all later varieties of geek and otaku conventions in both the West and Japan (Tocci 2009, Yoshimoto 2009). These events not only serve as trans-local and even national hubs for meeting other participants from within the culture (cf. Hodgkinson 2002) – as opposed to the smaller-scale and more regular meets or the chance encounters in specialist shops for instance (cf. Vályi 2010) – but they also serve as an important channel for the trade of subculture specific goods, such as fanzines and fan art for example (Yoshimoto 2009, Hodgkinson 2002, Bacon-Smith 1992, Jenkins 1992).

Organizing such large-scale events is often a result of the desire to contribute to the genre (e.g. as event staff, sharing information, publishing fanzines), the fifth element identified by Yoshimoto (see also Tamagawa 2007). He further emphasizes how these activities also serve as a way to garner recognition (cf. Thornton 1996 [1995], Hodgkinson 2002, Kahn-Harris 2007). Morikawa also points out in relation to the beginnings of the garage kit industry how amateur “mania” were motivated by both money and pride in choosing to become

professionals (Morikawa 2003: 44).

This aspect of the “otaku mode of enjoyment” is the one that has received the most attention within my own research, focusing on the how and why of people working as subcultural producers in fan markets, discussed in Chapter Seven. The tensions between amateurism and professionalization (e.g. the story of the relationship between *Uchūjin* and *S-F Magajin*, 2009: 17-23), between core and mainstream (for example the differences in focus and readership between *Animekku* as opposed to *OUT* and *Fan Rōdo*, 2009: 135-6), between subcultural and market values – e.g. in relation to the values of *Komiketto* (2009: 87-8) or the reaction of old-guard SF fans regarding DAICON FILM and GENERAL PRODUCTS (2009: 151-155) – is just as explicitly discussed in Yoshimoto’s historical account of each fandom he touches upon. The centrality of actors I would categorize as subcultural producers to the development of various events and media is also vividly apparent in Yoshimoto’s overviews, but also in accounts such as Tamagawa’s research on the staff of *Komiketto* (2007). Tsuji also points out how “some of the more prominent fans have quit their corporate jobs to pursue careers centered on their hobbies”, thus becoming the actors who certain “scholars have called [...] “the seminal otaku” (Miyadai 1994) and “first-generation otaku” (Azuma 2001) because of this passionate enthusiasm for their hobbies” (2012: 15).

Finally, Yoshimoto’s sixth element, not losing sight of the object of fandom, not only relates to the previous point of striving to further the genre through various contributions, but also to learning and hierarchies within geek and otaku cultures. Both Okada’s (1996, 2008) and Yoshimoto’s accounts (2009) stress the importance of learning within otaku culture. In *Otaku wa sude ni shinde iru* Okada’s emphasis on “required learning (*hissu kyōyō*)” (2008: 54-55 translation from 2015b: 165) in relation to both otaku culture on the whole and SF fandom specifically (2008: 133) mirrors that found in relation to subcultures in general (e.g. Vályi 2010, Hodgkinson 2002, Tófalvy 2008b) and geek fan cultures in particular (Jenkins

1992), as discussed in Chapter Five.

In a similar fashion the often referenced problem of innovators and followers (Hebdige 1988[1979], Hodkinson 2002, Reagle 2015) is also thematized in Okada's emphasis on an elite of "splendid otaku" (1996: 227)<sup>256</sup> or "strong otaku" (2008: 138). As Woo observes "geeks are guilty no less than Thornton's clubbers of making distinctions between "good" and "bad" participants" (2012: 55). On a more general level both the question of learning and that of innovators and followers ties in to the wider problem – already discussed above regarding the levels of meaning of geek and otaku – of the expansion and reproduction of the culture, as captured in the following description in relation to the increasing presence of – in this example – geek girls:

Hence, the popularization of geekdom itself has caused a crisis, because the geekdom/mainstream boundary has become more porous. It is feared that newcomers arrive from the mainstream without having paid the same dues as the "old-timers." Worse yet, some worry that newly arrived women attract attention by virtue of their (relatively rare) gender or attractiveness rather than their accumulation of knowledge and skill. Worst of all, the (sometimes coveted) attention of the mainstream alighting on these newcomers as representatives of the field robs the old-timers of "air" and weakens the definition of the field's boundaries. (Reagle 2015: 2874-5)

As Bourdieu explains in *The Rules of Art* "external changes affect the relations of force at the heart of the field" (1996 [1992]: 225) precisely via the influx of new entrants into the field. Thus, Reagle's points in the above quote, similar to Yoshimoto's (2009) and Okada's (2008) descriptions of the expansion and differentiation of SF and otaku culture discussed earlier, all reiterate Bourdieu's observations in relation to the field of cultural production:

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256 Translation of *rippa na otaku* as splendid otaku follows Okada (2015a: 97).

The great upheavals arise from the eruption of newcomers who, by the sole effect of their number and their social quality, import innovation regarding products or techniques of production, and try or claim to impose on the field of production, which is itself its own market, a new mode of evaluation of products. (1996 [1992]: 225)

Not only does this point towards the field-like nature of Japanese SF fandom (where the emergence of anime fandom and otaku culture challenged the previous standards of evaluation) or otaku culture in the narrow sense (where the emergence of *moe* has resulted in a similar struggle as evidenced by Okada's polemic (2008)), but also highlights the importance of subcultural clusters for understanding the way fields are structured. As explained in Chapter Two fields often demonstrate a nested structure. Therefore otaku culture in the wide sense just like geek culture can be understood as a field itself,<sup>257</sup> with subfields such as SF fandom, anime fandom, etc. By focusing on subcultural clusters the relationships and structures via which individual fields interact within their superfields becomes concrete and approachable. Therefore it is to this aspect of otaku culture in the wide sense that I will turn to next.

#### 8.1.2.4. The geek and otaku subcultural clusters

Enumerations of the interests within geek culture (e.g. Woo 2012, Tocci 2009) and otaku culture (e.g. Azuma 2009 [2001], Ito 2012, Morikawa 2003, Okada 2008, Yoshimoto 2009) are strikingly similar, with SF, fantasy, games, comics/manga, anime acting as central nodes for most of these lists. There are differences, of course, the presence of idol culture in the otaku subcultural cluster being the most obvious example with no immediate counterpart within geek culture. Such differences are a testament to the unique contexts and

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257     Indeed, this is the approach that both Woo (2012) and Reagle (2015) chose in relation to geek culture.

developments within both cultures,<sup>258</sup> however, the overall picture is that of similarity. The reasons for this high level of congruity among geek and otaku culture will be discussed in the second subchapter below, but first I want to complete my overview of the similarities between the two cultures, by examining the cluster-like nature of otaku culture. As I have already dwelled upon the cluster-like structure of geek culture in Chapter Six in detail, here I will only focus on Japanese accounts of otaku culture.

Both Morikawa's and Yoshimoto's definition of otaku are predicated on observable social facts and enumerations of the elements of the "structure of interest" of otaku and of the "otaku genre" respectively. For Morikawa the "structure of interests" – the affinity among technology such as personal computers and laser discs and anime, video games, dōjin manga, garage kits, etc. (2003: 63) – that emerged in the urban space of Akihabara ultimately define what otaku are (2003: 268). In a similar fashion for Yoshimoto the "otaku genre" – as already explained above – is characterized by the presence of "*bishōjo*, mecha and further SF elements, magic and further fantasy elements, sexual elements and romantic elements," and otaku are defined as males who enjoy works that belong to the "otaku genre" and who identify as otaku (2009: 8). Though the elements of the two lists are different in the way Morikawa focuses on different media and product types<sup>259</sup> whereas Yoshimoto's list concentrates on content, they actually complement each other to provide a general picture of the range of media forms and product types and the variety of content that otaku enjoy.

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258 As Ito points out: "Variations in otaku culture between Japan and the United States stem not from irreducible differences in national culture but from specific historical, social, and infrastructural conditions. For example, train otaku culture found fertile ground in Japan because it resonated with the history of Japan's postwar modernization and the train-centered transport systems of the small country [...]. But we have seen much less transnational uptake of this variation of otaku culture in the car-centered U.S. context." (2012: xix)

259 Also apparent in the following list he provides in relation to how Akihabara became the most important geographical concentration point of garage kit shops, and along with that "doujinshi, cosplay materials, trading cards, dolls, anime character goods, products related to manga-anime-games" (Morikawa 2003: 47).

Okada (2008) and Yoshimoto (2009) also enumerate a series of fandoms which are related to each other and belong to otaku culture, such as military fans, railway fans, SF fans, anime fans, manga fans, special effects fans, *kaijū* fans, etc. Again, some of these fandoms seem to be defined along the lines of media form while others are organized around content and genre. As already discussed above, both Okada and Yoshimoto identify otaku culture as having emerged from SF fandom during the late seventies, early eighties in conjunction with the proliferation of the fandoms just listed. Not only are the elements of these lists similar to those of geek culture in the European and North American context, but they also share the same lineage traceable back to SF culture (Jenkins 1992, Tocci 2009: 54-55).

Even though we find strong parallels between otaku and geek culture on the level of enumerations and even historical lineage, I want to further confirm that otaku culture does indeed conform to the concept of subcultural cluster on the level of interrelationships between the various cultures associated with otaku culture. Introducing the framework of subcultural clusters I identified five interrelated characteristics of these formations: (a) correspondence between stylistic and thematic elements and focal interests, (b) higher levels of convertible capital, (c) a higher proportion of shared infrastructure and media channels, (d) increased mobility of participants, and (e) a greater level of cooperation and competition for subcultural producers. Examining Morikawa's, Okada's and Yoshimoto's accounts for signs of these features, ample evidence can be found that indeed otaku culture can be interpreted as a subcultural cluster.

Regarding correspondence between stylistic and thematic elements and focal interests Morikawa, Okada and Yoshimoto all offer plenty of examples, starting with the various SF elements that tie manga fans, anime fans and later otaku in the narrow sense to SF culture (Okada 1996, Yoshimoto 2009). Yoshimoto also highlights how SF fans started to expand into reading fantasy thanks to authors like Ursula Kroeber Le Guin, who wrote in both



genres (2009: 45). He also points out how during the late seventies and early eighties special effects and anime were seen as being so close to each other that it was quite ordinary to deal with them together, which is one of the reasons behind some of the first anime journalists emerging from special effects fandom (2009: 100). Ōtsuka further explains how role-playing games were a direct influence on the development of the light novel format (2006). And Morikawa points out the connections between military garage kits, SF models and later *bishōjo* figures (2003). It is worth noting here that the connections between military, railway and SF fans are also intertwined with the image of the Japanese empire (steam trains, geographical expansion) and in the post-war context the future to be built (electric trains, temporal expansion), as Tsuji explains in relation to railway fans (2012). But the interconnections on a stylistic level also have an effect on the development of all these areas of interest, such that *bishōjo* and other similar elements have also started to enter railway,<sup>260</sup> modelling and military fans' genres (Yoshimoto 2009).

In relation to higher levels of convertible capital the career stories of magazine editors, event organizers in Yoshimoto's detailed account of the development of SF, anime, *kaijū*, and other fandoms leading into the emergence of otaku culture, provides ample examples of participation in one fandom leading to working in another related fandom (very much like the stories of many of my own interview subjects). Some of these stories even help us better understand how this movement of actors between fandoms helps further tighten the connections on the level of focal interests and practices. For example the way Hikawa Ryūsuke – building on his experience with special effects fandom within the *Kaijū Kurabu* – introduced to the fledgling anime fandom the practice of directly contacting the production studio for background materials and interviews (Yoshimoto 2009: 108). The story of DAICON FILM and GENERAL PRODUCTS is also an example of the way social and cultural capital accrued within SF fandom (leading to the opportunity to organize DAICON

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260 For a discussion of *bishōjo* elements in railway fandom see Tsuji (2012).

III and IV) can be converted to economic capital and cultural capital that is devalued within the original subculture (SF fandom), but is highly valued within anime fandom and/or otaku culture in the narrow sense (Yoshimoto 2009).

In relation to shared infrastructure and media channels Yoshimoto's exhaustive discussion of SF and other conventions, such as *Komiketto*, and SF and anime magazines does a very good job of conveying just how closely coupled SF, anime, manga fans and other related areas of interest were, especially prior to the growth and specialization of each individual market (2009). Just as I explained in the case of Hungary, interests which were too small to support their own magazines and conventions, were provided space and opportunity within the framework of more established related fandoms' events and media – advertising to find members for *Kaijū* fan circles on the pages of *S-F Magajin* for example (Yoshimoto 2009: 98). Morikawa's discussion in relation to the transformation of Akihabara, and the structure of otaku interests – and the geographical proximity of shops – demonstrates just how close and interrelated these areas of interest and the infrastructure servicing them remain even after the rapid growth they experienced during the nineties (2003).

Furthermore, Morikawa's elucidation of the way the new otaku Akihabara came about as a result of the overlap in interests among fans of these various forms and genres, once again emphasizes the strong connection within the wider otaku culture on the level of participants, which is the fourth characteristic of subcultural clusters. The mobility of participants among the different related areas of interest has already been highlighted in relation to the way some SF authors helped create an interest in fantasy for certain readers, and the way SF fandom acted as a gateway towards further fandoms (Yoshimoto 2009). It is also evidenced in the personal histories of participants who would go on to become subcultural producers, such as Hamamatsu Katsuki's for instance, who came from a background in SF fandom, but also had ties to manga fandom, before becoming one of the defining editors of anime fan magazines

(Yoshimoto 2009: 118).

Finally the cooperation and competition of subcultural producers from within the same subcultural cluster is evidenced by Yoshimoto's account of how organizers of *Komiketto* came from SF convention organization backgrounds (2009: 81), and the way the first anime journalists emerged from special effects fandom (2009: 100). And also in the way the various conventions and magazines, such as *Animekku* (Yoshimoto 2009: 128) or *Fan Rōdo* catered to all related interests (Yoshimoto 2009: 131-3).

#### 8.1.3. *Geek, nerd, otaku – Summary*

Although authors like Ito (2012), Morikawa (2013) and Taylor (2007) have all pointed out the correspondence between geeks and otaku, so far a detailed examination of this claim had been lacking. Following a brief overview of the origins of the terms, I first provided a structured comparison of the discourses invoking these expressions, demonstrating that there is indeed a major overlap in the way these terms are used in almost every respect. I then proceeded to identify various levels of meaning in relation to both phrases, establishing a correspondence between the terms in relation to the meaning of the geek and otaku subcultural clusters. In the following two sections I examined the similarities between both the practices of communities and individuals described as geeks and otaku, and the parallel nature of the geek and otaku subcultural clusters. Based on these three dimensions of analysis I hope to have convincingly explored the parallel nature of both the discourses and the social phenomena to which they refer in relation to geeks and otaku.

### 8.2. Three levels of interrelatedness

I would like to propose that the reason there is such a high level of congruity between the geek subcultural cluster and otaku culture in the wide sense is due to three interconnected reasons: a) there is a level of historical interrelatedness between the two cultural formations,

meaning that these cultures have developed in communication with each other, b) they are both governed by a similar underlying aesthetic disposition, and finally c) there is commonality in the social base of both cultures and their relation to the technological, economic, social and cultural changes occurring from the second half of the twentieth century onwards.

Out of these three underlying points of connection in the present subchapter I will focus on introducing and explaining my conception of the aesthetic disposition underpinning both geek and otaku culture, and the way such an approach helps re-evaluate the already discussed relationship to fantasy, children's culture and escapism. The other two points, historical interrelatedness and the relationship to social change, will only be elaborated upon to the point of introducing the respective problematics. Since neither the breadth of the present work nor my own research material would supply ample space and support for a more serious treatment of these points, they rather serve to help better flesh out my concluding hypothesis which I will be discussing in the following final chapter.

#### *8.2.1. Historical interrelatedness*

The title of the present dissertation references the temporal interrelatedness of geek and otaku culture. "From geek to otaku culture and back again" is a direct allusion to my own research findings on two different levels. First, on the level of individuals' stories of participation, most of the older participants had arrived to anime-manga fandom from geek cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, as I explained in relation to patterns of interest and engagement, some of them also returned to geek culture, not as a result of renouncing anime-manga fan culture, indeed some of them are still active in running the fandom, but rather on the level of actual consumption practices. Second, on the level of the geek subcultural cluster in Hungary, as explained in Chapter Four and Six, the domestic anime-manga fandom's events grew out of and around role-playing games, SF, fantasy and comics related events,

organizations and infrastructure. Also, here on the level of the national fandom and market one can find a reiteration of the turning back towards geek culture mirroring the stories of individual participation, with anime-manga fandom now serving as the backbone of the wider geek culture in Hungary.

However, there is a further level of meaning that the title alludes to, and that is the on-going history of communication and exchange between geek culture and otaku culture. The reason I would like to emphasize this point is because to the often reiterated story – to which the present work also contributes – of grass-roots fan activity in the West helping to usher in an influx of Japanese anime-manga culture (Leonard 2005a, 2005b, Eng 2012b), there corresponds a parallel story in Japan of dedicated fans with an interest in Western SF, fantasy, role-playing games and so on, working towards mediating these works, genres and fan practices to a wider Japanese fandom (Okada 1996, Yoshimoto 2009). The fact that geek and otaku culture have always been in communication with each other on the level of creators (cf. Brienza 2013), fans and subcultural producers – irrespective of whether mainstream culture in Japan or the West was paying attention to this or not –, needs to be explored in more detail in further research, as it would contribute to better understanding the affinity inherent in these cultures on the level of themes, forms, works and fan practices.

#### *8.2.2. Imaginary culture and the imagination-oriented aesthetic*

One of the reasons there has been such a history of exchange and communication between Western geek culture and the wider Japanese otaku culture is – I would like to propose – the shared aesthetic disposition underpinning both subcultural clusters. Indeed this shared aesthetic disposition also supports the strong affinity exhibited between the various cultures of these subcultural clusters. In order to explain this claim I will start out by first briefly summarizing the concept of aesthetic disposition as introduced by Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984 [1979]) – providing one of the most compelling attempts at bridging sociological and

aesthetic arguments –, followed by my introduction of the *imagination-oriented aesthetic disposition*, which I will then relate to geek and otaku culture.

As already explained in Chapter Two, for Bourdieu, the way we perceive the world and the way we operate within it, is defined by our dispositions which make up our habitus. The class habitus is “the internalized form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails” (1984 [1979]: 101) shaped by material and social conditions as well as the corresponding habitual modes of thought of one’s immediate social world. In order to provide a scale of differences in relation to different class positions’ and class factions’ habitus as demonstrated through patterns of cultural consumption, Bourdieu draws on the central dichotomy between the *pure aesthetic disposition* and the *popular aesthetic disposition*.

The *pure aesthetic* (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 28-53), which is the aesthetic regime underlying the bourgeois disposition in relation to art and aesthetic appreciation, is, firstly, predicated on a denial of the continuum between art and life, which results in detaching art from both utility and morality, and in prioritizing form over all other aspects of evaluation. Secondly, it is based upon a mode of appreciation informed by art-historical knowledge, and thirdly, it is characterized by reserved contemplative reverie as the archetypal mode of appreciation.

The *popular aesthetic* (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]: 28-53) can be seen as the mirror opposite of all that the pure aesthetic stands for: It affirms the continuum between life and art. Therefore, it falls back on standards of utility and morality when approaching works of art, and it regards form as secondary if noteworthy at all. It is oblivious to art history, and it is characterized by a desire for participation, by contact and emotional enthusiasm instead of distance and restraint.

This framework of aesthetic dispositions was taken up in early fan studies (Fiske 1992, Jenkins 1992) along with other elements of Bourdieu's body of work. However, as is evident from the way fan studies scholars reconstruct the development of their field<sup>261</sup> this particular element of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus has become mostly overlooked and forgotten.<sup>262</sup> I would, nevertheless, like to revisit Jenkins' argument in relation to aesthetic dispositions from *Textual Poachers* (1992), the quasi founding text of Western fan studies, as it points to a highly productive tension.

Although Jenkins does not explicitly spell out, he still alludes to the reason why fan practices are policed within various mainstream discourses, namely because they invoke elements of *both* the popular and the pure aesthetic disposition. According to Jenkins, fandom is regarded as "a scandalous category" (1992: 16) precisely because it seems to muddle socially consecrated hierarchies of taste and distinction, in two ways. On the one hand by applying what would seem to be misplaced significance:

As Bourdieu (1980) suggests, "The most intolerable thing for those who regard themselves as the possessors of legitimate culture is the sacrilegious reuniting of tastes which taste dictates shall be separated" (253). Fan culture muddies those boundaries, treating popular texts as if they merited the same degree of attention and appreciation as canonical texts. Reading practices (close scrutiny, elaborate exegesis, repeated and prolonged rereading, etc.) acceptable in confronting a work of "serious merit" seem perversely misapplied to the more "disposable" texts of mass culture. (Jenkins 1992: 17)

On the other hand by jettisoning the detached reverie proper to the pure aesthetic disposition; instead, "fans enthusiastically embrace favored texts and attempt to integrate media

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261 See for example Gray et al. (2007), Hills (2002), Sandvoss (2005).

262 Bourdieu's ideas of distinction and forms of capital, however, are commonly referred to in relation to discussions of the internal hierarchies of fandom (e.g. Gray et al. 2007, Hills 2002, Sandvoss 2005).

representations into their own social experience” (Jenkins 1992: 18). Thus, it is not only the misplaced use of the pure aesthetic mode of appreciation, but also the simultaneous invocation of elements of both the popular and the pure aesthetic modes of appreciation that characterizes fan reading (and writing) practices.

This tension between the elements of the popular and the pure aesthetic modes within interpretative and productive fannish practices has remained mostly unexplored within fan studies. But it is actually highly indicative of a specific form of fan attachment and activity, found, for instance, among involved fans of cult media texts, such as those described by Jenkins. It goes without saying that not all fan practices subscribe to this mode of operation. Indeed, as pointed out by Gray et al. (2007), early works like *Textual Poachers* focused on the subcultural core of media fan communities. In reality, we are likely to find varied discourses, activities and modes of perception based on both the level of intensity of involvement and the different foci of interest as explained in Chapter Two.

Fannish practice would, however, not elicit the kind of hostility and denigration coming from the mainstream of society that they regularly encounter, if it was only the popular aesthetic mode of appreciation that underlay their particular engagement. The dominant faction of society would merely view it as another form of popular activity, and the dominated faction would recognize it as one of their kind. The extent, however, to which fannish engagement has met with denigration from both the dominant and dominated levels of mainstream society – both in the West and in Japan – indicates that a break is at work here, similar to the one between the popular and pure aesthetic. And this break points to the very core of fannish engagement.

The reason for the tension felt in relation to the unclassifiable aesthetic disposition at work within certain fan cultures may not merely be the result of the simultaneous presence of both



aesthetic dispositions, but rather the presence of a different one. As explained in detail in Kacsuk (2016a) Azuma's arguments with respect to *game-like realism* (2007) offer a possible lead to understanding this third type of aesthetic disposition. For the sake of brevity I will only summarize my argument and interpretation in relation to the significance of game-like realism here.

Game-like realism as introduced by Azuma is born out of the intrusion of meta-fictional imagination into narratives with only a single starting and end point (2007: 140). While game-like realism utilizes manga and anime-like realism (chiefly characters), it also undoes the central meaning of Ōtsuka's manga and anime-like realism – that of characters' mortality – through the proliferation of stories, the multiplication of characters' lives and the possibility of reset overcoming death (Azuma 2007: 142). Works of game-like realism often model the experience of a gamer playing a character, in other words, the experience of reading meta-fiction. These works build on the duality of player/character in different ways, but all share the element of moving the locus of empathy from the level of the story to the meta-fictional level, and correspondingly from character to player (Azuma 2007: 275).

In Kacsuk (2016a) I argue that the theoretical explication in *The birth of game-like realism* is built around a series of nested deconstructive moves. I point out that this series of steps from Ōtsuka Eiji to Azuma Hiroki via Itō Gō actually contains a missing link: Although not explicated by Azuma, the way in which works of game-like realism invoke the experience of the player (or reader) and the meta-fictional level, clearly *corresponds* to the extension of Ōtsuka's "I" as character. Ōtsuka identifies the suppressed possibility of the fictional "I" as character in the modern Japanese novel (2006); Itō identifies the suppressed double nature of characters in modern manga (2005); and generalizing Itō's argument, Azuma maintains that all character novels are actually game-like novels (2007). Following the implications of all three backward operations, we find that they lead us back to the possibility of the fictional "I"

as character already being game-like in nature. But if the “I” of the modern novel is also a game-like character and the modern novel is supposed to represent reality as opposed to character novels, then the possibility of the real “I” being experienced as a character – and life as a story – also presents itself.

We arrive at a similar horizon when approaching the issue from the aspect of the works of fiction analyzed by Azuma in the *The birth of game-like realism*. If the experience of the player (reader) is made the subject of a work, often to the point of incorporating her/him into the world of the fiction/meta-fiction itself, then the player (reader) is also implicated in the fiction/meta-fiction as a character her/himself. Thus the same properties, which are necessary for a character to be a character, will also apply to the player (reader). The possibility of regarding life as folding into fiction and the joys of such a view are most clearly dealt with in *Higurashi no naku koro ni* (En: *Higurashi When They Cry*), according to Azuma (2007: 245). This is not to imply that players (readers) are unable to discern between fiction and reality. Otaku (or involved fans) are very well aware of the difference between fiction and reality. However, the pleasures opened up just by the possibility of meshing fiction and reality, and the existential quandaries entailed by such a way of looking at the world (as demonstrated by Azuma’s analysis) are very real indeed.

In this way game-like realism explicitly represents and problematizes the *non-fictional “I” as character*; it allows for the non-fictional “I” to be considered as a character and the non-fictional life as a story.<sup>263</sup> Certain works go so far as to introduce the player/reader directly into the world of the narrative, which is precisely the potential affirmed by the arrival of the non-fictional “I” as character. And this relationship between fiction and reality as understood through the lens of game-like realism serves as the key to identifying and understanding the

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263 Itō also alludes to the problem of the “I” as *kyara* (2005: 244), but concludes that this is one of the problems he had not been able to adequately address in his book (2005: 292).

third type of aesthetic disposition at work in otaku and geek culture.

The reading/writing practices of fans studied by Jenkins conform to the very modes of operation identified in relation to game-like realism. Game-like realism involves not only the unhinging of characters and the multiplication of possible lives (and deaths) but also the simultaneous invocation of the character/player duality, which results in the implication of the reader-player-consumer within the fictional narrative or meta-narrative. Compared to Jenkins' description of fan activities, we can see a surprisingly good fit:

Fans seemingly blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, speaking of characters as if they had an existence apart from their textual manifestations, entering into the realm of the fiction as if it were a tangible place they can inhabit and explore. (1992: 18)

Producers and consumers of fan art, videos and even filk songs understand and appreciate the multiple possibilities with regard to characters, settings and storylines. Furthermore, they ostensibly cross the boundaries between reality and fiction through practices ranging from cosplay (dressing up as characters) to *Mary Sue* fan fiction in which the fan writer or their avatar are written into the story in a way that allows for interaction with the setting and characters. In my view, this correspondence between fan activities and the properties of game-like realism is no mere coincidence. The latter correspond to a particular sensibility on the part of the reader-player-consumer. This sensibility represents a third type of aesthetic disposition, which I shall call the *imagination-oriented aesthetic*.<sup>264</sup> And to uncover its inner

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264 The word imagination has been used in relation to fan studies (see for example Hills 2002, Sandvoss 2005) and works of manga studies in the wide sense (e.g. Dollase 2010, Wong 2010) with regard to Anderson's (1996 [1983]) concept of *imagined communities*. Hills even suggests introducing the term *community of imagination* to refer to "a community which, rather than merely imagining itself as coexistent in empty clocked time, constitutes itself precisely through a common affective engagement, and thereby through a common respect for a specific potential space" (2002: 180). Along these lines Azuma's character database (2009 [2001], 2007) could be approached as a form of shared language within the fan culture, mirroring some of Anderson's claims in relation to the role of language in constituting forms

logic, we need only relate game-like realism to fannish modes of appreciation.

The issue of the non-fictional “I” as character and the practice of what seems to be the blurring of boundaries between fiction and reality in fandom provides a key. To begin with, the imagination-oriented aesthetic and the popular aesthetic are so easy to equate because they both affirm the continuum between life and art. But if this affirmation would be exactly the same in both cases, then invocations of the imagination-oriented aesthetic would not trigger the kind of resentment they do, from those who are more aligned with the popular aesthetic disposition. The distinction lies in the emphasis put on life or art respectively. According to Bourdieu, the popular aesthetic disposition gives preference to life in its attempt to relate the work of art back to life. The imagination-oriented aesthetic disposition, on the other hand, emphasizes art, or fiction, this forms its primary characteristic, from which all further properties stem. Like the popular aesthetic oblivious to consecrated art history and traditions, it is very much occupied with its *own* history and traditions (Kacsuk 2006). This is one of the reasons why fans can often be found to be engaged in the kind of knowledge accumulation and analysis reminiscent of the pure aesthetic disposition, while their focus lies beyond that which has been already consecrated both with regards to subject matter and the questions pursued (see for example Jenkins 1992, Okada 1996). The interest in form, style and, closely related, self-reflexivity as well as intertextual play seems to be another facet of similarity in relation to the pure aesthetic disposition.<sup>265</sup> However, in the

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of belonging. While I would definitely agree with the applicability of Anderson’s theoretical framework in relation to various forms of subcultural and fannish identification and feelings of community and belonging, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the current choice of the expression “imagination” does not intend to allude to this avenue of thought. Although my current argument is in no way incompatible with such an approach, inquiries building on the framework of imagined communities are about ways of constructing and experiencing community – that is, about relations between participants –, whereas my present discussion, and extension of Bourdieu’s framework of aesthetic dispositions, is focused on the possible ways of experiencing the relationship between fantasy or art and reality, and the connection thereof to the way fannish practices are often disparaged both from culturally privileged and popular mainstream positions.

265 Again Jenkins (1992) description of Western fans and Okada’s (1996) examination of otaku modes of appreciation offer innumerable examples.

case of the imagination-oriented aesthetic the knowledge accumulation and interest in form is driven by the desire for a more complete understanding and mastery of the fictional characters and worlds (cf. Azuma 2009 [2001], Ōtsuka 2010 [1989]), since they act as the anchoring points of aesthetic appreciation. Finally, the imagination-oriented aesthetic disposition is characterized by a desire for participation and emotional engagement just as the popular aesthetic disposition is, but this engagement and participation is focused on the fictional world (“art”) as opposed to everyday life – and consequently often labelled “escapist” – which, according to Azuma, is one of the central themes explored by works of game-like realism.

Such a different aesthetic disposition is noteworthy because it allows us to approach the relation of fantasy and reality in fan practices from an aesthetic and sociological perspective as opposed to the psychological and often psychoanalytical take. The latter have seen a certain predominance within both fan studies (for example Hills 2002, Sandvoss 2005) and otaku studies (e.g. Azuma 2009 [2001], Saitō 2011 [2000]). It is, however, important to keep in mind that the imagination-oriented aesthetic concerns dispositions, and is thus better suited to interpreting phenomena in relation to the aesthetic judgments of various groups and actors, as opposed to the analysis of the actual aesthetic qualities of works (e.g. Berndt 2003, 2015, Lamarre 2009, Suan 2013). Furthermore, just as the pure and the popular aesthetic dispositions are archetypal models, with real people actually demonstrating a wide range of different positions between the two poles, so too the imagination-oriented aesthetic disposition is an abstraction and will appear in degrees rather than in an undiluted form. Nevertheless, people will most likely have a higher propensity towards demonstrating an imagination-oriented aesthetic disposition the stronger they are affiliated with geek or otaku culture.

Looking at geek and otaku culture from the perspective of the imagination oriented aesthetic disposition underlying both, not only helps understand why these cultures are met with perplexity and/or resentment from different strata of society, as explained above in relation to the popular and pure aesthetic, but also helps make sense of a number of phenomena related to these cultures themselves. First and foremost it explains the strong affinity that both geek and otaku culture exhibit in relation to fantasy, children's culture and escapism. Geek and otaku culture are aligned with children's culture precisely because there the cultivation of fantasy is still allowed and even encouraged, whereas past a certain age it is disparaged as escapism. In fact, the very label of escapism and the way it is attributed to geeks and otaku seems to be a direct misunderstanding of the engagement with fantasy on the part of these cultures. If it is understood as an aesthetic disposition, then it becomes no more or less an "escape" than going to a football match (cf. popular aesthetic disposition) or enjoying consecrated art (cf. pure aesthetic disposition). The reason it is nevertheless labelled as escapist is due to, on the one hand, the lower position within the hierarchy of cultural legitimization<sup>266</sup> that the works and practices of geek and otaku culture traditionally occupy,<sup>267</sup> and, on the other hand, the misinterpretation on the part of outsiders of the aesthetic choice of favouring fantasy as an inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality.<sup>268</sup>

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266 Although Okada does not rely on Bourdieu for his analysis, the following quote perfectly captures the same point: "In the culture in which the members of Atelier Alma live, 'art' is part of 'education' and the culture of adults. It follows that the 'culture that children enjoy' is the 'culture of something different,' something antagonistic to art and legitimate, formal culture." (1996: 215 translation from 2015a: 91)

267 This is however slowly changing, and it is this change that I want to reflect upon in the next section and the following concluding chapter.

268 Although not building on Bourdieu, Jenson (1992) reaches a similar conclusion, arguing that the pathologizing of fans on the one hand and the recognition awarded to for example academic scholars on the other hand, is related to the different positions occupied by the objects of engagement within the cultural hierarchy and the status of the actors in the two cases. See also Hills' discussion of the tension within academia in relation to fan-scholars (2002).

Second, it becomes quite clear, why imagination is so central to interpretations of geek and otaku activities. From this perspective it makes perfect sense that Yoshimoto's list of the elements of "otaku mode of enjoyment" starts with the primacy of fiction (2009: 36), as this is exactly what the imagination-oriented aesthetic is premised upon as well. Also, the way Yoshimoto refers to otaku culture in the wide sense as "imaginary culture" throughout the book also seems to corroborate the fact that this relationship to imagination as captured in the aesthetic disposition I posit is one of the central elements tying the various subcultures and fandoms of otaku – and geek – culture together. In a similar fashion Tsuji also positions otaku in relation to the "historical developments in the culture of imagination" (2012: 26).

Third, this approach can help us understand phenomena regarding boundary-crossings in relation to geek and otaku culture. The works of Murakami Takashi and the reaction it has elicited from otaku is one such example.

In the world of contemporary art criticism, the production of simulacra is positioned as "a weapon that constitutes a new avant-garde." And probably Murakami, too, was initially attracted to the surface layer of otaku culture as "avant-garde." Understood in this context, the DOB and the Second Mission Project Ko<sup>2</sup> are indeed works created by extracting and purifying the most radical and groundless parts of the otaku designs, and in this sense they should be highly praised. For the otaku, however, this experiment by Murakami is nothing more than an incomplete attempt, extracting and imitating only the simulacra as designs (literally on the surface level) without understanding the database of moe-elements. Such a conceptual difference regarding the simulacra results in the different evaluation of Murakami's ventures by the contemporary art world and the otaku world. (Azuma 2009 [2001]: 64-65)

Whereas Azuma in the above quote understands the rejection of Murakami's works on the part of otaku based on his database model of otaku consumption, I would like to suggest that

it is in fact a result of the different aesthetic dispositions at work in Murakami's work and that of otaku culture. Murakami takes elements from otaku culture, but positions them in relation to a context underpinned by the pure aesthetic mode of appreciation, which is predicated on the negation of the continuity between art and life, and thereby cuts off these works and the tropes they invoke from the mode of aesthetic appreciation proper to otaku. The fact that Murakami's pieces cease to function as objects that otaku would have interest in is a clear sign that the surface elements most commonly attributed to otaku culture, are organized by a deeper level and mode of appreciation connecting the various domains of the wider otaku culture.

### *8.2.3. Relation to social change*

The emergence of both geek and otaku culture in their present form is related to wider technological, economic, social and cultural changes according to the majority of authors dealing with the question. Tocci invokes the concept of imagined communities to define what geek cultures are, in part "to remind us that a variety of social, historical, and technological conditions have made geek cultures possible" (2009: 74). In a similar fashion, Yoshimoto urges us to not only consider what otaku are supposed to be like, but to examine the changes in media, economy, politics, culture and society from the seventies onwards, that have resulted in the development of the "otaku genre" (2009: 3).

The most commonly cited changes linked to the growth of geek and otaku culture are the rise of personal computing and the information society (Kendall 1999b, Okada 1996, 2008, Tsuji 2012), and with it the shift towards late capitalist modes of production and the corresponding restructuring of work (Lamarre 2004-5), along with the arrival of consumerism (Miyadai 1994 cited in Aida 2015, Nomura 2005, Ōtsuka 2015, Tsuji 2012), a postmodern world-view (Azuma 2009 [2001]), and the ensuing reconfiguration of class structures (Ōtsuka 2015). In a number of cases geeks (Kendall 1999b, 2011) and otaku (e.g. Azuma 2007, 2009 [2001]),



Ōtsuka 2010 [1989], Okada 1996) are seen as a kind of vanguard, as bearers of attitudes and masters of skills that will spread to larger segments of society with the advance of the changes cited above (cf. Aida 2015, Jenkins 2007 cited in Tocci 2009).

These changes correspond to a shift in the meaning of geek and otaku in the eyes of society at large, from ostracized pariah to expert connoisseur as already discussed earlier. To start out from the marginal status of these groups, the roots of dejection can also be seen to lie in technological, economic, social and cultural changes. For example, as already cited earlier, for Ōtsuka the term otaku as introduced by Nakamori Akio represented a form of discrimination that could serve as tool of “semiotic differentiation” (2015: xx) replicating the way the *shinjinrui* had been identified as something alien and inferior by the older generations in Japan. In a similar fashion members of the *shinjinrui* could mark off a group within their generation, which they could hold up as being alien and inferior, and thereby reaffirm their own normalcy. In relation to geeks, Kendall pointed out how the liminal figure of the nerd could serve as a way of negotiating society’s rising dependence on computers (1999b), as discussed above in section 8.1.2.1. The later positive re-evaluation of both geeks and otaku, however, stems from the intensification of those very same technological, economic, social and cultural changes as well.

The nerd, previously a liminal masculine identity, gets rehabilitated and partially incorporated into hegemonic masculinity during the period from the early 1980s through the present. [...] The reconfiguration of hegemonic masculinity to include aspects of the once subjugated masculine stereotype of the nerd relates both to changes in economic and job prospects for middle-class white males, and to the growing pervasiveness of computers in work and leisure activities. (Kendall 1999b: 261)

Similar to Kendall's observation in relation to the re-evaluation of geek masculinities, as a result of the work conditions and social trajectories of their peers growing closer to those previously attributed to geeks, Morikawa also points out that the growing prevalence of social trends like the postponement of marriage in Japan "act to weaken the pressure exerted on people by their peers to adopt mainstream interests and lifestyles" (2013: 17). At the same time "nerds' earning power in the knowledge economy" (Woo 2012: 26) has become a major theme in discussions of geeks (Bell 2013), and Okada also points out how otaku are successful in the world of information technology (2008). Ito draws attention to the way "the mainstreaming of otaku culture" in Japan happened parallel to the same movement with regards to "fan culture more generally in the United States and elsewhere" (2012: xiv), also emphasized by Galbraith et al. (2015b: 6). Freedman also points out that "the *Train Man* phenomenon occurred at a time when nerd culture [...] was becoming popular worldwide" (2015: 137). This resemblance in the development of the evaluation and positions of geeks and otaku is most likely not a coincidence.

There are two parallel movements of change: a) a relative rise in social status and power pertaining to the jobs and positions commonly associated with and occupied by geeks and otaku, and b) the increased prevalence of attitudes and conditions in the wider society previously mostly associated with geeks and otaku. I would like to propose that the mainstreaming of geek culture in the West (Tocci 2009), the way "nerds have become the new arbiters of pop-culture success" (Woo 2012: 26), and the success of Japanese otaku culture in Europe and America are closely interrelated with these changes.

According to various social scientists there is indeed a societal restructuring going on, which is accompanied by a shift in the forms of relevant cultural capital (e.g. Florida 2002, Savage et al. 2013). The shift in the social position and public perception of geeks in the European and North American context and of otaku in the Japanese context relate to these societal

changes as the types of knowledge and dispositions fostered among geeks and otaku become increasingly valuable for the economy (cf. Bell 2013). As Woo also asserts, “the combination of technical mastery and business success is one widely accepted explanation for perceived shifts in nerds’ cultural status” (2012: 28). I would like to suggest that these transformations are mirrored in the wider acceptance and prominence enjoyed by the aesthetic disposition and corresponding hallmark works pertaining to these two groups, such as anime and manga for example (cf. Rivera 2008, Woo 2012, Yui 2010). This is similar to previous examples in the history of art and culture of how the relative growth in power and influence of different cultures and social strata have found expression in the corresponding rise in popularity and prevalence of their aesthetic values and forms of expression (cf. Bourdieu 1996 [1992]).

The way social and political struggles are intertwined with cultural and aesthetic ones and the potential relevance of such a vantage point regarding discussions of otaku culture recurs in Yoshimoto’s (2009: 63) and Ōtsuka’s (2015) arguments in relation to how the Joint Struggle Movement (*zenkyōtōundō*) in 1968-69 was not just a political-social movement but one that also stood for the wider social acceptance of subcultural genres.

But as Woo (2012) and Rivera (2008) point out nostalgia for “children’s culture of the 1980s and 1990s” (Woo 2012: 34) is another factor driving the current interest in geek and otaku culture. This observation points towards the complexity of the way the themes, works and corresponding aesthetic disposition of geek and otaku culture have come to enjoy a rising status in the early 21st century, and the need for further fine grained analysis of these phenomena.

### 8.3. Summary

The present chapter has been an attempt at broadening the horizon of my discussion of anime-manga fandom and the role of subcultural producers and subcultural clusters in its spread outside Japan, by incorporating the theoretical and empirical contributions from the Anglophone literature on geek culture and Japanese language otaku studies. This angle of inquiry has allowed me to not only relate the expressions otaku and geek to each other in a grounded manner, but to also identify the subcultural cluster-like nature of Japanese otaku culture in the wide sense. The correspondences between geek and otaku culture explored in the first subchapter led to a deeper examination of the possible background of the similarities among the two cultural formations. In the second subchapter I offered three interrelated reasons for the commonalities found in relation to geek and otaku culture, the level of historical interrelatedness, the level of underlying aesthetic disposition, and the level of correspondence regarding the social base of both cultures and their relation to technological, economic, social and cultural change. Of these three I have provided a detailed discussion of my introduction of the imagination-oriented aesthetic disposition and its possible explanatory power in relation to the characteristics of geek and otaku culture. Although the other two levels of interconnectedness have only been cursorily engaged with for now, I will proceed to demonstrate the value of having formulated such a framework of inquiry in the following concluding chapter on the possible ways of approaching the future of anime-manga culture in Europe and America.

## 9. Conclusion: Re-imagining the future of anime-manga culture in America and Europe from the perspective of subcultural clusters

In *Otakugaku Nyūmon* Okada had already prognosticated that “*otaku* culture will be mainstream in the world” (1996: 230, translation from 2015a: 99). His words are in many ways indeed coming true. Hollywood blockbusters like *Pacific Rim* from 2013, which many consider to be inspired by the epoch-making generational anime hit *Shin Seiki Evangelion* (En: *Neon Genesis Evangelion*), or *Edge of Tomorrow* from 2014 based on the highly successful light novel *Ōru Yū Nīdo Izu Kiru* (En: *All You Need Is Kill*) – incidentally also one of the main works analyzed in Azuma's *Gēmuteki riarizmu no tanjō* (2007) – best epitomize the mainstreaming of *otaku* culture. However, the gradual rise in social status and acceptance of *otaku* in Japan and geeks in Europe and North America as discussed in the previous chapter can also be seen as a facet of this same phenomenon. And of course, the adoption of *otaku* culture as a flagship element of the *Cool Japan* nation branding strategy (cf. Iwabuchi 2015, Valaskivi 2013) is the most obvious signal that an undeniable mainstreaming of the culture has taken place.

At the same time, however, there seems to be mounting uneasiness in relation to the lack of economic and political impact the export of Japanese popular culture has had, at least compared to the expectations of Japanese policy makers (Brienza 2014, Iwabuchi 2015, Valaskivi 2013). This is further exacerbated by the signs of Japanese culture being appropriated and reproduced abroad as opposed to being imported from Japan (Brienza 2014, 2015a, Suan 2015). Japanese *otaku* culture it seems has won, it has claimed its spot in the global youth culture of today and within the geek subcultural cluster in Europe and North America, yet this seems to be little consolation when compared to yearly business figures or the mounting tensions within the international arena (cf. Brienza 2014, Iwabuchi 2015). As several analysts of the Cool Japan policy push have concluded this is most likely a result of the unrealistic expectations that accompany most nation branding strategies (Iwabuchi 2015,

Valaskivi 2013).

This concluding chapter offers a short overview of how we can reassess this tension between the perceived success and assumed failure of Japanese anime-manga culture abroad through the lens of the framework outlined in the present work focusing on subcultural producers, subcultural clusters and the interrelationship of European and North American geek culture and Japanese otaku culture.

First, if there is anything to be learnt from subcultural theory, it is that the power of Japanese otaku culture is manifest precisely in the way it has remained vibrant and successful *despite* Cool Japan (cf. Galbraith 2010, Valaskivi 2013). Second, if we shift our view from short-term policy goals to the larger overarching cultural trends that are the focus of the present work, it seems that the rhetoric of decline is far from substantiated, neither in relation to the subculture, nor in relation to the cultural power enjoyed by Japanese anime-manga culture, as observable through the way authenticity in relation to these forms is still anchored to Japan (Kacsuk 2015). Finally, in relation to trends in mainstream market interest in the West, the parallels offered by subcultures and fan cultures, offer far more space for optimism, especially in relation to long-term growth, in part as a result of the vitality of the subculture itself.

The relationship of politics to subcultures has never been an unproblematic one. The most common interaction between the two are the way political actors use moral panics to demonize certain subcultures to thereby garner political capital for themselves (e.g. Ferrell 1996, Redhead 1997). Embracing subcultures on the part of political actors is far less common, the tensions between the two are usually too great to be successfully managed. There are, however, plenty of examples of embracing subcultures for a mainstream audience on the part of market actors, who try to commodify the cool that subcultures embody (cf.

Hebdige 1988 [1979]). Mainstream approval for subcultures usually spells their quick demise (Thornton 1996 [1995]), as there is usually nothing cool and edgy about something that is accepted by the larger society, including one's parents. This is further aggravated by the way embracing subcultures by market actors, politicians or mainstream media and society often means forgetting, or even worse, actively suppressing their more controversial aspects (cf. Galbraith 2010, Valaskivi 2013).

Thus, as already stated above, the power of Japanese otaku culture and anime-manga fandom in Europe and North America is manifest precisely in the way it has remained vibrant and successful *despite* Cool Japan. The fact that it is still considered cool in the face of having been incorporated by a government policy push, the way it remains vibrant and alive despite attempts at sanitizing it – precisely because it is supposed to be a central element of an international image campaign – all show just how resilient this culture is both outside and within Japan. This resilience is a sign that instead of a quick fad, we are dealing with something that is much more deeply and organically rooted not just within Japan but also abroad. If not looking at the phenomenon through the eyes of policy makers, this is the real message here: there is now a non-European, non-American cultural entity that is just as entrenched in global youth culture and more specifically within the geek subcultural cluster in the European and North American context, as for example hip-hop or *Star Wars* are respectively (cf. Brienza 2014).

Since the interest in Japanese otaku culture and Western anime-manga fandom is starting to drop off outside Japan, it would be easy to come to a different conclusion, one that sees the former surge in interest that is now subsiding as nothing more than a short-lived hype with no real substance behind it. Like all fashions before, the anime-manga boom in Europe and North America is over and gone as well. Although it would be hard to deny the fact that there was indeed an unprecedented rise in interest from the mainstream in Europe and North

America in Japanese pop culture during the turn of the Millennium, jumping to the conclusion, that *all interest* in these forms is now over just because mainstream interest has died down, is the most typical reaction in relation to subcultures and fan cultures. To approach this question more precisely I will break it down into what we can observe and prognosticate on the level of the subculture and what we see and can expect in relation to mainstream interest.

Starting with the subculture the truth is that there is no downturn in the interest in Japanese anime, manga and games if we look at the strength and development of the fan culture through, for example, convention attendance. Based on the number of visitors at the largest US and European anime-manga fan conventions – similar to the trend in Hungary – there is a palpable growth in the fandom (Brienza 2014, Santiago Iglesias 2014). Nevertheless, it would be hard to argue with critics who claim that there is still no readily available recipe for how to reliably monetize this interest in Japanese anime, manga and games on the part of (Japanese) businesses (cf. Brienza 2014), but to discount its existence altogether would be a serious mistake.

Not only is the anime-manga fan culture alive and well in Europe and North America, but as discussed in Chapter Six it is firmly embedded in the wider geek culture in both the European and the US and Canadian context, which provides it with even more staying power in the long run. This fandom offers an environment rich in informal learning practices, as discussed in Chapter Five, which contributes to the emergence of newer and newer generations of subcultural producers. The interrelations that anime-manga fan culture enjoys with other related geek subcultures and fandoms provides for further possible outlets and employment opportunities for producerly actors emerging from the culture. Indeed, it would be no surprise to see the current generation of subcultural producers, coming from anime-manga fandom, servicing the next geek culture to emerge in the future, just as SF had paved



the way for the dominance of fantasy and RPG in the nineties, which in turn provided fertile ground for the flourishing of anime-manga culture.

But most importantly the unique nature of subcultural markets, as discussed in Chapter Seven, means that even when mainstream interest turns away from anime-manga fan culture it will still be able to reproduce itself. When metal music became popular again during the early two-thousands people were surprised to find that there were so many mature metal bands ready to take centre stage. The reality of course is that metal music never went away, it was only mainstream interest that had turned its head the other way. Metal music, developing since the late sixties and emerging as a full-fledged mainstream phenomenon during the eighties, had a strong enough fan base and subculture to support its development, during its time “underground” during the nineties. Bands were formed, records were recorded and sold, magazines were published, concerts and events were staged. There was a very active subculture, which led to the resurgence of metal in the two-thousands playing out the way it did. In a similar fashion, based on the strength of anime-manga fandom in Europe and America, it seems to me a very likely scenario that when the next wave of interest from mainstream culture focuses on Japanese anime, manga and games in the West, there will be an ample supply of subcultural producers who have emerged from within the culture itself ready to cater to the sudden rise in demand for all things anime-manga related.

This leads on to the question of mainstream market interest. The short and simple answer is that the mainstream market is fickle, and fashion cycles come and go. It would be unrealistic to expect sustained mainstream market interest in any cultural form as specific as anime and manga are *outside of Japan*. Yes, these forms, especially manga, are amazingly varied in style and content, however, only a fraction of the works from Japan reach Europe or North America, and the majority of those will not attain any level of recognition outside the fandom. The mainstream market is a hard sell for any culture, and only the most successful

works – like *Doragon Bōru* (En: *Dragon Ball*) for example – manage to breach the attention threshold of society at large. However, just as with fan interest discussed above, it would be a mistake to discount the presence and relevance of anime and manga in Europe and North America beyond the fan market, just because the mainstream market demand for these forms is waning. Based on the example of any other subculture or fan culture, like that of metal music singled out above, this is the natural course of these markets. And as the resurgence of interest in fantasy, for example, in the West demonstrates, it only takes a few mainstream hits like the *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy and the *Game of Thrones* television series to rekindle the excitement of the wider audience beyond the confines of the immediate fandom.

The significance of the subcultures, fandoms and the subcultural producers servicing them lies in the way they help *smooth out these cycles of interest* coming from the wider society. Whereas major business actors will necessarily leave market segments, which no longer generate high enough returns on investment, subcultural producers can remain dedicated to specific niche markets much longer, operating near the breakeven point, and in some cases even bearing the burden of non-crippling losses. Simply because they operate on a different scale and within a different set of constraints than major businesses do, and because they will frequently take into account non-monetary rewards when evaluating their returns on investment, as explained in Chapter Seven. Because they are often earlier to arrive at these specialist markets and also generally stay active longer, they play a crucial role in both the build up and the phasing out stages of the mainstream market interest cycle.

The larger and more robust fandoms or subcultures are, the more infrastructure and businesses they will be able to support, and in turn, the more infrastructure exists and the more businesses service these cultures, the more materials and events there will be to be found by those who start to develop an interest in them. During the waning of mainstream interest, again, the larger the fandom and the number of subcultural producers, the more

things there will be to satisfy the interest of those who still wish to engage with the culture. To rephrase all of this, the larger the fandom and the more subcultural producers are present the smoother the transitions will be between periods of mainstream hype and non-interest, and the smaller the actual fan base, subculture and the number of corresponding subcultural producers the more abrupt these changes prove to be.

Subcultural clusters also fulfil a role in this regard. The more a given subculture, fan culture is integrated in a subcultural cluster, the more its infrastructure and media channels will overlap with related cultures, which further increases the robustness of the given culture, helps in its growth potential and plays a role in sustaining it during the waning of mainstream interest. The development of the Hungarian anime-manga fan market, as explained in Chapter Four and Six, is an excellent example of how related cultures can be relied upon for infrastructure and market actors during the fledgling period of the subculture and market, and how later the mature anime-manga fan market could in turn expand towards those same related cultures thereby increasing its sustainability.

Finally, based on my exploration of the interrelationship of Japanese otaku culture and European and North American geek culture in Chapter Eight, there are further reasons to be optimistic about the development of the anime-manga market in the West. First, if the increasing size and social status of the geek and otaku strata are indeed linked to the technological, economic, social and cultural changes defining our late modern societies – a situation most research results seem to point towards – then we will see further increases in the popularity and relevance of these forms within the wider society. Second, the parallel and at the same time recurrently interrelated nature of these cultural forms projects a future in which the influence Western geek culture and Japanese otaku culture have on each other continues to develop and enrich both cultures, which in turn only increases the likelihood of further success for Japanese works in the European and North American arena.

Thus, focusing on subcultural producers, subcultural clusters and the interrelationship of European and North American geek culture and Japanese otaku culture there is much to be optimistic about in relation to the future of Japanese anime-manga culture in European and North American markets in the long run.

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## Appendix: Research consent form

### Hozzájáruló nyilatkozat kutatáshoz / Research consent form

Tájékoztatás a jelen kutatásban való részvételről	Information on participation in the present research project
<p>A jelen kutatást Kacsuk Zoltán (továbbiakban: a kutató) végzi ifjúsági piacok működésének illetve működtetőinek vizsgálata céljából. Ezt a kutatást a kutató a Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem Szociológia és Társadalompolitika Intézetének Szociológia Doktori Programjának keretében kezdte el 2010-ben, és a továbbiakban önálló tudományos program keretében folytatja.</p>	<p>The present research is conducted by Zoltán Kacsuk (henceforward: researcher) in order to examine the workings of youth markets and the actors operating them. This research project was started by the researcher within the framework of the Sociology Doctoral Program of the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy at Corvinus University of Budapest in 2010, and is now being continued within the framework of an independent scientific program.</p>
<p>A kutatással illetve a kutatásban való részvétellel kapcsolatban fontos tudnivalók:</p>	<p>Important information regarding the research project and participation within the research project:</p>
<p>A kutatásban való részvétel teljesen önkéntes alapon történik.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participation in the research project is entirely voluntary.</li></ul>
<p>A kutatásban résztvevők bármikor dönthetnek úgy, hogy nem kívánnak részt venni tovább a kutatásban. Ebben az esetben a résztvevők dönthetnek úgy, hogy engedélyezik az addig a pontig tőlük gyűjtött adatok és idézetek felhasználását a kutatáshoz, vagy akár úgy is, hogy egyáltalán nem engedélyezik a tőlük gyűjtött és még nem publikált illetve publikálásra le nem adott adatok és idézetek</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participants can at any time decide to no longer participate in the research project. In this case, participants may choose to allow the research project to use the quotes and data collected from them up to that point, or can choose not to allow the use of any unpublished or unsubmitted data or quotes collected from them (i.e. data and quotes which have till that point not been published or have not been</li></ul>

felhasználását.

- A kutatás jelentős részben interjúkon alapul, és ezen interjúk diktafonnal rögzítésre kerülnek, majd ezekről gépelt átirat készül.
- A kutatás során gyűjtött adatokat, interjúkat a kutató bizalmasan kezeli.
- A kutatás során gyűjtött interjúkat a kutató titkosítva tárolja, majd a kutatás végeztével, amennyiben azt a résztvevők kéri, megsemmisíti vagy átadja a résztvevőknek saját interjúikat.
- A kutatásban résztvevők az interjú(k) során megmondhatják, hogy milyen tartalmakat engednek felhasználni a kutatásban, és hogy ezen tartalmaknál engedélyezik-e a beazonosíthatóságot, avagy azt szeretnék, hogy az adatok anonimizálva kerüljenek felhasználásra.
- A kutatásban résztvevők kérhetik, hogy személyük titokban maradjon. A résztvevőkkel kapcsolatban ez esetben a kutató sem nevüket, sem más olyan adatot nem tüntet fel doktori disszertációjában és egyéb publikációkban, illetve árul el harmadik személynek, amely alapján személyükre következtetni lehet.
- A kutatás kizárólag a kutató doktori disszertációja, illetve tudományos szövegek megírását szolgálja, semmilyen kereskedelmi célra nem használható fel.

submitted for publication).

- The research project is to a large extent based on interviews. These interviews are recorded and are then transcribed.
- Data and interviews gathered during the research process are handled confidentially by the researcher.
- All interviews collected during the research project are stored encrypted, and should the participants request it their interviews will be destroyed or handed over to them at the end of the research project.
- Participants can specify during the interview(s) what contents they agree to allow to be used in the research project, and whether they allow identification or wish the data to remain anonymous.
- Participants can ask to remain anonymous. In this case neither the name or any other data that could identify them will be included in either the doctoral dissertation or other publications, nor will such information be disclosed to third parties.
- The sole purpose of the research project is the writing of the researcher's doctoral dissertation and further scientific texts. The research project cannot be utilized for any type of commercial purposes.

A kutatás eredményeit a kutató közzéteszi a doktori disszertációjában és további tudományos szövegekben (könyvek, könyvfejezetek, folyóiratcikkek, stb.).

Amennyiben a kutatásban résztvevők további részleteket szeretnének megtudni a kutatásról vagy annak publikált eredményeiről a zoltan.kacsuk@gmail.com címen érdeklődhetnek a kutatónál.

- The results of the research project will be published by the researcher in his doctoral dissertation and further scientific texts (books, book chapters, journal articles, etc.).
- Should participants want to find out further details about the research project or its published results, the researcher can be contacted at the following email address: zoltan.kacsuk@gmail.com.

Alulírott Kacsuk Zoltán (kutató) vállalom, hogy a tájékoztatás fenti pontjainak megfelelően járok el a kutatás során.

I, undersigned Zoltán Kacsuk (researcher), hereby promise to adhere to the above information points in relation to the research project.

Dátum / Date: .....

Aláírás / Signature: .....

1. Elolvastam és megértettem a fenti *Tájékoztató a jelen kutatásban való részvételről* szöveget. Lehetőségem volt végiggondolni az információkat, kérdéseket feltenni és a kérdésekre kielégítő válaszokat kapni.

1. I have read and have understood the above *Information on participation in the present research*. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. Tisztában vagyok vele, hogy a jelen kutatásban való részvételem önkéntes, és hogy bármikor szabadon és indoklás nélkül

2. I understand that my participation in the present research project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time

kiszállhatok belőle, anélkül, hogy ez hatással lenne a jogaimra.

without giving any reason, without my rights being affected.

3. Tisztában vagyok vele, hogy bármikor kérhetem, hogy hozzáférhessek az általam szolgáltatott információkhoz, és kérhetem a még publikálatlan illetve publikálásra le nem adott általam szolgáltatott adatok és idézetek megsemmisítését is, ha szeretném.

3. I understand that I can at any time ask for access to the information I provided and I can also request the destruction of unpublished or unsubmitted data or quotes I provided (i.e. data and quotes which have till that point not been published or have not been submitted for publication), if I wish.

4. Hozzájárulok a jelen kutatásban való részvételhez.

4. I agree to take part in the present research project.

5. Hozzájárulok a jelen kutatáshoz korábban készített és a továbbiakban készítendő interjú(i)m anyagainak kutató általi tárolásához és feldolgozásához.

5. I agree to allow the researcher to store and process the interview(s) conducted previously and to be conducted henceforth within the framework of this research project.

6. A jelen kutatás alapján készült doktori disszertáció és további tudományos szövegek (könyvek, könyvfejezetek, folyóiratcikkek, stb.) esetében hozzájárulok a jelen kutatáshoz készített interjú(k) anyagainak felhasználásához és írásban történő akár szó szerinti hivatkozásához, idézéshez (ez alól kivételt képeznek az interjú(k) azon részei, és minden olyan információ, amelyekkel kapcsolatban jeleztem, hogy azok nem publikusak) a következők szerint:

6. In the case of the doctoral dissertation and further scientific texts (books, book chapters, journal articles, etc.) based on the present research project I agree to allow the use of the materials of the interview(s) conducted for the present research project and their written, even verbatim, referencing and quoting (except for those parts of the interview(s) and all information regarding which I have noted that they are not to be made public) in accordance with the following:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teljesen anonimizálva             | <input type="checkbox"/> Completely anonymized               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teljes nevem feltüntetésével      | <input type="checkbox"/> With my full name represented       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Csak keresztnévem feltüntetésével | <input type="checkbox"/> With just my first name represented |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Csak vezetéknévem feltüntetésével | <input type="checkbox"/> With just my last name represented  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Egyéb név feltüntetésével: .....  | <input type="checkbox"/> With the following name             |
| .....  | represented: .....   |
| .....  | .....  |

Egyéb kikötések: .....	Further terms: .....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

7. Szeretnék értesítéseket kapni a jelen kutatásból készült publikációkról a következő email címen: .....	7. I would like to receive notifications about publications regarding the present research project at the following email address: .....
--	---

Résztevő neve / Participant name: .....

Dátum / Date: .....

Aláírás / Signature: .....

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A kutatásvezető elérhetőségei / The contact details of lead researcher are:

Kacsuk Zoltán

[e-mail address]

BME Szociológia és Kommunikáció Tanszék

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