Chapter 2:
Observing a Scene of Electronic Music Culture

From the general descriptions of music scenes and their participants especially in Berlin, as I have laid them out in the first chapter, I will now shift the focus to a detailed analysis of a particular cultural scene and its activities. This chapter starts with an overview of the collected data types, and the methods used for their collection and analysis. Following this, the field is introduced in detail.

2.1 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The analysis is based on data collected in research that began with preliminary work and initial data collection starting in early 2007, followed by a period of structured data collection beginning in April 2009, and ended, at least in its structured form, in late 2010. I have continued to follow the relevant activities after this period, and will include additional data sporadically, whenever it fits and helps to further develop the argumentation.

The data collection includes a few different formats. During the research period, I traced the activities in the scene mainly through their online representations. My starting point was the website of the label C, where most of the live performances of artists releasing on the label were announced. My personal acquaintance with one of the artists helped me to get in contact with the label owner, who then referred me to further artists. My job at a music technology manufacturer served as an additional door opener, as all of the artists knew the company and several of them were interested in how it worked and how they might get involved with it themselves. However, it was important to me that I did not exploit this position and the interest the artists had in it, and whenever I saw the necessity, I made it clear that I was in no position to hire anybody or to get them onto the list of artists sponsored with free products.

2.1.1 Web Pages

The website of the label C (P515) had dedicated sub pages for all the artists on its roster, containing a photo and a short informational text (e.g. P517). If the artist or artist group had a website, the link could be found here. Not all of the artists or groups had

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their own websites, though, and of those referenced from the label's website, several were outdated and had not seen updates in months or even years. In the first half of the research period, most of the artists had MySpace pages that were active and up to date. The features and social functions of MySpace are analyzed in detail in section 3.1. During the research period, Facebook took over from MySpace as the most active platform hosting representations of artist identities (Quantcast 2011), and many of the artists followed this trend and created a representation for their artistic work on this platform. The features and social functions of Facebook use are analyzed in a dedicated section, 3.2. In addition, there were also representations of artistic work that were not maintained by the artists or their agents, but by interested members of the public who followed an artist's discography and performances and kept the profiles up to date. The most important and most active of these platforms compiling information that was primarily user-generated were Discogs.com and Last.fm.

Screenshots were recorded of all relevant web pages containing information on activities in the field. This method ensured that the exact rendition of the web pages could be conserved, as the browser had displayed them upon access at the time the screenshots were taken. Saving the web pages as HTML documents together with the individual images they referenced, a feature offered by all standard web browsers at the time of research, would not have ensured adequate conservation, as large parts of the content especially on platforms like MySpace, Facebook, and Last.fm was generated on demand by databases. This means that the HTML code a web browser could save only contained links to entries in databases stored on the platform's servers, which were called upon accessing the page, and which delivered their content in up to date form to be rendered by the browser. The database entries themselves, however, could not be saved as raw data by the web browser on the client side, which is why the rendered form of data representation was chosen for data collection. The software Screengrab (http://www.screengrab.org/) was used to take the screenshots, acting as an extension of the web browser Firefox. Screengrab allowed the user to save an exact screenshot in either the JPG or the PNG format. As the JPG format introduced heavy compression artifacts, the PNG format, which applied lossless compression, was chosen for the screenshots. In the beginning of the research period, the Screengrab software managed to capture all elements of a web page except for elements in the Adobe Flash format. These elements were not included in the screenshots, and simple single-color rectangles were saved in their place. Later versions of the Screengrab software also captured Flash content.

In order to cover changes on the web pages occurring during the research period, screenshots were taken repeatedly. If a web page was involved in any direct activities I observed, screenshots were taken according to the temporal structure of the activity. Web pages relating to the inner circle of artists and organizations of the research

scope (see section 2.2) were conserved roughly on a monthly basis. Web pages that were newly created during the research period were added as they entered the scope of observation, and in most cases, it was not possible to determine exactly when they had been introduced. This applies especially to Facebook pages and personal profiles, which were added in great numbers in the course of the platform's enormous gain in popularity during that time (Quantcast 2011).

The screenshots of web pages were then assembled in a research database. As all data was either collected in digital form directly or transferred to a digital file format, the database was handled entirely in software. An advantage of this procedure was that all primary data assets were accessible directly from within the database. The software package used for database management, as well as for further stages of analysis, was Scientific Software's ATLAS.ti (http://www.atlasti.com/). Inside ATLAS.ti, individual items of collected data are called primary documents, and each of these documents was assigned a unique ID number. This unique ID number is used throughout this study to reference items in the data collection.

The ATLAS.ti software package was designed to facilitate both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis, with a clear focus on the qualitative side (Scientific Software / Friese 2011; Lewins / Silver 2007). Primary documents of a variety of formats can be accessed directly from within the program. The screenshots of organizations' and artists' web pages were stored in part in the JPG format, applying destructive compression, and in part in the lossless PNG format. The reason for this was that the version 5 of ATLAS.ti, which was current when I started with the analysis, could not import and display files in the PNG format. Therefore, the stored PNG files were converted to JPG files with the batch conversion feature of Apple's Automator software, a part of Mac OS X (Apple 2011c). During the analysis period, Scientific Software released version 6 of ATLAS.ti, which added the functionality to import and display PNG files (undocumented by the manufacturer). Therefore, files that were created after the incorporation of this new version were directly imported in the qualitatively superior PNG file format. However, the batch converted JPG files were still of better quality than JPG files directly stored with Screengrab, and have proven fully sufficient for the purposes of analysis in this study.

2.1.2 Interviews

Another important set of data contains the 18 interviews conducted with persons active in the cultural network around the label C. The interviews were conducted as half-structured ethnographic interviews (Schlehe 2003: pp. 78). The interviewees were selected on the basis of their belonging to an inner circle, a densely connected group of artists, most of which had releases during the research period (see section

2.2). In addition, I interviewed the label owner, a label assistant, and the owners of a record store. The interviews were conducted on the basis of a prepared guide covering fields of research interest. The guide was constructed in the form of a mind map using the software Freemind (http://freemind.sourceforge.net), and already contained pre-formulated questions. During the interviews, I used this guide in printed form to steer the conversation, but did not go through the questions in an ordered way. Rather, I attempted to touch all fields of research interest and used the pre-formulated questions only to get the interview started and if one of the topics did not come up automatically.

The interviews started with questions about the interviewee's most recent cultural or artistic activity. For example, if an artist had just released an album, the first question could be how long he had been working on the production. From this outset, different aspects of the practice were explored, such as the technological setup used for production and how the artist collaborated with other artists and organizations such as the releasing label during that process. The questions also touched aspects of marketing a release, such as who the artist saw as target group of the release and what he was going to do to promote it. From there on, some of the interviews covered the communication with the releasing label, the distribution organizations, and fellow artists on the label's roster as topics. Another route through the conversation first put a stronger focus on a self description of the artists, including questions regarding other jobs or activities they might be involved in besides music and how they saw their own involvement with the local scenes. A separate set of questions touched the artist's own view on events where he had performed, sometimes asking about a specific event and sometimes staying on a general level, depending on whether I had recently observed a performance by this artist. The artist was asked to describe the performance situation, the audience, and whether he knew a larger part of the audience personally. Finally, if it had not been covered before, questions were raised concerning the artist's interaction with the interested public, and which communication media were of relevance in these processes. This field of interest also included questions about the artist's involvement with online representations – did he create and maintain his own MySpace and Facebook profiles? – as well as his approach to react to comments on profile pages. If the interviewee was part of an organization and not active as an artist himself, the questions concerning the performances stayed on a general level, while the questions about the organizational setup went into more detail than with the artists.

The interviews were recorded with a portable digital recorder, and are included in the research database as MP3 files. The ATLAS.ti software package allows for direct playback of these files, and in version 6, audio files could be linked to text files, including anchor points relating positions in the text and the audio (Scientific Software 2011: pp. 20). This way, transcriptions could be produced with links in the

text making the transcribed part of the audio recording immediately accessible. In the transcriptions, no words were omitted from the recording, but incomplete words were completed to achieve better readability. Also, fillers such as "ah" and "mh" were omitted whenever, in my observation, they served no purpose of utterance. Every interview has two entries in the research database, one for the original audio file and one for the transcribed text. The relation between the two is directly visible from the text for most interviews, where the links to the audio passages show up as small red dots above the text.

2.1.3 Participatory Observation

During the research period, I visited as many performance events organized in the field as possible. This amounted to 50 accounts of participatory observation. I got to know more field participants at these performance events through the acquaintances with artists and organizers I had established through the interviews. My interviewees regularly introduced me to other visitors and suggested new interviews. In addition, I knew some of the other visitors through the business relations I had working at a music technology company. Several of the visitors were either colleagues of mine or business partners I had dealt with before. Any observations I could make at these performance events were, therefore, not objective or distanced from the interactions taking place there. Rather, I was part of the same social mesh I was observing from a research perspective, albeit in a distanced position that allowed me to retain a role of an outsider when it came to questions of artistic and cultural practice.

I then produced written records of my observations at the performance events. They covered the timespan from getting to the performance event to the next activity after the performance event. After experimenting with taking notes directly at the performance events, I discarded this method as it proved too invasive. Firstly, it provoked reactions among the other visitors, and secondly it distracted my own attention away from the interactions and performances at hand. Therefore, I decided to postpone the writing of the records to either directly after the performance event, or the next day. In any case, the records were produced within a time-frame of 48 hours after the performance event. In some cases, addenda were enclosed at a later time.

The written records were guided by Clifford Geertz' approach to "thick description" (Geertz 1987). Inspired by his approach, I tried to make my own observed subjective assessments of situations or statements as clear as possible, and attempted to specify assessments I observed among the other visitors, artists, and organizers. Also, I tried to reduce presuppositions in my descriptions, i.e. being careful with guesses as to what was meant by something as opposed to what was observably said or done. Of course, none of these distinctions could be followed through perfectly.

2.1.4 MySpace Survey

At least in the first half of the research period, the MySpace platform was still the most important social network where most of the artists and organizations involved in the scene I observed hosted their own representations. As I mentioned, Facebook gradually took over this social function over the course of the second half of the research period.

Using a software package called MyFriendsManager (http://www.myfriendsmanager.com, now offline), I was able to collect information provided by other MySpace members who had registered as "friends" of a given MySpace profile. The information these members had entered in their own profile could be read out and saved into a table in the Microsoft Excel format using MyFriendsManager. The data was used in aggregated form only, so that anonymity of the members was secured. The information gathered via this method included the type of membership, whether the member was registered as an individual person or as a band, as well as data on the sex, age, religious and sexual orientations, and even yearly income of the member. Most of these fields were not mandatory, though, and so the number of entries in these fields varied greatly. Also, probably more importantly, there were no measures implemented to verify the information given by the members. They could enter any numbers they wanted or select an arbitrary account of religious orientation, for example. Indeed, data on the members' yearly incomes, for example, appear way off balance when compared with real income distributions (for Germany, see Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2009). Therefore, the data collected via this method cannot be read as quantitative data referring to any reality beyond their presentation in the context of the MySpace platform itself. Instead, it provides valuable information on how members present themselves in this social surrounding.

For the survey, I collected this information for all the "friends" of the label C's MySpace profile. From the 2,917 member profiles included in this collection effort, a random set of 159 members was selected for a survey. These members were then contacted via the messaging feature available on the MySpace platform. This feature was designed similar to email communication, where members had an inbox and could send messages to other members. For this, only the recipient's member name had to be known, and the sender and recipient did not have to be related as "friends" on the platform in order to exchange messages. I had set up a member account (P3169) for my research work, which only contained information regarding my location in Berlin. The set of members to be included in the survey was enlarged several times, as 26 members who had been selected randomly could not be included. The reasons for this were either that they had ended their membership in the meantime, that they were too close to the label C to give an independent statement, or that I was already

in contact with them through my own participatory observations or the interviews I conducted, which also would have prevented independent statements.

The questions I sent to the "friends" of the label's MySpace profile differed depending on whether or not they had provided Berlin as their current location. If they had entered a different home city, I asked them about a possible relation to Berlin. If Berlin was set as their location, I sent them questions about possible preferences they might have for certain cultural activities in the city. The different versions of the questionnaire were sent out in both English and German versions, depending on the language spoken by a member, if it could be made out. In total, I received 22 replies, which is a response rate of 13.8%. The answers and the analysis report can be found in Appendix 3. The findings are mainly provided in section 3.1.

2.1.5 Coding

The research database contains primary documents in image, text, and audio formats. The web pages, interviews, participatory observation records, and the survey answers in the research database were then subjected to different stages of coding in iterations of the analysis process. Coding is a method to reduce complexity in large datasets so that certain factors become easily accessible. Thereby, it generates an overview of the content of the elements in a research database. Originally based in the methodology of grounded theory (see for example Strauss 1998: pp. 56), coding is an approach in the semantic analysis of empirical data. There, coding is used to select parts of a primary document that have a certain, coherent meaning, and assign to them a term, the code, under which this meaning can be subsumed. Other parts of the same or other primary documents that have the same meaning are assigned the same code, and sets of codes are then grouped in categories. In grounded theory, all codes and categories have to be generated from within the data; the methodology is understood as a means to get the data to speak for itself (Ibid.: pp. 29). One problem with the data-centric approach of grounded theory is that it does not take the observer serious enough. This can be problematic, as it potentially keeps the most important decisions in the research process, the selection of which data to collect and which codes to assign to which parts of primary documents, out of the focus. The data is seen as an entity existing largely separate from any presuppositions the researcher might already have. Grounded theory thus employs a claim of objectivity, while the dataset subjected to the analysis was forged by the very subjective decisions of an observer, in most cases the researcher him- or herself.

I did not follow this approach, but rather tried to lay open the relations of codes to certain theory-induced questions which guided the collection of data. The first set of these questions targeted the understanding of operational processes in the net-

work. For this, the operational involvement of observed process parts was coded. The first theoretical assumption here was that momentary observations of actions can be attributed to larger, overarching constructions of processes. Niklas Luhmann has described such processes as structuring society in a top-down perspective (Luhmann 1997b: pp. 743). The modern society as observed by Luhmann was differentiated in functional subsystems, such as economy, science, and religion. Each of these functional subsystems has a code, a core distinction separating its communicative actions. In the economic subsystem, for example, communication was structured by the core separation between payment and non-payment, while in the case of the scientific subsystem, the core distinction separated truth from not-truth. Luhmann also described organizations as social systems that are able to negotiate between communication in different functional subsystems, i.e. that could, for example, arrange for a trade-off between truth and payment (Ibid.: pp. 826). Art as a social system is described by Luhmann as a mechanism applying and negotiating criteria for how society can deal with works of art. Part of this process is determining whether or not the works fit and fulfill expectations held towards them (Luhmann 2000: pp. 118). Artists anticipate this evaluation and, at least partially, take the criteria and expectations held towards their works into account. In the case of electronic music, such strategies can be observed in the selective use of certain sounds or strategies of arrangement that are aligned with a certain musical style and that fit a specific situation.

Organizations in the realm of cultural and artistic practice have the ability to mediate between the cultural and stylistic embeddedness of works of art on the one hand and economic considerations on the other hand (Luhmann 1997b: pp. 826). Thereby, they can try to establish and, to a degree, manage what amounts to market valuations of works of art. This does not only refer to paintings being auctioned off or sold in galleries, but also includes the willingness of visitors at a venue to pay for a performance, or of an interested public to buy a music release either physically as CD or vinyl record or as a download from a website or via iTunes. Mediating between the different interests in economic and artistic considerations was the domain of organizations in this field. On the side, they also took over mediations in other directions, such as the legal system, negotiating agreements on questions of copyright and right of exploitation.

Mediating in the field between cultural and artistic practice as well as the broader economy, operational categories such as marketing and distribution were predetermined in the analysis. These basic operational processes of the organizations were used as the first set of codes. With them framing other activities, further codes were introduced, getting into the details of the processes. At the same time, the core set of identities, the densely connected inner circle of participants in the field I was observing, were added as codes as well. This way, operational processes, their footings in

performance events and on the web, as well as the participating identities became traceable. For the full set of codes deduced from the research interest in the operational structure of the network, please see Appendix 2.

The other area of research interest related directly to sociological theory. Coding was used here to attribute data fragments to modes of communication as described in the theories I have introduced so far, especially sociological systems theory (Luhmann) and network theory (White). The categorizations brought forth here were not in any way exclusive; rather, via coding, I attempted an ordering of observations into fuzzy sets of communicational modes. This included dominant themes, e.g. when identities or the relations among them were discussed, as well as functional aspects, such as the communication of expectations towards a performance or towards a certain role in an organization. The full set of theory-induced codes including short descriptions is also provided in Appendix 2.

2.1.6 Networks from Codes

Inside the ATLAS.ti software, codes can be arranged in freely definable relations. The relations used in the analysis for this study mostly defined containment, e.g. "Code A is a part of Code B" or "Code A is a function of Code B". This way, another layer of insight could be gained especially with regard to the connectivity among operational processes in the network. In Appendix 2, the network view of operational codes is given. Similarly, the theory-induced codes were structured in network views representing the coherent theoretical interpretations as used for analysis. Network views for the theoretical interpretations, which will be detailed further in the following chapters, can also be found in Appendix 2.

Coding is inherently a qualitative method of data sorting, as the decisions on which codes to apply to which segments of data are arbitrarily taken by the researcher, and can only be rationalized after the fact by taking a coherent theoretical framework into account. However, once this qualitative method is accepted, the codes themselves can be subjected to quantitative analysis. For example, ATLAS.ti automatically counts how many times a code was applied. More sophisticated queries could be constructed and run across the coded research database, for example how many times a specific code followed another specific code, or how many times it was enclosed by another. Of course, the results of such queries were more a quantitative account of the qualitative method of coding, but when used inside one individual or one homogeneous class of primary documents, it could indeed provide additional insights.

2.2 Tracing a Music Scene: The Label and its Artists

All references to phenomena are anonymized in this study. The reasoning behind this is that, although I started out with interviews where the interviewees gave their consent to have their names appear in the study, I soon encountered situations where field participants gave me information on the condition of anonymity. It could be argued that such information should be excluded from the study, but that would not have been a realistic account of my observer position in the field. I soon realized that I could only gain access to some of the more risky discussions, where personal opinions were brought to the table, if the participants trusted me in keeping their opinions anonymous. Therefore, I will use codes for the participants and other entities, and all explicit references in images have been made unrecognizable. As I have already mentioned, the starting point for the data collection was an electronica record label in Berlin, which I simply call "C". The choice to start here was motivated by previous observations of the scene, where this label stood out as one of the few labels that connected very different aspects of the culture it was embedded in. First of all, the label had been founded in the 1990s, under economical circumstances which I expected to differ dramatically from those at the time of data collection (see Kusek / Leonhard 2005 and section 1.6). Secondly, the label offered a connection between electronic music styles that pioneered in the 1990s and their evolutionary descendants contemporary to the research period. In addition, the scope of the label was clearly global, with its two founders located in Manchester and Berlin, and artists scattered in various places ranging from the US to Europe and Japan. At the same time, though, the label's activities were deeply embedded in the local Berlin scenes, and it appeared to help draw some of its artists into the city. In addition, the label founder in Berlin also worked as an editor at one of the most influential magazines in technology-aware electronic culture in general. This combination of aspects promised a broad range of multi-faceted phenomena, linked together by one coherent identity. In the vicinity of the label, I observed a total of 30 artists actively involved in producing and performing music.

2.2.1 Observing Differences and Relations

The selection of artists on a label's roster can be stylistically diverse. As the artists used the label name together with their own in their communication, they fostered the establishment of a relation with the label and thereby, indirectly, also with the other artists on the roster. At the same time, these artists also signaled their uniqueness by expressing differences separating them from the references they related themselves to (see for example the self descriptions in P466; P1423, and sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.1). Therefore, there was no typical artist embodying the average traits found in the label's

roster. Instead, each artist had a field of specialty, which was used to point out his or her uniqueness. This principle is expressed in the following two equations:

$$\text{profile}_{\text{artist A}} = \overline{\text{work}_{\text{artist A}} \mid \text{differentiation}_{\text{artist A}}}$$

Form equation 2.2.1.a: The profile of an artist A as the work of artist A observed in the context of the differentiation constructing the identity of artist A.

$$\text{profile}_{\text{label C}} = \overline{\text{work}_{\text{label C}} \mid \text{differentiation}_{\text{roster label C}}}$$

Form equation 2.2.1.b: The profile of the label C as the work of label C observed in the context of the differentiation constructing the identity of the roster of label C.

The differentiation among the artists on the roster had an influence on the stylistic profile of the label. At the same time, the vast majority of artists had releases on other labels as well, either before or after their releases on the label C, sometimes both. Also, most of the artists did not significantly vary their stylistic orientation between releases on this or other labels. There was, therefore, no stylistic exclusivity to be claimed by the label. Similar music was released by artists from the label's roster, as well as other artists, who had nothing to do with the label, on various other labels all over the world. In some cases, there were collaborations (e.g. P1205) with other labels releasing similar music, but I did not observe a notion of coherence among labels with a stylistically similar profile.

Some level of coherence could however be observed in the distribution chains in which the labels were embedded (see P1165: 37). Physical representations of releases were usually only sold in specialist record stores, but they did not show up in the music release shelves of the huge electronics retailers, such as Mediamarkt or Saturn for Germany during the time of research (P47: 51), which accounted for the major share of the in-store retail sales of physical releases. The situation was very different at the smaller specialist stores. As these stores catered to very specific musical interests, the selection of releases by certain labels and artists to be sold there were an important part of the stores' identities. As some of these stores, such as Hardwax or Dense Records, both in Berlin, gained attention in their own right (see online search results for HardWax P2364), their selections of records to sell could be observed as a determining part of their identity in the public perception, not unlike that of a record label.

The mechanism of specialization for specific interests worked in a similar manner among the wholesale retailers of physical releases. While the major labels usually had

their own distribution branches targeting the general-interest electronics megastores (Kusek / Leonhard 2005: pp. 86), the small independent labels signed contracts with mid-sized specialist distributors in different geographical regions or countries who then represented the sales interests of the label in their territory and delivered the physical releases directly to the record stores.[9] At the same time, the distributors also took over much of the responsibility to promote the releases among magazines, radio stations, and other mass media outlets of importance in their territory. The label C had distribution contracts with two companies in Germany (P1166: 12), one big wholesale distributor in the US, and specialists for the electronica genre in various other countries, among them the UK, Japan, Australia, and France (P588). Many of these distributors had a focus on a specific selection of genres, partly because they were labels themselves.[10] In addition to working with distributors in different market territories, the label C, one of their cooperation partners, another record label, and a clothing label had started a web shop together, where physical products could be ordered (P1165: 163; P88).

The website of the joint web shop (P2708).

While physical representations of releases remained an aspect that was regarded highly in the field and celebrated with release parties (for example P1192), a large proportion of actual sales was accomplished via downloads of releases (P1165: 197). The distribution setup for downloadable releases differed significantly from that for CDs and vinyl records. The labels provided the product in the form of digital music files,

9 For the label perspective, see for example P1165, and for the record store perspective P1187: 88.
10 This distributor, for example, had an extensive discography of its own (P2326).

and specialist online stores offered them for paid download, managing the logistics of secure payment and delivery. In the field of this study, Apple's iTunes and Boomkat (P2342; P598; P599) were the most important online stores. While Boomkat had a browser-based store, iTunes was only accessible through its desktop software or clients on Apple's mobile devices. Also, Boomkat was highly specialized in that it only sold releases from a few genres of electronic music, mostly in the field of electronica or experimental music. iTunes, on the other hand, was the undisputed leader in the overall market for music downloads, covering a broad variety of styles and genres ranging from the mainstream to special interests. Both Boomkat and iTunes provided reviews of releases. Boomkat commissioned reviews directly from its own writers (P1165: 215). These reviews were not only used in its own store, but they also appeared in the iTunes store as well as other places.

Boomkat website (P3307).

For the label C, the main difference between the distribution of physical releases and the sales of music downloads was that the label owner dealt directly with the online stores, without the intermediary distributors in the case of the physical releases. This included not only the negotiation of business terms for the conditions under which the music was to be sold, but also, for example, the manual upload of digital music files onto iTunes' servers and the entering of relevant metadata into the system's product database (P1216).

Some of the artists who released music on the label C owned labels themselves. Although they could have released their music on their own labels – which most of them had done previously – they chose to release on the label C instead. In one interview, an artist (artist O, see section 2.2.2) offered credibility as rationalization of his decision to release his second album on the label C instead of the label he co-owned and partly managed (P1175: 77). This rationale hints at a notion of independently

verified quality of music that could not be attained without going through the selection process of a label and the different cultural contexts surrounding it, which was not yet associated with the artist in any way. Also, the label owner used to release his own music on the label C and other labels as well.

Artists who ran a label themselves necessarily had to fulfill several tasks similar or identical to those which the label C's owner had to engage in. They, too, dealt directly with distributors, sometimes even the same companies, as well as the different download stores. The same artist/label owner referenced above mentioned that the label C's owner had shared templates for contracts with him and offered detailed advice on several occasions (P1175: 104).

Aside from tasks involving cooperations in the distribution chain, there was other organizational work that most of the artists on the label's roster took on themselves. This mainly involved tasks in the process of organizing for live performances of any sort. The artists usually dealt directly with either the venue owners where they played or the organizers of events that hosted performances. The label C usually did not take part in this organization process (P47: 67). Notable exceptions were the performance events organized and branded by the label itself (see section 4.1).

2.2.2 Persons

The notion of personhood will be discussed in section 2.3. Here, persons are described as phenomena in the field.

The first person I am going to describe is the label owner H. The label C was co-founded by H, an artist and music journalist from Berlin, and the owner of a record store from Manchester. During the research period, the co-owner from Manchester was not present in the label operations. An artist told me in an interview that this had not always been the case, and that indeed this co-owner used to be his primary contact at the label (P1167: 202). The co-owner H in Berlin told me (P1165: 206) that his partner had withdrawn from operations gradually over time because his workload with other tasks had left him no time for the label. Besides running the brick-and-mortar record store, this co-owner had opened an online store for music, which had become a success, but which also demanded the partner's full attention in management.

The label owner H was from Berlin originally, and had already worked there as an artist and journalist in the early 1990s (P1222; P1216; P47: 91). His roots were in radio journalism, but he had started to work in print in the 1990s (P47: 3; Ibid.: 107). He joined one of the primary German technology-aware lifestyle magazines as editor shortly after it was founded. The magazine had been started by several former editors of a legendary German techno music magazine that had entered bankruptcy

and seized publication in 1997. The label owner still worked at the magazine during the research period, with a work schedule of four full days a week. This left him enough time for label work (P1165: 136; P47: 15). Also, he used some of the magazine's infrastructure for the label. He had a separate room at the magazine's offices where he kept the server with the label's website and email services as well as boxes with CDs and vinyl records of releases that had not yet been shipped to a distributor or dealer (P47: 95-99).

Communication between the label owner H and the artists was done mostly via email. Artists told me that it was sometimes hard to communicate with him because his email replies were sometimes scarce and usually very brief (P1175: 101-104; P1212; P1442). Also, the label owner attended only very few of the performance events I observed. Communication between him and the artists usually peaked just before a release, when they discussed the material to put on the record and, in some cases, also the sequence of tracks on a release (P1163: 68; P1175: 80). One of the artists releasing on the label C described the collaboration as follows:

> "I might have an idea of an album, but he is a little bit the selector, you know, who says, hm, this track, well, maybe better leave out, but these two are good, and then also the order, it's like, when, for example, you really don't know, with such an album, where it is better, when someone else finds the dramaturgy. He pretty much did that with the last one, and with this one it really worked very well. Or I just trusted him, I just told him, you do the order [...]." (Artist M, P1163: 68, transl. FG)

The final sonic mastering of a release, a studio process where the sound of the mixes to be released was finalized, was usually done in Berlin (P1167: 85). If the artists lived elsewhere, the label owner arranged for them to come to Berlin for this process, and he attended the studio session himself as well (P1165: 130). I was present at such a session for one of the releases by the artist O, before entering the research phase for this study. Most of the label's releases were mastered by the same engineer, who was known as an expert in mastering for releases on vinyl records, but who also had an exquisite track record of high-profile releases in digital formats (P1550). The mastering process seemed to be an important aspect of the relation between the artists and the label owner. I did not observe similar occasions of focused collaboration between him and any of the label's artists in other situations.

The next person to introduce is the artist T. This artist had moved to Berlin after he had already released five records on the label C as part of a duo he formed together with a US-based techno producer and DJ (P1162: 59). Of Japanese origin, this artist had lived in Los Angeles before, where he had studied guitar and played in various formations as well as solo (P357). In Berlin, he established himself in the live music

scene, focusing on his guitar playing with added electronics. This allowed him to cater to publics outside of the realm of electronic music in addition to the label's typical scene. I engaged in participatory observation at 23 of his performances. He had released a solo record on the label C, with only his acoustic guitar playing. He told me in an interview that the idea for this actually came from the label owner C:

> "[...] the one reason I'm doing this classical guitar part again is that [the label owner H, FG] really wanted to continue the idea. So that was kind of his idea first. I kind of, first I was against the idea, but now I kind of, I understood, and then, I'm very happy that I am going to try to write some classical solo guitar material." (P1162: 39)

T was also part of a trio together with the artist M (see below), also from the label's roster, and an external musician (P485; P486). In this group, his guitar playing added an acoustic part to the computer-based parts played by the other two musicians. The trio had formed after the artist T had played a couple of guest appearances with a larger group of computer musicians, sharply contrasting their distinctively digital sound with his guitar playing. The two other members of the trio had been part of this larger group and decided to continue to work with the artist T (P1162: 13; P1517; P1208). In another musical engagement, the artist T played together with a clarinetist, who, as a member of yet another group, had also released music on the label previously (P1219). In addition, T was active in at least one more music project together with another techno producer and DJ (P1443). The descriptions of these activities show the artist T's focus on collaborative music making and performance. He had a vast network of musical acquaintances, which he had gathered through collaborations in Japan, the US, and Germany.

For practice and recording, T had a dedicated music room at his apartment, with a semi-professional computer-based recording setup and several electronic sound devices (P3178). A large part of this setup was owned by his wife at the time, who was also from Japan and an active musician herself (P1206). They both used this music room, and played some performances together as well. As T's specialty was the seven-string guitar (adding a baritone string to the regular six-string guitar concept), his unique guitars were his most important pieces of equipment (P1162: 43). He had one electric seven-string guitar that was industrially made in a neck-only design – omitting the resonance body – and another electric that was custom-made for him by a guitar luthier in New York City (Ibid.). Another essential aspect of his setup was that he almost always combined his guitar with a loop pedal, a separate device he could operate while playing the guitar by stepping on it, and that would sample entire parts of his playing and then repeat them continuously (as observed in P1201). That way, he could build layer upon layer of his own playing and create complex musical

patterns. This technological addition to the guitar considerably expanded his musical expressiveness in a solo performance situation. He did not use a computer on stage himself, which means that in his solo performances, no external sound material was used in addition to his guitar. Nevertheless, he could create complex rhythmic and harmonic pieces via his layering method.

During the time of research, T also started to work for a Berlin-based music software manufacturer. First, he started out as freelance writer for website texts in Japanese, but soon moved on to become a support agent in customer care, serving Japanese-speaking customers on the phone and via email. In addition, he helped out in the support team serving the US market (P1213; P1439; P1443; P1192).

After his solo record, T released two more records together with his duo partner, the techno producer and DJ in Los Angeles. The first of these albums was released on his duo partner's own label, while the second record appeared on the label C (P2980). In our interviews and conversations, T mentioned repeatedly that he was working on another solo album, but this was not released during the time of research.

The next artist I want to introduce is the artist O. This artist had been my point of entry into the field of this study. I already knew him from university, where we worked together as undergraduate students on a project researching aesthetical strategies in computer-based music production. As I mentioned, O was also the co-owner of another record label, which he founded together with other undergraduate students from our university, three of which were also working on the same project team (P1175: 62-74). He released his first full-length album on his own label, but then moved to the label C for his second full album. I have mentioned the rationalization he gave, that he believed it would be better if he didn't release his music on his own label, at least not exclusively (P1175: 77):

> "[...] to somehow reach other regions, both regions as well as classes of people, to just be perceived differently. Always this [label name, FG], and [artist name, FG], sounds even almost the same, and that is somehow, this Lüneburg thing. [FG:] So a bit to get out of this Lüneburg context? [O:] Yes exactly. Well, not get out, I do like to get back in, and I am still in, but I didn't want, I don't know, it's silly to always release on your own label, then it's like, for me that would've felt like a compromise, maybe." (P1175: 77, transl. FG)

He described how he got in touch with the label owner H through a mutual friend, and how his release on the label C came about:

> "[...] one time when we went with [the friend, FG] for a beer in Berlin, then [the friend, FG] negotiated a bit and said, the next album, who knows, if this will still be released on [the label co-owned by O, FG], and [the label owner H, FG] was very interested to hear it, but I also knew, that he listens to a lot of albums and doesn't, I wasn't counting on it. And by that time I had already

> sent out like 20 demos for the next album and I thought, it will be released on [the label co-owned by O, FG] again, but it would've been nice to not just stew in one's own juices, but to be somewhere else for once." (P1175: 74, transl. FG)

> "And no word from [the label owner H, FG], nothing, not even a simple mail saying, I'm going to have a listen soon or something, just nothing. And then I was back in Berlin and we met, I think, at NBI briefly, but just waving across the bar, and I had played with [name of mutual artist friend, FG], and I didn't have much time, and I was in Berlin for this and not to meet [the label owner H, FG] or something. And then I get a text the next day, let's meet today about your album, or like, to talk about your album. Yeah, and that sounded pretty positive somehow. Then we met and it was like, well, we won't make it this year, but that was in September, but we could make it next year in March, and it was like, to him it was totally clear that it hadn't been accepted anywhere else, so somehow, yeah, let's just do it. But before that, he never said that he liked it, or if I couldn't perhaps move this or this song towards the end or take it out or something, it was only like, yeah, let's just do it." (P1175: 80, transl. FG)

The artist O was trained in playing the cello and the drums, and especially the cello was featured widely in his music. All production work was done on a computer, though. I had also collaborated with this artist, working on an interface technology connecting his cello and computer. For this, we were granted a residency at an art institute in Amsterdam, which offered studio space and technical support for artists and engineers who worked on experimental instrument concepts. After the residency, we established and maintained an institutional cooperation between the institute and our project team at our home university.

During the time of research, O lived in Hamburg. Two of his label co-owners also lived there. Together with them, he organized a monthly label night in a small bar, where the label owners and selected guest DJs played vinyl records for the guests. Also, O regularly played performances together with a techno DJ who was based in Hamburg, as well. In this duo, O used a computer setup together with his cello (P1175: 8; P1177: 26). This system had originally been inspired by the work we had been doing together in Amsterdam, but later it was changed and then realized with different technological means. With this setup, O also played with other musicians or as solo performer. The cello retained its status as the main instrument in these performances, but the computer interface and the software behind it augmented the instrumental paradigm by allowing O to sample short pieces of his cello playing and play them back by performing gestures with his bow. He had added a motion sensor to his bow that was connected to his computer. This method differed from the approach used by the artist T in that O only sampled short sounds of either individual notes

or clusters of notes, or one melodic pattern at a time, but he did not build multiple layers of repeating patterns. Instead, sampled sounds were played back as individual voices of his setup, their pitch, length, and tonality being transformed in realtime via the gestures of the bow hand and commands from an additional floorboard offering an array of switches the artist could access while playing.

In the beginning of the research period, O had still been active in a duo with a guitar player in Hamburg, playing live scoring performances at screenings of silent movies (P445). When he came to Berlin to perform at one of the regular performance events hosted by the label C, he brought this guitar player as his duo partner to perform live versions of the tracks from his second album (see section 4.1.4; P1224).

In terms of production, O did much of his work at home, where he had a semi-professional setup that was good for production, but not optimized for recording. For recording and longer production sessions, the artist regularly scheduled periods either at the art institute in Amsterdam, where he had access to a dedicated room and sometimes even a full-sized professional recording studio, or retreated to a former water mill and inn in the black forest, which was owned by his family (P1175; P1513). At either of these locations, he would spend anywhere from one to several weeks working on new material or his performance setup. Although he had mentioned producing material for another album on the label C (P1175: 2), this did not materialize until 2013, when it was released on the label he co-owned.

The third artist from the label C's roster who played a major role at the outset of my research was a German artist who lived in Berlin, although this was not his home city. I am mentioning his nationality because there were observable differences between him and the Japanese artist in terms of their embeddedness in the local scene. The Japanese artist could take advantage of organizations dedicated to promoting artists from his national background in Germany, or even Berlin (see section 4.2.1; P1204; P1219; P1443). The apparent advantage of the native language could not necessarily be utilized by the German artist M, as English was spoken widely at the performance events I observed. This, of course, would have to be accredited to the specific situation in the culturally thriving unified Berlin.

The artist M had released one EP and one full album on the label C prior to the research period (P654). During the time of research, he released his second full-length album there. Differing from the two artists I have described before, M did not have a primary acoustic instrument to feature prominently in his electronic productions. In a way, aesthetically, his productions were the most electronic-sounding out of all the productions by these three artists. At the same time, his music appeared to be guided by the mainstream of popular electronic music of the 1980s, while the other two artists mainly referenced techno, hip hop, and jazz styles. He described his music production background as follows:

> "[... FG:] so you're coming from the guitar, and then started to make music with the computer? [M:] Yes, basically yes. Although, my very first instrument was keyboards. As a kid, you know, I played home organ, keyboards. You know, really well behaved, really organ school, home organ school. At some point, that really started to annoy me, and I somehow bought an electric guitar. That was the liberation, somehow. But at some point I realized, that it is somewhat limited, well for me, there are other people, all they want is to play the guitar. For me it was rather, I wanted to have a four-track recorder, and with other instruments and so on, and then it became really obvious for me to start arranging with the computer. That is really a continuation from the four-track recorder. I believe, when I do pieces like that, it is a little bit like a tape simulation. You know, it is of course all abstract and virtual, but somehow I imagine that as a band, like, and now the bass line and like, now the drums [...]." (P1163: 49, transl. FG)

M performed his music mostly as a soloist, strongly focusing on his laptop while playing (see P1192; P1222). The other two musicians often put their acoustic instruments in the foreground at their performances, in the case of the artist O also utilizing the instruments' established paradigm for controlling parameters in the software he used during the performance. Although M, as a solo act, played his music without additional performers on stage, he regularly collaborated with a duo of visual artists. During his performances, they would be placed away from the stage, and produce visuals in realtime that were projected behind the artist on stage (see P1460). Besides pursuing his solo work, M was also active in groups, two of which he had together with T (see above). M was one of the musicians in the larger group of laptop performers where T was brought in to add his guitar playing as a separate element (P1476; P1304; P1308). Also, the two played together in the trio that formed as a spin-off of this larger group.

M also worked as a producer for other artists, and maintained a dedicated studio in a downtown business building during the time of research (P1207). He did, however, also keep several devices at home and produced some of his music there (P1163: 138). In terms of professional involvement, M was in touch with the music software manufacturer where I was employed at the time, and tried to get a commission for the production of sound material to distribute with their products. For the software manufacturers, having enough high-quality sound material to accompany their products was crucial, as the motivation among the users to create their own sounds was generally not high. At least, they expected to get some inspiration from factory-provided sounds. The software manufacturers had some internal resources that produced this material, but they also worked with a large number of additional freelancers. M had pitched some of his work at the manufacturer where I worked, but no commission followed from this. A few months later, towards the end of the research period, he

started to work as a freelance writer of website texts for the music software manufacturer where the artist T worked (P1443). As a writer, he also held a position very similar to that in which T started his career at this company.

Finally, I will introduce the label assistant L. L was a journalist by profession, just like the label owner H. They had worked together at the magazine where H was editor, and L had been commissioned to write articles on a regular basis. He did not, however, write exclusively for this magazine. He told me that he was also editor for another, smaller lifestyle magazine.

> "I always wanted to do something in journalism and really write cultural journalism, but I never found the right channel. And that was like, this internship was the possibility to finally do this. But before that I basically had always, always followed that, read the music magazines and so on, but that was like, the initialization for the journalistic writing for me, and also, to broaden that from there on. Well, and I studied cultural journalism here in Berlin, did my masters, and have, and now work as editor at a magazine, that's named [name of another magazine, FG]. Well, also as music editor, really." (P1160: 7, transl. FG)

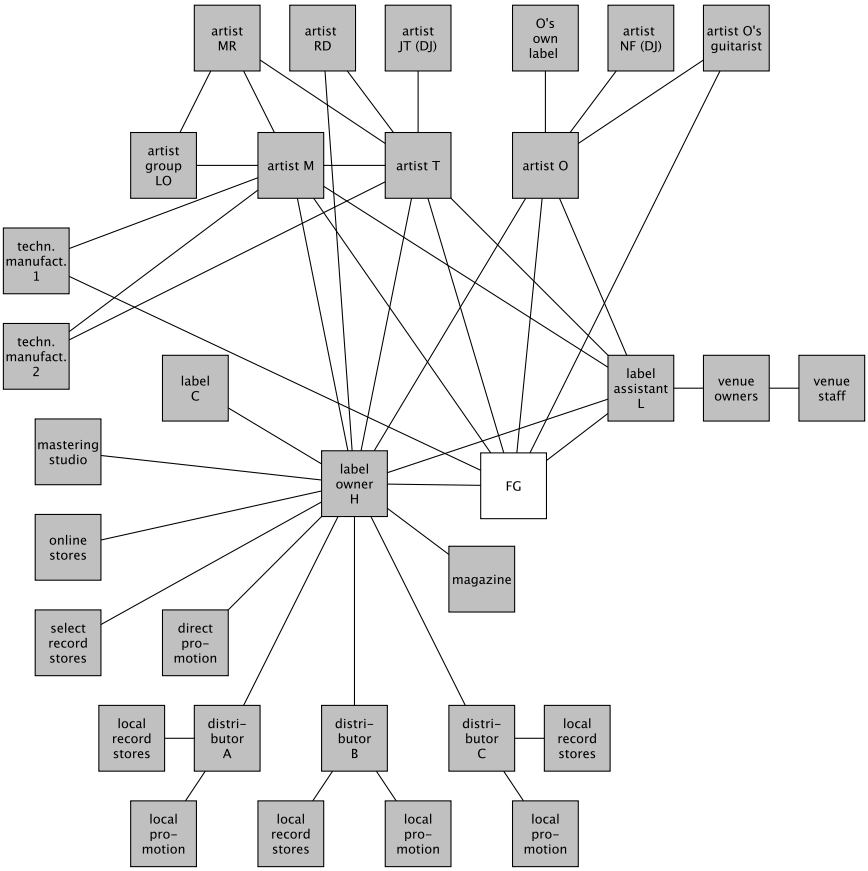
On another occasion, L mentioned that writing was very important for him, and that he would take almost any job as long as it allowed him to keep on writing. For the label C, he took over the responsibility of organizing the label's "Allnighter" events at the venues. The planning was mostly done by the label owner H, but L was present at the venues to organize the sound check with the artists and the venue staff, and also to moderate performance times between the artists and the venue owners (P1160: 25). In addition, he took over the role of DJ regularly in between the sets of the guest DJs and the artist performances (e.g. P1202).

Additionally, L was also involved in setting up and maintaining the label C's MySpace presence (P1160: 4). However, his role with the label was not made official by the label owner, and his name did not appear on the label C's homepage or in any official communication surrounding the label events.

2.3 Persons in Networks

In the previous section, I have described how a few persons were engaged in the cultural practice of running a label, releasing music on it, and in pursuing the artistic practice of producing music and performing at concerts. These persons were related in various different ways: The label owner H received music for potential releases and commented on it, while the artists were connected through collaborations. In addition, two of the artists also became co-workers at a music software company, and the artist M used to write record reviews for the magazine where the label owner

worked as editor. Even these few persons whose activities I have started to describe were connected in various ways. This can be visualized as a densely connected network of hubs with ties.



A network visualization of relations in the core part of the field, including my own position.

A visualization like the one shown above is only partially helpful, as it draws an entirely static image of the connectivity in the network. Looking closer at the activities, it becomes clear that not all of these connections were active at any one time. Rather, most of these connections were inactive most of the time. They were explicitly acti-

vated on an event base, when they were needed to fulfill a certain function or make a reference, for example upon being asked for in an interview with me. This is not to say that they were irrelevant, or only relevant in certain situations. The knowledge of their latent existence can be expected to play an important role in the planning and carrying out of social activity, for example among the persons whose actions I have started to describe. The connections were, however, not fixed and always activated in a technological sense. Activating a connection between e.g. the label owner and an artist was a social endeavor, subject to various influences on both sides of the connection. Artists, for example, mentioned a few times that the label owner was too busy in his job as editor at a music magazine to look after their needs as artists releasing records on his label. Him being busy was a circumstance of this connection, but one they could not do anything about, as they had no way of influencing the distribution of tasks at the magazine. If, for example, we reconstruct the perspective of the artist O in this situation, we can model the following equation:

$$\text{label owner H}_{\text{perspective artist O}} = \text{identity H} \mid \text{operation}_{\text{label C}} \mid \text{roster}_{\text{label C}} \mid \text{magazine}$$

Form equation 2.3.a: The label owner H seen from the perspective of artist O as the notion of H's identity in the network contexts of operational work for the label C, communication about artistic topics with the label's roster, and work at the magazine.

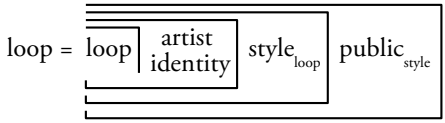
Therefore, the technological paradigm of network connections has to be used with caution, and with the knowledge that connections in the realm of social activity are much more involved than the connections in technological systems. Nevertheless, it can teach us caution when using the notion of personhood, as it shows how individuality is constructed out of the referencing of identities from a certain perspective.

2.3.1 Network Domains

Within the identity/control networks he described, Harrison C. White (2008) has identified clusters, inside which control efforts are structured in largely similar ways. He refers to the specific way in which control efforts are operationalized as culture, and to the clusters that form out of these operations as network domains. This is compatible with Luhmann's notion of culture, where meaning as the medium of all communication is knowledge, and where society has the capacity to find different ways of applying knowledge in different areas of social action, comparing and evaluating them against each other, and thus forming cultures.

However, the specific ways of applying knowledge and operating control efforts is not static. Together with meaning, they evolve as social processes adapt and renew the underlying semantic categorizations. We can see this in changing processes of cultural and artistic practice, when, for example, a certain style of clothing or of playing a musical instrument gets out of fashion. The fashion industry itself is a good example of a huge social institution that is built around these very changes in cultural processes. We can make out similar changes in the field observations we are analyzing: Not only do musical styles change, but the waves of cultural fashion also influence how the venues that host instantiations of cultural practice are being viewed.

The choices that are being made to apply knowledge in a particular way are functionally equivalent to the implementation of specific control efforts in the network. For example, knowing how to produce a drum loop is basic technological knowledge that is fundamental to artistic practice. Applying this knowledge to create a specific drum loop that fits the expectations held in a particular network part means building a bridge between artistic and cultural practice. It is, however, also a control effort, in that it marks a) the identity of the artist producing the drum loop, b) the identity of an artistic realm, i.e. a style, where such drum loops are produced, and c) the identity of a public in which an interest for this production can be expected. Of course, the production of a particular drum loop is usually only a small fraction contributing to such an effort, which involves not only directly talking about works of art, but also an entire set of metadata (data about data) involving several aspects of an artist's work and its reception. The differentiation of the control effort described above is expressed in the following equation:



Form equation 2.3.1.a: A musical loop observed as a loop that is attributed to an artist identity, in the context of a certain style the loop fits, and a public interested in that style. This arrangement is bridging the operative realms of artistic and cultural practice, between the loop as a production and as an observed artifact.

The artists' attempts to adapt to expectations they anticipate is at the same time an effort to control how they as artists and their works will be viewed by others in the future. It is, therefore, a genuine network process in the theoretical sense that White has established. Their attempt at adaptation is not directed towards an individual's expectation, but towards a more generalized understanding of a set of expectations that govern the evaluation of art. On the other hand, artists are not alone in trying to

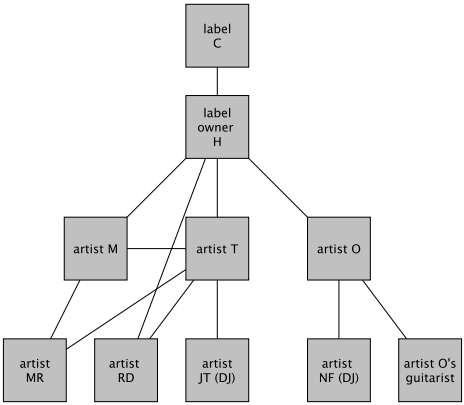
fulfill such a set of expectations; usually, a similar set is being catered to by an entire group of artists. Through this process, different artists may find out that they produce similar music and collaborate, or look for ways to differentiate themselves from this similarity. At the same time, visitors at a concert may lead a discussion about how works of art fulfilled or failed to meet their expectations, and whether these expectations may need to be changed. All the while, artists can themselves become part of audiences, and they can also communicate expectations towards works of art. Audience members can become artists because they have such intimate knowledge of how artists try to fulfill a certain set of expectations.

The notion of culture does not only incorporate the production and reception of works of art, but includes every occasion where selections on specific ways of applying knowledge are made. This means that organizations can have a culture, or even a variety of cultures. Markets have cultures (see White 2001), as well as, for example, families, cliques, and religious groups. Because of this internal structural similarity, these conglomerates can be observed as network domains. In our field, we can make out several network domains in addition to the inner circle of music production and performance described above. For example, the functions enacted in order to organize releases acted as a network domain, establishing or activating connections on the basis of the event at hand, e.g. the common theme of getting a music release out and into the hands of the public. This governed not only what was to be communicated, but also who could participate in the communication. In addition, manufacturing organizations, observed both as individual companies and together as a culture of professionalism, and, in a similar way, the venue organizations with the owners, technicians, bartenders, and sometimes security staff, consisted of structured network parts that included roles with a certain functional focus.

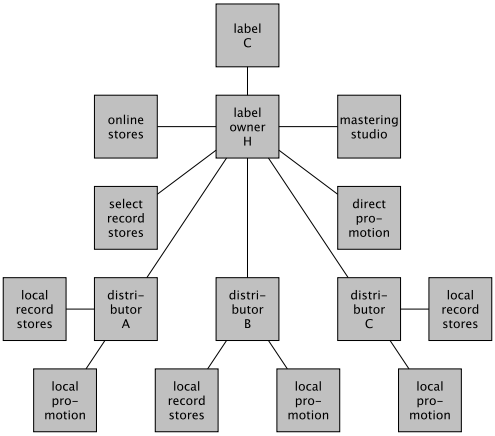
For example, the network domain shown below visualizes the relations with focus on artistic topics among the artists in the inner circle of the field and the label C, including some further artists who were involved in collaborations. Notably, the entities in this visualization do not show persons, but rather roles as parts of identities. The notion of persons can possibly be constructed out of the observation of roles, with the construction becoming more detailed as the number of observed roles increases.

The label owner H had an exclusive relation with the identity of the label C, in that only he could make official statements on its behalf. That is not to say that no other perspective on the label was possible. Indeed, many perspectives could be observed, and they did have an influence on how the label was perceived. Rather, this should indicate that – at least within the scene – the label could not be observed without also observing the label owner. The artists M and T were linked together in a densely connected network part that included many more identities – artists, artist

groups, and other collaborators – than are shown here. On the other hand, the artist O was rather separated in his relation with the label C.



Network domain: Artists' relations with the label C.

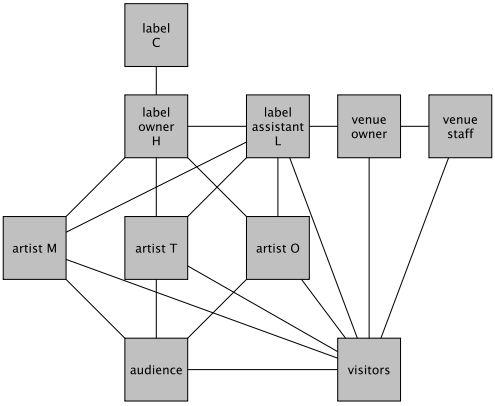


Network domain: Operative business relations of the label C.

In the image directly above, the label owner H again takes on a central role as the only entity directly connected to the identity of the label C. In this role, he handled all operational matters involved with the production and distribution of physical and downloadable releases of recorded music. He communicated directly with the master-

ing studio, the online stores, and certain promoters and record stores. All other communication regarding promotion and the placement of the physical releases in record stores was handled by distributors with a specific focus on locality. These distributors mainly served individual countries, some of them entire regions of the world.

At the "Allnighter" events organized by the label C (see section 4.1), the label assistant L fulfilled an important role as the organizer in charge of the concrete setup of the schedule and the spatial layout of the performance events, in the context of what was possible at the selected venues. He was also the primary contact to the venue owner and his staff.



Network domain: Operational arrangement at the label C's "Allnighter" events.

It is important to note again that network domains include roles, not persons (White 2008, pp. 7). Artists' involvements with labels were never mutually exclusive, i.e. other artists released on the same label, and the artists also worked with other labels to release their music. Similarly, employment at a music software manufacturer or a venue for music events was separable from artistic work or other involvements. Identities encompassed roles, integrating them into framework stories, which served as narratives in attempts at anticipating and influencing the public's response to an artistic offering, for example. We will come back to this.

Organizations such as music software manufacturers, venue operators, record stores, journalistic publications, etc., had established structures and their own functional focus, yet the perspective on the production and publication of music was essential to their existence. In that sense, them being so close to the process of artistic practice that took place involving the persons I have begun to describe made them stakeholders in the field. They relied on artistic productivity for their own work,

because this is where they drew their information from as to what to produce and offer, and this is where they saw their markets as well.

2.4 Publics and Audiences

Publics and audiences fulfill different social functions, and they take part in forming distinct sociocultural niches. This distinction is similar to the separation between publics and crowds, as Gabriel Tarde has described it (see Tarde 1969). Crowds gather mainly for one topic only, while publics are open to many different topics. Habermas (in Habermas 1990) has expanded the notion of the public as a function of civility, where any member of the civic class has access and can raise any topic. In her study on Japanese culture, Eiko Ikegami (in Ikegami 2005) has argued that publics can rather be seen as network functions that emerge around aesthetical topics. I observed similar functions in the field, while audiences as the remainders of crowds were also present and played a much valued role. In the following section, we will look at how publics and audiences operated in our field.

2.4.1 Baiting Publics

Artists, label operators, and distributors worked together in a conglomerate of network domains that focused on the production of recorded and performed music. However, the work did not stop there. The products that came out of the production-oriented network domains' operation had to find or build an audience for themselves, an audience that would be interested enough to listen to the music and watch the performances in the forms that had been conceived for them during their production.

Even though technological advances may have made production potentially much easier and cheaper, as I have laid out in section 1.2, the artists, labels, distributors, and music stores still had to face the very realistic risk that nobody would be interested in their work, and therefore no audience would form. The key to building an audience was to get relevant publics interested. The label could not expect to sell any number of records automatically. The label owner stated with reference to the label's presence at the "Allnighter" events:

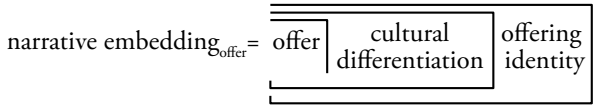
> "Well, it is nice to be present, but mainly for the band, not so much for the label, because this, this cultic following of certain labels, as we know it from the nineties, that doesn't exist any more. That is over." (P47: 59, transl. FG)

Audiences were the consumers of the products, whether in the form of releases or of performances. Niklas Luhmann (in Luhmann 1995b) has described the mode of

reception as part of the communication surrounding and dealing with art. Audiences engaged with the network parts focused on production, although these connections were extremely volatile in comparison with the internal structure of the production network domains. Audiences were not tied to artists or labels in any way; they could disappear as quickly as they formed. The artists in our field did not have much of a dependable audience, either. The audiences therefore had to be built almost entirely by generating public interest, i.e. by getting people who would not automatically listen to the recordings or attend the performances to check out the information about them, and eventually give them a try, thus becoming at least a temporary part of the audience. In order to build this interest, information about the offerings of the production network domains had to become accessible in places where potential future members of the audiences were likely to find it. Looking at network processes, both the product and the target groups as potential audiences were engaged in different domains of the same overarching network that is the society. The matching of production domain and audience was then accomplished by a part of the target group making the more or less probable switch and becoming part of an artist's audience. In order to make this switch, the necessary information about the offers had to be available to the target groups in a public situation.

The function of the public situation was that it brought together concrete offers and potential audience members. A public in our field can be described as a specific network configuration in which potential listeners and artists offering references to their work could participate, so that eventually, the potential listeners could make a selection and follow an offer, i.e. start listening to a recording or watch a performance. With Harrison C. White (1995), such an event can be described as a switch from belonging to the group of the merely interested potential listeners or spectators to becoming actual listeners or spectators. Technically, potential listeners could thus be seen as potentials for switchings. Online platforms like the ones used in our field facilitated such situations, as did performance events in which all participants could engage in direct interaction, taken out of their respective network domains. In such a situation, where a public had formed, involvement in particular network domains was not in the focus, or, as Harrison C. White put it, the network domains were "suppressed" (White 1995: p. 1045). Potential connections were not hindered by having to form within the realms of specific network domains; rather, the situation of a public established the theoretical possibility of full connectivity, where all participants were potentially connected with each other (Ibid.). This had practical benefits: The visitors to an artist's profile page on MySpace or Facebook did not need to know the configuration of the network domains in which the artifacts on offer on these pages had been produced or where the presentation on the profile page had been organized. From the artist's perspective, it was impossible to know in which situations the offers made

on a profile page would be evaluated by a potential listener. The matching between potentials for switchings and offers was, however, not entirely random, either. Artists, labels, distributors, and stores all enhanced their offerings with metadata, i.e. data about the concrete offers, which effectively served as an attempt to create a narrative embedding the offer into the overarching framework of cultural differentiation, as explicated in section 1.5.2. Potential listeners navigated through this framework of differentiation, guided by their interest. This phenomenon of narrative embedding is captured in the following equation:



Form equation 2.4.1.a: The phenomenon of narrative embedding adds a context of explicit cultural differentiation between the identity of the offering party and the offer itself.

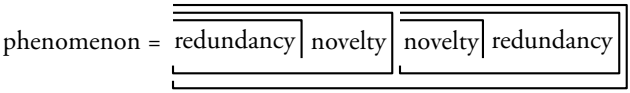
This narrative embedding opens up a network domain surrounding the offers, while also presenting several different topics and concrete offers, often in the form of music or video players, to let a new public emerge in situ, e.g. on an artist's profile page. In this public, it becomes possible to switch between topics and audiences of the material or the works on offer.

2.4.2 Offers for Switching Generate Interest

In the field of cultural practice we are analyzing, interest was more a notion of anticipation than an observable phenomenon. The concept on the side of the artists and labels was simple enough: Establish and maintain a placement in the framework of cultural differentiation, in our case in the segmentation of genres and differentiation of styles (see section 1.5), and then offer a link to an artifact with a narration of novelty, in the hope that potential audience members will follow the offer. Examples in the field were the offers and categorizations by the artists or other participants acting on their behalf, with consecutive selections by an audience. All these phenomena instantiated combinations of redundancy and novelty in a process of mutual recursivity: They had to offer something perceivably new in order to be distinguishable from what was already there, yet they also had to largely remain redundant in light of existing offers, so they could be recognized as belonging to the same cultural niche.

The metadata provided in order to attempt a categorization of the offers referenced redundant information, e.g. well-known music styles and their protagonists. At the same time, novelty at least in some details was claimed for the works of art on

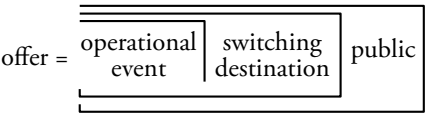
offer, proactively rationalizing a selection out of interest that could occur if the offer was to be recognized in the public discussion.



Form equation 2.4.2.a: A phenomenon observed as a process combining redundant elements in a context of novelty with novel elements in a context of redundancy.

2.4.3 Operating Publics

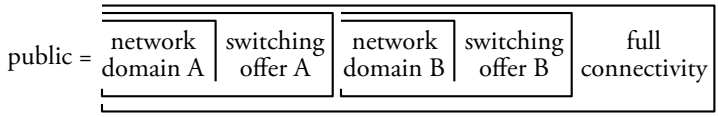
Publics relied on indications from within the network domains for guidance in the process of switching. They could not generate the necessary information themselves, but rather had to select from what was on offer and then follow the directions provided. In the case of the artist profiles, mentions of and links to other artists were such indications, offering starting points for switchings. Via evaluation of observations, it could then be decided whether or not these comparisons did indeed fit the expectations in the cultural context in which they were situated. The artists, or whoever made these offers to the public, could anticipate possible judgments in the public opinion, and thereby select which comparison offers to make. The offer as phenomenon can be modeled as follows:



Form equation 2.4.3.a: The offer as an operational event in a context of a switching destination, embedded into a situation of a public.

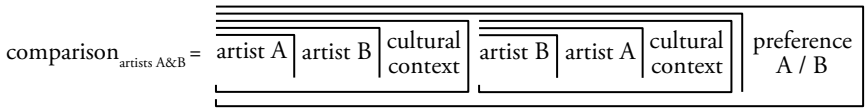
The public can then be described as a situation integrating different offers for switchings. It can, therefore, make network domains observable for each other.[11] The precondition for this is that all network domains known to the participants can potentially become topics in the public communication, allowing members of the public to make the switch and engage in communication specific to a certain network domain. The principle of the public situation is modeled in the following equation:

11 Dirk Baecker (2007c: pp. 85) has described a similar function of the public (although the German word "Öffentlichkeit" does not seem to translate to "public" entirely). Baecker defines one function of the public as the marking of boundaries between social systems, i.e. providing an independent secondary version of otherwise determining boundaries that can be discussed as an observation.



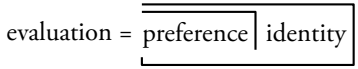
Form equation 2.4.3.b: The situation of the public as observations of network domains A and B, embedded in the context of switching offers referencing them, respectively, all in the context of full connectivity among the different switching offers.

The public opinion can be seen as a conglomerate of different assessments of switching offers. In our example of artists comparing themselves among other artists, such communication could be observed in written comments on MySpace or Facebook profiles, in journalistic writing, on blogs, and as themes in situations of interaction. For example, if an artist named a certain well-known musician as an influence to his work, this mention could be taken up and discussed in online forums or in an article in a music magazine. The public opinion forming there could agree that indeed such an influence was credible and that the artist's work was somehow comparable to his influencer's work. This would then have been a publicly made positive evaluation of the artist's profile, and it could help deepen the embedding of the profile in the domain of cultural practice. As the basis of this principle, I have already introduced the notion of comparison (see section 1.5.1):



Form equation 2.4.3.c: The comparison between artists A and B as the preference for one of the artists in observation of the unified differentiation of a cultural context from which references to both artists are separated, with these references in turn serving as contexts for references to the operational realms of the respective other artist.

The preference could then be communicated separately, in a form I have been referring to as evaluation. In an evaluation, the preference is connected to an identity communicating it. By triggering this identity, other network domains this identity is involved in become accessible. Therefore, evaluations in public communication can themselves serve as switching offers.



Form equation 2.4.3.d: Evaluation as a preference observed in the context of an identity.

Another option besides observing explicit evaluations, which always required indicating the observer expressing the evaluation, was to simply not select a potential relationship at all. In fact, the vast majority of comparison offers made on artist websites and profile pages were never evaluated in the sense that they would have been talked about in interaction or mentioned in online comments. Such switching offers may still have left an impression with visitors to the website, or even triggered a switching, but their failure to directly establish themselves as themes in public communication meant that they could not have an immediate and explicit positive influence on the public image of the artist.

What is especially notable about the offers we are analyzing is that the largest proportion of indications that led to switchings was provided directly by the protagonists in the field: the artists, the label owner H, and his assistant L. This information was not processed by any intermediate party, such as expert journalists at music magazines, for example. It had been selected for public presentation directly by those who had to be concerned about their public image.

The online publics were in a situation where its members had broad access to original material in terms of audio and video recordings of the artists' work that was provided by the artists themselves. The public as a switching device between network domains (White 1995) operated with information that it received directly out of those network domains, without intermediate buffering layers of expert selection – which material to discuss –, or judgment. Such expert opinion would have been available in evaluations that could be more successful in public communication simply because of them originating from a privileged network position in broadcast media, such as print magazines, radio, and television. These media of communication, and with them their experts, still played an important role in the public reception of the works produced in the field, but the information they provided in terms of offers for switchings amounted to only a minority of all information available.

Because it could not rely on experts for the preselection of switchings that would be worth pursuing, any public situation where interest in the artistic practice of our field was present could potentially process a vast amount of primary material and subsequently come up with evaluations. So, while the situation could certainly be described as one where the experts lost influence, another valid perspective is that indeed the public took over many of the social functions that were otherwise performed by the experts. In this view, we see the evolution of publics into expert publics (see Hutter 2007, pp. 36). Such expert publics had to engage in a complex distributed process of creating valuation orders, forming public opinions. They were not neces-

sarily new phenomena, as predecessors can be found e.g. in fan clubs[12] or fanzines[13]. However, these predecessors typically did not have to deal with the same load of primary material accessible to them, provided directly by the protagonists of the field of practice they were interested in.

The notion that the public situations forced the artists to engage in the process of directly providing information that the publics could use for switchings became prevalent in the field. The artist O mentioned that the label owner H had asked all artists on the label C's roster to create their own MySpace profile page, if they hadn't already done so (P1513). The reason the label owner gave for this request was that he feared other MySpace users, who were unrelated to the label, could create profile pages in the artists' names, effectively hijacking their identities on this platform. He warned that it would be hard to take control of such profiles once they were created. Therefore, the best remedy was to prevent this from happening altogether by creating official profile pages for each artist in time. Notably, the label owner saw this as the responsibility of the artists themselves and did not, at least not openly, consider making this a centralized task for the label. No similar call to action by the label owner was issued regarding the creation of Facebook pages.

2.4.4 Different Public Situations

Social situations facilitating publics could be observed in different instantiations in the field. In his definition of the public, Harrison C. White (1995) pointed out the full, all-inclusive connectivity of a public, which seems to suggest that such situations would foster interaction systems as Luhmann described them (Luhmann 1995a: pp. 405). However, the situations in which switchings between different network domains took place did not all involve interaction systems. In fact, the cases in which instantiations of publics also rendered interaction systems were only a minority in the field.

One of the cases in which a public situation did contain interaction systems was at an event with a performance. The performances took place in front of audiences, but not everybody inside the venue was part of the audience. In fact, the decision whether or not to make the switch – e.g. from interacting with peers – to engaging in the audience was often made only after the performance had started. The details of these situations are analyzed in Chapter 4.

Other public situations were not based on face-to-face communication. An operation where someone read about an artist in a music magazine, then entered the

12 For a study on fan clubs of the TV series Star Trek, see Wenger 2006.
13 Renner and Renner (2011: pp. 40) describe how fanzines, music magazines produced by fans, could be distributed because photocopy machines became available at the end of the 1970s.

artist's name in an online search, visited the artist's website or MySpace profile page, and listened to the music offered there, also took place in a situation of a public. Of course, this is not limited to computer technology, as the printed magazine has allowed for similar actions for much longer than the computer has been around. The difference, however, is that with the possibilities available to the artists in the field, the printed magazines – or, for that matter, their online counterparts – were not exclusive grounds for publics any more. Searches for interesting artifacts with an appreciated novelty value did not have to rely on information gathered and channeled by professional music journalists. Rather, they could come directly from the artists themselves. Whereas before, the announcement of a new release or a concert would have been sent to magazines and similar outlets by the artists or their agents, the availability of the so-called social networks made it much more probable that the text in which an interested member of the public read about an upcoming release for the first time had actually been written by the artist himself, and would be continuously updated as the release neared publication.

This had various implications in our field. Music magazines and similar publications still existed, but they took on new, diversified roles, extending beyond the information channels that had been the basis for their operation before. During the research period, the magazine where the label owner H worked tried to establish its own monthly party event, with relatively prominent guest DJs and live acts (P1203; P1217; P1396). The party was originally conceptualized as a celebration of the publication of the monthly print issues, and, as part of the concept, each paying guest could grab a free copy of the new issue at the entrance. The party event was announced in the magazine, but the email newsletter sent out by the editors was at least as important to get the word out and draw the interest of potential visitors. Towards the end of the research period, the party events were discontinued, despite a good number of guests at the instances I attended (P1203; P1217).

At the same time, the artists also had to assume new roles. The advent of the social networks had drawn in artists of all categories and genres, united by the understanding that the production and distribution of works of art could benefit from direct involvement with the processes of reception. Audiences formed right there within MySpace, Facebook, and sometimes Last.fm, and their members appreciated the channels of direct communication with the artists; channels that had been facilitated by the technology of the internet. For the artists, this involvement brought the opportunity of being able to express their own opinions and views on their own music in the context of the broader cultural practice. They could address at least a part of their target groups, without the intermediate stages of professional promotion, including giving interviews and inside stories. These had been introduced as structural processes of the cultural industries (Kusek / Leonhard 2005: pp. 57), and as such, they were based on

the concepts of broadcasting, one-to-many network configurations and the notion of opinion leaders as influential hubs in relevant network parts. Notably, these processes did not disappear: Releases were still professionally promoted (see P1166), and artists still had interviews with music journalists (P1188). Via their online profiles, however, they could be a part of their target group's regular processing of information, partly by setting themes themselves, but more often by assuming the role of commenters in the continuous flow of themes occupying their cultural scene.

Artists acted as members of the public most of the time, and they used this role in building and maintaining their artist identity. This was especially visible on Facebook, where almost every new piece of information that entered the platform via a member was added to that member's "wall" and could be commented on either by the member's "friends" or by all members of the platform, depending on the respective member's privacy settings (see section 3.2 for more details on the technology of Facebook). For the artists, this socio-technological possibility brought about a potential to place themselves in relation to relevant cultural processes, i.e. announcements of releases and concerts by other artists, but also television shows, popular online videos, etc. This new potential could utilize a much larger amount of sources of novelty for the artists' work on their identity than what would have been possible with only the artists' own output of releases and other news as material. The artists' comments on material from other sources were themselves offers to the public, as they added new information, if only a relation or perspective, to the original material.

This directness of being involved in a continuous flow of themes also posed a risk for the artists. In the structures that the cultural industries had professionalized, possible misinterpretations or other unfavorable outcomes of information provided by or on behalf of an artist were carefully examined and could be reviewed and discussed before publication, if necessary. With the artists' direct involvement on the so-called social networks, this corrective was not available. Comments came from the artists themselves, and since the comments were read by many who knew the artists personally, any ghostwriting would have been identified quickly.

On MySpace, the use of anonymous agents keeping the artists' profiles up to date was a little more accepted. MySpace had different uses than Facebook, though, since the focus was much more on the presentation of information and less on taking a stance on information presented by someone else. It was more a replacement for an artist's website than a place for personal involvement by the artists themselves. Facebook, on the other hand, allowed the artists to get involved on a much broader basis.

2.4.5 Audiences out of Publics

An audience in the field can be defined as the group of members of the public who engage in the reception of a piece, a song, or an entire performance. Niklas Luhmann has described this mode of communication for the reception of art as a mode that is focused primarily on perception (Luhmann 1995b, pp. 39). This part of art reception is non-functional, and only the mere act of perception can be observed by a second-order observer. There is no understanding of the work of art as such to be observed. After decoupling from listening to or looking at a work of art, the act of focusing on perception can itself become a theme of communication and thereby serve a function, e.g. to indicate the listener's knowledge of aesthetic categories. All this happens in successive communication decoupled from the actual reception of a work of art. An audience is a precondition for the observation of art and artists, for if any given entity cannot be imagined as being perceived as art, it cannot be described as such. Of course, this does not rule out the possibility that the artists themselves make up their own exclusive audience, or that indeed the observer giving the account is the only member of the audience. Also, an audience may falsely be observed by others, without any reception actually taking place – think of the thin line between deep listening and sleep, for example.

With the exception of interviews and direct personal communication, all the data we are analyzing was originally published for public situations. In these situations of potential full connectivity (White 1995), messages containing information on the artists, labels, distributors, and other participants in our field faced competition for attention from a vast number of more or less similar offerings from other artists, labels, and distributors. In order to increase the chance that members of the public would switch their attention to their offerings, the participants in our field created distinct profiles in which they embedded their messages. In marketing, this process is known as target group marketing (Kotler / Armstrong / Saunders / Wong: pp. 441), where the presence of a specific interest in a public is assumed, and the offerings are then tailored to accommodate this assumed interest.

Perhaps the most obvious method of target group marketing I observed in the field was the splitting up of an artist's or organization's identity representation into separate sub-identities targeting separate interests. One example is the separation between the label C and its two sublabels. While the main label was known for releases in the broader realm of popular electronica music, one of the sublabels hosted music by bands or instrumentalists with a sound that was distinctively guitar-oriented, yet was situated in the same broader cultural context as the musical style of the main label (P76). The other sublabel focused on vinyl-only releases, so any music released on this sublabel could not be bought on CD or as MP3, at least not initially at the time

of its release (P1216). Thereby, this sublabel was targeted towards purist aficionados of the vinyl medium. The differentiation, the notion of distinctness in the context of the main label, was established through aesthetic classification in the case of the first sublabel, while in the second case being based on a preference for a specific technological medium. By addressing different publics, both sublabels could also have been the exclusive contact for audiences that did not consume the offerings made by the main label C. Similar cases can be observed among the artists: If an artist's work deviated enough in musical style, the artist would usually create separate areas of publication for each area of artistic work. In some cases, these areas were so strongly separated that distinctive identities with different artist names emerged in each area.

On the other hand, even a targeted publication by an artist or label could still gain attention from members of the public with different interests. One member of the public might be interested in the acoustic part of an electro-acoustic performance, while another could be interested mainly in techno music and therefore focus on the electronic part. If they made the switch and became part of the audience, each of these two members of the public would contextualize the performance differently, as each would use the performance as a starting point to reference comparable experiences and areas of knowledge within their particular background.

Thus, offers from participants in our field and the attention they received cannot be linked by any overarching rationalization or causal relation. Areas of interest could be targeted, and this was done in various forms, yet it was impossible to foresee any switchings. It was, however, possible to observe which mechanisms did not play a major role in channeling attention. For all the artists, their releases, and performances, I did not observe a single instance of paid-for advertisement; neither in print magazines nor in online publications. Also, no paid-for placements of search results appeared openly on Google (e.g. P1008; P1015; P1030; P2580). Therefore, we can almost rule out the possibility that any visitor to a website or profile page belonging to the field found his or her way to an artist or a label from an otherwise unrelated site through traditional advertising. When conducting searches myself, the artist and label profiles on MySpace, as well as the official websites showed up high in the ranking of search results on Google (Ibid.). Therefore, the label and its artists could easily be found if their names were already known in the public domain. Another way for members of the public to find the label and the artists was through related sites offering links, either on the open web, or within MySpace or Facebook. Most of the artists on the label C's roster had the label as a "top friend" on their MySpace profile, and were themselves featured on the label's profile page. The artists were also referenced by other artists outside of the label's inner circle, often because they belonged to more than one label's roster (e.g. P32; P445; P447; P676), or because they had collaborated with these other artists in the past (P78; P548). Public interest in one of the artists'

profiles could then lead to a fraction of the members of the public actively switching over to the other artist's profile. Each artist added more and more such references to the profile over time, thereby gradually building the potential for attention from the public.

The "top friends" section on the profile page of the label run by artist O (P32).

Participants in the field offered metadata to the publics not just hoping that members of the publics would read through them, but with the actual goal of building audiences. An audience would not just know of an artist, but would actually listen to his music, attend performances, and likely take part in discussions of works or of the artist himself. Therefore, the offerings by the artists and the label C often included direct invitations to listen to works or watch videos. This included interviews in print magazines and online publications as well as websites and profile pages on social network sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Last.fm, and others (for Last.fm, see for example P2; P373).

The Last.fm page dedicated to the label C (P2).

None of this could have been achieved without social embedding: Statements about the quality of an artist's own creative output were usually backed up by mentions of references to other artists, claiming similarity to their work – while retaining the claim of originality for the artist's own work –, and sometimes naming collaboration projects with them, or quoting from their assessment.

The claim of artistic originality could be found primarily in the combination of references. Each reference was directed towards certain expected interests among members of the public, and by combining indications towards existing knowledge with references to areas that were new, the artist could eventually hope to shape an original profile. White (1998: pp. 9) has described this process of building identities as a sequence of mismatches between expectations and outcomes, where the specifics of the mismatch are then attributed to the identity, which thereby gains informational value. Baecker (2005a: p. 229) has expressed the process of maintaining an identity in the following equation:

$$\text{identity} = \frac{\text{deviation}}{\text{norm}}$$

Form equation 2.4.5.a: An identity as the process of deviation from an established norm (Baecker 2005a: p. 229, transl. FG).

With such a combination of references as the basis for an original profile, an artist could try to build an audience out of the different participants in the public situation who observed the profile. However, the sum of the people present at any of the performance events I observed was not identical with the audience for the performances happening there. Indeed, in several cases only a very small audience formed inside a venue full of people. The rest of the people present remained engaged in a situation of public interaction, which the audience had decoupled from in order to engage in perception of the work of art. Decoupling in order to enjoy the work or artistic performance and coupling again in order to join the public interaction could happen in quick succession and could often not be observed as separate states of engagement.

The observation of an audience was a necessary precursor for the observation of a work or artistic performance. That is why control over audience formation was sought after so much at the performances I observed. Artists without an audience would immediately run the risk of losing their status as artists, and with this status, they would also lose their appeal to the public. Therefore, any decrease or increase in the size of the audience was carefully observed both by members of the public and the artists themselves. As tedious as it may have been, the artists had to take the approach of attempting to attract the interest of as many members of the targeted publics as possible in order to build the potential for winning over at least a signifi-

cant part of them as their audience. The presence of interested members of the public at a performance event was already an improbable phenomenon in the light of all the different options on offer at any given night in a city like Berlin. The next step of convincing the members of the public present at a performance event to actually engage in listening to the music and following the performance was also hard to take, as the possibilities to remain engaged in public interaction with other visitors at the performance event were many.

All efforts at getting members of the public interested in artistic work could only create the potential for an audience to form at a performance event. The potential then had to be seized, either by attempts to change the social situation so thoroughly that interaction neglecting the presence of the performance was forced to break up (see section 4.2), or by creating a strict, enforceable schedule for the performance event.

Not all communicational offers were directly related to the forming of an audience for an artist's work. Via the public, other important wins for the artists could be gained as well. For example, an artist could get a commission to work on a score for a television feature, just because the director of the feature had read about the artist in a newspaper article.

Taking on and enacting the roles of performers was in part an attempt to get action from the public present at a performance event. A performance was still a situation of mutual recursive observation, not unlike the situation within an interaction (for a detailed analysis of such a situation, see section 4.1.5). Since the performance was temporary, the audience always dissolved into the public again.

2.4.6 Audiences as Performers

Audiences were important network domains in the cultural practice in the field. The artists, labels, and organizers of performance events all constructed a large part of their actions focusing on their respective potential audiences. Yet, the desirable act of participants in a public situation switching in, engaging with an offer, e.g. starting to listen to an embedded music file on a MySpace profile page, or watching a performance, was not observable directly. If we take communication to be the unity of an uttered information being understood (see section 1.4.3), then we can observe the uttering of information in any public situation, but we cannot take its being understood for granted. Although a large number of people might have been present in front of the stage where an artist was performing, their sheer presence did not necessarily lead them towards uttering signs of understanding, which might be observable as reception. We have to look carefully for signs of understanding being uttered as fresh information, so we can indirectly come to conclusions about participants that

included themselves in the audience. Online, this can only be achieved by the traces an audience left behind, e.g. in counters or other web statistics tools.

Understanding was signaled mostly through comments on the music. Of course, such comments could only be given while the commenter was not listening, so it required a decoupling from the audience to signal the engagement in the audience. Decoupling from the audience, the commenter became a participant in the public situation again, which was where the comment was placed and could itself be observed and understood. The most ritualized form of commenting was applause, which was given either in between songs or tracks, if there were noticeable breaks or even moments of silence between them, or after longer parts of the performance. Some performances went on without any breaks leaving room for applause, so it could only be given at the very end of the performance.

I have described a few basic mechanisms how audiences can form from publics. Both areas are thus not separate operations, but rather deeply interwoven. In the next two chapters, we will look at case studies where these processes can be analyzed in detail.

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