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# The Politicization of the German Ethical Consumer

A Qualitative Analysis of an Ethical Fashion Network and its Production of Ethical  
Consumer Subjectivity

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# 1. Introduction

*Ich weiß nicht was ihr habt/ ich seh' nur gute Menschen/  
alle lieben Kinder/ alle gehen Blut spenden/  
doch das letzte was man hier noch vermisst/  
ist die Antwort auf die Frage warum alles bleibt wie's ist.  
OK Kid ("Gute Menschen")*

For some, ethical fashion is a cultural trend. For others it is a new and expansive market which is interested in sustainability and social change. This text analyzes ethical fashion as a simultaneous political, cultural and economic network which produces subjectivities through a complex dynamic of network actors. The relationship between network-actors can be seen, for example, in the following statement regarding the *H&M Conscious* clothing line<sup>1</sup>. In relation to its efforts Anna Gedda, the brand's head of sustainability, states:

"Big change requires bold actions and the courage to aim high. At the same time, we have to be humble to the challenges our planet is facing. So if we want to make real change we have to be brave, push the boundaries and not be afraid to fail" (H&M Group)

According to this statement, "[b]ig change" is a goal by the brand. The process of achieving this goal seem to be related to specific developments in terms of ideals, such as "bold action and the courage to aim high" as well as a certain level of cooperation, as can be assumed by the use of personal pronouns such as "we" and "our".

Ever since global inequalities caused by the industry have become more visible, particularly since the publication of information regarding the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza textile factory in Bangladesh, which killed 1135 people, organizations have appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, to counteract the industry's negative impact. The global non-governmental organization *Fashion Revolution*, for example, shows a commitment to counteracting these negative impacts in their 'about'-section on the website:

"We celebrate fashion as a positive influence while also scrutinising industry practices and raising awareness of the fashion industry's most pressing issues. We aim to show that change is possible and encourage those who are on a journey to create a more ethical and sustainable future for fashion." (*Fashion Revolution: About*)

Embedded in this statement is a further aspect of ethical fashion. Whereas movements commonly protest against a particular ideology or reality rather than becoming entangled with that which they are protesting against, ethical fashion does just that. Because of the idea that the negative impacts of fast fashion can be counteracted with slow fashion, the movement appears to have

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<sup>1</sup> H&M Conscious is a brand collection which has been dropped annually since 2011. Its most significant concern is to provide an ethical alternative for customers (see Jakob 2019)

brought forth a new kind of consumer tied to this movement – the ethical consumer. By framing “fashion as a positive influence” and encouraging “those who are on a journey to create a more ethical and sustainable future for fashion”, it not only invokes the ideal of consumer responsibility, but it also implicitly creates this new, ethical consumer as a potential new future in its discourse.

However, recent studies have shown an increase in public scrutiny of ethical fashion efforts by brands and organizations. Accusations surrounding the topic of ‘greenwashing’, a process of commodification understood to be embedded in the pretense actions of brands to present themselves as eco-friendly, for example, have become increasingly public and problematic for brands. In a 2019 article published by *NTV*, Diana Dittmer interviews Lara Keuthen, the editor of the eco-lifestyle magazine *Peppermyntha*, who explains that greenwashing is a consequence of the popularity of ethical fashion concerns:

“[...] Nachhaltigkeit ist angesagt und mehr als die Hälfte der Deutschen gibt an, dass sie sich dafür interessieren. Das ist die perfekte Steilvorlage für Marketing.“ (Dittmer 2019)

Most of this public scrutiny comes from organizations and initiatives which are designed to counteract the negative social, economic and ecological impact of the fast fashion industry. However, public scrutiny also concerns ethical fashion initiatives and their certification methods. An assessment by the German Bundestag from 2016, for example, shows the overall critical review of the *Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien*. Whereas *CDU/CSU* politician Mechthild Heil calls the initiative a success, *SPD*-politician Elvira Drobinski-Weiß and *Die Linke*-politician Niema Movassat expressed their discontentment with the results, the latter calling the initiative “eine Farce” and demanding stricter regulations (Deutscher Bundestag).

Considering this increasing level of visibility concerning the ethical fashion topic, it makes sense that the brand’s reaction has to involve the new consumer subjectivity produced by the growing interest. After all, the brand needs to maintain its position in the market. However, the rationale of sociopolitical organizations promoting the agenda also plays a significant role in the establishment of a new consumer subjectivity. And even if that agenda is ethically ‘good’ as understood by our current range of ethical codes, consumers are caught in a process of subjectivation via politicization which they may not be aware of. This politicization of consumer subjectivity will be addressed in this master’s thesis in order to propose arguments for a more reasonable approach.

The qualitative study seeks to investigate the construction of ethical consumer subjectivity through the politicization of ethical fashion in Germany based on interviews and participatory observation of self-described ethical consumers as well as what I will refer to as an ethical fashion network, which, aside from consumers, includes network representatives and their respective organization or initiative, and brands<sup>2</sup>. My thesis necessitates three significant steps, including individual analyses of 1) the ethical fashion consumer, including main motivations for ethical consumption as well as self-perception, 2) the ethical fashion network, including transformations and rationale, and 3) network and consumer interdependencies, focusing on the strategies through which consumers are affected by network rationale. All aspects of the study will be accompanied by a contextualization.

The leading questions of my thesis will therefore include two focus fields: The first field pertains to consumer subjectivity, so it includes evocations of ethical consumer perception. How do they view their own position within the network and how has the growing push for consumer action affected their approach to fashion, and why? Do they feel a social or moral obligation to be more aware of their consumption habits? When and why did they decide to be more aware?

The second focus field covers questions such as what the main aims of ethical fashion organizations are and what they expect in terms of consumer engagement. Where do they see responsibility and how do they expect to engage the consumer? It also asks, further, what kind of rationale regarding consumer behavior and action is embedded in their discourse.

I claim that this complex politicization process utilizes sociopolitical notions of consumer responsibility and conscious and unconscious dependencies on group belonging and external validation. These notions are then disseminated through many realms of interaction based on a political re-articulation. Through the course of this process, the main culprit, namely global capitalism, is escaping focus and accountability. Ethical fashion organizations and initiatives play a significant part in the subjectivation of ethical consumers which ultimately leads to a projection of responsibility. This projection lies at the foundation of the very contradictions which are preventing the movement from achieving its goals. This assertion is to be assessed and analyzed through a focus on consumer and network rationale, network strategies and inherent contradictions in network approach. The conclusion will include the conceptualization of a

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<sup>2</sup> Since I will be focusing closely on the commodification of ethical consumer subjectivity in my PhD research, this thesis sets a focus on subjectivation mechanisms concerning sociopolitical organizations rather than brands.

hypothetical non-governmental organization which works to counteract the negative effects on consumer subjectivity.

## **2. Consumer and Network: Motivation and Rationale in Ethical Fashion**

Contrary to popular belief, ethical consumption is not a brand-new trend. Interdisciplinary research, including studies focusing on consumer behavior and market transformations, range back to the 1980s, covering “issues such as fair trade, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable consumption” (Barnett et al. 2005: 5). The topic of ethical fashion consumption, or even consumer studies in general, has been analyzing many different research fields, including business and economics. Until recently, the anthropological realm has largely been supporting these fields by presenting “narrow conceptualisations of ethical decision-making by consumers, companies, and public organisations” (Barnett et al. 2005: 6).

The current sum of anthropological research sees the connecting line between ethics and consumption as relating to two dimensions: The first dimension centralizes the “active and creative dimensions of consumption” (Barnett et al. 2005: 4). Here, the focus is related to practices of self-formation which are commonly viewed as autonomous actions (Jackson 1999, Gregson and Crewe 2002, Miller 1995; 1998). This realm is particularly concerned with determining the role of consumers in networks and processes related to consumption. The second realm relates to the politics of networking in contemporary processes of commodification. It concerns extensive analyses of the realities linked to supply-chains such as the paths of commodities as they make their way from production to consumption, emphasizing the often undisclosed realities of commodity-chains (Mezzadri 2017). Another significant aspect of this perspective also includes a critical analysis of the relationship between knowledge and subjectivities within a network of ethical consumption initiatives (Hale 2000, Hale and Shaw 2001, Hughes 2001).

In order to assess the qualitative data provided in this text, I will provide a summary of relevant empirical research related to the consumer as well as the network and then focus, in the last chapter, on theoretical developments regarding the subjectivation of consumers, which will lead through the contextualization of this text.

The first chapter concerning the consumer offers information regarding consumer motivation and perception in relation to the consumption and promotion of fair and sustainable fashion. The second chapter focuses on the network. Themes include recent analyses of contemporary transformations as well as evocations of an organizational rationale, outlining the structures and formations of standards and ideals. The third chapter then focuses on the network-consumer relationship, assessing theoretical developments related to the way in which a humanitarian effort tends to develop into a regime-like mechanism.

## **2.1. The Consumer**

Although economic studies range back much further, the sociological research field of consumer culture gained popularity with the social anthropologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu and his text *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984), linking social origin to aesthetic expression. As described by Alan Warde, another influence in the establishment of the research field surrounding consumer culture is Mike Featherstone, whose text *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (1991) greatly expanded the demarcation of boundaries related to the field (see Warde 2015: 12.4). He explains that in sociological study, consumer culture has frequently been regarded a two-sided but interrelated development which connects to, both, social division and individual commodity dependencies, whereas cultural and social anthropology is “notable for contesting both dominant economic explanations and the widespread moral condemnation of consumer behavior” (Warde 2015: 12.4).

Generally, sociologists and anthropologists have defined three categories related to consumer motivation. For one, it is understood as involving psychological motivations related to the maximization of satisfaction, which leads us to correlate goods with positive experiences (Miller 1998). Another motivation is related to group belonging in that a commodity promotes a group identity through a semiotic system which relates the consumer to a particular subculture or class (Bourdieu 1987). This motivation also presupposes the consumer’s ability to relate to the world through the semiotic system, or in other words, to be affected by her or his environment. The last motivation, as outlined, for example, by Christer Sanne (2002) involves the consumer’s individual understanding of self, how that self relates to others and through which means that construction of identity can be established. No longer necessarily related to group belonging, this

form of consumption motivation relates to the internal construction of a perceived autonomous self which stands in relation to external influences (Miller 1995; 1998).

This applies to the ethical consumption of fashion as well. Most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is defined by an excessive interest in commodities. However, in the last few decades ethical considerations regarding commodity choices have gained public and academic interest. For example, Nicholls explains that with ethical consumption, consumer interest has been removed from a realm of need satisfaction to identity-based choices (see Nicholls 2002).

It is important to clarify that ethical consumers are not all the same. Several subcategories can be tied to the overarching dimension. Manchiraju and Sadachar, for example, found different labels: “sustainable consumption, socially responsible consumption, conscious consumption, or fair trade consumption” (Manchiraju & Sadachar 2014: 361) are all among those subcategories. However, ethics, being the overarching category, is what essentially determines the similarities of the labels: they stand in relation to non-ethical consumption – meaning, they define a particular branch of consumption which is interested in moral behavior and ideals over perceived self-interest. Many of these groups are very specific. Sustainability-focused consumers might be more motivated by ecological considerations (see Newholm & Shaw 2007: 259) rather than socially-conscious decision-making. But apart from that, the more general term ethical consumption refers to a movement which is interested in opposing a generalized regime-ideology, human-rights violations, as well as promoting sustainable market practices. Manchiraju and Sadachar explain that, generally, the ethical consumer has “political, religious, spiritual, environmental, social or other motives” for their commodity choices (Manchiraju & Sadachar 2014: 357). The term ethical refers to all of those categories in different ways.

An important part of the movement is the recent development of fears regarding the collective survival of humanity. This fairly recent focus of ethical consumers is increasingly concerned with ideas of diminishing resources and means for survival as well as ecological considerations related to waste. Under the popular header ‘sustainability’, ethical consumers have begun to concern themselves with the needs of people who do not live in their immediate environment and whose success and contentment do not necessarily affect their own, on a global scale. Arguably, the access to information may have played a part in that. Newholm & Shaw claim that the increase in visibility regarding social ‘issues’ has created a new focus on awareness regarding consumption choices (Newholm & Shaw 2007). Aside from this new



awareness, however, another development of their research is the subsequent glorification of responsible consumers as role models and general objects of sophistication. As outlined by Manchiraju & Sadachar, it was this idealism which led to a market response which adopted the new consciousness into a branch of corporate social responsibility which now, among other determinants, signifies the value of a brand (Manchiraju & Sadachar 2014: 358) and, by proxy, its consumers.

The glorification of a particular social ideal then also means the expression of a particular political stance. Whereas people seem to be losing interest in traditional politics, as can be seen by research concerning the decreasing interest in voting among the newer generation (Hertz 2001), the internet seems to have made consumers more political than ever. And this rather new tendency is increasingly dominant in market-related politics as described by Jo Littler in his book *Radical Consumption: Shopping for Change in Contemporary Culture* (2008). He explains that the rise in politically-motivated consumption is closely related to the disbelief in traditional politics. Therefore, the self-actualizing side of commodity-consumption has, in a way, become the way in which consumers express their political stance. A recent analysis by McGregor (2015) has also posited the claim that the perceived autonomy linked to shopping has become a major indicator of what is held to be a kind of political independence.

In contrast to the connection most research makes between consumption behavior and political action, Barnett et al. add the “habitual, practical dimensions of consumption.” (Barnett et al. 2005: 6). Thereby, they further define the apparent learned behavior as related to the desire to foster positive relationships. They claim that there is a direct connection between conscious appropriation of behavior related to ethical representation toward *other* and unconscious decision-making processes underlining the understanding of *self* – all of it being conducted as part of everyday life. Barnett et al. therefore extend ideas surrounding consumption to include unconscious psychological mechanisms.

In brief, this background on consumer-related ethical fashion efforts shows that there are four major motivations which would lead a consumer to identify as ethical. 1) The positive experience of shopping, which has now been removed from basic need satisfaction to include a feeling of contentment with oneself and one’s ethical decisions, 2) the feeling of solidarity with a group, supporting the same efforts and the validation of one’s identity by that group, 3) the

establishment of a self-understanding revolving around a socially and politically autonomous self, and 4) the desire to foster positive relationships in everyday situations.

## **2.2. The Network**

Within the time span of the last three decades there has been “the emergence of initiatives and movements campaigning around such issues as fair-trade, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable consumption” (Barnett et al. 2005: 5) According to studies by Durning (1992) and Newholm (1999), this development has had a significant effect on consumer behavior. In Germany, there has been a surge of interest not only in sustainable production, but more recently, particularly since the 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza textile factory, in socially responsible work environments for textile workers. The *Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien*, for example, was established as a direct response to a heightened interest in the topic. Economic responses to the visibility of certain issues include the creation of different certification methods for clothing with the aim to provide a promise of fair or sustainable production and manufacturing, such as the previously mentioned *H&M Conscious* collection.

Aside from a general overview of these transformations, the research focus also includes another area of interest concerning the question regarding what kind of institutive concern actually constitutes ethical behavior. Many initiatives and organizations, especially if they are government-funded, have come under scrutiny in public and academic discourse. Much of the debate surrounds the issue of “authenticity perceptions” (Heuer & Becker-Leifhold 2018) including notions such as ‘greenwashing’. There have been a range of studies researching the reason why consumers seem to be skeptical regarding corporate social responsibility efforts (Carrigan & Attala 2001; Bray et al. 2011) which show a general consensus that there are many consumers who do not trust the fashion industry enough to believe that sustainable brand products actually hold up what they promise. In Germany, the public also seems to display a general distrust when it comes to the application of the different certifications, such as *Grüner Knopf*. As explained in a 2019 article by leading ethical fashion online magazine *Utopia*, “[w]ichtige Begrifflichkeiten seien nicht geklärt und es sei offen welche Teile der Lieferkette abgedeckt werden und wie die Überprüfung stattfinden soll” (Reuter 2019). These designations, which mostly concern the sustainable production of textiles rather than social responsibility, are commonly challenged by consumers and organizations alike.

Generally, the range of organizations and initiatives involved in what I am referring to as an ethical fashion network include “ethical trading organizations”, “lobby groups”, “fair trade campaign organizations” co-operative movements”, “consumer boycott campaigns”, and “no-logo-anti globalization campaigns” (Barnett et al. 2005: 5). Together they form a kind of binding movement against un-ethical fashion conduct and adopt a diverse range of tactical approaches to fight against it. Studies from different disciplines cover the separate and interrelated realms. The field of economics is largely concerned with the influence of the information medium as a tool for both market actors and initiatives (Bateman et al. 2002), whereas sociological research on consumption is focused primarily on the role of the consumer within the network (Barnett et al. 2005: 5). Both of those aspects are of some importance for the analysis in this thesis as they surround the concept of knowledge-production. As outlined by Barnett et al. “ethical consumption practices often work through registers that, while outwardly universalistic in their ethical and political claims, are related to routines of differentiation, discrimination, and distinction” (6), which means that, while initiatives and organizations may have positive intentions, their practical approach is subject to contradictions which have a negative effect.

A 1997 study by Miller and Rose shows, for example, that political mobilization through shared identity has not led to many of the anticipated results. The study hypothesized that this is due to the strategic weaponization of ethical behavior which can be framed as standing in opposition to solidarity. Traub-Werner and Crave (2003) show that many of the network’s initiatives and organizations reproduce an opposition between active and passive recipients of the initiative’s altruistic rationale. Not only does this model portray a top-down mechanism of giver and taker, but it also potentially leads to a projection of liability and blame (Barnett 2004). Many initiatives hold themselves as neither liable for the actions of the fashion industry, nor to be blamed for any broken promises regarding its effective change. What this model of political responsibility has the potential to lead to is a shift toward the assumption that the consumer is accountable for, both, the flaws of the industry as well as the mobilization of political change. The everyday and sometimes very necessary act of shopping for clothes is now framed as a political act, which only the consumer is responsible for.

An interesting example of this phenomenon and its side-effects is the concept of *social design*. Friederike von Wedel-Parlow explains that the act of shopping is a choice which signifies social belonging and therefore also social isolation:

“Selbst die bewusste Ablehnung von Mode wird durch die Auswahl der Bekleidung ungewollt ausgedrückt. Ein Modemuffel gibt sein Statement gleichermaßen ab wie die Fashionista, die immer am Zahn der Zeit sein will und jeden (vermeintlich) neuen Trend mitmacht und ihre Garderobe bis ins Detail abstimmt.“ (Wedel-Parlow 2017: 113)

Her research concerns the domain of social design, a different approach which seeks to focus on the human aspect of fashion. Social design does not seek to level the unequal and unethical playing field of the industry, rather, it seeks to establish a new realm which is heavily influenced by ideas concerning zero-waste and recycling methods. In the introduction to her book *Social Design: Gestaltung für die Transformation der Gesellschaft*, Claudia Banz describes this phenomenon as a transformative design movement comprised of several scattered actors who seek to relate the ecological, economic and social. She explains that, in terms of responsibility and accountability the movement follows the same top-down relationship as described above:

“Die anstehende ›Transformation von Gesellschaft‹ fordert nun auch die Akteure im komplexen Feld des Designs vermehrt zu einer verantwortungsbewussten und kritischen Haltung heraus. Zur Disposition steht die Gestaltung des Sozialen, wofür Design als eines der geeignetsten Tools erscheint: Dabei wird das Soziale verstanden als Reich spezifischer, transindividueller Strukturen, Identitäten, Kulturen und Bedürfnisse, das zwischen Staat und Zivilgesellschaft lokalisiert ist.” (Banz 2016: 8)

This field between state and consumers ends up holding within it all responsibility while actors engage in the delineation of the structures which they, themselves, are subject to. So, while social design is often understood as a new and innovative way of approaching political activism, which integrates participation and social empowerment, it also projects a rationale which highlights consumer responsibility, and also, at the same time, remains neutral toward any level of accountability.

In brief, this chapter summarizes the ways in which the ethical fashion network has failed to produce the results which it aims to produce. The authors of the texts mentioned in this chapter have hypothesized that this is due to several different reasons including 1) allegiance with government-funding, 2) an increase in visibility which not only led to consumer engagement, but also new market strategies to profit from the social developments, 3) a focus on political mobilization through shared identity and the subsequent establishment of hierarchies and projections of responsibility and 4) the notion of individual responsibility, which creates the field of social design and scatters group initiatives and efforts.

### 2.3. Network Influence on Consumer Subjectivity

It is important for the coherence of this thesis to determine the ambivalence through which the network is defined. As already mentioned above, the network seems to have some contradictions. These contradictions are not exclusive to ethical fashion or consumer studies. One closely related research field is the study of regimes. Hess et al. describe in their 2018 text *Regime ist nicht Regime ist nicht Regime. Zum theoriepolitischen Einsatz der ethnografischen (Grenz-) Regimeanalyse* that the focus on contradictions within the studies regarding the rule, power, normativity and representation within society started in the 1970s, although many think back to Marx. Michel Foucault's concept surrounding the subject and power (1982) as well as Stuart Hall's representation regime (2012) are also mentioned. Hess et al. explain that these studies hold one major correlation: the study of contradictions. These contradictions are usually related to the topic of agency. The analysis of regime ideology then generally explores the way in which individuals are made to believe they are accessing and experiencing agency, when, in fact, they are driven by external ideals and power mechanisms.

Another research field which focuses on contradictions within institutional rationale, in this case pertaining directly to matters related to ethics, is comprised of studies in moral anthropology relating to humanitarianism. These studies tend to explore non-governmental as well as governmental organizations and their efforts to establish a humanitarian alternative to institutional governmentality (Fassin 2007). Many of the organizations tend to promote and, perhaps, even believe that their intentions are pure, without ever considering the contradictions within their rationale. Most of the studies in this realm show a field which is, as Donini puts it, "fraught with ambiguities" (Donini 2015: 72). Commonly, this is due to the pressures of capitalism. He claims that humanitarianism is defined by the "same standards and *modus operandi*" (72) as the capitalist system. The dominant models of 'doing humanitarianism' are the successful ones, and therefore those which define what humanitarianism is and can be. He claims that the capitalist system's natural competition model affects humanitarian organizations as much as it does anyone else. What he refers to as "network power" (75) is the way in which "standards that are designed by outsiders [...] have achieved critical mass in language, technology, trade, law and many other areas" (75). And this network isolates other, smaller groups whose efforts may be more in line with actual change rather than a colonization of ethics as a category determining the value of individuals.

In either case, the main contradiction in studies on regimes and humanitarianism relate to the topic of agency. Didier Fassin explains that agency is either exercised as free will to choose any given morality or the freedom to oppose it. However, it is commonly claimed that people choose to disregard their agency for the sake of norms and standards, which are perceived to support a collective good (see Fassin 2014: 431). Furthermore, collectivity has historically proven to be drenched in contradictions. For instance, the “humanitarian politics of life” (Fassin 2007) divides the world into categories which greatly universalize and, at the same time, essentialize individuals, while promoting agency as a human right:

“The world order, it supposes, is made up of the powerful and the weak. Humanitarian action takes place in the space between the two, being deployed among the weak as it denounces the powerful. It therefore relates to only one part of humanity — the one on the wrong side of life.” (Fassin 2007: 512)

In doing so, it “essentializes the victims” (512) as well as essentializing ethical behavior. It promotes two processes to combat the victimization of the *other*: 1) a top-down rationale which gives to those who need and 2) a differentiation between ethical and non-ethical as explained in the chapter above. These processes are driven by the subjectivation of consumer identity in which the politicization project promoted, in this case, by ethical fashion organizations, plays a fundamental role. Therefore, the relationship consumers build between their own habits and their identity can easily be affected by external input (Niinimäki 2010).

Postmodern societies have been particularly interested in establishing this connection which included the excessive focus on individual responsibility. Seemingly free in agency, and free of regime rule, consumers now feel compelled to not only embark on a journey to find but also to express their identity to the world. And this comes with the need to constantly reevaluate one’s own path. As explained by Giddens, “the narrative of self-identity has to be shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances of social life, on a local and global scale” (Giddens 1991: 215). Although obviously being a social signification mechanism, fashion is not commonly understood as a process interfering with individual agency. Rather, it is defended as a way to express originality, personal freedom and identity (Warde 2015: 12.6). Ethical behavior in particular, in this case related to consumption, promotes in its rationale an ethical existence for all (Giddens 1991). However, the mechanism that defines this feeling of what could be described as shared autonomy can be unmasked as a political process which infringes on individual self-formation. By invoking the concept of *life politics*, Giddens,

for example, explains that “globalization influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self” (Giddens 1991: 214). What this means is that while consumers enjoy the perceived freedom of expressing their fashion and ethics choices to the world, the world, which they seek to shape with their choices, is simultaneously shaping their choices – often without them knowing it. And, as explained above, this is influenced by the politicization of consumer subjectivity, which essentializes, both, giver and taker as well as creating social divisions between ethical and non-ethical consumers.

To sum up, the interdependencies between consumer and network are best analyzed through contradictions in network rationale. By focusing on individual and shared identity, and projecting responsibility, the movement becomes unstable and more likely to be appropriated as a regime and commodified by global capitalism.

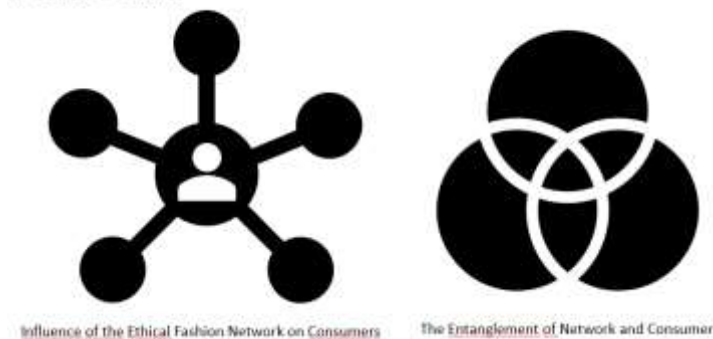
### **3. Methodology**

The most difficult and simultaneously compelling part of writing this thesis was to attempt to determine any kind of coherent structure – to understand how this ethical fashion network functions, and what the components of the network are, without placing too great a focus on that structure and losing sight of its dynamics. It was important to me to build the network around the perceptions of the consumers because I felt that their voices were lost within a complex network of external ascriptions. However, I was unsure of how to approach this task without either exercising authority over their understanding of *self* and *other* or without focusing too intensely on the external influences. Throughout my phase of uncertainty regarding my approach, I decided that I needed to let the impressions form while exploring the content. So, the first step included the formation of the research field before, then, attempting to decide on any definitive research methodology. These two steps will be outlined in the following two subchapters.

#### **3.1. Research Field: Complexity and its Tiny Pieces**

The two major focus fields I had in mind when I started to think about this study can be seen in the following image:

## Focus Fields



**Image 1: Focus Fields**

While surfing the internet to find images I could use to provide any kind of visualization to simplify potential focus fields for my study group, I found two which had an effect on me.. The image on the left, which I titled ‘influence of the ethical fashion network on consumers’ nicely represents two important aspects of the consumer-oriented part of the study: 1) the consumer is in the center, and 2) many surrounding factors influence the way in which the consumer, as an entity, is constructed. The second image, titled ‘the entanglement of network and consumer’ represents the cohesion and overlapping factors in regard to the actors within the network. Through the use of these images I realized that I needed to decipher the necessary elements of the study before I could attempt to decide on methodology. And I needed to learn more about these elements before I could decide on whether or not they were actually integral parts and relevant to the study. So, that is what I did. I asked myself the questions which ended up largely becoming the leading questions of my study. The complexity of the field became the center of my focus and I began to realize that it was that which was at the heart of the very subjectivation mechanism I was analyzing.

Participatory observation was the first step in assembling a research field. First, I visited two group gatherings in Bremen and Niedersachsen, which related to the topic of ethical fashion in different ways. I went to a privately organized Tauschparty<sup>3</sup> and later, I participated in one of the meetings organized by the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung*. During these events, I had many casual conversations with participants.

At the Tauschparty, I was particularly interested in finding some kind of access to the consumer aspect of my study. I wanted to understand what made them different or similar to

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<sup>3</sup> A Tauschparty is an event where people come together to exchange items, in this case clothing, to avoid waste.



other consumers and how they defined themselves. So, I began looking for any recurring focus fields or topic discussions, and any similarities in behavior or expression.

The first recurring dimension I noticed during the conversations was that there seemed to be an underlying consensus on many of the topics which were discussed. This included the seeming awareness of participants regarding the ‘evils’ of the industry. Furthermore, it seemed almost as if one connecting aspect between ethical fashion consumers was the need to change the level of importance placed on consumption in the first place. Yet, I was participating in a gathering which was focused on commodities with a very apparent focus on aesthetical appeal. This is how I realized how much the expression of group belonging in ethical fashion was related to contradictions within the movement’s rationale.

The second dimension I observed was a seeming focus on their ability to make informed and self-reflective decisions which showed their own limitations. It seemed particularly important to each one of the people I engaged in conversations with to make sure that I understood that they were not ‘fully there yet’, that there was much they could do better. A kind of subtle humility and need to justify and explain seemed to regularly accompany the conversations.

A further dimension also included the perceived abuse of the consumer’s most basic needs, including the evocation of the similarity of fashion to food as fundamental to who they understood themselves to be – but to a point of basic needs. The belief of being exploited or manipulated was generally accompanied by an expression of disdain regarding the lack of transparency offered by, both, brands and sociopolitical organizations. It was an almost organic development, leading from a feeling of unease about being manipulated to being outraged or irritated by the industry’s in-transparency.

Another aspect I noticed was a disbelief in institutions to provide change. Although much of the desired changes were still lacking definition and strategic aim, a connecting value promoted by and between the participants was the general need for some kind of change. When asking who should be responsible for the change, most participants explained that since government and institutions were largely failing to provide the changes necessary to counteract very vaguely defined ecological and social challenges on a global scale, they felt directly responsible to make it happen. Yet not many of the participants seemed to know or have any definitive plans on how to bring about the sought changes. Although I was not particularly

interested in re-evaluating the topic of responsibility at that point<sup>4</sup>, I came to feel that it was somehow engrained in the subject matter – perhaps to a much larger degree than I had previously thought.

Another recurring dimension which related many of the participants to each other was a need to define themselves as different than non-ethical consumers. Although many admitted to individual shortcomings, and hardly any of them were willing to define themselves as truly ethical, it was important to them to make it clear that they did not shop at specific, over-used fast fashion locations and that second-hand was one of their preferred methods of shopping for clothes.

Many of the discussions were quite organic and seemed to draw in a lot of attention from others. Starting one conversation frequently got others engaged who wanted to discuss their opinion on the topic which then quickly turned into participants discussing the topic with each other rather than with me. An atmosphere of belonging and agreement was quickly established. It seemed important to participants to have a positive experience at the events. I did not encounter any antagonism. Feeling that I had gained some insight to the motivations of ethical fashion consumers, I felt I could determine categories through more structured interviews.

The interesting aspect of the development of the research field was that, although I had not planned to develop any assumptions while I attended the events, the complexity of the field quickly turned into many small focus areas, which allowed me to fill in the blanks on the initial focus fields. The question regarding what influenced ethical fashion consumers became more apparent to me through the participatory observation of the dynamics between people as well as the conversations with individual consumers before I even set out to ask any particular questions. So, while my intent was to find a smaller focus field, the complex dynamic of influences ultimately became the major focus of my study.

The second event I participated in then allowed me to develop the research field surrounding the sociopolitical organizations involved in ethical fashion. In my mind, this field was still separate from the consumer. I aimed to understand, first, what ethical fashion organizations do, how and under what line of thinking they operate and how the operation shaped the movement for consumers. However, as with the Tauschparty, the complexity of the

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<sup>4</sup> I had previously focused on the topic of in-transparency and responsibility in the fashion industry in a study in module 6 of my study program.

web of questions I had had in my mind for the group meeting quickly turned into several small focus areas which allowed for a more succinct assessment.

The *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung*, the German branch of the international NGO *Clean Clothes Campaign* was of particular interest to me because I had been following their social media accounts and felt that their public scrutiny of fashion brands was a fascinating approach to large-scale change. I decided to contact the info-email account which could be found on the website, first, to ask for any opportunity for participatory observation as well as interviews. I received an email from one of the event organizers asking if I would be interested in attending one of the monthly group meetings. After getting acquainted with the website as well as looking into any recent efforts, I attended the meeting, which prompted one major observation: the motivations of ethical fashion consumers, which I had found to be apparent at the Tauschparty could be found at the meeting as well. However, I quickly realized a change of form and function.

It seemed as though the participants in the group meeting, being consumers themselves, shared many of the convictions and ideals with the participants at the Tauschparty. However, there also seemed to be a comfortable distance to social realities as well as a kind of vague authority position. I found that the social belonging motivation was turned into a notion of social mobilization through external influence from the group. The question ‘how do we get more people involved?’ came up more than once and there was a frequent interest in advertisement and consumer engagement.

The identity-motivation which I had observed at the Tauschparty seemed to be perceived as an effective way to ‘spread the message’ through an instrumentalization of style as a symbol of sophistication related to the expression of moral standards. The idea that aesthetic expression could relay the moral message of the group was understood as self-explanatory and not scrutinized in any way although one participant noted that sometimes the message is lost beyond the focus on fashion.

After attending the meeting, I felt flooded with impressions, a feeling I had not had at the Tauschparty, where the atmosphere was relaxed and generally comfortable. The group meeting felt very stiff and pressuring. I felt that we were sitting at a table, exercising the authority of discussing how we could mobilize consumers to spread our message. But what that message was,

was not clear to me either, even though I had thoroughly absorbed the mission statement of the website. Still, it felt like a job at a marketing firm and input was not really requested.

After letting the impressions rest in my mind over night and questioning my own level of scrutiny, I began my literature analysis, to see if others had experienced similar emotional responses. Without this step, I would not have been able to understand my reactions and feelings. However, after feeling validated in my approach and intuition regarding the meeting, I developed the research field further, realizing all the small, fragmented mechanisms embedded in the organization’s approach. I also realized that I needed to add some interviews with further actors in the field to my analysis to really develop the dynamic of actors of the network. These aspects of the analysis will be discussed in the next chapter.

### 3.2. Research Methodology: De- and Reconstructing the Complexity

Above all, I needed to deconstruct the complexity of the network. To tackle this extensive project, I followed the three simple steps laid out by Dorle Dracklé in her text *Ethnographische Medienanalyse: Vom Chaos zum Text* (Dracklé 2015: 390). The first step included the participation in events, leading to the establishment of a research field. Throughout this process I filled 1 ½ small logbooks with observations, ideas, concepts, and journal-like explorations of emotional responses.

The participation in the events mentioned in the chapter above, helped me not only narrow down the research field but it also helped me understand the significance of the complexity of the network. I felt it was necessary to come up with a visualization of all the small parts of the network which seemed relevant to my study (see below).

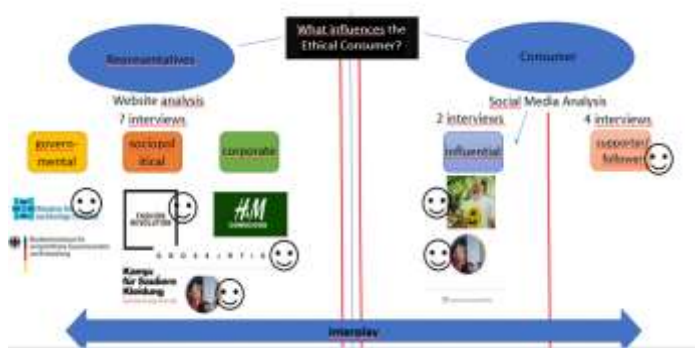


Image 2: Network Deconstruction

I found that in terms of what was influential to consumers and what could possibly shape the consumers' motivations and behavior aside from brand marketing was other consumers and sociopolitical organizations and initiatives.

Although my approach changed throughout the analysis, in terms of consumer-to-consumer influence I initially differentiated between two groups: the influencers, who are also consumers, and the followers of the ethical fashion movement, or more succinctly, consumers who identify as ethical. I define influencers as internet personas who share their ideals, approaches and concepts on social media and websites. These social media profiles are often related to the promotion of particular brands or organizations as well. By my definition, followers are those who follow these influential figures, participate in social activism, attend events or promote ethical fashion-related habits either through organizations, events, social media or even just by discussing the topic with friends and family.

In order to get a clearer perspective into the 'supporting' category of ethical fashion consumers in Germany, I decided to distribute flyers at the *Hochschule Bremen* as well as several coffee shops in Bremen. I also posted a very plain online flyer in ethical fashion groups on *Facebook*. I received 8 messages within the next 2 hours as well as 2 phone calls within a week of handing out the flyers. I decided to do one in-person interview, one *Skype* interview and two interviews via social media messaging. All interviews were structured and very similar. It was important to me to ask the same questions in order to find similarities although I ended up straying from the guidelines every once in a while, to get further information.

Altogether I used an ethnographic protocol detailing my participatory observation at the Tauschparty as well as four interviews on the consumer side of the network. Although I had planned to include the ethnographic protocol and the interview with Alf Zahn as part of the consumer-focused part of my analysis, I quickly realized that the data I had gathered was showing much more similarities with the network field. Therefore, I decided to add this data to the network analysis.

I contacted Alf directly. As one of the founding members of one of the most popular ethical fashion blogs in Germany, he seemed to be the right person to approach. I promptly got a response back, telling me he would be happy to answer my questions via email. As I had hoped for an in-person or *Skype* interview I was disappointed but determined to make it work. I decided to analyze his blog and social media accounts before writing my interview questions because I

felt I could be more precise if I had some insight into his ideals and approaches. Then I sent my interview questions and received a response a few days later.

Understanding the network dynamic was a challenging part of the analysis. I found that the network was comprised of several representatives – meaning, actors who are not simply consumers or followers of the movement. As can be seen in the image above, I categorized three focus fields which influence consumers: governmental, sociopolitical and market actors. On the side of the governmental actors I found two specific institutions. The *Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BWZ)* and the *Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien*, or *Textilbündnis*, which is actually conceptualized by the former. Whereas the *BWZ* is an official government ministry, the *Textilbündnis* is a multi-stakeholder initiative which focuses on sustainable textile production and manufacturing efforts. I did one participatory observation of an organization (*Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung*) and one interview (*Fashion Revolution*). The *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* as well as the brand I attempted to interview, namely *H&M Conscious*, are actually members of the initiative. The organization I focused on was *Fashion Revolution*, a global ethical fashion non-governmental organization which is extremely popular in Germany. Although I interviewed *Fashion Revolution* I decided to incorporate participatory observation data from a team meeting with the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung*. The reason why I felt inclined to mostly focus on *Fashion Revolution* rather than the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* was that I felt that their internet persona was much more popular and influential. However, since I could not go to a *Fashion Revolution* team meeting, as it is located in London, I decided to participate in a team meeting with the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* instead. The interview as well as the participation in the team meeting were welcomed by the organizations and I got responses to my emails almost immediately. Unfortunately, it took a very long time to get an interview with the *Textilbündnis*, after the *BWZ* as well as the *Textilbündnis* kept advising me to simply read the information on the website. And in the end, the response was scarce. Only a few questions were answered and most of the answers were extremely vague. I attempted to get an interview with *H&M Conscious* as well, to try to get some understanding of the corporate side of consumer subjectivation. However, even after writing several emails, I kept getting ignored, and, in the end I was told via telephone that I would not be able to get an interview until 2021. Therefore, I decided to omit this part of the exploration from my analysis and to add it in more detail to future research.

To sum up, this part of the analysis is comprised of three ethnographic protocols detailing my experience of conducting website analyses (*GROSSVRTIG*, *Fashion Revolution* and the *Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien*), and three interviews (Alf Zahn, *Fashion Revolution* and *Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien*) as well as an ethnographic protocol relating to my experience at the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* team meeting.

For the website analysis, I decided to write an ethnographic protocol the way I would if I were engaging in participatory observation because I felt that it would appropriately relay my experiences and impressions and offer insight into the organization's affectual capabilities. Although there are no actors being observed, the strategic, planned creations of actors, such as a blog or website, can provide the basis for understanding network actor rationale. I decided to work with the open coding method (Strauss & Corbin 1996) to analyze all ethnographic protocols. I aimed to keep impressions 'on key' which is why I decided to write brief protocols which would end with me losing interest or feeling too tired to further observe. I believe this strategy to have helped, particularly, because the many brief impressions helped convey the scattered effect of the network. The reason why I chose the open coding method rather than continuing and forming a theory based on this approach is that I felt that a mix of many types of analyses could lead to a greater understanding of such a complex network.

The interviews were subjected to a reconstructive analysis (Carspecken 1996; 2003) of the given communicative acts. I chose this method because I feel that it helps to reconstruct meaning, particularly with e-interviews where the participant can spend more time assessing and re-assessing their own thoughts. As outlined by Zhang and Carspecken (2013), the purpose of this method is to move "inferentially connected portions of the background of a meaning horizon into explicit articulation (209). The frequent use of the evocation of 'embedded rationale' reminds of a critical discourse analysis, which is why I need to add that my theoretical focus as well as the method, in connection, relate to a critical discourse analysis as well (Dijk 1993). In combination, these methods serve as a way to 1) establish correlations between consumer responses which could then be 2) compared to network rationale to show 3) contradictions which could further demonstrate the strategies employed to affect consumers. The point was to analyze the "intricate relationships between texts, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture" (Dijk 1993:253) by exploring "patterns, setting, and participants, and then examin[ing] the properties of the 'text', of the speech itself, such as its topics, local meanings, style and rhetoric" (260).

## 4. The Politicization of the German Ethical Fashion Consumer

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the overarching result to come from this study is that the complexity of the network is simultaneously its overarching subjectivation mechanism. However, this claim could only be made by analyzing the individual parts of the network and making clear distinctions between consumer and network rationale and communicative action. In the following chapters, I will explore these aspects to outline the ways in which the relationship between both forms the ethical fashion movement. As mentioned in the introduction, I claim that the movement is currently defined by a politicization process of its most cohesive property: consumers. While this process manages to create visibility and solidarity among active participants in the movement, it also creates the contradictions which lie at the foundation of the constant threat of commodification and ‘greenwashing’. The following chapter is divided into three parts with individual subchapters which outline the rationales through whose contradictions the complexity of the network is created.

### 4.1. The Consumer: (Shared) Identity & Responsibility

I had the pleasure of interviewing four well-informed individuals. In terms of the focus field self-validation, all of them identify with ethical behavior. All of them admit that they are not always inclined to make the ethically-correct decision. All of them feel that consumption is economically abused in relation to fundamentals such as food and clothing. All of them feel uninformed, having to make more of an effort to understand the workings of the fashion industry than they would like. In terms of responsibility, all of them feel that more needs to be done and all of them are willing to do more, but also feel that the political system as well as fashion brands are not making it particularly easy for the consumer. And lastly, in terms of group belonging, all of them feel somehow connected not only to other ethical consumers, but consumers in general, while expressing a perceived conscious detachment from market and political rationality. The following chapter outlines communicative similarities in the qualitative data gathered from consumer interviews and one ethnographic protocol from participatory observation at a privately-organized Tauschparty<sup>5</sup>. The chapter is divided into subchapters which explore the

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<sup>5</sup> The appendix includes ethnographic protocols, and interview transcripts. Appendix I: Consumer Interview Nr. 1: *Stephanie*; Appendix II: Consumer Interview Nr. 2: *Johannes*; Appendix III: Consumer Interview Nr. 3: *Franzi*; Appendix IV: Consumer Interview Nr. 4: *Jannina*; Appendix V: Ethnographic Protocol: *Tauschparty*; Appendix VI: E-Interview: Alf-Tobias Zahn; Appendix VII: Blog Protocol: GROSSARTIG; Appendix VIII: E-Interview:



individual aspects of consumer rationale based on evocations of experiences, opinions and descriptions.

#### **4.1.1. Identity: The Aware & Introspective Subject**

One of the similarities I found in all four interviews as well as many of the conversations I had at the Tauschparty were related to the way in which they introduced themselves. Interview participant Stephanie, for example, explains

“Ich heiße Stephanie, bin 27 und gelernte Köchin, hab aber gerade mein Abi nach gemacht und wird ab Oktober Management Sozialer Innovationen studieren, weil es mir wichtig ist, dass meine Arbeit einen Unterschied macht.“ (Appendix I: 3-5)

Like Stephanie, my second interview partner, Johannes, describes himself as follows:

“Nun betreibe ich [...] ein Geschäft, in dem ich ausschließlich fair gehandelte, vegane und nachhaltig produzierte Bekleidung, Schuhe, Taschen und noch vieles mehr anbiete. Durch meinen Einblick in die Welt der Fast Fashion ist mir immer deutlicher bewusst geworden, dass ich die Ausbeutung von Mensch und Natur nicht weiter mittragen kann. Und den Menschen in meiner Stadt eine Alternative bieten möchte, die sowohl vom modischen Aspekt, als auch vom Preis mit Marken wie s.Oliver, Esprit und anderen mithalten können.“ (Appendix II: 6-12)

Jo, as he likes to be called, had previously experienced fast fashion mass consumption firsthand during his work as an upper-level salesman in the fashion industry (3-7). Although not part of her introduction, interview participant Nr. 3, Franzi, explains later that she likes to rummage through Second Hand stores, or things people have left in front of their houses in boxes (Appendix III: 12-14) and Jannina designed her final collection during her study program in fashion design as a testament to the excessive waste in modern consumer culture (Appendix IV: 13-16). All four of the interview partners understand themselves as reasonably aware, and, therefore, view awareness as a potential defining aspect of identity.

The second field related to the identity of the interview participants was that all of them felt inclined to include their perceived shortcomings in their pursuit to ethical consumption, thereby relaying, as an important marker of their identity, the capability for introspection. Jannina, for example, explains:

“Ich kauf natürlich nicht nur bei extrem nachhaltigen Marken, aber wenn ich was brauche schau ich schon erst da ob ich was finde und wenn ich da nichts finde was ich unbedingt brauche, dann

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*Fashion Revolution*; Appendix IX: Website Protocol: *Fashion Revolution*; Appendix X: Website Protocol *Textilbündnis*; Appendix XI: E-Interview: *Textilbündnis*; Appendix XII: Ethnographic Protocol: *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung Team Meeting*. The ethnographic protocols as well as the interview transcripts include categorizations and codes from the analyses as well. The line count will be referred to only by number while relevant pages will be outlined as such in the text with the abbreviation ‘pg.’

kauf ich das woanders oder ich schau nochmal gebrauch. [...] Manchmal ist es nicht besonders verantwortungsvoll und manchmal eben schon.“ (Appendix IV: 40-45)

Franzi sees her shortcomings as relating, in particular, to her level of knowledge regarding the industry: “Trotzdem bin ich halt da nicht so informiert, dass ich alles wüsste, einfach dadurch, dass ich mich auch einfach nicht sehr viel mit den großen Modellabels und so auseinandersetze [...]“ (Appendix III: 64-66). Even Jo, who spends most of his time researching fashion, explains that he does not always choose the right route, but that he tries hard to be conscious his own behavior (Appendix II: 25). And, although Stephanie considers herself at least partially ‘ethical’ in her fashion consumption, she definitely feels the need to change it: “Insbesondere bei Klamotten würde ich richtig gerne nachhaltiger handeln, denn aktuell kaufe ich zu 90% bei *Forever21* online” (Appendix I: 21-22).

Another similarity relates to the fact that all four interview participants included at least one relation between fashion and food as markers of their self-understanding, thereby evoking a fundamental relationship between the two. Stephanie, for example, explains that, because of her efforts to support foodsharing activism, she has not done much to support the ethical fashion realm although she is interested in it and finds it important (Appendix I: 8-9; 21-22). When asked to describe their consumption behavior in spite of knowing the study’s topic, most described their food consumption habits first. Jo explains, for example: “Beim Essen achte ich auf Regionalität und kaufe viel im Bioladen. Darüber hinaus nutze ich Foodsharing um Lebensmittelverschwendung zu minimieren“ (Appendix II: 16-18). Jannina and Franzi both included food consumption in their answers regarding their consumption habits as well (Appendix III: 9-15; Appendix IV: 31-45).. While this could be seen as a confusion regarding the question, I do not assume that it is as it came up multiple times at the Tauschparty as well.

Another similarity is the fact that all four interview participants, although having gone to extensive lengths to become informed, feel that there is much more to be known. Stephanie, for example, feels that unless the political and corporate realm is willing to become more transparent, then she has little hope for people ever truly understanding what is even happening to them (Appendix I: 39-40). Jo explicitly states: “Die Konsumenten werden bewußt getäuscht” (Appendix II: 40) and finds that the best way to combat this deliberate abuse of consumers is to maintain a certain level of introspection (41-42). Jannina explores that same topic when asked about in-transparency in the fashion industry:

“Ich denke, dass es auf jeden Fall einfacher wäre die Schritte in die richtige Richtung zu gehen, wenn es mehr Transparenz gäbe, also etwas zu verändern, weil wenn man die Informationen nicht hat, wie der aktuelle Stand gerade ist, dann weiß man ja auch nicht wo man was verbessern kann. Wie man das vielleicht anders machen kann.” (Appendix IV: 80-83)

Franzi also explains that the advertisement industry is a major culprit in the deliberate misinformation of consumers:

“Natürlich ist es so dass du durch Werbung, Models, als was uns vorgelebt wird, wie wir auszusehen haben, dass dadurch glaub ich viele junge Mädchen auch viel, ja, genauso aussehen wollen wie irgendwelche Vorbilder und dadurch halt auch viel kaufen. Viel neu kaufen. Alles wird billig abgeboten.” (Appendix III: 44-47)

The open coding analysis of the Tauschparty revealed many of the same categories explored in the interviews (see Appendix V: pg. 3). The ethnographic protocol included two realms through which the categories could be related. The first realm, *topics*, explores all the different discussion points I experienced at the Tauschparty. Relating to the first identity marker discussed in this chapter are the categories *fairness*, *environment*, *mass-consumption*, *waste*, *volunteering*, *transparency* and *flea markets*. All of these categories relate to topics discussed to express an interest in ethical behavior. Most of these categories came up in direct relation to the participant’s introduction of themselves, which, as with the interviews, was commonly subsequent to their occupational or educational background, which relates the two categories occupation and education directly to it.

Pertaining to the second topic discussed previously, the protocol of the Tauschparty also revealed categories related to the participant’s inclusion of their introspective reasoning as part of their *identity*. Categories such as *addiction*, *authenticity*, *stories*, *background*, *popularity* and *doubt* all relate to this realm.

The third field, namely the identity marker relating food and fashion as basic needs, was included at the Tauschparty as well. The topics ‘foodsharing’ and ‘food waste’ came up frequently in relation to consumer behavior. Introduced by an excursion into the political realm in a conversation about the Rana Plaza tragedy, fashion waste is quickly related to food waste and appropriately titled a ‘crisis’: “Soon the conversation turns to the political realm. Capitalism is the problem. Daniela likens the fashion waste crisis to the food waste crisis” (Appendix V: 46-47).

Lastly, the fourth field came up as well. Many of the participants described their shortcomings as a side-effect of a lack of information. Daniela’s open discussion of her

shopping-addiction, for example, is followed by outrage related to the lack of transparency and a proclamation regarding her allegiance with *Fashion Revolution*, for that reason. Although the topic of in-transparency is rarely discussed at the Tauschparty, it does come up in the form of doubt related to fair trade certification methods as well (Appendix V: 47-48).

In brief, I have determined four fields of communicative action which carry an embedded rationale. All four interviews as well as the ethnographic protocol from the Tauschparty expressed the following identity markers: 1) The *awareness marker*: In this field, the similarities include that 3 out of 4 interview participants include their ethical behavior alongside their occupation and education as part of their introduction. This shows a hierarchy which equates, or, in the least, relates, social engagement with individual achievements as a marker of identity – both on an individual and collective level. 2) The *introspection marker*: All four interview participants express their perceived shortcomings honestly, without being prompted to do so. Some of the participants even describe that, in their opinion, relativizing one's own position inconveniences ethical fashion on a collective level. 3) The *nature-structure marker*: This identity marker relates to the way in which all four participants relate food and fashion, thereby exploring a correlation between the 'natural' and the 'structural' need for sustenance and clothing, as well as its cultural excess. 4) The *subject marker*: Since all four participants expressed feeling that they were subjected to a deliberate attack on their agency through advertisement or other methods, all four showed a conscious awareness of their own subjectivation as well as the subjectivation of others. In the end, the signified identity which can be related to all four interview participants is that of an aware and introspective self, who is subjected to an attack on her or his most fundamental needs.

To offer a contextualization of the discussed realms, I would like to, first, relate the outlined identity markers invoked in this chapter to the concept of *virtue ethics* as an overarching identity marker which merges all four fields. Leaning on Laidlaw, Dider Fassin explains that

“[...] the necessity of reinventing virtue is the consequence of the loss of ethics, starting with the Enlightenment and culminating in the contemporary world, which implies that virtue ethics is definitely a normative project attempting to restore a previous state of the world.” (Fassin 2014: 431)

Thereby, *virtue ethics* is not related to a specific morality but rather related to collectivity and its practices, which can be discerned on an individual, historical and political level. Three of the four fields determined in this chapter can be related to the essentialization of virtue. In the case

of the *awareness- and introspection markers*, it is clearly related to the desire to be seen as ethical and aware by others – to represent virtue. The *nature-structure marker* relates to Fassin’s understanding of *virtue ethics* in that it rejects contemporary consumer culture and its excessive waste practices. This, again, is connected to the idea of restoring a particular traditional state of the world in which consumption was not related to mass-production. The fourth marker and its relation to the others can be contextualized by linking it to Fassin’s following claim:

“Second, [...] the moral philosophy to be promoted is indissociable from a political philosophy [...] with the consequence that virtue means going back to a former ethical stage when political communities were also moral communities defined by a tradition.” (Fassin 2014: 431)

The *subject marker* is defined by scrutiny of political intention and the feeling that political strategies are preventing consumers from making proper decisions, which can be related to *virtue ethics* because rather than promoting individual political independence, *virtue ethics* utilizes political philosophy to promote collective ethical community based on shared belief and identity.

Conclusively, all four dimensions of identity outlined and represented by a majority of observed and interviewed participants in the study are related to, both, a notion of *virtue ethics* including its inherent pre-contemporary understanding of communal life and responsibility toward *other*, on the conscious side of identity, as well as the need for legitimization by others on the unconscious side. The result of the desire for legitimization will be explored in the following chapter.

#### **4.1.2. Shared Identity: Us, Them and *the big Other***

Defining features in all four interviews as well as the conversations and impressions from the Tauschparty not only relate to the way they define themselves but also the way in which they define others and seek to be defined by others. For example, Stephanie’s explanation related to my question regarding her consumption habits shows the embedded idea that shopping at discounter stores is regarded as shameful behavior, even if she, herself, engages in this behavior: “Also, zu meiner Schade kaufe ich leider sehr viel im Discounter ein, gucke aber auch wo es geht, dass ich food sharing und food rescue unterstütze.” (Appendix I: 8-9). This statement invokes several distinctions: 1) buying food at a discount store is negative behavior, 2) awareness counterbalances the negative effect, and 3) supporting food sharing and food rescue is positive behavior. She makes the same distinction regarding clothing consumption:

“Ich trage persönlich meine Kleidung bis sie zu kaputt zum unsichtbar flicken ist, weil ich mir vorher echt gut überlege, ob mir das Kleid [...] auch wirklich gefällt. Ich renne keinen Modeerscheinungen nach, da war ich noch nie so wirklich der Typ für.” (45-48)

As with the statement above, her answer shows a particular rationale: 1) wearing clothes until they are not fixable anymore is positive behavior, 2) awareness counterbalances negative effects, and 3) blindly following popular fashion is negative behavior.

Johannes makes a similar distinction with his response regarding my question whether or not he would define himself as an ethical consumer:

“Bei meinen Kaufentscheidungen berücksichtige ich zumeist ob Menschen, Tiere und Umwelt durch meinen Konsum beeinträchtigt werden. Natürlich mache ich nicht alles perfekt, aber ich achte schon sehr auf mein Einkaufsverhalten.” (24-26)

We can find the same distinction here: 1) making sure people, animals and the environment are not inconvenienced consumption behavior is positive, 2) awareness counterbalances negative behavior, and 3) to negatively impact people, animals and the environment is negative behavior. Franzi and Jannina, both, make the distinction as well (see Appendix III: 18-21 and Appendix IV: 18-28). This is a particular moral code they all share. And the expression of that code is significant to each interviewed person.

However, while they identify with the same moral ideal, thereby separating their group from those which do not follow it, all four of them also feel similarly inclined to express that a lack of transparency makes it difficult for consumers to make positive decisions. Stephanie, for example, explains, “dass heute vielen Menschen alles so scheißegal ist” (Appendix I: 40-41). She clearly separates her own actions from those of consumers who engage in nihilistic behavior. However, she only makes this statement after explicitly proclaiming that consumers should not be regarded as the most responsible party. Johannes describes this consumer nihilism as a byproduct of global capitalism, but feels equally inclined to mention that “[e]igenes Fehlverhalten sollte nicht über das Fehlverhalten anderer relativiert werden” (Appendix II: 42). Jannina and Franzi, while also separating their actions and choices from consumer nihilism, relate negative consumer behavior to public manipulation through advertisements. Jannina, for example describes the “Schattenseiten” of advertisement which affects even those who seek to better themselves and adhere to the moral code of ethical consumption:

“[...] Schattenseiten gibt es halt auch immer. Es ist problematisch wenn eine Marke so tut als wolle sie was verbessern aber die Ziele dann nicht eingehalten werden. Konsumenten können so auch getäuscht werden. Der Hype für Nachhaltigkeit und Feminismus und faire

Arbeitsbedingungen und Löhne und so kann dann halt auch ausgenutzt werden. Also, für Werbung und so.” (Appendix IV: 99-103)

Essentially, what this shows is that there are two interrelated dimensions to the identity shared by all four interviewed individuals: They share a very similar moral code which is based on three inherent qualities – *positive behavior; awareness, negative behavior*. This dimension defines the group *self*, which I have titled *us*. The distinction to other consumers is then defined by, both, the compassion and understanding for non-ethical behavior as well as the discontentment for the lack of adherence to the group’s moral code by others. This distinction defines the *relatable other*, which I have called *them*. However, there is a third dimension, which I have titled *the big Other*, thereby relating it to Jacques Lacan’s evocation of the imaginary and symbolic register of the psyche, through which communication defines and categorizes what is perceived as reality (see Lacan 1973). *The big Other*, in this case, is described by all four interview participants in different words. Stephanie and Franzl call it “Gesellschaft” (Appendix I: 36; Appendix III: 49), Johannes calls it “Politik” (Appendix II: 39), and Jannina titles it “Kapitalismus” (Appendix IV: 60). It is arguable whether the meaning is the same. However, my claim can be validated by showing its opposing side, which outlines the parties with a perceived lack of guilt – consumers and market actors. Whereas the brand’s behavior, which is perceived by all four interview participants as criminal or inhumane, is seen as a side-effect of a system of interaction, *the big Other*, or the overarching political mechanism, is held accountable due to the perception that it is that through which all aspects of the industry are determined. I will refer to this *big Other* as global capitalism, because I believe it aligns as a blanket term with the culprit described by all four participants.

To offer a context to the results of the study included in this chapter I would like to refer to Homi Bhaba’s concept of *cultural difference*. He explains that

“[w]e are very resistant to thinking how the act of signification, the act of producing the icons and symbols, the myths and metaphors through which we live culture, must always - by virtue of the fact that they are forms of representation - have within them a kind of self-alienating limit. Meaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation between the signifier and the signified. So it follows that no culture is full unto itself, no culture is plainly plenitudinous, not only because there are other cultures which contradict its authority, but also because its own symbol-forming activity, its own interpellation in the process of representation, language, signification and meaning-making, always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity.” (Bhaba 1990: 210)

Here we find a connection with Fassin’s concept of *virtue ethics*. The “originary, holistic, organic identity” which Bhaba mentions, develops the communal practice of *virtue ethics* to

incorporate the quality of meaning-production. Bhaba states that meaning is produced through “difference and separation”, which is apparent in the study results. By dividing *self* from *other*, one defines *self* against *other*. As a movement, this process can function on a transnational basis (see Breidenbach & Zukrigl 2002: 23) and, thereby, has an influential, homogenizing effect on the way global capitalism, which I have titled *the big Other*, is perceived (Breidenbach & Zukrigl 2002: 20). This active alignment against global capitalism is apparent in all four interviews as well as in the very nature of the Tauschparty as an event which seeks to counteract mass-consumption.

As mentioned previously, it seems that the interview participants agree that their perception of their own position within consumer culture is related to “contentious issues of how to reconcile autonomy and responsibility, individual agency and collective obligations” within a system of global capitalism which individuals are subjected to (Barnett et al. 2005: 5). The fundamental perception of being caught in the system of global capitalism as an overarching determinant of behavior sets the stage for the imagination of *the big Other* as a medium through which their perceptions are discussed. According to Slavoj Žižek, Lacan’s *big Other* is the instrument through which we designate meaning:

“When we speak (or listen, for that matter), we never merely interact with others; our speech activity is grounded on our accepting and relying on a complex network of rules and other kinds of presuppositions” (Žižek 2011: 9)

While global capitalism may be illuminated as *the big Other*, it is also, at the same time, represented as completely alien to the consumer’s individual lives. Not much hope is invested in the forces of global capitalism to create any change. I claim that this is how *the big Other* not only determines meaning in communicative acts of consumers, but also reverts responsibility back to the consumer by becoming an ethos, or as titled by Jacques Lacan, a *myth*. I believe this effect, namely the establishment of an *absolute other*, to be the result of a dialectic of communicative reason. In his text *The Neurotic’s Individual Myth*, Jacques Lacan describes ‘absolute othering’ which involves the evocation of an object through which reality is constructed. He describes it as a mythologization in which “myth”, or the establishment of an absolute object “provides a discursive form for something that cannot be transmitted through the definition of truth” (Lacan 1979: 407). It is my claim that the framing of global capitalism as a *big Other*, rather than an active actor is providing the consumer with the object through which she or he identifies. And by simultaneously defining global capitalism as a legitimization power



and a structure through which one understands oneself, the consumer is inclined to stir away from challenging it directly.

#### **4.1.3. Political-, Brand- and Consumer-Responsibility & the *Global Capitalism Myth***

The title of this chapter appropriately summarizes the hierarchy invoked by all four interview participants as well as statements gathered at the Tauschparty. When asked who is responsible for consumer culture, Stephanie, for example, explains:

“Der Gesetzgeber [...] führt die Liste definitiv an. Klar sind eigentlich die Konzerne, die verbrechen, was sie verbrechen, die Schuldigen, allerdings ist völlig klar und auf makabre Art nachvollziehbar, dass sie so handeln, weil es für sie nur um Wirtschaftlichkeit geht. Die wirklichen Verantwortlichen sind eben die Gesetzgeber, weil er nicht unterbindet, was mit ’gesundem Menschenverstand betrachtet kompletter Wahnsinn ist und zugleich auch seiner Informationspflicht nicht nachkommt.“ (Appendix I: 33-39)

According to Stephanie, then, the hierarchy starts with political policy-makers, and leads into what could be perceived as government-tolerated corporate crimes. However, she invokes also the concept of global capitalism as a greater system of crime. Jo also explains that “[n]eben dem Unternehmen, die aus dem Prinzip der Gewinnmaximierung arbeiten, und dabei rücksichtslos Mensch, Tier und Natur ausbeuten, trägt die Politik eine große Mitschuld, die solche Methoden nicht reglementiert“, and describes further that the consumer is manipulated by this system (Appendix II: 38-42). And although Franzi is less decisive about her pick for responsibility regarding the state of consumer culture, she explains that she sees a large part of the problem in advertisement which she perceives as responsible for the creation of a particular kind of consumer subjectivity which produces mass consumption ideals (Appendix III: 44-53). Jannina is clearer in her opinion regarding responsibility. After being asked where she sees responsibility, she states clearly:

„Ich würde ganz klar sagen der Kapitalismus. Weil der eben Firmen hervorgebracht hat, die nur [...] darauf ausgelegt sind so viel Geld zu machen wie möglich und so wird natürlich auch Werbung gemacht und Konsumenten werden getäuscht“ (Appendix IV: 60-62)

Jannina, therefore, extends upon Franzi’s somewhat unsure statement regarding advertisement and outlines the way in which advertisement is a byproduct of global capitalism.

The Tauschparty revealed much of the same mind state. The fact that many of the conversations led directly into a political realm and then into further evocations of brand

advertisement and guilty pleasures regarding clothing consumption showed the same hierarchy expressed by the interviewees.

To sum up the results, all four participants mentioned global capitalism as a general, overarching culprit. Then, all of them went on to deconstruct that guilty system to set up a hierarchy of responsibility: 1) politics, 2) brands, 3) consumer (see Appendix IV pg. 3). So, according to the interviews and the participatory observation, there is a scale of guilty parties which create and perpetuate the negative side of the fashion industry, which ethical fashion supporters aim to eliminate. However, the overarching structure of this process is viewed as a system, a passive shadow of the actors' behavior. Although clearly seen as carrying the most guilt, capitalism escapes the bounds of responsibility by becoming a passive structure which can only be eliminated through the collaborative effort of politics, brands and consumers.

As explained in the previous chapter, although all four interviews show an alignment in perception regarding the responsibility of global capitalism as the source of contemporary consumer culture, a mythologization is taking place. While Stephanie, for example holds political actors accountable for allowing the system to divulge into the state we are currently experiencing, she clearly states that although global capitalism is really at fault, the policy-makers are those actors most capable of creating actual change (Appendix I: 33-39). Jo, who had previously invoked the same hierarchy, seeing politics as the leading culprit within global capitalism, shows his skepticism of government-led initiatives to have a real impact. When asked to talk about the *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien*, he states:

“Solche Bündnisse haben sicher die Möglichkeit politischen Einfluss zu nehmen. Leider sind die Interessen von großen Konzernen oft einflussreicher bei der Gestaltung von gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen. Ich erwarte daher maximal winzige Schritte. Veränderungen die wirklich signifikant sind, müssen aus seiner Bewegung aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft entstehen.“  
(Appendix II: 56-60)

While Jannina seems initially supportive of the idea of actors within the system coming together to work toward change, she also sees its greatest potential in its ability to affect consumers by creating more visibility toward the topic, thereby setting the focus on consumer effort:

“Ja, also ich glaube, dass es erstmal ein guter Schritt ist, dass auch erstmal zur Sprache zu bringe, das in die Medien zu bringen. Umso mehr das zur Sprache kommt und umso mehr von solchen Initiativen es gibt, auch wenn vielleicht nicht alles perfekt ist, umso mehr kann sich dann auch in der Zukunft bewegen.“ (Appendix IV: 90-95)

I claim that the mythologization of global capitalism creates the illusion of an untouchable passive force which is stands in direct connection to brands and politics, but not to consumers.

This weakens the consumer's direct connection with it. The added view that brands and political actors are byproducts of global capitalism reverts responsibility back to consumers, as shown in Jo and Jannina's statement. Jo's evocation of a movement from the center of society (Appendix II: 59), as well as Jannina's focus on visibility (Appendix IV: 90-95), which affects consumers, above all, exemplify this de-centering effect of the mythologization. This subchapter shows that although all four interview participants view global capitalism as the main culprit, responsibility is frequently shifted back to consumer culture by evoking the idea that consumers are what drive capitalism.

Spanish social psychologist Marlon Xavier proposes the concept of the totalization of consumer subjectivity in his 2016 text *Subjectivity under Consumerism: The Totalization of the Subject as a Commodity*, which describes how subjectivity is used to condition consumers:

“[...] consumerism represents the actualization of capitalism's tendency to total colonization, including the colonization of subjectivity. [...] Contemporarily, the actualization of such orientation appears as the relentless colonization of social and psychological forces, of life realms, or reality itself, by the capitalist ethos [...]”. (Xavier 2016: 208)

The contemporary colonization of consumer subjectivity is closely related not only to the mythologization of global capitalism but also to the perceived virtue of autonomy, described in the previous chapters. Xavier explains that the logic of contemporary culture, which relates to the need for simultaneous group identification and autonomy as promoted by capitalism, also promotes impermanence and excess in an individualistic pursuit for gratification: “As such, this pursuit is also marked by disposability [...] and hedonism; an eternal search for new sensations and identities made possible by individual freedom [...]” (209). Through this individualization, the consumer forms an imaginary which is “based on imagination and imaginary things” (209). In this way, global capitalism is no longer a political agenda but a myth, or a grand narrative through which consumers identify. But this system is essentially irrational, as it is based on affects and desires which are elevated to the status of normality and reproduced as social knowledge (209). And, according to Lacanian psychoanalysis, desire cannot be fulfilled but is continuously reproduced: [...] desire's *raison d'être* is not to realize its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire” (Žižek 1997: 39). Therefore, consumption is irrational and calls for rationalization, a process which is then easily accessed and abused by brands and political organizations seeking to achieve their goal.

## **4.2. The Network: Mobilizing (Shared) Identity & Responsibility**

The previous chapter, focusing on the consumer, showed that consumer rationale includes the evocation of an aware and introspective self which defines itself through an adherence to a moral code and a differentiation from a *real and imaginary other* and is unconsciously involved in the production of a myth which centers around the untouchable quality of global capitalism and consumer responsibility. At the basis of this rationale lies the production of consumer subjectivity, which is framed as a mobilization of shared identity and responsibility.

I have found a three-step process of subjectivation which the network utilizes to mobilize the consumer. This process includes 1) actors who directly relate to consumer culture as messengers (influencers), 2) sociopolitical, predominantly non-governmental organizations which focus primarily on invoking a feeling of power and autonomy in the consumer and 3) overarching governmental initiatives who act as an umbrella platform for change which mobilizes consumers through a support of NGOs. The following chapter will illuminate the ways in which consumer rationale is instrumentalized and transformed into network rationale to legitimize existing forms of cultural dominance under global capitalism (see Breidenbach & Zukrigl 2002: 23).

### **4.2.1. Identity Validation: The Autonomous and Powerful Consumer**

The three-part structure of influence mentioned above is apparent in the way in which the network validates and simultaneously transforms consumer identity. Starting with influencer Alf Zahn, the network moves through several steps to involve consumers. While Alf aligns with the rationale of network representatives, he still defines himself as a consumer – a significant step in, both, the promotion of individualization as well as network rationale. At first glance many of his answers are similar to the consumer interviews. However, I claim that he mimics consumer rationale by invoking a strong focus on autonomous identity mentioned in chapter 4.1.1. When asked to explain the frequent referral to what he calls a healthy body feeling on his blog, he states:

“Ich habe mich entschieden, dass ich konventionelle Mode nicht mehr kaufen kann. Wenn ich demnach neue Kleidung haben möchte, dann ist es Slow Fashion oder Second Hand. Ich möchte wissen, was ich auf meiner Haut trage. Ich kann mich in meinem Körper nur wohlfühlen, wenn ich weiß, dass für meine Kleidung niemand leiden musste und noch nicht einmal einen Lohn erhält, der für das Leben ausreicht.“ (Appendix VI: 35-39)

His response is very similar to the consumer responses. He speaks in the first person and relays personal experiences. However, one major difference to the consumer interviews is his frequent habit to promote brands by engaging in positive and negative ‘name-dropping’<sup>6</sup> (see 8-31). Thereby, he shows his alignment with or against brands and other actors. A significant portion of the interview is dedicated to this mechanism and has the effect of establishing alliances and rejections of brands, activists and organizations. Thereby it can be assumed that Alf’s identity is more closely related to network rationale than consumer rationale. This makes him a messenger between the two worlds and a significant influence in the subjectivation of consumers.

An analysis of his blog supports the messenger-evocation as well. Two major categories illuminated by his blog were *focus* and *emotions* (Appendix VII: pg. 2). The *focus* category includes many of the topics deemed relevant enough to be featured, including *lifestyle*, *fashion*, and *activism*. The *lifestyle* category included topics such as *yoga*, *nature*, *culture*, *leisure*, *internet* and *city life*. The *fashion* category surrounds topics such as *shoes*, *accessories*, *models*, and *brands*. And the *activism* category includes topics such as *NGOs*, *public discourse*, *policy*, *tragedy*, *production and manufacturing*, and *fairness*. The majority of the blog is dedicated to interviewing and promoting slow fashion brands and sociopolitical actors and their respective forms of activism rather promoting a particular mission. Yet his persona and his use of social media make him relatable. By relating lifestyle and fashion to activism, he is building a bridge to other organizations and getting consumers interested and involved in ethical fashion. Rather than promoting a clear mission or movement, Alf engages in an aestheticization of ethical fashion activism and thereby validates the superficial appeal of ethical fashion.

My interview with *Fashion Revolution*’s public relations representative yielded a similar set of results. The consumer is now an object and described as “a fundamental part of the supply chain”, and capable of “driv[ing] the demand for products” as well as “driv[ing] the demand for sustainability within the fashion industry” (Appendix VIII: 13-14). The consumer role is presented as the most significant actor in the pursuit of change. This simultaneously validates the consumer and puts pressure on her or him, an effect which is further supported by the emotional intensity achieved through language. By describing that fashion consumption has “dramatically scaled and sped up” (3) and having produced “more frequent and deadlier garment factory

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<sup>6</sup> Continuous mentioning mentions of fast fashion and slow fashion brands as well as political organizations and movement representatives

disasters and more significant and faster environmental degradation” (4-5) while also using that same intensity to describe the potential positive effects of consumer engagement with definitions such as sustainability being about “maintaining life on earth and the ecosystems required to support it” (32-33) and “respecting and protecting the human rights of people and enabling equitable development of communities” (37-38), the representative is ensuring a two-sided effect: the establishment of urgency and virtue – both projected onto the consumer. In this way, it utilizes the consumer’s need for validation while promoting the idea that she or he is needed as part of the collective for the movement to work.

Her words address all identity patterns mentioned in the previous chapter. The *awareness* marker is validated through the glorification of the consumer position within the industry. The *introspection* marker is validated through compassion in statements such as “[w]hether or not they are always aware of it, consumers drive the demand for products and could thus drive demand for sustainability within the fashion industry” (13-14). The *nature-structure* marker is accentuated by invoking the concept of “sustainable/ethical fashion as a holistic approach to the design, production, sale, consumption and use of clothing, accessories and footwear that conserves and restores ecosystems whilst respecting and protecting the human rights of people and enabling equitable development of communities” (35-37). The *subject* marker is validated through a focus on government failure and, again, an elevation of the consumer from subject to active participant in consumer culture:

“Definitely, as an individual, it can be difficult to see directly how your actions can make a positive difference, whether that’s buying second hand or choosing a more sustainable brand. However, collectively if we all make these positive changes as well as using our collective voice to demand change by brands and governments, we can have a tremendous impact.” This impact is then not only validated as consumer power by pointing out that “for every person that asks them #WhoMadeMyClothes [...] they represent 10,000 other people who are thinking the same thing but haven’t spoken up” (77-83).

The consumer role is highlighted in a way that invokes the concept of power through autonomous action.

The results of the website analysis support the validation of consumer power in the same way (Appendix IX pg. 3): The categories established through the analysis of the website were *aesthetics* and *aim*. The *aesthetics* category includes appeal markers such as *vibrancy*, *life*, *boldness*, *functionality*, *attention*, *color*, *aesthetical opposition*, *cleanliness*, and *specificity*, while the category *aim* includes markers such as *voice*, *power*, *mission*, *revolution*, *fairness*, *equality*,

*encouragement, community and openness*. Both the linguistic intensity of the interview as well as the utopian appeal of the consumer position are reflected on the website.

The ethnographic protocol for the team meeting with the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* (Appendix XII) then showed the perspective from within the organization. Not how they represent themselves but rather how they work together to discuss and assess their actions, experiences and the changes they seek: There was a frequent focus on the question of how to get consumers involved (17-18) which aligns with the developments of this chapter. However, there were also many expressions of scrutiny and the notion of adverse effects caused by the constant drive to involve consumers. For example, when the idea for another fashion show came up because the meeting participant felt that it was successful, many other participants expressed their discontentment with the results: “Auch auf der Modenschau war irgendwie der Fokus nur auf die Mode selbst. Ein paar Leute waren interessiert an Infos der Kampagne, aber irgendwie nicht so richtig” (28-29). Furthermore, when the idea came up to promote a film about fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, one of the participants expressed her scrutiny of this type of glorification of fashion designers (38). Altogether, ideas regarding the problem of lacking support included more events (34-35), and more advertisement (26) and an increase in involvement of the press (48). So, internally, organizations such as Fashion Revolution or, in this case, the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung*, work with a notion of consumer engagement in mind – meaning, they design their approaches to introduce consumers to the moral concept of the organization through a subtle infiltration of their interests and understanding of self.

The interview with the *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien* was subsequent to the website analysis. Therefore, I will outline the effects of the website first. The analysis yielded three major categories (Appendix IX), including *style, structure* and *emotion* (pg.2). The aesthetic appeal of the website can be deconstructed into the symbolic signifiers of *complexity* and *aesthetics*. The stylistic complexity is masked through the aestheticization of the overarching web structure which represents the multi-stakeholder initiative in the first place: “The logo is clever. Looks like textile on a microscopic level. With all its connections.” (1-2). Through the inclusion of complex *diagrams* and statistical *lists*, the website reminds the reader of an educational computer program. The *aesthetics* category includes many fundamentally pleasing images such as a mother and a child, and a simplistic stick-figure picking cotton. The category *structure* includes

many of the complexity-symbolizing patterns, including the idea of individual responsibility through the scattering of a diagram outlining the initiative's members and ideas for progress:

“The ‘Über das Bündnis’ section explains how they do what they set out to do. Responsibility seems to be a big buzzword here. Engagement, goals. Very future oriented. And so many scattered agendas. Chemicals, sustainability, security, wages, labor laws...” (22-24)

The *emotions* category of my analysis shows the words *challenging, tired, depressing, confused, frustrated, and overloaded*. There seems to be an established distance to consumer engagement which is promoted by the website. While the *Textilbündnis* itself does not seem to offer any direct validation to the consumer, both, the distance to consumer matters and the transmission of consumer relations to NGOs is noticeable. This also becomes evident in the interview.

When asked how consumers are involved in the initiative, the representative answers:

“Im Textilbündnis ist die Zivilgesellschaft in Form von NGOs vertreten. Der einzelne Konsument bzw. die einzelne Konsumentin kann sich auf unserer Website über verschiedene Aktivitäten informieren und im Download-Bereich auch Informationsmaterialien einsehen.“ (18-21).

In this way, the initiative, which represents the German government, takes a position of an open platform which not only provides a safe distance from consumer engagement but also to consumer and organizational failure.

While the *Textilbündnis* does not directly validate consumers, it does so by proxy. Since it seems as though the idea is promoted that the initiative has no true face but is represented by a collaboration of several actors who engage in consumer validation such as fast and slow fashion brands and NGOs, the consumer is indirectly validated while at the same time providing an environment of distance toward the greater myth of political change in global capitalism.

Apart from the obvious consumer validations, Alf Zahn's blog, and the websites for *Fashion Revolution* and the *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien* all show one similar pattern. They engage in an aestheticization of everyday-life. While Alf's blog is particularly focused on clothing and lifestyle, *Fashion Revolution* promotes the aesthetical appeal of activism. The *Textilbündnis* focuses on everyday life on a more essential level by including imagery of a family and a cotton field worker as well as several images of simple textiles and fabrics, and invoking a relationship between fabric and the structure of a web (1-3).

The conscious utilization of these images and structures marks a particular aim and rationale. As described by Bachmann-Medick, this process of aestheticization of every-day life, has a significant effect on how people perceive themselves:



“Vor allem Medienbilder zeichnen sich durch die Gleichzeitigkeit von Ereignis, Bild und Wahrnehmung aus.[...], sie zeichnen sich aber auch durch die mediale Inszenierung und Manipulation aus, [...]. Gleichzeitig aktivieren solche Medienbilder das kollektive Bildgedächtnis und geben ihnen [...] einen massiven Zitatcharakter.“ (Bachmann-Medick 2006:: 354)

Xavier explains how this manipulation of visual imagery can affect consumer subjectivity. Leaning on Mike Featherstone, he describes that our constant exposure to the relation between consumption and signification rather than material value affects the way in which we define commodities: “what is consumed is the commodity image” (Xavier 2016: 210). In this way, the strategic use of imagery to achieve an emotional response is a manipulation of the consumer’s psyche. So, apart from the more obvious and explicit efforts to affect the consumer, such as the validation and frequent referencing of consumer power or the bridge-building effect supported by Alf Zahn’s inclusion of himself in the consumer model while clearly representing brands rather than consumers, the unconscious is affected as well.

#### **4.2.2. The Mobilization of Shared Identity: I/Us/Them, Them and Them**

In chapter 4.1.2. I showed that the shared identity of consumers seemed to be related to a specific moral code which defines the group self (*us*) and that their understanding of other could be split into two sides, one of them relating to compassion and understanding for the other, while the other represents discontentment with the other’s lack of coherence to the shared moral code. The way this shared identity is instrumentalized and mobilized can be seen in the three-step network structure as well.

First, beginning, again, with influencer Alf Zahn, one can observe an alignment with the group moral code. In the interview he explains, for example, that he no longer wears any fast fashion clothing because he cannot tolerate wearing fabrics on his body which have been made in an unsustainable way (Appendix IX: 35-39). However, he also takes on the role of a role model, because, according to him, he has not failed in his commitment to slow fashion since 2009 (8-13), which is clearly different than the interviewed consumers who were still having trouble adjusting and openly admitting it. Another aspect of Alf’s position as an influencer is also that he does not show the same compassion for individual failures which the consumer interviews showed. He does not mention consumer subjectivation but focuses on highlighting positive consumption behavior and thereby promoting the adherence to the moral code as respectable behavior: “Jeder Kauf ist eine bewusste Entscheidung für ein Produkt und damit

auch eine politische Entscheidung” (55-56). Alf invokes a different set of others which could be summarized as *I*, *them* and *them*, highlighting autonomy and consumer responsibility and clearly establishing the way in which his behavior differs from others.

*Fashion Revolution*'s public relations representative then turns Alf's *I* into a vague *us/them* by distributing the *us*-group identification among two separate groups: *Fashion Revolution* as a NGO as well as the entire fashion industry in general. This process, both, essentializes and universalizes the ethical consumer group, and at the same time, merges group identity with the organization. For example, when asked to explain what an ethical fashion industry would look like, she clearly speaks as *Fashion Revolution*'s representative: “To us, sustainability is fundamentally about maintaining life on earth [...]” (Appendix VIII: 32). In the next question she then invokes the *us*-characterization in regard to the entire spectrum of the industry in general: “We all have a part to play in this highly globalised industry.” She then continues to name all actors involved in the fashion industry, namely “consumers”, “brands”, and “[g]overnments” (40-45).

In the same statement, *Fashion Revolution* also manages to invoke the other two *others*. However, in this case there is no distinction between *them* and *the big Other*. First of all, the non-followers of the moral code are represented as so irrelevant as agents that there is no longer any distinction. Once, the membership of the group is established, *the relatable other* becomes future potential rather than existing individuals with a right to choose: “We can't stop until every person who makes our clothes is seen, heard, paid properly and working in safe conditions” (Appendix VIII: 28-30). Not only is this statement extremely utopian but it is also showing an allegiance with the rights and freedom as well as an essentialization of the perceived victims over the consumer's agency. In terms of *the big Other*, *Fashion Revolution* describes itself as capable of singularly handling global capitalism under the condition that consumers play their part. While reminding the consumers of their autonomy as well as their collective power, they remove some of the fear and pressure surrounding *the big Other* from the minds of consumers. The scary unknown is now put in the proper hands:

“A drive around consumer awareness has certainly catapulted these issues into the public sphere. Social media certainly has a large part to play, allowing like-minded citizens to connect and share information and spread their message. In addition, NGOs such as ourselves and many others have been working tirelessly to ensure these topics are taken seriously by brands and policymakers” (66-71).

While maintaining the myth of global capitalism but removing the consumer's responsibility of challenging it and by offering the consumer the simple solution of getting on social media and utilizing their autonomy, *Fashion Revolution* is simultaneously validating the consumer and her or his power and autonomy, and creating a platform for the promotion of their organization. They successfully turn *the big Other* into a *relatable other* through conformity to the group but alienate the previous *relatable other*.

The protocol from the team meeting highlights the *us/them*-mobilization attempts as well: When discussing the participation at a meeting with some representatives from the *Textilbündnis*, which is supposed to aid in the assessment of a new certification method, many of the participants seem either uninterested or unqualified:

“Eine Teilnehmerin sagt sie würde ja gerne dabei sein aber sie weiß doch gar nichts davon. Ich empfinde dies als fragliche Position. Lernen ist doch immer gut. Andere nicken ihr zu und zeigen, dass sie es auch so empfinden. Ich frage mich nun, ob einige Teilnehmer denken, weil sie sich engagieren müssen sie eine Art Expertenfunktion übernehmen.” (Appendix XII: 51-59)

Furthermore, it seems as though the idea of maintaining a regulatory position between political actors and consumers is important to the campaign: While supporting the idea of inviting as many students of cultural studies and design to the podium discussion challenging the multi-stakeholder initiative *Fair Wear Foundation*, the idea to invite experts such as professors is met with intense skepticism (60-74): “Man soll ja dann nicht irgend ein Gespräch haben das ‘kein Mensch versteht’. The spokesperson position seems to be reserved for members and potential members of the organization.

Fassin explains the effect the *us/them*- mobilization of shared identity, which he refers to as “becoming a spokesperson”, has:

“By becoming their spokespersons, humanitarian organizations introduce another distinction into the public arena — the distinction between those who are subjects (the witnesses who testify to the misfortunes of the world) and those who can exist only as objects (the unfortunate whose suffering is testified to in front of the world).” (Fassin 2007: 517)

The rationale it instills in these spokespersons is one of an essential distinction between the weak and the powerful:

“[Humanitarian intervention] establishes a distinction between lives that can be narrated in the first person (those who intervene) and lives that are recounted only in the third person (the voiceless in the name of whom intervention is done): testimony, operating as an autobiographical account for the former and the construction of a cause for the latter, reveals this split.” (519)

Essentially, what this distinction then promotes is the very basis of ethical virtue rather than subjective morality, while constantly validating the consumer's perceived autonomy and

collective power. Not only does this establish an extended and legitimized shared identity, it also introduces morality into a political realm.

This effect explains the transmission of power from traditional to social media which also enables a shift from local to global media dissemination. Media visibility is promoted as a virtuous aim for all of the autonomous individuals supporting the organization and a real possibility and necessary step in the fight against global capitalism. However, as has been shown in several studies including Alessandra Mezzadri's *The Sweatshop Regime*, while allowing for a heightened awareness surrounding themes related to the industry, visibility does not always provide positive results for the people it is set out to support. This is exemplified by India's response to the imposition of new corporate regulations in the industry which led to the 'firing and re-hiring' of workers as informal employees (see Mezzadri 2017: 19-26). The effects of the new corporate responsibility guidelines which had become necessary after social media visibility made the improper and inhumane treatment of garment workers in India apparent on a global scale, therefore included schemes to avoid responsibility altogether. On a consumer level that leads to the question: How aware are consumers of this potential effect? Since it is not a secret and has been discussed within the ethical fashion realm, I am inclined to believe that at least some active participants are aware. Yet, not much attention is paid to the regimes and not much is done to counteract this negative effect. As outlined by Morozov, while the internet offers the possibility of collectivizing and mobilizing people and sharing information, "the problem with political activism facilitated by social networking sites is that much of it happens for reasons that have nothing to do with one's commitment to ideas and politics in general, but rather to impress one's friends" (Morozov 2011: 186). Clearly, non-governmental, pro-ethical fashion organizations must be aware of this potential effect. So why is it omitted from the interview responses?

The *Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien* then achieves the last step of completely transforming the shared identity into a process of othering ending in the designations *them*, *them* and *them*. Serving as an umbrella initiative representing consumers through NGOs, the legitimization ends in the distinction *them*, *them* and *them*, rather than the previously invoked *us*, *them* and *the big Other*. Not only does the *Textilbündnis* achieve a distancing effect through serving as an umbrella initiative, but, through the relation to NGOs, which, in turn relate to influencers such as Alf Zahn and thereby also to consumers, it establishes a new identity, which

supporters of NGOs and influencers are inclined to promote; it turns consumers into promoters of a particular rationale through the reproduction of identity markers. Now being part of a greater movement, the *us*-mentality carries the name of the NGO as well as the fashion industry itself, which under the leadership of a multi-stakeholder initiative become a tiny part of a greater project and diminishes the active and individual role of consumers as anything but future potential for a subject whose rationale supports that of the greater ethical agenda.

Through its inherent rationale, as well as the support of political initiatives or similar umbrella initiatives, NGOs such as *Fashion Revolution* are homogenizing activism. A new kind of conformity is promoted. By collectivizing notions of shared identity, the movement is radicalizing the concept of conformity and establishes a top-down hierarchy between the weak and the powerful, thereby adopting and supporting a political narrative based on shared virtue ethics, opposing the “axis of evil” and supporting the “axis of good” (Fassin 2007: 510). This essentialization of shared morality then aids sociopolitical organizations such as *Fashion Revolution* and, by proxy, multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien* in establishing a safe distance from responsibility, which, through validation of consumer power and autonomy, is reverted back to consumers. This process is outlined by Fassin concerning humanitarian organizations which intervene in war zones:

“By an astonishing paradox, at the very moment when some countries are throwing themselves into a moral crusade against their demonized enemies and appropriating the vocabulary and symbolism of humanitarianism, nongovernmental organizations are distancing themselves while nevertheless casting their discourse in the same rhetorical mold.” (Fassin 2007: 510-11)

While this certainly does not equate actions of Alf Zahn, *Fashion Revolution* or even the *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien* with the actions of corporations and governments effectively creating and perpetuating tragedies and social inequalities, it is still worth mentioning that its inherent rationale seems to follow similar structures. The following chapter will develop the responsibility-distancing-effect further.

### **4.2.3. Consumer Responsibility vs. Brand/NGO Influence & the Global Capitalism Myth**

Chapter 4.1.3. showed that consumers generally invoked the same hierarchy of responsibility, both, in relation to the state of consumer culture as it is, as well as concerning the future of ethical fashion. Within the network created by global capitalism, they presented politics as the actor carrying the greatest level of responsibility. Brands and consumers were both

described as a symptom of the consumer culture capitalism promotes, but brands were described to carry more responsibility and more guilt than consumers. In a paradoxical turn, consumers, while not fully responsible due to a lack of transparency within the industry, were, however, viewed as a significant driving force in consumer culture as well as the most significant actor in the counteraction against it. I have also made the claim that the validation of consumer notions mythologizing global capitalism and the continuous focus on consumer autonomy lifts the weight off of brands and political actors and manages to project responsibility onto the consumer. I will now show how the hierarchy ladder is described by sociopolitical organizations and relate the findings to the results in chapter 4.1.3.

The clearest relation to network rationale in Alf Zahn's responses could be drawn in relation to responsibility. Alf explains:

“Für die aktuelle Form unserer Konsumgesellschaft sind wir zum Großteil selbst verantwortlich. Aber wie schon skizziert hat die Wirtschaft einen massiven Einfluss auf unsere Gesellschaft und auf unser Kaufverhalten. Und nicht zuletzt kann auch die Politik positiven Einfluss nehmen, was Unternehmen machen dürfen und was nicht. Hier fehlen mir klare und vor allem bessere Richtlinien, um uns Konsumenten vor Fast Fashion zu schützen.” (Appendix VI: 42-47)

Here, he makes an interesting distinction between responsibility and influence. While he describes that consumers are responsible for the state of consumer culture, he also outlines the influence of market- and political actors. In relation to his self-representation as a role model, this distinction holds an embedded notion of consumer autonomy. Alf presents himself as having achieved a particular level of status in ethical fashion as someone who has successfully resisted fast fashion on an individual basis through the utilization of his autonomy. Ultimately, he achieves a role of passive observer through his statement, which relates closely to the essential aim of virtue ethics – namely, conformity, as outlined by Fassin. Thereby, Alf not only relays a new hierarchy, in which consumers hold all responsibility including the responsibility to ward off influences and actively change the system, he also greatly supports the paradox of agency through conformity.

*Fashion Revolution's* public relations representative invokes a similar hierarchy:

“We all have a part to play in this highly globalised industry. Consumers play a large role in creating demand for products at certain price points. Governments should play a larger role in regulating brands [...] brands have a large role in ensuring their supply chains respect the people that work in them and the environment. We all need to push forward for systemic change.” (Appendix VIII: 40-45)

It should be said that she mentions consumers first, then governments, and then brands. Furthermore, she sets up a clear hierarchy to consumers with the inclusion of the last sentence. Having previously established that the signifier “we” relates to both *Fashion Revolution* as well as the entire industry, she is representing the rationale that the consumer plays multiple roles. Through engagement in the NGO, through individual autonomy in resisting and challenging fast fashion brands as well as the ‘wrong’ political loyalty, and through the role of a spokesperson, the consumer’s responsibility is now scattered across the entire realm of global capitalism. Her relation to consumers with her “we all”-signification then simultaneously offers the consumer the comfort of shared identity, the validation of power and autonomy, and a reduction of helplessness regarding *the big Other*. The consumer is no longer just a small part in the supply-chain or an individual actor in the network of ethical fashion, but a carrier of immense responsibility to create the changes the NGO seeks to establish. Through the consistent focus on consumer power and autonomy, both in an economic as well as a political sense, the network is establishing its own level of power, including a very specific set of standards rather than aiding the consumer in her or his autonomy.

Donini explains how the imposition of standards in humanitarianism relates to global dominance:

“The dominance of a particular standard involves a form of power that shapes the functioning of institutions [...]. This network power defines the rules of the humanitarian club that new players need to accept if they want to become members. As such, this network power provides the glue that keeps the system somewhat together and allows its disparate parts to communicate with one another.” (Donini 2015: 73)

But beyond just instrumentalizing the consumers’ needs for validation and shared identity, I claim that NGOs such as *Fashion Revolution* end up aiding market-actors in continuing systems of oppression in the fashion industry through embedded mechanisms in their approach including the aestheticization of activism and the consistent focus on consumer autonomy as can be seen with Alf Zahn’s blog and *Fashion Revolution’s* website. This process aids brands in the creation of a new market in which humanitarianism is merged with fashion appeal:

“Whatever influence the rise of capitalism may have had generally on ideas and values through the medium of class interest, it had a more telling influence on the origins of humanitarianism through changes the market wrought in *perception* or *cognitive style*. And it was primarily a change in cognitive style – specifically a change in the perception of causal connection and consequently a shift in the conventions of moral responsibility – that underlay the new constellation of attitudes and activities that we call humanitarianism. [...] To explain humanitarianism, then, what matters in the capitalist substructure is not a new class so much as

the market, and what links the capitalist market to a new sensibility is not class interest so much as the power of market discipline to inculcate altered perceptions of causation in human affairs.” (Haskell 2001 [1985]: 342)

What this quote details is that that which makes NGOs appealing to consumers, whose support is vital to the NGO, is also that which becomes embedded in market transformations. The real concern for the future of this planet and the discontentment with social structures in the industry becomes its own market, where concepts of ethical responsibility to resist and combat the industry are sold back to consumers in the form of reductionist notions of change. By focusing on consumer autonomy and the importance of visibility this market is then validated by NGOs, which spreads the idea that just wearing a t-shirt by a green label is a virtuous act which makes a difference or that visibility is the most important aim in ethical fashion activism. While they are legitimate steps, it is necessary to assess the downsides of this side of activism to find better approaches. In this way, NGOs such as *Fashion Revolution* then function simultaneously as a challenge to and an ally of global capitalism.

Furthermore, an alliance with governments is exemplified in its support of umbrella organizations for change. Although *Fashion Revolution* does not have ties to the *Bündnis*, because it is not a German NGO and does not have a specific branch set up for Germany, it does support many of the foundations which are part of it, including German branches of the *Clean Clothes Campaign*, the *Fair Wear Foundation* and other fair trade organizations and multi-stakeholder initiatives. It is also funded by the *European Union*, as is stated on the website.

The *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien* claims that its main aim is to improve the conditions of the global textile industry (2-5). When asked what exactly the initiative does, the representative replies:

“Das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien zielt auf verbesserte Bedingungen in der weltweiten Textilindustrie ab. Es gibt verpflichtende und freiwillige Ziele für die Mitglieder. Jährlich wird über den Fortschritt bezüglich der Zielerreichung berichtet. Zudem gibt es Bündnisinitiativen, in denen sich verschiedene Mitglieder zusammen tun und sich beispielsweise für bessere Arbeitsbedingungen im indischen Tamil Nadu oder für den Ersatz giftiger Chemikalien im Produktionsprozess einsetzen. [...] Außerdem bietet das Textilbündnis eine Plattform für den gegenseitigen Austausch an. Die Mitglieder können voneinander lernen und gemeinsam Lösungen für unterschiedlichste Probleme erarbeiten.” (Appendix XI: 7-16)

The *Bündnis* scatters responsibility across many layers with the overarching idea that they are providing a platform for discourse and outlining mandatory goals which have to be reached by participants. However, participation is not mandatory. After being set into motion by German development minister Gerd Müller and the *BMZ*, a scandal surrounding the lack of participation



by of brands and organizations, brands became public in 2015. The claim was made by brands that the regulations could not be adopted in others countries as easily as was expected by the initiative. This then prompted public appeals toward consumer action by organizations and ethical brands, including, for example Sina Trinkwalder, from the eco-social textile company *manomama*:

“An einer Veränderung der derzeitigen Lage müssten allen voran auch die Kunden mitwirken. Ein Appell an ethische Grundsätze und mehr bewusstsein für die Kleidung, die gekauft wird, und wo sie herkommt, könne letzten Endes mehr bringen als große politische Reden.“ (detektor.fm)

In this scheme, the *Bündnis* shifts responsibility toward organizations and ethical brands, which then shift responsibility toward consumers through public discourse. In the end, what is left is the notion of consumer responsibility to force brands into joining the initiative, which actively reverts all levels of responsibility back to consumers. Although this responsibility is marketed as power and autonomy to consumers it essentially conditions them into conformity to the already established standards laid out by humanitarian agents. Not only does this process constitute a “humanitarianization” of political intervention in the industry, but also a “politicization of the nongovernmental humanitarian field” (Fassin 2007: 508). This merging between politics and humanitarianism involves the NGOs position insofar as it aids in the writing of the global capitalism myth through which consumers construct their identity in a pre-political as well as an active stage of activism. This, of course, is greatly supported by the effort of initiatives such as the *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien* by scattering responsibility and distancing itself from consumer engagement altogether.

### **4.3. Contradictions & Strategies: Universalize, Divide, Project (and Conquer)**

As the title of this chapter implies, I have determined contradictions embedded in the strategic approach of the ethical fashion network. As described by Donini, finding these contradictions in the rationale of humanitarian organizations is not uncommon:

“Like other ‘isms’ [...] humanitarianism propounds lofty aims that serve to hide deep contradictions, conflicting alignments and power plays, manipulations and instrumentalizations, personality cults, struggles over resources and, sometimes shady financial transactions.” (Donini 2015: 72).

As I have previously explained, my research illuminates a three-part subjectivation mechanism. I have also mentioned that this complexity is, perhaps, the network’s greatest strategy. But what is the overall aim? Why is this strategy employed? I believe that the scattering

of responsible parties, which all seem to lead back to the consumer, aids the network in rationalizing global capitalism. By setting up fail-safe systems promoted by umbrella organizations, to provide certifications and evaluate the efforts of members, and by focusing on consumer responsibility in the case of NGOs or providing a platform for the exchange between spokespersons, the network is avoiding any direct connection to the fight against global capitalism. In this way, the comforting aspects of capitalism, including the ability to enjoy fashion is made possible; in essence, it is a way to maintain capitalism while not coming across as capitalist.

The previously mentioned three-part subjectivation mechanism begins, in this case, with influencers as a bridge between consumers and organizations. Influencers provide a messenger function which aids the network in promoting the aesthetical appeal as well as the basic standards of the network. The second part of the subjectivation is then the socio-political organization which provides a link to the political realm as well as standardizing individual morality through a process of accentuation of individual autonomy. The next part is then the umbrella organization, stemming from a purely political realm, which acts as an intermediary between the organizations and global capitalism. It does not accept responsibility as an organization but rather acts as an authoritative policy-certifier who provides standards for companies and organizations which affect consumers through the position they hold as a spokesperson for the moral standard. How exactly this subjectivation of the consumer is achieved and what kind of subjectivity is produced will be outlined in the following three chapters, including a contextualization beyond what has already been provided in the previous chapters.

### ***Validation & Universalization***

The first strategy, as shown in chapters 4.1.1. and 4.2.1. can be summarized as a *universalization* which is achieved through a validation of the consumer's identity and the simultaneous focus on the consumer's position as a member of a specific group whose main aim lies in achieving a specific goal. While the influencer achieves a role model position which aestheticizes the virtue ethics behind ethical fashion, the organization then offers a clear and standardized aim. However, this aim is promoted as achievable through the consumers' utilization of agency. The contradiction related to this strategy is, of course, that anything highlighting agency should not have a universalizing effect. However, through the promotion of

a standardized goal, the organization achieves supporter conformity which is promoted as solidarity. While autonomy is portrayed as consumer power, the autonomy to reject the organization's aim is completely trivialized through the organization's approach. It claims that it will not stop until every garment worker leads a better and more secure life – an aim which is only achievable through the standardization of morality, and the promotion of its value system. This is not a goal which allows for alternative perceptions or strategies.

This is a form of power being exercised over subjects by establishing and maintaining an ethical standard and modifying the consumers' behavior to promote this standard while stirring away from responsibility by continuously pointing to the consumer's agency. In a Foucauldian sense, ethical consumers are being consciously confronted with the idea that there is an overall aim which is to be achieved and that the utilization of their agency and ability to represent this aim to others, leads to collective success. However, as Foucault explains,

“[t]he crucial problem of power is not that of voluntary servitude [...]. At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of will and the intransigence of freedom.” (Foucault 1982: 789)

In relation to the relationship between power and freedom, Fassin explains that

“freedom is not far from virtue. Recognizing the latter as autonomous from any given morality means affirming freedom against the imposition of rules and norms in the name of a culturally defined good or duty. An interesting distinction is established here between freedom and [...] agency. [The concept of agency] has been inseparable from that of structure, being used to contrast and nuance it: agency corresponds to the margin of liberty individuals dispose of, even when structures overwhelmingly tend to reproduce the unequal social order. The problem is that agency essentially reflects the view of the observers, who recognize its existence only when practices meet their expectations of openly manifested resistance.” (Fassin 2014: 431)

This instability of free will is instrumentalized to achieve, what Foucault refers to as a movement with a “massive and universalizing form, at the level of the whole social body” (795). The ultimate aim of the NGO is the promotion of its own value system to ensure the more distant goal provided in their mission statement (see introduction).

As shown in 4.2.1., the subjectivation of the consumer is achieved by affecting conscious and unconscious decision-making processes. In the conscious realm, the consumer is put in a position where she or he is confronted by the inherent contradiction but asked to set it aside through a focus on the organization's overall ethical aim as more significant than consumer agency. This entanglement of the consumer's autonomy with group standards is where the conscious meets the unconscious, as explained by Sigmund Freud in his text *Group Psychology*

*and the Analysis of the Ego*. He explains that “in a group the individual is brought under conditions which allow him to throw off the repressions of his unconscious instinctual impulses” (Freud et al. 1968 [1921]: 78). He explains further that the characteristics adopted from the group are actually “manifestations of the repressed unconscious, in which all that is evil in the human mind is contained as a predisposition” (78). From a psychoanalytic standpoint, then, the group identity forms a power mechanism over consumer agency and tends to lead the individual to suppress or repress patterns and mechanisms which defy the group in *self* and *other*. While the contradiction may be apparent, consumers who wish to achieve the overall aim supported in the mission statement are inclined to regulate their agency to maintain their position in the group. This notion is supported by research by Paez et al. who showed that “subjects with a strong group identification and a high private self-consciousness are those who show a stronger behavior regulation on the basis of one’s social identity” (Paez et al. 1998: 212).

This method is greatly supported by what some researchers may refer to as the ‘representation regime’ as outlined by Stuart Hall. In this case, identification relates also to a symbolic realm, which tends to affect individuals on an emotional level:

“Representation is a complex business and, especially when dealing with 'difference', it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple, common-sense way.” (Hall 2012: 226)

However, this process not only affects the individual in an individual way; it also has an effect on the social imaginary which forms concepts and ideas based on representation. Therefore, it has to be understood also as power mechanism as outlined by Michel Foucault, because it “includes the exercise of symbolic power through representational practices” (Hall 2012: 259). In the case of this study this relates, above all, to the way in which the work of the NGOs and the influencer standardize the representation of morality as virtue ethics.

The influencer plays a vital role in this subjectivation mechanism, as illuminated by Stuart Hall’s summary of Sigmund Freud’s concept of identification: “[Identification] involves some projection based on a similarity between the individual and an external person, and, from that, the moulding of the ego after that person” (Hall 2012: 312). This, of course, highlights Alf’s dual self-representation as a role model as well as a member of the world of consumers. It also explains the NGOs focus on the formation of spokespersons to share the standard of the group with others. According to Xavier, representation through imagery, as shown in the website analyses, works to form “a network of socio-historical images, symbols, and myths through

which human beings imagine, organize and represent meaning” (Xavier 2016: 210). As such, they support the movement in spreading concepts and ideas which relay an emotional message. This focus on an emotional message often completely diminishes the inherent contradiction to where consumers are willing to give up certain aspects of their agency to support the representation regime.

This method of universalizing individual perception to disseminate a moral agenda by means of representation is, then, of course offering the first access point to corporate mechanisms infiltrating the movement and its supporters by basing new commodities around the social imaginary of the group. While consumers believe to be validated for their ethical behavior, they are actually validated for the aesthetic appeal of their ethical behavior. In brief, the contradiction of validating the consumer’s power of autonomy while promoting shared identity is causing the universalization of individual expression and the violation of agency through the manipulation of conscious and unconscious decision-making processes. This strategy is one commonly employed by what is known in sociological research as a representation regime.

### ***Othering & Division***

Of course, the ‘representation regime’ then holds within it also another contradiction as outlined in chapter 4.2.2.: the promotion of the importance of individual identity and the simultaneous trivialization of other identities. This contradiction seems to be inherently linked to the appropriation of the average consumer’s moral code to reflect the aim of the organization. The pre-politicized group self seems to feel also a relation to others in that they feel understanding and compassion for individual misbehavior. This compassion is, then, no longer supported by the network – the non-ethical consumer cannot be excused but rather, she or he is just not properly conform yet.

This is not said directly, of course, but as I have shown in 4.2.2., it is embedded in the discourse of the organization, which seeks to affect consumers on a global scale to change their behavior as well as the influencer, who is promoting himself as a role model who has not made any mistakes since he decided to adopt new regulations to his own behavior. The NGO not only trivializes non-ethical consumers as mere potential, it also merges the ethical consumer’s moral code with that of the organization. Furthermore, it trivializes also the individual consumer’s concern and animosity toward global capitalism as the root of the problem. The result of these radical trivializations is, then, also a radical division between two groups – *us* and *them*. This

othering effect is linked, in particular, to the establishment of spokespersons (see chapter 4.2.2.). The essentialization of the weak and the powerful which this othering mechanism causes then also establishes a political narrative - namely that of a utopian ideal within a great field of conformed individuals adhering to the same sense of virtue ethics. Anyone amounting to the *them*-category cannot be tolerated within this system.

This politicization has a moral background. Foucault explains that the technique “categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him” (Foucault 1982: 781). By doing so, the organization establishes an unspoken rule common in much political rationality: *You are with us or you are with them*, alluding to the political habit of radical othering. And, in this case it is related to ethical structures. Foucault explains that this form of power utilized by institutions and, in this case, NGOs and sociopolitical umbrella organizations is originally related to the relationship between political and religious agents in society, which can be linked to the “modern Western state [which] has integrated in a new political shape an old power technique which originated in Christian institutions” – namely “pastoral power” (782). He explains that this technique merges morality and political influence through a process of simultaneous individualization and totalization (782). By doing so, institutions of power are violating human agency while essentially re-articulating it as a human right. As explained by Fassin, “recognizing [virtue] as autonomous from any given morality means affirming freedom against the imposition of rules and norms in the name of a culturally defined good or duty” (Fassin 2014: 431). And, indeed, whether it is a “good” or a “duty” does not matter. Both are culturally produced commodities which relate to the “margin of liberty individuals dispose of, even when structures overwhelmingly tend to reproduce the unequal social order” (431). So, while *Fashion Revolution* or the *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung* seek to utilize consumer subjectivity to produce positive changes in the fashion industry, only a fraction of the aim can be reproduced through the mobilization of consumers due to 1) the consumers individual need satisfaction and 2) the inherent violation of consumer agency which cannot be rationalized as anything but a form of governance.

### ***Transparency Avoidance & the Projection of Responsibility***

The last contradiction I found is related to the network’s ambiguous relationship to responsibility. There seems to be a ladder of accountability which ends on the back of the

consumer. As outlined in chapter 4.2.2. and 4.2.3., it seems as though the network assumes a position of authority without accepting any level of accountability. However, while consumers, as part of the network, also assume that same position, they promote the idea that consumers are responsible for the changes promoted by the network. It appears as though the position of power, even when assumed by consumers through the alignment with an organization allows for a reduction in responsibility.

First of all, this is achieved by the scattering effect which makes the network so complex. The umbrella organization scatters responsibility among several NGOs and brands. The NGOs scatter responsibility among consumers. And consumers, the group with the least authority in terms of policy-making or media influence, then become entangled in a contradiction in which they assume a position of authority to dictate responsibility as well as actively holding responsibility. This is, quite simply, the epitome of the regime global capitalism has set up for itself, to sustain and perpetuate its system.

To deconstruct the contradiction and explore its origin, I will first remember the Marxist concept of social production and its relation to the economic structure of society. Marx showed through his extensive analyses that the “totality of [...] relations of production” are the foundation of the “political superstructure [...] to which there correspond definite forms of social consciousness” (Marx 1976 [1858-59]: 2). This can be related to the ethical fashion network as well, whose constitution relates to “the totality of [...] relations”. Through several integrated patterns of social signifying, the network is created. So, the question, of course, needs to be: Do we establish our own political economy or is it forced on us? Are consumers really responsible for the state of consumer culture or is there a guiding principle stemming from the above-mentioned superstructure, and if so, what is the consumer’s level of complicity in this superstructure?

To attempt to answer this question I will draw on Sigmund Freud and his text *Civilization and its Discontents*. In his conclusion, Freud states:

“The fateful question of the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent the cultural process developed in it will succeed in mastering the derangement of communal life caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction.” (Freud 1962 [1930]: 133)

Freud explains that governance is a result of the human psyche needing a counterbalance to its instincts. In this sense, the above-mentioned superstructure is a result of a regime consumers create to bring order to the chaos of instinct. In Freudian terms, human civilization is, essentially,

a large-scale project in the avoidance of pain and the acquisition of comfort. This line of thinking could illuminate the described approach of fighting fashion with fashion as promoted by the general rationale of the network as a way to maintain comfort but feel useful and helpful in the fight against social injustices. Essentially, by Freud's determination, both global capitalism and consumer culture are a "[s]ublimation of instinct" (Freud 1962 [1930]: 63). However, Freud proposed a view of human beings as subject to their own psyche which is deeply engrained in predetermined societal conditions embedded through parental guidance and structural predeterminations (Freud 1962 [1930]: 92).

To elaborate I would like to make a claim proposed by Foucault and recalled by Dreyfus and Rabinow:

"People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does." (Dreyfus et al. 1982: 187)

If this is true and people are commonly aware of their own behavior but not how their behavior affects those around them, then can they be held accountable? And is there someone who is more aware of the effects than consumers? I would like to claim that there is. Considering that *Fashion Revolution*, an NGO which has teams of experts working together to assess the state of consumer culture, withholds background information related to the effect of visibility in interviews such as was conducted by me, it shows that a lack of transparency in the name of a particular goal which can have significant effects which consumers are not necessarily aware of. The *Textilbündnis* then goes one step further in completely neglecting any relation to consumers by projecting responsibility onto NGOs which not only have to fulfill requirements set up by the initiative, but also have to utilize consumers to achieve their goal.

The mythologization of global capitalism I mentioned previously is a result of the lack of transparency on the part of any collective seeking to utilize consumer agency to produce certain results. By engaging in the distortion of the active influence, historical reality, and embedded contemporary effects of global capitalism, either by knowing or unknowing actors in the network, the individual consumer is inclined to engage in signifying and representation mechanisms which may be contrary to their intended approach. Consumers do not have sufficient knowledge of the effects of their engagement in the system, due to the significant oversimplification of information promoted by NGOs as well the scattering efforts and overloading of information by umbrella organizations. Relevant information is made available as part of long lists of bibliographies, and the information which is sufficiently simplified for



consumers is loaded with imagery and signifiers promoting a political rationale rather than a basic platform for information exchange.

## **5. Conclusion: *Enunciation, De-Moralization, Introspection (and Empowerment)***

In this thesis, I have 1) deconstructed what I have referred to as the ethical fashion network by analyzing ethnographic protocols and interviews related to the different actors involved. I have also 2) analyzed the rationale promoted by NGOs and initiatives in the team meeting as well as the interviews, to outline different markers of subjectivation related to the politicization of ethical fashion consumers. In relation to these markers of subjectivation I have found three relevant strategies through which the network achieves this politicization, and ultimately opens itself up to commodification. I have titled these strategies by evoking an extension of the old strategy of *dividing and conquering* to relate to the politicization of consumer subjectivity – namely, *universalization, division, and projection*. As a counterargument to these strategies and incorporating all contradictory aspects I have outlined in this text, I will base my conclusion on a hypothetical NGO which would incorporate the research results into its project concept. In an effort to conceptualize this NGO I have come up with three counter-mechanisms which I feel would work toward the goal of ethical fashion organizations while refraining from the violation of consumer agency.

But first, it is important to clarify the aim of the NGO. Whereas all of the analyzed NGOs and initiatives aim to counteract the exploitation of workers in the industry (see *Fashion Revolution: Manifesto*; *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung: Vision & Mission*; *Textilbündnis: Das Bündnis*), the NGO I am proposing focuses, first and foremost, on consumers in the Western realm. The idea is to properly educate consumers rather than condition them and to explore their agency through a focus on full transparency. The mission of the proposed NGO would be to offer a platform for consumers in the West to explore the realities surrounding ethical fashion as well as exposing the strategies employed to violate consumer agency. By exposing these mechanisms and realities, the NGO's overall aim would be to target global capitalism as an institution of power which violates consumer subjectivity, and to counteract its influence on consumers. In this way it relates to Anthony Giddens' structuration model in practice in that it opens up the "forms of interaction in which [...] agency is performed", namely,

“communication, the exercise of power and sanction” and clearly outlines the modes through which they function in social systems: “signification, domination and legitimization” (Whittington 2015: 148). The counter-concepts I have designed to be incorporated into the NGO’s approach are in line with Giddens’s considerations regarding the relationship between structure and agency, which is important to avoid contradictions related to humanitarian work. The above-mentioned counter-concepts will be outlined in the following chapters:

### ***Enunciation & The Non-Sovereign Self***

One of the fundamental realms of humanitarian intervention is information exchange. Here, information is first offered, then assessed and analyzed and, in most cases, turned into a discursive event which is influenced by predetermined structures such as the social knowledge which is continuously reproduced to promote the principles of capitalism. This realm involves the dangers surrounding textuality as outlined by Homi Bhaba, who explains that “[t]extuality is not simply a second-order ideological expression or a verbal symptom of a pre-given political subject”; but rather, the “political subject” is easily determined through the analysis of a text which “has been a formative influence on Western democratic and socialist discourse” (Bhaba 1988: 8). In this way, the problem with textuality can serve as an access point for the assessment of information and the simultaneous establishment of ideas which stem from consumers.

What this idea amounts to is, first of all, the promotion of discourse in the form of 1) well-organized information regarding the subjectivation of consumers, and 2) an anonymity-driven ‘open-mic’ medium which allows for a free flow of information surrounding topics within the realm of consumer activism. This is an act of *enunciation* – a concept proposed by Homi Bhaba. In his text *The Commitment to Theory* (1988), he defines it as a “dialogical discursive exchange; a negotiation of terms in the on-going present of the enunciation of the political statement” which involves “the suggestion that a crisis of identification is initiated in the textual performance that displays a certain ‘difference’ within the signification of any single political system, prior to establishing the substantial differences between political beliefs” (Bhaba 1988: 9). By encouraging the act of dialogical exchange of ideas which “acknowledge[s] the force of writing, its metaphoricity and its rhetorical discourse, as a productive matrix which defines the social”, it also “makes it available as an objective of/for action” (Bhaba 1988: 8).

Essentially, this discursive realm is endangered by its own power; the power of producing yet another politicized consumer who promotes the superficial appeal of the group identity to achieve validation. To counteract this effect, I would like to propose an active promotion of a “non-sovereign notion of the self” (Bhaba 1990: 212). According to Bhaba, the recurring exchange of articulation and knowledge production has the potential to counteract universalization. The *non-sovereign self* is, then, the anti-ideal which is to be ‘promoted. It amounts to an autonomous individual interested in exchange. This could be realized through a *Reddit*-type thread forum without profiles, which keeps users on point in relation to concepts or ideas, rather than diverting into a form of social signifying in which the aesthetic appeal of a concept can take control. Of course, this approach does not guarantee that group identity can be avoided. But it does offer an access point for real exchange of information in a setting where the content or topic is elevated, rather than engaging in knowledge production which is based on aesthetic appeal.

Essentially, the NGO would offer access to well-organized information, such as existing supplier lists, transparency charts, supply-chain information and other important data. But, furthermore, it would also provide critiques and assessments of the data, including independent research, media articles and other information related to the topic of consumer subjectivation. Rather than mobilizing consumers to push for change in the industry, it would mobilize consumers to push for an empowerment of their own agency and decision-making processes by demanding information.

This realm relates to Giddens’s analysis in relation to signification, which Whittington describes as “[referring] to a system’s discursive and symbolic order – that is, rules governing the types of talk, jargon and image that predominate [...]” (Whittington 2015: 148). The proposed NGO would offer a platform for exchange without rule over the discursive or symbolic order, but with a significant focus on awareness regarding the topic of social signification and knowledge production.

### ***De-Moralization and Tactical Humanism***

I have outlined in the previous chapters that the ethical idealism in ethical fashion promotes the embedded rationale of conformity. I have also shown that this conformity is related to an *us vs. them*-mentality which divides and essentializes groups to achieve mobilization. This

radical form of othering is to be avoided by the proposed NGO. To counterbalance the conformity-effect, I propose a de-moralization of consumer action. What I mean by this is to redirect the focus of consumer activism from demanding ethical justice to demanding transparency for consumers whose agency is violated by the active manipulation of consumer culture through market actors and political organizations in the name of global capitalism. This form of activism does not seek to antagonize any other NGO. It could easily exist alongside those seeking ethical justice as long as other NGOs would not view its open discourse policy as an attack of its strategies.

First of all, this approach necessitates a focus on the re-education of consumers in the West to understand and re-assess their own position within the network. So, alongside the previous approach of the publication of information regarding consumer subjectivation I propose a refocusing effort, stirring away from virtue ethics toward highlighting the appeal of empowerment by representing the subjectivation of consumers. The manifesto or mission statement of the NGO needs to be directed at the empowerment of consumer agency – be it ethical or non-ethical consumers. Regardless of whether or not the consumer wishes to fight for justice for garment workers, empowerment is a desired outcome.

The NGO would promote a form of *writing against culture* which highlights consumer profiles through interviews, biographies, and ethnographies which could help people struggling with their subjective understanding of morality. Lila Abu Lughod defines this type of approach as *tactical humanism* (Abu-Lughod 1991). The dangers of this strategy are related to the “illusions that tactical humanism, whether in the form of ethnographies of the particular or other modes of writing against culture, contribute to some universal language or universal good” and losing sight of the fact that, as anthropologists, “we work as Westerners, and what we contribute is a Western discourse” (159). By focusing on the Western realm, however, and providing realities of Western consumer subjectivation, and continuously providing information regarding the effects of Western movements on the places they seek to intervene in, the NGO might be able to avoid these illusions by highlighting difference as a positive aspect of discourse.

Once again, this approach enables consumers to identify their own position in the industry and make informed choices. It also allows them to legitimize their choices from an internal position. Of course it is naïve to assume that it would be possible to create a system of knowledge accumulation which does not end in certain degrees of signification, but the focus on

‘agency empowerment’ might allow for an effect which brings Western consumers as close as possible to being able control their own decision-making processes. As explained by Whittington, according to Giddens, “[a]gency is enhanced by control over resources; it is exercised through the following, or rejection, of rules” (147). In this way, it relates to Giddens’s second structural determinant – namely, legitimization (Whittington 2015: 148).

By allowing for an organizational culture which surrounds the ‘empowerment of human agency for Western consumers’, the structural control mechanism of legitimization can be counterbalanced with unbiased and open-source information and demands for transparency.

### ***Introspection through Transparency & Responsibility***

In chapter 4.3.3., I have hypothesized that, while global capitalism is a result of the needs and drives of individuals to avoid pain and gain comfort, the contemporary market is set up to avoid transparency to a point where consumers can no longer be held accountable for their own decisions. The NGO I am imagining would work toward a reengagement of decision-making through the illumination of the mechanisms used to influence consumer agency. This process would highlight the responsibility of consumers to be held accountable for their own decisions rather than the collective state of the industry.

First, it would be necessary for the NGO to be unattached to government or market funding of any kind. It would also necessitate complete transparency in its own efforts by continuously subjecting itself to scrutiny from external and internal actors. All information and strategic approaches and sources of funding would have to be made public.

Furthermore, while promoting its own internal transparency, it would have to set a definitive focus on promoting the consumer’s internal transparency as well. As mentioned in the previous chapter, through de-moralization and tactical humanism, one of the main concepts should be that being transparent about one’s own intentions and choices is acceptable. Moral value cannot be promoted as being potentially determined by external sources; rather, it is determined through agency. As such, it offers a normalization of subjective morality that allows individuals to make choices, such as “to resist individualism or “to reject the ‘hard’ or deterministic notions of social structure” (Whittington 2015: 148). By the logic of chapter 4.3.3., reclaiming agency then also involves reclaiming structure, which essentially reclaims the capability for accountability. Through a promotion of introspection on the part of the NGO, the

domination of consumer subjectivity is potentially counteracted – which allows for a re-activation of consumer responsibility based on choice and the acceptance of consequences.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

The ethical fashion network, as it is structured and promoted in contemporary Western society does not work without becoming entangled with the commodification practices of a global capitalistic order. I claim that the reason it does not achieve its aim is the violation of consumer agency which involves a consistent focus on consumer responsibility and a faux interest and discursive elevation of consumer autonomy. As long as people do not understand why they do what they do and how their behavior affects others, they cannot approach social problems with moral integrity. Therefore, from the standpoint of contemporary culture, the concept of consumer responsibility cannot be justified.

I have shown in this thesis that there are vast layers of subjectivation involved in consumer rationale and behavior. These layers are related to pre-determined notions of ethically virtuous appeal with the aim of conformity and a projection of responsibility onto the consumer. Responsibility is essentially weaponized through the aesthetical and moral appeal of virtue. However, as a force of authority, responsibility cannot be put on the shoulders of consumers as long as full transparency is not provided and as long as consumers are consistently pushed to engage with virtue ethics, rather than their own morality, and signification mechanisms, rather than their own decision-making processes.

Instead of the politicization of ethical consumer subjectivity I propose the politicization of subjectively-determined moral consumer action through a push for agency via transparency. Rather than reproducing the unconscious needs of consumers, which are concerned with self-validation and group belonging processes to avoid pain, this process mobilizes the conscious rationale of consumers through a re-activation of agency. Whether or not this process will lead to desirable social changes in the fashion industry is difficult to predict. However, as I have shown, it is also questionable whether the current modes of practice are capable of producing results without negative consequences for garment workers or if they can aid in the combatting of global capitalism in its current form. In either case, it seems more sensible to me to start at the root level and offer information and guidance to the people who ultimately shape the industry. But, most of

all, this needs to be done without the intention of turning their desire into a commodity and without reproducing the rationale of global capitalism.

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## APPENDIX:

# The Politicization of the German Ethical Consumer

A Qualitative Analysis of an Ethical Fashion Network and its Production of Ethical Consumer Subjectivity

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## Appendix I: Consumer Interview 1: Stephanie

1 **1) Erzähl doch mal ein bisschen über dich selbst. Alles, was du teilen möchtest oder was**  
2 **du relevant findest zu deiner Person und Persönlichkeit.**

3 Ich heiße Stephie, bin 27 und gelernte Köchin, hab aber gerade mein Abi nach gemacht und  
4 werd ab Oktober Management Sozialer Innovationen studieren, weil es mir wichtig ist, dass  
5 meine Arbeit einen Unterschied macht.

6 **2) Vielleicht kannst du ein bisschen was zu deinem Konsumverhalten sagen. Wo kaufst**  
7 **du gerne ein und wie oft im Monat?**

8 Also zu meiner Schande kaufe ich leider sehr viel im Discounter ein, gucke aber auch wo es  
9 geht, dass ich food sharing und food rescue unterstütze.

10 **3) Würdest du dich als ethische/n oder bewusste/n KonsumentIn bezeichnen?**  
11 **Warum/warum nicht?**

12 Jein. Ich bin mir vieler Dinge sehr bewusst und ich verzichte auch auf einiges, (ich meide  
13 Produkte von Müller Milch komplett und meide so gut es geht Nestlé Produkte) aber kann  
14 finanziell mit 700 Euro Bafög in München leider absolut nicht so wie ich gerne würde.

15 **4) Würdest du dein Konsumverhalten gerne ändern und warum?**

16 Ja auf jeden Fall! Ich würde gerne mehr bei zertifizierten, transparent nachhaltigen  
17 Unternehmen wie zum Beispiel Kauf ne Kuh oder... Oh wie heißt sie... Es gibt ne Seite, die  
18 schicken dir ne Box unförmiges Gemüse, damit es nicht gesxhreddert wird.... Bei sowas würd  
19 ich gern mehr kaufen. Und auch mehr selber produzieren. Dem Label "Bio" traue ich leider  
20 nicht wirklich, weil Bio Gelabeltes einfach selten was mit echtem Bio zu tun hat.  
21 Insbesondere bei Klamotten würd ich richtig gerne nachhaltiger handeln, denn aktuell kaufe  
22 ich zu 90% bei Forever21 online. In Konfektionsgröße 50 ist es aber sehr schwer, offline was  
23 schönes zu finden und nachhaltige Kleidung ist kaum bezahlbar, also frage ich mich bei  
24 Kleidung immer sehr nachdrücklich, ob ich das gerade benötige oder nur cool finde. Cool  
25 allein ist kein Kaufgrund.

26 **5) Engagierst du dich bei politischen oder sozialen Fair Trade oder Fair Fashion**  
27 **Organisationen? Warum/warum nicht?**

28 Jein. Ich bin in ner foodsharing Gruppe für mein Viertel und share da relativ viel mit anderen,  
29 ehrenamtlich bin ich aber eher bildungspolitisch unterwegs, weil ich da die "Wurzel des  
30 Übels" sehe.

31 **6) Wer hat, deiner Meinung nach, Schuld daran, dass unsere Konsumgesellschaft so ist**  
32 **wie sie ist?**

33 Der Gesetzgeber, der entscheidet, dass Kükenschreddern okay ist, führt die Liste definitiv an.  
34 Klar sind eigentlich die Konzerne, die verbrechen, was sie verbrechen, die Schuldigen,  
35 allerdings ist völlig klar und auf makabere Art nachvollziehbar, dass sie so handeln, weil es  
36 für sie nur um Wirtschaftlichkeit geht. Die wirklichen Verantwortlichen sind die Anführer  
37 dieser Gesellschaft, sprich eben der Gesetzgeber, weil er nicht unterbindet, was mit gesundem  
38 Menschenverstand betrachtet kompletter Wahnsinn ist und zugleich auch seiner  
39 informationspflicht nicht nachkommt. Die Mehrzahl der Bürger hat keine Ahnung, was sie  
40 konsumieren. Der einzelne Bürger ist insofern daran schuld, dass heute vielen Menschen alles  
41 so scheißegal ist. Diese Ignoranz macht es Konzernen überhaupt erst möglich, Lebewesen zu  
42 Milliarden zu töten, weil sie das falsche Geschlecht haben und tonnenweise makelloso essen  
43 wegzuwerfen, weil darauf ein Datum abgedruckt ist, das zufällig heute ist.

44 **7) Was sind, deiner Meinung nach, Alternativen zum Fast Fashion Konsum?**

45 Schwierig. Ich trage persönlich meine Kleidung bis sie zu kaputt zum unsichtbar flicken ist,  
46 weil ich mir vorher echt gut überlege, ob mir das Kleid (ich trage fast nur Kleider) auch  
47 wirklich gefällt. Ich renne keinen Modeerscheinungen nach, da war ich noch nie so wirklich  
48 der Typ für. Ich hatte schon immer meinen eigenen Style.

49 Ich denke ein bisschen mehr Bewusstsein in der Gesellschaft könnte schon viel ändern.

50 **8) Ich habe eine Liste von Fashion Revolution beigefügt, die zeigt, wie transparent die**

51 **200 größten Modelabels sind. Wusstest du, dass vieles der Infos die wir eigentlich haben**  
52 **sollten, gar nicht preisgegeben werden? Und wie findest du das?**  
53 Klar weiß ich das, das ist in der Lebensmittelindustrie - wo es noch viel gruseliger ist - ganz  
54 genauso. Hier sehe ich ganz klar die Politik in der Verantwortung, ihre Bürger zu schützen.  
55 Per Gesetz, Kontrolle und Strafen, falls nötig. Die haben aber für gewöhnlich selbst nur  
56 Scheinchen im Kopf und da liegt halt der Hauptfehler. Die Diäten sind viel zu hoch. Politiker  
57 sein sollte finanziell viel unattraktiver sein, denn dann würden es weniger geldgeile Säcke  
58 machen und mehr Leute, denen nicht alles außer ihrem eigenen fetten Arsch scheißegal ist.  
59 **Was denkst du, würde passieren, wenn es volle Transparenz gäbe?**  
60 Diverse Firmen, die nicht sofort einen 180 Grad Schwenk machen, würden pleite gehen.  
61 Hoffe ich zumindest. Ich hab aber leider zwei Videos gesehen, die genau das Gegenteil  
62 zeigen....  
63 Einmal zum Thema Nahrung:  
64 <https://youtu.be/pgCD-4Q-4Wo>  
65 Und Kleidung:  
66 <https://youtu.be/pRD0h4CqUjo>  
67 Ich finde die Videos sehr schockierend.... Die zeigen, wie blöd und gierig viele Menschen  
68 sind.... Ich hoffe und glaube aber weiterhin, dass viele Menschen aich anders entscheiden,  
69 wenn sie die Wahl haben.  
70 **9) Falls du das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien noch nicht kennst, solltest du wissen,**  
71 **dass es aus vielen verschiedenen Akteuren zusammengestellt ist. Die Kampagne für**  
72 **Saubere Kleidung ist zB dabei, aber auch Marken mit niedriger Transparenzbewertung**  
73 **wie s.Oliver.**  
74 **Meinst du, solche Initiativen wie das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien haben eine**  
75 **Chance etwas zu ändern?**  
76 Nur, wenn sie auch entsprechend transparent sind. Weil mal eben unterschreiben und was  
77 spenden kann und darf nicht reichen, um trotz Intransparenz soetwas wie Nachhaltigkeit als  
78 Aushängeschild benutzen zu dürfen. Das ist genau das Gleiche wie dieser "fair" Trend. Das  
79 Wort fair ist nicht geschützt, das darf sich jeder einfach so in den Namen klatschen und so  
80 funktioniert es halt leider nicht.

## **Appendix II: Consumer Interview 2: Johannes**

1 **Erzähl doch mal ein bisschen über dich selbst. Alles, was du teilen möchtest oder was du**  
2 **relevant findest zu deiner Person und Persönlichkeit.**

3 Mein Name ist Jo, ich bin 42 Jahre alt und ausgebildeter Kaufmann im Einzelhandel.  
4 Nachdem ich rund 20 Jahre im konventionellen Einzelhandel, größtenteils in der Textil- und  
5 Schuhbranche in verantwortlicher Position gearbeitet habe, habe ich mich 2017 selbstständig  
6 gemacht. Nun betreibe ich auf rund 175 m<sup>2</sup> ein Geschäft, in dem ich ausschließlich fair  
7 gehandelte, vegane und nachhaltig produzierte Bekleidung, Schuhe, Taschen und noch vieles  
8 mehr anbiete. Durch meinen Einblick in die Welt der Fast Fashion ist mir immer deutlicher  
9 bewußt geworden, dass ich die Ausbeutung von Mensch und Natur nicht weiter mittragen  
10 kann und den Menschen in meiner Stadt eine Alternative bieten möchte, die sowohl vom  
11 modischen Aspekt, als auch vom Preis mit Marken wie s.Oliver, Esprit und anderen mithalten  
12 können.

13 **Vielleicht kannst du ein bisschen was zu deinem Konsumverhalten sagen. Wo kaufst du**  
14 **gerne ein und wie oft im Monat?**

15 Sowohl für mich privat, als auch für mein Geschäft suche ich nach Produkten, die möglichst  
16 wenig Plastikverpackung nutzen. Beim Essen achte ich auf Regionalität und kaufe viel im  
17 Bioladen. Darüber hinaus nutze ich Foodsharing um Lebensmittelverschwendung zu  
18 minimieren. Ein für alle zugängliche Fairteiler befindet sich auch in meinem Geschäft.  
19 Bekleidung, Schuhe, aber auch Seife, Bambuszahnbürsten und Deo biete ich in meinem  
20 Geschäft an, und versuche mein Sortiment stets um praktische, nachhaltige Alltagsartikel zu  
21 erweitern.

22 **Würdest du dich als ethische/n oder bewusste/n KonsumentIn bezeichnen?**

23 **Warum/warum nicht?**

24 Bei meinen Kaufentscheidungen berücksichtige ich zumeist ob Menschen, Tiere und Umwelt  
25 durch meinen Konsum beeinträchtigt werden. Natürlich mache ich nicht alles perfekt, aber ich  
26 achte schon sehr auf mein Einkaufsverhalten.

27 **Würdest du dein Konsumverhalten gerne ändern und warum?**

28 Ich würde gerne schneller einkaufen können. Leider muss man stets Kleingedrucktes, oder  
29 verschlüsselte Inhaltsstoffe lesen, bzw. kennen, um Produkte zu vermeiden, die man nicht  
30 konsumieren möchte. Eine Lebensmittelampel wäre ein erster Schritt, jedoch wäre es an der  
31 Politik, Handel, der ethisch mehr als fragwürdig ist, grundsätzlich zu verbieten.

32 **Engagierst du dich bei politischen oder sozialen Fair Trade oder Fair Fashion**  
33 **Organisationen? Warum/warum nicht?**

34 Neben meinem geschäftlichem Engagement, unterstütze ich den lokalen Umsonstladen und  
35 Foodsharing in Hagen.

36 **Wer hat, deiner Meinung nach, Schuld daran, dass unsere Konsumgesellschaft so ist wie**  
37 **sie ist?**

38 Neben den Unternehmen, die aus dem Prinzip der Gewinnmaximierung arbeiten, und dabei  
39 rücksichtslos Mensch, Tier und Natur ausbeuten, trägt die Politik eine große Mitschuld, die  
40 solche Methoden nicht reglementiert. Die Konsumenten werden bewußt getäuscht. Doch kann  
41 auch jeder einzelne Informationen erlangen, welche Auswirkungen der eigene Konsum hat.  
42 Eigenes Fehlverhalten sollte nicht über das Fehlverhalten anderer relativiert werden.

43 **Was sind, deiner Meinung nach, Alternativen zum Fast Fashion Konsum?**

44 Neue Sachen einfach im Onkel Jo sein Laden einkaufen! Aber man kann Kleidung auch  
45 flicken, tauschen, gebraucht kaufen oder im Umsonstladen finden.

46 **Ich habe eine Liste von Fashion Revolution beigefügt, die zeigt, wie transparent die 200**  
47 **größten Modelabels sind. Wusstest du, dass vieles der Infos die wir eigentlich haben**  
48 **sollten, gar nicht preisgegeben werden? Und wie findest du das?**

49 Die Tatsache, dass Produktionsbedingungen nicht offen kommuniziert werden ist mir schon  
50 lange bekannt. Gerade bei Leder ist die Transparenz besonders dürftig. Ich kann mir gut  
51 vorstellen, dass größere Transparenz das Konsumverhalten beeinflussen könnte.

52 **Falls du das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien noch nicht kennst, solltest du wissen, dass**  
53 **es aus vielen verschiedenen Akteuren zusammengestellt ist. Die Kampagne für Saubere**  
54 **Kleidung ist zB dabei, aber auch Marken mit niedriger Transparenzbewertung wie**  
55 **s.Oliver.**

56 Solche Bündnisse haben sicher die Möglichkeit politischen Einfluss zu nehmen. Leider sind  
57 die Interessen von großen Konzernen oft einflussreicher bei der Gestaltung von gesetzlichen  
58 Rahmenbedingungen. Ich erwarte daher maximal winzige Schritte. Veränderungen die  
59 wirklich signifikant sind, müssen aus einer Bewegung aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft  
60 entstehen. Fridays 4 Future ist ein tolles Beispiel dafür.

### **Appendix III: Consumer Interview 3: Franzi**

1 **Erzähl doch mal ein bisschen über dich selbst. Alles, was du teilen möchtest oder was du**  
2 **relevant findest zu deiner Person und Persönlichkeit.**

3 Ähm...ich bin Franzi und bin Physiotherapeutin, war jetzt gerade 15 Monate in Kanada und  
4 bin gerade nach Bremen gezogen...genau. Und bin jetzt wieder im Mai angefangen zu  
5 arbeiten (Pause) und bin 26, ähm, also im Juli werde ich 26 Jahre alt und bin ganz  
6 aufgeschlossen, würd sagen bin ein offener Mensch. Genau.

7 **Vielleicht kannst du ein bisschen was zu deinem Konsumverhalten sagen. Wo kaufst du**  
8 **gerne ein und wie oft im Monat?**

9 Ähm...Einkaufen normal würd ich sagen geh ich einmal die Woche, also, sprich Lebensmittel.  
10 Ich versuch aber auch viele Lebensmittel zu retten und bin da in verschiedenen Gruppen  
11 aktiv. Ähm...halt Lebensmittel vor dem Wegschmeißen zu retten. Kleidung...ähm...kauf ich  
12 fast nie, also ähm...selten (pause) neu. Ähm...auch da versuch im möglichst Second Hand zu  
13 kaufen in sozialen Kaufhäusern, Second Hand Läden oder ich schau auch oft hier in Bremen  
14 vor allem ...ähm... haben Leute was vor der Tür stehen oder so und versuch halt so meine  
15 Kleidung zu bekommen. Genau.

16 **Würdest du dich als ethische/n oder bewusste/n KonsumentIn bezeichnen?**  
17 **Warum/warum nicht?**

18 Ich würd schon sagen, dass ich eine bewusste Konsumentin bin, weil ich schon darauf achte  
19 wenig zu kaufen und nicht im Überfluss, sondern, ja ich gucke, ja, also wann brauch ich  
20 wirklich was und versuch aber auch dann eher noch von Freunden ...äh...oder Bekannten mir  
21 Kleidung zu leihen, bevor ich mir jetzt für ein Fest irgendwas Neues kaufe. Joa.

22 **Würdest du dein Konsumverhalten gerne ändern und warum?**

23 Ähm...im Moment bin ich mit meinem Konsumverhalten **eigentlich** soweit zufrieden. Ich  
24 weiß aber auch dass ich gewisse Sachen noch ändern könnte, sprich, weniger Plastik kaufen,  
25 weniger Auswärtsessen. Mmm. Genau, würd da halt, versuch ich schon ab und zu noch mehr  
26 drauf zu achten, aber manchmal fällt's halt eben doch schwer noch Sachen, ja, ohne Plastik  
27 vor allem...das fällt mir schwer zu kaufen. Mit meinem Konsumverhalten zum Thema  
28 Kleidung bin ich auf jeden Fall zufrieden. Ich hab eigentlich in den letzten zwei Jahren nur  
29 Second Hand gekauft, beziehungsweise Sachen geschenkt bekommen. Und äh...hab da aber  
30 auch gemerkt, dass das in Kanada viel einfacher war. Ähm...ich war in Kanada 15 Monate  
31 und hab irgendwie das Gefühl dass da der Second Hand und, ja, Gebrauchtwarenkauf viel  
32 größer ist als in Deutschland.

33 **Engagierst du dich bei politischen oder sozialen Fair Trade oder Fair Fashion**  
34 **Organisationen? Warum/warum nicht?**

35 Nein, zur Zeit...ähm... engagier ich mich nicht in solchen Organisationen. Ähm ich bin im  
36 Moment für Viva ConAqua ein bisschen aktiv, das ist ne Organisation die sich für frischen  
37 Wasserzugang auf der ganzen Welt äh einsetzt und halt dafür sorgt, beziehungsweise,  
38 versucht so viel, so vielen Menschen wie möglich ähm...frischen Zugang zu Trinkwasser zu  
39 gewährleisten und deswegen würd ich sagen ist es im Moment eher schwierig für mich noch  
40 woanders mich zu engagieren. Einfach weil ich nebenbei auch, oder als Hauptjob schon 38  
41 Werkstunden in der Woche beansprucht. Genau.

42 **Wer hat, deiner Meinung nach, Schuld daran, dass unsere Konsumgesellschaft so ist wie**  
43 **sie ist?**

44 Find ich ne sehr schwierige Frage. Ähm...Natürlich ist es so dass du durch Werbung, Models,  
45 also was uns vorgelebt wird, wie wir auszusehen haben, dass dadurch glaub ich viele junge  
46 Mädchen auch viel, ja, genauso aussehen wollen wie irgendwelche Vorbilder und dadurch  
47 halt auch viel kaufen. Viel neu kaufen. Alles wird billig angeboten. Ähm...wer ist Schuld  
48 daran? Ja, also...schwierige Sache. Natürlich also ich bin der Meinung, dass man die  
49 Änderung der Gesellschaft, sprich, dass man andere Vorbilder hat oder Kindern und  
50 Jugendlichen vor allem zeigt, dass man schön ist wie man ist und dass man das nicht durch



51 Kleidung oder irgendwas zu repräsentieren braucht. Ähm...ja, dass es dadurch besser werden  
52 könnte. Aber generell **Schuld** find ich ne schwierige Frage. Das kann ich nicht zu hundert  
53 Prozent beantworten.

54 **Was sind, deiner Meinung nach, Alternativen zum Fast Fashion Konsum?**

55 Naja, also, Alternativen sind definitiv immer noch Second Hand kaufen oder halt  
56 eben...äh...zu fairen Läden gehen, Fairtragen in Bremen zum Beispiel auch oder...ja, zu  
57 gucken, wo wird tatsächlich fair hergestellt, wo wir von Anfang bis Ende jeder (Pause)  
58 vernünftig vergütet, um einfach auch Ressourcen nicht zu verschwenden und äh...und  
59 natürlich ist die Alternative immer noch Second Hand einzukaufen definitiv.

60 **Ich habe eine Liste von Fashion Revolution dabei, die zeigt, wie transparent die 200**  
61 **größten Modelabels sind. Wusstest du, dass vieles der Infos die wir eigentlich haben**  
62 **sollten, gar nicht preisgegeben werden? Und wie findest du das?**

63 Also mir ist schon bewusst, dass uns natürlich vieles nicht preisgegeben wird oder vieles  
64 heimlich gehalten wird. Trotzdem bin ich halt da nicht **so** informiert, dass ich alles wüsste,  
65 einfach dadurch dass ich mich auch einfach nicht sehr viel mit vielen großen Modelabels und  
66 so auseinandersetze und ähm...auch wenn es volle Transparenz gäbe glaub ich schon dass es  
67 gewisse Leute gibt die anders und bewusster einkaufen würden. Ich denke aber es gibt immer  
68 noch viele Leute die trotzdem bei großen Modelabels einkaufen und denen es trotzdem  
69 wichtig ist Marke zu tragen sag ich jetzt mal. Ähm...ja. Dass denke ich schon dass da viele  
70 auch halt keinen Wert drauf legen trotz der Transparenz dann. Wichtig find ich es schon  
71 damit ja auch da die Gesellschaft halt weiß was da sich hinter den Kulissen abspielt.

72 **Falls du das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien noch nicht kennst, solltest du wissen, dass**  
73 **es aus vielen verschiedenen Akteuren zusammengestellt ist. Die Kampagne für Saubere**  
74 **Kleidung ist zB dabei, aber auch Marken mit niedriger Transparenzbewertung wie**  
75 **s.Oliver. Meinst du, solche Initiativen wie das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien haben**  
76 **eine Chance etwas zu ändern?**

77 Ich kenn das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien tatsächlich noch nicht. Ähm...klar, wenn viele  
78 sich da zusammentun und **viele** zusammen was ändern glaub ich schon, also glaub ich schon  
79 dass die eine Chance dazu haben. Mmm...aber da müsste ich mich jetzt ehrlich noch mal mehr  
80 damit auseinandersetzen. Grundsätzlich glaub ich schon wenn immer mehr Leute ja dahinter  
81 her sind das was passiert und **viele** sich für eine gleiche Sache engagieren, dass da noch was  
82 passieren kann. Das denk ich schon.

## Transcription Rules

Speaker	Bold print question
Interviewpartner	Normal print response
Emphasis on particular word or phrase	Bold print in response
Breaks	.. (short) ... (long)
Omission	[...] due to inability to hear
Paralinguistic, nonverbal aspects	Ex.: (laughs out loud)
Sentence end, Komma	.,

## **Appendix IV: Consumer Interview 4: Jannina**

1 **Erzähl doch mal ein bisschen über dich selbst. Alles, was du teilen möchtest oder was du**  
2 **relevant findest zu deiner Person und Persönlichkeit.**

3 Ich heiße Jannina Minkenberg, bin 26 Jahre alt, bin verheiratet und habe ein...ähm 2 Jahre  
4 alt-jährigen Sohn. Mmm, ich hab eine Ausbildung zur Maßschneiderin und Modedesignerin  
5 gemacht und hab mich während meiner Ausbildung schon ganz viel mit ähm, Nachhaltigkeit  
6 beschäftigt und vor allem eben auch den ähm, gängigen Arbeitsbedingungen der  
7 Modeindustrie und fand das schon ... ja, ganz ganz schlimm und hab nicht verstanden warum  
8 da nicht so wirklich was gegen gemacht wird, auch von den großen Firmen und...ja, seit ich  
9 meine Ausbildung beendet habe...ähm...und meinen Sohn bekommen habe, hab ich immer  
10 sowas nebenbei gemacht und gearbeitet. Hab mich weitergebildet und, genau, bin dann so  
11 auch zu Fashion Revolution gekommen und...ja, bilde mich immer weiter und finde das sehr  
12 unterstützenswert. Ich weiß nicht, was ich sonst noch erzählen kann. Ja, was ich eben auch  
13 super krass finde ist wie viel Müll einfach konsumiert wird. Und wieviel immer wieder neu  
14 produziert wird, obwohl schon so viel da ist. Und das Thema hatte ich damals auch in meiner  
15 Abschlusskollektion verarbeitet.

16 **Vielleicht kannst du ein bisschen was zu deinem Konsumverhalten sagen. Wo kaufst du**  
17 **gerne ein und wie oft im Monat?**

18 Mein eigenes Konsumverhalten? Also, während meiner Ausbildung hab ich eigentlich extrem  
19 wenig konsumiert, weil ich auch einfach kein Geld hatte. Auch nicht für die gängigen Marken  
20 wie HM und so, also, bin dann mal second hand oder vielleicht einmal in Jahr was von Hm  
21 gekauft, oder halt andere Marken wie Zara und so, die gibt's ja auch, die machen auch schon  
22 sehr schöne Sachen aber, ja. Und mittlerweile ist das so, dadurch dass ich in einer Kleinstadt  
23 wohne...ich kauf nicht besonders viel. Also im Monat noch nichtmal einmal also...man kann  
24 das vielleicht eher aufs Jahr sagen. Dass ich im Jahr vielleicht so 3 mal oder 3-4 mal was  
25 kaufe. Ähm...und ja, leider dadurch dass ich in einer Kleinstadt lebe und auch nicht viel Zeit  
26 habe bestelle ich dann halt schon öfters mal. Was natürlich auch nicht so gut ist. Aber,  
27 naja...ich will dann halt auch gerne bestimmte Marken unterstützen und habe schon  
28 bestimmte Vorstellungen was ich haben will und das find ich hier eben in der Region nicht.

29 **Würdest du dich als ethische/n oder bewusste/n KonsumentIn bezeichnen?**

30 **Warum/warum nicht?**

31 Im Allgemeinen ist mir das bewusst, dass sehr viele Dinge die konsumiert werden und die ich  
32 teilweise auch konsumiere...ähm...schlecht für die Umwelt sind oder schlecht für...ja,  
33 ungesund sind oder sonst irgendwas...ähm, aber ich muss sagen dass ich zum Beispiel wenn  
34 es jetzt um Konsum von Plastik geht nicht besonders, sagen wir mal, ich würde mich  
35 als...mein Konsumverhalten als bewusst bezeichnen, aber manchmal nicht als besonders  
36 verantwortungsvoll weil wenn man eben mal einen normalen Wocheneinkauf macht dann  
37 kommt man halt super oft einfach nicht dran vorbei was in Plastik verpackt zu kaufen. Da  
38 muss man dann schon auf den Wochenmarkt gehen oder so und das passt bei uns zeitlich  
39 einfach nicht. Mmm...ich würde sagen, also ich schätze wenn ich mich jetzt mit anderen  
40 vergleiche was den Konsum von Mode angeht, dass ich da schon sehr bewusst einkaufe. Ich  
41 kauf natürlich nicht nur bei extrem nachhaltigen Marken, aber wenn ich was brauche schau  
42 ich schon erst da ob ich was finde und wenn ich da nichts finde was ich unbedingt brauche  
43 dann kauf ich das woanders oder ich schau nochmal gebraucht. Also ich würde sagen, dass  
44 beides stimmt. Manchmal ist es nicht besonders verantwortungsvoll und manchmal eben  
45 schon.

46 **Engagierst du dich bei politischen oder sozialen Fair Trade oder Fair Fashion**  
47 **Organisationen? Warum/warum nicht?**

48 Ähm...ich war in Hamburg bei dem Fashion Revolution Move, da hab ich mich engagiert  
49 und, ja, also... ich engagier mich eigentlich zu wenig. Ich würde gerne viel mehr machen. Ich  
50 hab einmal mit Bund Jugend m.V. einen Upcycling Workshop...ähm...mitgestaltet. Solche  
51 Sachen. Ja also ich mach das wenn ich Zeit habe, wenn sich die Chance ergibt, weil ich das  
52 super wichtig finde, Leute da auch drauf aufmerksam zu machen, weil viele wissen ja auch  
53 einfach nicht wie sie es vielleicht anders machen können. Die sind sich im Klaren darüber  
54 dass was schief läuft aber man muss ja auch zeigen was man vielleicht anders machen kann.  
55 Und wie es einfach möglich ist und deshalb find ich zum Beispiel Upcycling Workshops  
56 immer cool, weil man dann den Leuten zeigen kann, hey, wenn was kaputt ist muss man das  
57 nicht gleich wegschmeißen, man kann daraus noch was machen so.

58 **Wer hat, deiner Meinung nach, Schuld daran, dass unsere Konsumgesellschaft so ist wie  
59 sie ist?**

60 Äh...ich würde ganz klar sagen der Kapitalismus. Weil der eben Firmen hervorgebracht hat  
61 die nur...äh...darauf ausgelegt sind so viel Geld zu machen wie möglich und so wird  
62 natürlich auch Werbung gemacht und Konsumenten werden getäuscht. Das...ja, das würde  
63 ich dazu sagen.

64 **Was sind, deiner Meinung nach, Alternativen zum Fast Fashion Konsum?**

65 Ähm...ja, das hab ich ja vorher schon mal kurz angesprochen. Natürlich Second Hand, aber  
66 Second Hand, da findet man natürlich auch nicht immer alles was man braucht. Also auf  
67 jeden fall erstmal die Sachen die man hat reparieren, umnähen...ähm...Second Hand kaufen  
68 und ansonsten eben, ja Produkte kaufen die vielleicht...ähm...neu hergestellt wurden aus  
69 alten Materialien. Und eben Marken unterstützen, wenn man was ganz neues kauft die eben  
70 so wie es in unserer Welt gerade möglich ist, ethisch und Menschenfreundlich und  
71 Umweltfreundlich produzieren.

72 **Ich habe eine Liste von Fashion Revolution dabei, die zeigt, wie transparent die 200 größten  
73 Modelabels sind. Wusstest du, dass vieles der Infos die wir eigentlich haben sollten, gar  
74 nicht preisgegeben werden? Und wie findest du das?**

75 Ich weiß, dass es...äh...in vielen größeren Firmen in der Modeindustrie ein  
76 Transparenzproblem gibt, ähm...dass durch die langen Lieferketten und so weiter eben auch  
77 Informationen verschwinden oder nicht weitergegeben werden. Das finde ich natürlich nicht  
78 so gut. Ähm...und da müssen eben vor allem die größeren Firmen, die mit langen  
79 Lieferketten arbeiten und n Problem damit haben. Daran muss auf jeden Fall gearbeitet  
80 werden. Ich denke dass es auf jeden Fall einfacher wäre die Schritte in die richtige Richtung  
81 zu gehen wenn es mehr Transparenz gäbe, also etwas zu verändern, weil wenn man die  
82 Informationen nicht hat, wie der aktuelle Stand gerade ist, dann weiß man ja auch nicht wo  
83 man was verbessern kann. Wie man das vielleicht anders machen kann. Genau...so  
84 oberflächlich gesagt.

85 **Falls du das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien noch nicht kennst, solltest du wissen, dass  
86 es aus vielen verschiedenen Akteuren zusammengestellt ist. Die Kampagne für Saubere  
87 Kleidung ist zB dabei, aber auch Marken mit niedriger Transparenzbewertung wie  
88 s.Oliver. Meinst du, solche Initiativen wie das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien haben  
89 eine Chance etwas zu ändern?**

90 Ich glaube erstmal, dass es sehr gut ist, dass es überhaupt so ne Initiative gibt, um  
91 überhaupt...also auch wenn da Firmen eine Rolle spielen, die vielleicht nicht gerade die  
92 besten sind was Transparenz angeht, aber man kann eben nicht alles perfekt machen. Ja, also  
93 ich glaube dass es erstmal ein guter Schritt ist, dass auch erstmal zur Sprache zu bringen, das  
94 in die Medien zu bringen. Umso mehr das zur Sprache kommt und umso mehr von solchen

95 Initiativen es gibt, auch wenn vielleicht nicht alles perfekt ist, umso mehr kann sich dann auch  
 96 in der Zukunft bewegen. Es ist halt einfach erstmal wichtig, dass darüber gesprochen wird  
 97 und vor allem ist es auch super wichtig, dass darüber gesprochen wird mit Firmen und mit  
 98 Leuten, die eben gerade noch nicht alles perfekt machen. Und umso mehr kann sich eben in  
 99 der Zukunft verändern. Und ja, aber Schattenseiten gibt es halt auch immer. Es ist  
 100 problematisch wenn eine Marke so tut als wolle sie was verbessern aber die Ziele dann nicht  
 101 eingehalten werden. Konsumenten können so auch getäuscht werden. Der Hype für  
 102 Nachhaltigkeit und Feminismus und faire Arbeitsbedingungen und Löhne und so kann dann  
 103 halt auch ausgenutzt werden. Also für Werbung und so was.

### Transcription Rules

Speaker	Bold print question
Interviewpartner	Normal print response
Emphasis on particular word or phrase	Bold print in response
Breaks	.. (short) ... (long)
Omission	[...] due to inability to hear
Paralinguistic, nonverbal aspects	Ex.: (laughs out loud)
Sentence end, Komma	.,

### Analysis of Similarities in the interviews

#### Self:

1. Identification in introduction: occupation + social effort (*awareness marker*)
2. Recurring illumination of capability for introspection (*introspection marker*)
3. Evocation of Relation between food and fashion (*nature-structure marker*)
4. Self-description as subject to global capitalism (*subject marker*)

#### Other:

1. **us**: same moral code = ethical consumers
  - group identification as ethical fashion consumer
  - **moral code: positive behavior - awareness - negative behavior**  
awareness of moral code = ethical fashion effort
2. **them**: *the relatable other* = non-ethical consumers
  - non-ethical consumer culture as separate from self
  - but relatable through understanding of consumer subjectivation
3. **the big other**: mythologized *absolute other* = global capitalism
  - perceived as overarching mechanism of subjectivation

## **Appendix V: Ethnographic Protocol: Privately Organized Tauschparty** **Cuxhaven 22.07.2019**

1 After a long train ride, I find myself feeling a little exhausted. I haven't seen my friend Daniela  
2 in quite a while though, so I am extremely excited at the same time. She was so happy to hear I  
3 was exploring the topic of fair fashion. As we are in her car, she is explaining to me why she  
4 regularly visits these events. I have to admit, I almost feel as though she is explaining herself a  
5 little too much. She feels like nobody is really doing anything for the environment. She feels like  
6 people have to step up together to make a difference. At this point I am not so sure this is  
7 actually a reasonable approach, but I am open to the experience. She tells me that she had a  
8 phase where she couldn't stop buying clothes at Primark on a regular basis and she felt ashamed  
9 every time. She likens it to drug addiction. Then she tells me she has two whole bags of old  
10 Primark clothes in her trunk but that at the parties they only usually trade around 10 items at a  
11 time. I realize that all I brought was a small grocery bag full of mostly shoes. I have maybe 6  
12 items altogether.

13 We arrive at the house. It really is private as we are in a quiet neighborhood. It is not apparent  
14 that we are about to enter an actual event, although, since it was not publicly advertised, I  
15 suppose it makes it possible. It feels like a house party or maybe some kind of neighborhood  
16 meeting. We enter the house. A girl with an arm full of bracelets greets us and tells us to take our  
17 shoes off and take our bags to the living room. People are mingling, drinking and eating snacks  
18 laid out in the living room. There is quiet music playing in the background. The organizer, Ines,  
19 tells me how much fun it is to exchange clothes. I tell her all I have is shoes and bags. She says  
20 that is no problem at all.

21 I am not really interested in exchanging clothes. I feel like maybe that is obvious. I don't want to  
22 alienate anyone. Then I feel like if I overthink it, I will not have an authentic experience. I  
23 become a little anxious, so I walk around the room to see and ask what people have set out to  
24 exchange and just to mingle. A girl names Steffi shows me her bag. An Ikea bag full of nicely  
25 folded clothes. I see a lot of denim jeans and even more tops. There are clothes from all kinds of  
26 brands. Small and big brands. Cheap and expensive. She is happy to let me rummage through her  
27 bag, but she tells me that the important part of the event is sharing the story behind the piece of  
28 clothing. I wonder what she means. There is a nice pair of black Dr. Martens. For a second, I  
29 catch myself thinking how expensive and high quality the shoes are and that I could not believe  
30 she would give them away like this. I want them even though they are a size too small. I tell  
31 myself to focus on what I came here for. But the shoes continue lingering in the back of my  
32 mind.

33 I decide to sit down on the couch in the living room to take in the event from a relaxed position.  
34 My friend Daniela sits down next to me. I ask her how this all works. She explains that basically  
35 the 7 attending women just present their clothes to the group and then if someone wants them,  
36 they can have them. I don't quite understand but I go along with it. The room has 6 people in it,  
37 chatting. I decide to mingle. Since I sort of feel like a newbie, I decide to simply tell people why  
38 I am attending. At first, my introduction to my thesis is making people want to talk about their  
39 own university experience. I am interested to see that everyone at the party is either a student at a  
40 university or has already finished at least a bachelor's degree. One of the girls, Marie, tells me  
41 that she studied design because she wanted to find a way to combat the negative aspects of the  
42 fashion industry. Then, Ines joins the conversation. I feel like the topic is popular. It is getting

43 attentions in the form of looks and listening ins. Ines tells me she is sick of all the waste. I bring  
44 up the Rana Plaza collapse and Ines tells me about a picture of two dead people holding each  
45 other under the rubble. She says she cannot stand thinking about it.

46 Soon the conversation turns to the political realm. Capitalism is the problem. Daniela likens the  
47 fashion waste crisis to the food waste crisis. I ask about Fair Trade Siegel. Ines tells me she is  
48 unsure how to feel but generally she thinks it's a good step in the right direction. Daniela and  
49 Marie both nod in agreement. I ask about transparency. They agree that more could be done. The  
50 conversation isn't really getting much further. I feel like I am making people uncomfortable, so I  
51 take a step back and get myself a snack and a drink. Ines follows me. She wants to keep talking. I  
52 suppose I didn't make them uncomfortable after all.

53 The Tauschparty officially begins. Including me there are seven participants. Ines, Marie,  
54 Daniela, Mia, Steffi, Annabel and me. We all sit down on the ground in a circle with our bags of  
55 clothes next to us. Ines explains that I am new and that I am writing a thesis about ethical  
56 fashion. Everyone looks over at me and smiles. I feel welcomed. She also explains that for that  
57 reason everyone will now introduce themselves and the clothes they brought. She asks who  
58 wants to begin. Marie starts out saying she didn't bring much so she would like to begin. She  
59 tells the group, but mostly me, that she is 24 years old, that she studied design and that she is  
60 currently trying to establish herself as a Modeberater. She pulls out a yellow polo shirt, which  
61 looks fairly new. She explains that she wore it last at her brother's farewell party and that it  
62 carries a lot of meaning, which means she would like it to "go to a good home". She lays it out in  
63 front of her and pulls out a pair of black sandals. Size 39. I like the sandals. I ask her if I could  
64 have them. Ines laughs and comments on how quickly I became part of the group. She gives me  
65 the shoes and moves on to the next item. A plaid skirt, mid length, with a patch on the front. She  
66 explains that she bought it in London and that she designed the patch herself. It seems so  
67 precious. Everything she brought seems to carry some meaning, which makes me feel a little  
68 uncomfortable. I feel like if I bought it, it would go to waste. Like the meaning would get lost.  
69 The remaining items seem to carry the same level of meaning to her. Every item has some kind  
70 of story. I notice this throughout the event, with all the other participants. Daniela, for example,  
71 brought a bracelet which she bought in Barcelona. I remember when she went on that vacation.  
72 And I am wondering why she is willing to trade such an important item in the group. Later I ask  
73 her this question, to which she replies that she just didn't wear them anymore, and that she  
74 wanted them not to go to waste. A strange concept to me. Even if it was kept in a box...its not  
75 like it would rot. Person after person introduced themselves and then the clothing. Ines explained  
76 that she has created a foodsharing network, which is starting to work out for the community. She  
77 also likes to volunteer when she can, at fashion events and she really enjoys flea markets. Most  
78 of the time she spends taking care of her 6 month old daughter though. Mia is a bit shy. She  
79 doesn't say much. Just that she likes to go to the events because she is trying to work on  
80 changing her consumption habits. She finished her bachelor's degree in German studies recently  
81 and is now getting her master's to be a teacher. Steffi says she is a big fan of Adidas and this way  
82 she doesn't have to feel bad about buying their clothes. Annabel only brought shoes. She has a  
83 serious addiction, she explains. She wants to stop buying so many sneakers so she is hoping to  
84 find some nice ones. I brought a pair of green Converse chucks that I thought would look good  
85 on me but didn't. She ends up taking them.

86 After the rounds I feel a bit exhausted. I have heard so many stories. I need to relax. I sit back, let  
87 the evening wind down.

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Identity</b>
Fairness	Addiction
Environment	Authenticity
Mass consumption	Stories
Waste	Popularity
Volunteering	Doubt
Transparency	Uninformed
Flea Markets	Aware
Politics (Capitalism)	Frustration/Anger

## Appendix VI: E-Interview: Alf-Tobias Zahn (Fashion blogger/Influencer)

1 **Wann habt ihr den Blog einfach-anziehend konzipiert und umgesetzt und welche**  
2 **Motivation steht dahinter?**

3 Den Blog zum Buch gibt es seit Oktober 2018, also exakt seit der Veröffentlichung von  
4 „Einfach anziehend“ im oekom Verlag. Der Blog soll den Ratgeber begleiten, einen Einblick  
5 ins Buch geben und informiert über Veranstaltungen und Termine von Kirsten und mir.

6 **Wie wichtig ist dir selbst der bewusste oder ethische Konsum von Kleidung und**  
7 **warum?**

8 Ich habe als Jugendlicher und junger Erwachsener noch nicht darauf geachtet, wo und durch  
9 wen die Kleidung, die ich trage, produziert wurde. Nach einem längeren Auslandsaufenthalt  
10 in Nepal und dem grundsätzlichen Interesse an Mode habe ich dann Slow Fashion (als  
11 Kontrapunkt zur Fast Fashion von Unternehmen wie h&m, Zara, Primark & Co.) für mich  
12 entdeckt. Seit 2009 kaufe ich nur noch Slow Fashion und trage die Textilien, die ich schon  
13 vorher hatte, so lange, bis sie nicht mehr tragbar sind.

14 **Ihr sprecht auf dem Blog von "Konsumzwang" und "Modediktat". Was ist damit**  
15 **gemeint?**

16 Die großen Modekonzerne wie h&m, Zara und Primark diktieren leider die Schlagzahl der  
17 Fast Fashion. Fast Fashion bedeutet zum Beispiele komplett neue Kollektionen in den Läden  
18 alle 14 Tage. Es bedeutet auch, vor allem jungen Menschen durch Werbung zu suggerieren,  
19 dass sie mit Mode aus dem Massenmarkt sich individuell kleiden können und einzigartig sind.  
20 Genauer: Dass sie nur durch diese Kleidungsstücke etwas Besonderes sein können. Es  
21 bedeutet leider auch, dass diese Kleidung zu einem sehr geringen Preis verkauft und zu einem  
22 noch geringeren Preis produziert wird – auf Kosten von Mensch und Umwelt.

23 **Wie wichtig ist dir die Transparenz in der Modeindustrie? Meinst du mehr**  
24 **Transparenz würde zu einem erweiterten Bewußtsein führen?**

25 Ich befürworte mehr Transparenz in der Modeindustrie. So wie die Fashion Revolution mit  
26 #whomademyclothes fragt, möchte auch ich wissen, wer meine Kleidung produziert, wo dies  
27 geschieht und unter welchen Bedingungen. Ich finde den Vorschlag von Marie Nasemann  
28 (fairknallt) sehr gut, im Eingangsbereich der großen Stores und Einzelhändler eine Infotafel  
29 zu platzieren, die genau über diese Bedingungen aufklärt. Modepioniere wie honest by. und  
30 kleine Labels aus dem Slow Fashion Bereich wie Jan n June zeigen hier den großen Marken,  
31 wie es richtig geht.

32 **Auf deinem eigenen Blog "Grossartig" hört man viel von dem Zusammenhang zwischen**  
33 **einem gesunden Körpergefühl und Fair Fashion. Würdest du mir diesen**  
34 **Zusammenhang genauer erklären?**

35 Ich habe für mich entschieden, dass ich konventionelle Mode nicht mehr kaufen kann. Wenn  
36 ich demnach neue Kleidung haben möchte, dann ist es Slow Fashion oder Secondhand. Ich  
37 möchte wissen, was ich auf meiner Haut trage. Ich kann mich in meinem Körper nur  
38 wohlfühlen, wenn ich weiß, dass für meine Kleidung niemand leiden musste und noch nicht  
39 einmal einen Lohn erhält, der für das Leben ausreicht.

40 **Wer ist, deiner Meinung nach, für den derzeitigen Stand unserer Konsumgesellschaft**  
41 **verantwortlich?**

42 Für die aktuelle Form unserer Konsumgesellschaft sind wir zum Großteil selbst  
43 verantwortlich. Aber wie schon skizziert hat die Wirtschaft einen massiven Einfluss auf  
44 unsere Gesellschaft und auf uns und unser Kaufverhalten. Und nicht zuletzt kann auch die  
45 Politik positiven Einfluss nehmen, was Unternehmen machen dürfen und was nicht. Hier  
46 fehlen mir klare und vor allem bessere Richtlinien, um uns Konsumenten vor Fast Fashion zu  
47 schützen.

48 **Auf dem Blog schreibt ihr: "Wir sind nicht was wir haben. Wir sind auch nicht, was wir**  
49 **anziehen. [...] Wir sind, was wir tun. Was wir denken. Wofür wir uns engagieren."**

50 **Was bedeutet das für Konsumenten, die sich nicht engagieren?**



51 Wir stehen vor massiven Veränderungen in unserer Welt. Hauptsächlich durch den durch uns  
52 verursachten und beschleunigten Klimawandel bzw. die, von Greta Thunberg treffend  
53 benannte, Klimakrise. Wir sind für diese Entwicklung verantwortlich – und so sind wir auch  
54 dafür verantwortlich, dies durch unser tägliches Verhalten positiv zu beeinflussen. Jeder Kauf  
55 ist eine bewusste Entscheidung für ein Produkt und damit auch eine politische Entscheidung.  
56 Wir sollten viel bewusster solche Entscheidungen treffen, die hoffentlich dazu führen, dass  
57 wir insgesamt weniger konsumieren

58 **Meinst du Eco-Fashion ist eine gute Alternative? Wenn ja, warum?**

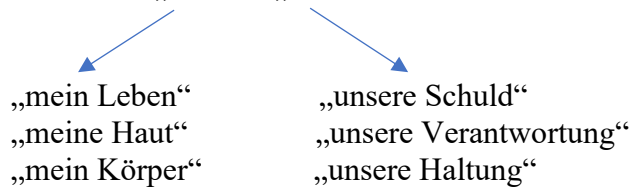
59 Eco Fashion bzw. Slow Fashion ist für diejenige, die gerne konsumieren, definitiv die bessere  
60 Alternative als Fast Fashion. Slow Fashion achtet auf Grundsätzlichkeiten wie natürliche  
61 Stoffe, ressourcenschonende Materialien, soziale Arbeitsbedingungen, faire  
62 Produktionsbedingungen und Arbeitnehmer\*innenrechte und umweltschonende Produkte. Für  
63 alle, die bei Slow Fashion nicht fündig werden, kann Secondhand und Vintage eine sehr gute  
64 Alternative bieten.

1. **Identity:** (Self-) Advertisement & (Self-) Commodification

- Name dropping (positive & negative)

2. **Othering:**

- Alignment/Othering with/of positive & negative
- „me“ vs. „we“



3. **Goal:**

„I“ vs. „us“

I: to be special and autonomous

Us: responsibility

Method: political mobilization

= *Splitting of self as simultaneous subject and representative*

## **Appendix VII: Ethnographic Protocol: Blog Analysis: G R O S S Δ R T I G** **(<https://www.grossvrtig.de>)**

1 In big, bold, black letters it says GROßARTIG, with a double s and a pyramid replacing the a.  
2 Five separate page headers say “Über mich”, “Fotografie”, “Grüne Mode”, “Interviews” and  
3 “Outfits”. As I scroll down there are links to articles with really big photographs representing  
4 them. They are rather scattered. Most of the pictures are of Alf Zahn, the blog creator. Others  
5 include people doing yoga, a pair of shoes on a sidewalk, a guy wearing a backpack, from  
6 behind. Links to his Facebook and Instagram account. The homepage is held in black and white  
7 with bold letters. The images add a nice colorful touch to the website.

8 I click on “Über mich” and instantly see Alf smiling at me in front of a sunset. He explains in  
9 bold letters that he is a “Blogger, Berater und Modejournalist”. He lives in Berlin, originally  
10 from Nürnberg. He used to be a “Social Media Mensch”. As a Modeberater he wrote a book in  
11 collaboration with Dr. Kirsten Brodde, that explains the know-how necessary to become an  
12 ethical consumer. A picture of someone going through the pages of the book. Okay. I feel like it  
13 is very self-explanatory. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook – he is well-connected. Not much more to  
14 see here.

15 Category “Fotografie”: Many, many pictures of streets and regions in Bremen. Weißensee,  
16 Steglitz. Although none of this seems to have much to do with fashion, he does seem to enjoy  
17 taking pictures of interesting styles in the streets. The pictures include the typical young Berlin  
18 city lifestyle. Graffiti, backpacks, sneakers.

19 “Grüne Mode” is the next link. The one I am really interested in, to be honest. I click on it and  
20 get moved back to where all the articles were. Many articles covering so many, scattered aspects  
21 of ethical fashion. How much longer do we need the Fashion Revolution? Advertisements for the  
22 Airpaq, Alf’s Top 5 Male and Female Underwear picks, Fairness in an unfair world, Lets talk  
23 about sneakers. I click on the link with the sneakers. It’s an interview with someone from the  
24 brand WADO. A green label? I’m not sure. Alf is interviewing him. It’s something about eco  
25 sneakers. Alf is asking some very specific questions about the production and manufacturing of  
26 the materials used in the sneakers. Then there are some gigantic seeming images of the sneakers.  
27 Close up. Then he asks something about vegan sneakers. I am realizing there is so much to this  
28 ethical movement. I am a little overwhelmed. What is chromium? I have to look it up. It seems  
29 like Alf is deconstructing the show and asking about the story of each part of it. Important  
30 questions. Where and how is it made? Reforestation. Another question. I have to look it up again.  
31 I feel like I need to get a better feel for all of these terms. Another close up of sneakers. Critics  
32 on social media. That’s the next question. How does he deal with that? Social media seems to me  
33 to have such a large influence in the matter. So much of this ethical fashion network is connected  
34 that way. I guess that isn’t really special, but it’s something. Not sure what. Hashtags  
35 Greenwashing, Crowdfunding, Vegan Sneaker. I find it very interesting.

36 I click on “Fairness in einer unfairen Welt”. Hashtag fairbylaw. I wonder what this means. The  
37 whole page is covered in a white background and a gigantic hashtag saying exactly that. “Hilft  
38 Freiwilligkeit oder nur ein Gesetz”, the subtitle. Very interesting and thought provoking title. He  
39 is writing a kind of editorial about the Fashion Revolution Day. After the introduction I see a big  
40 picture of what looks to be politicians in a circle having some kind of public discussion. Who are  
41 they? Dr. Gerd Müller from the CSU, someone from Tchibo, Joschka Fischer. I was right.  
42 Politicians and, as it seems, representatives for brands and NGOs. As I am scrolling down I see

43 more pictures of concerned looking politicians. I wonder if their clothes are made by an eco  
44 brand. This text seems to be promoting the Textilbündnis. As said, there is so much networking  
45 going on. The question is about enforcement. A good question. Do brands really care? Should  
46 they be forced. I wonder if there are any comments under the article. No comments. Hashtags  
47 folkdays. Change.org. stakeholder dialog. A kind of meme to be shared on social media with a  
48 quote by Lisa Jaspers. Who is Lisa Jaspers? I guess she is demanding a law to hold brands  
49 accountable for their behavior. I like the accountability aspect. Not so sure about the law angle.  
50 She describes the Rana Plaza accident as “furchtbar”. Horrible. It was. She isn’t wrong about  
51 that. There is a change.org link. I wonder how many people have supported this. 153.490  
52 signatures. At the bottom is says “this is why people are signing”. Interesting. One guy says  
53 politics is worthless, people need to take responsibility. Someone else says “no one should die  
54 for fashion”. Another guy says there is no way to have a capitalistic company doing non-  
55 capitalist things. A lot of political criticism. Everything here gets shared on Facebook in the form  
56 of a link, if the signer wishes to do so.

57 The interviews link doesn’t work. So I move on to “Outfits”. He likes to model clothes. “One  
58 link says “We are Nature”. I click on it. He isn’t wearing any shoes in the picture and looking off  
59 to the side. The image is so large, I have to scroll quite a while to get to the text. Alf is standing  
60 in front of some kind of inner city wall. Is it the Berlin wall? Probably. Lots of graffiti. The  
61 whole nature barefoot thing makes sense I guess. He is just wearing a black sweat suit. I am  
62 wondering if he was cold. It doesn’t look warm. He is clever. A lot of his texts seems to be quite  
63 clever. Like he is trying to directly approach the reader. Like, hey, I know you. We are alike. A  
64 quote by someone named Svenja Haffritz. Talking about connection and nature. We are small.  
65 We are connected. We belong together. Something like that. Four big pictures of Alf and his  
66 sweat suit and well groomed feet. Then the Berlin wall again. No comments. Hashtags A new  
67 path, Fridays for Future. See what I mean by network connection? Its like everywhere you go  
68 there is more to see. More hashtags, more phrases and names, more quotes, more NGOs, more  
69 politicians talking their talk. But I don’t see the coherence.

70 There are no mission statements. No manifesto. No approach. Just scattered information. No  
71 comments. What is the point of this?

<b>FOCUS</b>
<b>Lifestyle</b>
<b>Fashion</b>
<b>Activism</b>

<b>LIFESTYLE</b>
yoga
nature
culture
internet
city life
leisure

<b>FASHION</b>
shoes
accessories
models
brands

<b>ACTIVISM</b>
NGOs
public discourse
policy
tragedy
production & manufacturing
fairness



<b>EMOTIONS / IMPRESSIONS</b>
<b>Scattered</b>
<b>Colorful</b>
<b>Bold</b>
<b>Black</b>
<b>White</b>
<b>Irrelevant</b>
<b>Image</b>
<b>Clever</b>
<b>Connected</b>
<b>Incoherent</b>
<b>Horrible</b>
<b>Worthless</b>
<b>Thought-provoking</b>
<b>Concern</b>
<b>Variety</b>
<b>Detail</b>
<b>Confusion</b>
<b>Similarity</b>

## **Appendix VIII: E-Interview: Fashion Revolution Representative**

1 **Please summarize the aims and motivations of Fashion Revolution.**

2 Fashion Revolution is a global movement campaigning for systemic reform of the fashion  
3 industry. The way fashion is produced and consumed has been dramatically scaled and sped  
4 up over the past 30 years and so too have we seen more frequent and deadlier garment factory  
5 disasters and more significant and faster environmental degradation.

6 We are working year-round to raise awareness of the industry's most pressing issues, with a  
7 focus on transparency. Transparent disclosure makes it easier for all the relevant parties to  
8 understand what has gone wrong, who is responsible and how to fix it. We believe that  
9 transparency leads to greater accountability, which eventually will lead to a change in the way  
10 business is done.

11 **Where do you see the consumer? How important is consumer engagement to the  
12 movement?**

13 Consumers are a fundamental part of the fashion supply chain. Whether or not they are  
14 always aware of it, consumers drive the demand for products and could thus drive demand for  
15 sustainability within the fashion industry. Through engaging consumers in this movement, we  
16 can shape the fashion industry through our voice and our money.

17 **What does Fashion Revolution consider to be the most impactful activity to combat non-  
18 ethical consumption?**

19 Education. Most people are unaware of the impacts that their clothes have on the people who  
20 make our clothes and on our environment. Once you begin to educate consumers on these  
21 issues, it is easier for them to see why paying £3 for a T-shirt is unsustainable and they can  
22 begin to implement changes in their lifestyle and use their voice as a consumer to demand  
23 change from brands and governments alike.

24 **What does Fashion Revolution consider to be the most significant outcome to be  
25 achieved in terms of an ethical fashion industry?**

26 Since we started campaigning six years ago, the fashion industry has made some crucial  
27 progress, but the story is far from over. We are only just getting started. We can't stop until  
28 every person who makes our clothes is seen, heard, paid properly and working in safe  
29 conditions. We won't stop until our clothes no longer destroy ecosystems and harm people's  
30 health.

31 **What would an ethical fashion industry look like?**

32 To us, sustainability is fundamentally about maintaining life on earth and the ecosystems  
33 required to support it. In simplest terms, sustainability is about our children and our  
34 grandchildren, and the world we will leave them. When we apply these concepts to fashion, in  
35 essence we understand 'sustainable/ethical fashion' as a holistic approach to the design,  
36 production, sale, consumption and use of clothing, accessories and footwear that conserves  
37 and restores ecosystems whilst respecting and protecting the human rights of people and  
38 enabling equitable development of communities.

39 **Who or what is responsible for the non-ethical side of the fashion industry?**

40 We all have a part to play in this highly globalised industry. Consumers play a large role in  
41 creating demand for products at certain price points. Governments could play a larger role in  
42 regulating brands through regulations such as the Modern Slavery Act (UK's and Australia's),  
43 through taxes, bans etc. Whilst brands have a large role in ensuring their supply chains respect  
44 the people that work in them and the environment. We all need to push forward for systemic  
45 change.

46 **What has already changed since Fashion Revolution began its efforts?**

47 Six years on, there has been considerable progress, but undoubtedly more still needs to be  
48 done. Today, hundreds of factories in Bangladesh are now safer places to work. More than  
49 2,000 factories have been inspected since Rana Plaza and 1.5 million garment workers have  
50 received factory safety information.

51 We are also seeing brands begin to publish more about their social and environmental efforts,  
52 and we are seeing an increasing number of brands publishing their factory lists. As of April  
53 2019, we have counted 180 brands across 75 companies/parent groups that are disclosing at  
54 least some of the facilities making their clothes. 29 Brands have disclosed supplier lists as a  
55 direct result of Fashion Revolution's efforts in 2018, through #whomademyclothes and/or by  
56 being scored in the FTI in 2017 and again in 2018.

57 There has also been key legislation implemented such as the UK 2015 Modern Slavery Act  
58 and Australia's 2018 Modern Slavery Act which requires brands above a certain turnover to  
59 produce a slavery and human trafficking statement setting out what they have done to ensure  
60 there is no modern slavery in their supply chains or own business (or that they have taken no  
61 such steps). The 2017 French Corporate Duty of Vigilance Law takes the modern slavery acts  
62 a step further and requires companies to establish and implement due diligence measures to  
63 identify and prevent human rights violations and environmental damages in connection with  
64 their supply chains.

### 65 **What caused the changes?**

66 A drive around consumer awareness has certainly catapulted these issues into the public  
67 sphere. Social media certainly has a large part to play, allowing like-minded citizens to  
68 connect and share information and spread their message. In addition, NGO's, such as  
69 ourselves and many others have been working tirelessly to ensure these topics are taken  
70 seriously by brands and policymakers. One way we have driven change is through our  
71 Fashion Transparency Index which has been designed in a way to make use of the competitive  
72 nature of business by scoring and ranking brands annually. Brands are competing against their  
73 peers and themselves year-on-year and this is helping to drive them to disclose more  
74 information about their social and environmental policies, goals, practices and impacts.

### 75 **Does or can the push for ethical consumption involve a sociopolitical mindset 76 connected to collective action?**

77 Definitely, as an individual, it can be difficult to see directly how your actions can make a  
78 positive difference, whether that's buying second hand or choosing a more sustainable brand.  
79 However, collectively if we all make these positive changes as well as using our collective  
80 voice to demand change by brands and governments, we can have a tremendous impact. We  
81 were told by a large fashion brand that for every person that asks them #WhoMadeMyClothes  
82 or ask them about their sustainability practices, they represent that as 10,000 other people who  
83 are thinking the same thing but haven't spoken up.

### 84 **And is Fashion Revolution interested in mobilizing this kind of action?**

85 We have developed a large and ever-growing community of people who all want to change  
86 the fashion industry on social media. Through our content and our website, we hope to  
87 provide them with simple tools, information and advice so they can make the most sustainable  
88 choices for their lifestyles. If every person made small changes or used their voice, we would  
89 be well on our way to creating a better fashion industry for all.

1. Hyperbolic/otherwise intense linguistic expression
2. **Focus:** transparency → greater accountability of brands  
Achieved through: education of consumers  
= pressure on consumers
3. **THE CONSUMER:**
  - Fundamental part of supply chain
  - Drives demand
  - Can shape fashion industry  
= elevation of consumer influence and position  
CONTRADICTION: individual agency drives demand (social media)
4. **Methods:**
  - Identity validation  
Consumer role = consumer power through autonomy
  - Mediators  
Consumers can become role models and spread message
5. **Responsibility:**
  - Fashion Revolution = mediator
  - NGO role: ensures topics have political relevance (distance)

**Appendix XI: Ethnographic Protocol: Website *Fashion Revolution***  
**(<https://www.fashionrevolution.org>)**

1 Upon accessing the site, my attention is immediately drawn to a full-screen scrolling news feed  
2 with six different items. The scrolling images feature vibrant colors and bold text. The first  
3 directs users to the “2019 Impact Report” with a link, and text that reads “In 2019, Fashion  
4 Revolution became bigger and louder than ever before, more people asked #whomademyclothes,  
5 more people within the supply chain answered #imadeyourclothes and a new wave of brands  
6 took a step towards becoming more transparent.” The second slide has an animated background,  
7 which is very attention grabbing. It is advertising a “fully-functional, fold-out, yearly planner”  
8 which is “filled with information and guidance on how to make the biggest impact in the fight  
9 for change”. The rest of the slides (four more) are like the first: bold, colorful, vibrant. The third  
10 slide features the Brand Transparency Index, which is stated as a ranking of the 200 largest  
11 brands and retailers based on efforts to disclose their social and environmental policies. The  
12 remaining slides feature links to a “fanzine library”, a sign-up page to receive their weekly  
13 newsletter via email, and a directory to connect to Fashion Revolution locally based on country.  
14 Below the sliding feed, there is another small section where people can register for the newsletter  
15 by inputting their email address; below that is an interactive table where users can again “FIND  
16 YOUR COUNTRY”, first by selecting a continent or global region, and then the appropriate  
17 country. Scrolling further, bold, black text over a lavender background shows the dates of their  
18 2019 Fashion Revolution week. In slightly smaller text below that, the site explains the special  
19 reason for the date, and a message encouraging participation: “On the 6th anniversary of the  
20 Rana Plaza factory collapse, which killed 1,138 people and injured many more in 2013, we  
21 encourage millions of people to ask brands #whomademyclothes and demand greater  
22 transparency in the fashion supply chain. The more people who ask #whomademyclothes, the  
23 more brands will listen. Use your voice and your power to change the fashion industry. Together  
24 we are stronger.” Three links are listed underneath, one to email a brand, the other two to share  
25 the page on Twitter and Instagram. Continuing to scroll, the next section - plain black text on a  
26 plain white background - displays the general mission statement and purpose of Fashion  
27 Revolution: “Fashion Revolution is a global movement calling for greater transparency,  
28 sustainability and ethics in the fashion industry. We want to unite the fashion industry and ignite  
29 a revolution to radically change the way our clothes are sourced, produced and purchased, so that  
30 what the world wears has been made in a safe, clean and fair way.” Immediately underneath  
31 that, an embedded video that fills the page titled “Who Made My Clothes” has as its thumbnail a  
32 young woman holding a bundle of orange fabric out in her hands, as if offering it to the reader.  
33 She is not smiling; if anything her expression appears melancholy and serious. Scrolling further,  
34 and nearly approaching the bottom of the page, the word “RESOURCES” appears, with four  
35 items - each displaying a picture, a title/link, and a brief description - “Fashion Transparency  
36 Index Brazil 2019”, “Read our latest fanzine - #004: FASHION CRAFT REVOLUTION”,  
37 “Citizen Action kit”, “Fashion Revolution Consumer Survey 2018”. Below that, with the same  
38 layout are “LATEST BLOGPOSTS”, with the four most recent displayed. Then there is yellow  
39 background, and a small blurb encouraging users to support the movement, with a link marked  
40 “DONATE” at the bottom. I found this a bit interesting, since other websites that ask for



41 donations are usually much more aggressive with their campaigning for funds, sharing the link at  
 42 the top of the page, or with a pop-up. It’s a bit reassuring: money and profit isn’t the primary  
 43 concern. At the very bottom, a directory to the major sections of the site can be found, with the  
 44 links categorized into four categories: “ABOUT” (2019 Impact; Our Team; Our Manifesto; Find  
 45 Your Country), “TAKE ACTION” (Citizens; Brands And Retailers, Schools and Universities,  
 46 Producers and Makers), “BLOG”, “RESOURCES” (Free Downloads, Fashion Transparency  
 47 Index, Podcast, Events, Fashion Open Studio, Further Reading), “KEY ORGANIZATIONS”,  
 48 “DONATE”, “CONTACT US”, “PRESS”, “PRIVACY POLICY.” Links to share on social  
 49 media are below, and then the “Terms of Website Use” and copyright/licensing information on  
 50 the website. Finally, at the very bottom, being unable to scroll further, and EU flag and a  
 51 statement that the website was created and maintained with financial support of the European  
 52 Union. Below that, the Trade Fair – Live Fair icon/seal is displayed. Over all I found the site to  
 53 be very attention grabbing and engaging, with a stylistic and yet intuitive interface. The efforts  
 54 and attitude of the organization appear genuine, as opposed to a marketing scheme or  
 55 manipulative cash-grab. At the top of the page, present even when the user has scrolled, is a  
 56 menu with the same links found in the directory at the bottom. Also included is a drop-down tab  
 57 that allows the user to choose their relation to the fashion industry (citizen, brand, retailer,  
 58 student, etc.) which then takes the user to another page containing content geared toward the  
 59 “role” or “position” chosen.

<b>Aesthetics</b>	<b>Aim</b>
Vibrancy	Voice
Life	Power
Boldness	Mission
Functionality	Revolution
Attention	Fairness
Color	Equality
Opposition	Encouragement
Cleanliness	Community
Specificity	Openness

**Appendix X: Ethnographic Protocol: Website *Bündnis für Nachhaltige Textilien* (<http://textilbuendnis.com>)**

1 I'm switching to English. Partnership for sustainable textiles. The logo is clever. Looks like  
2 textile on a microscopic level. With all its connections. Weavings. Its very blue. Light blue.  
3 Sharp edges. A illustration of a stick figure picking cotton. And a picture of a mother with a  
4 baby. Members of the Bündnis are buying most of the bio cotton. Okay, that is a little self-  
5 congratulatory but let's continue. The Bündnis wants to promote good wages. A button to  
6 become a member. Who are the members, I wonder. I scroll down. Who are we, comes first. A  
7 multistakeholder initiative. Lots and lots of members. 120 to be precise. Brands, NGOs, other  
8 organizations, economic agencies.

9 I click on the button "Zu den Mitgliedern". A nicely simple graph shows me that it includes 19  
10 NGOs, the German government, 6 times other organizations. Lots and lots of economic parties  
11 including brands. Adidas, Aldi, Tchibo, H&M, Edeka, S.Oliver. So many big brands. Kik. Low  
12 quality brands with a bad name.

13 I click on the Review process. 1000 little steps, it says. It sure does seem like a complicated  
14 system they have set up. Brands and organizations are signing themselves up for scrutiny,  
15 supposedly. They have to hand in a progress report, detailing their annual achievements and  
16 efforts. They have to answer questions. What are the questions, I wonder? They have to provide  
17 road maps that lay out their aims. They have to maintain a dialogue. The initiative sets a focus,  
18 then they create mandatory goals and guidelines for the members to achieve the goals. They want  
19 to fight child labor. They want to make supply chains more transparent. They want to find a way  
20 to allow for better wages. Organic cotton is a big goal. A common goal. Something about  
21 standardized certification.

22 The "Über das Bündnis" section explains how they do what they set out to do. Responsibility  
23 seems to be a big buzzword here. Engagement, goals. Very future oriented. And so many  
24 scattered agendas. Chemicals, sustainability, security, wages, labor laws.

25 Interestingly enough I keep seeing the words "individual responsibility". Both, in relation to  
26 people as well as in relation to organizations and steps along the initiative's future aims.  
27 Individual goals are to combine to form one big massive change. Who checks the validity and  
28 credibility of the progress reports, I wonder? I cannot find any information about this. I'm going  
29 to have a look at an example. The 2019 progress report for Adidas. One page. The progress  
30 report as well as the road map is comprised of one page. Social Standards. Natural Fibers.  
31 Everything seems so scattered. So complex. Who checks this information? I still cannot find  
32 anything on that.

33 I click on downloads. Goals, Annual reports, List of members, review process, list of questions.  
34 Everything in several different languages. Links for brochures from NGOs. International  
35 standards. So much information. The links don't work. I get a zip file I cannot open. This is very  
36 frustrating.

37 News. What is new? I click on the link that says "Aktuelles". New members. That is the first  
38 topic. Some new certification method. India. Training for Chemical Management. I am very  
39 confused.

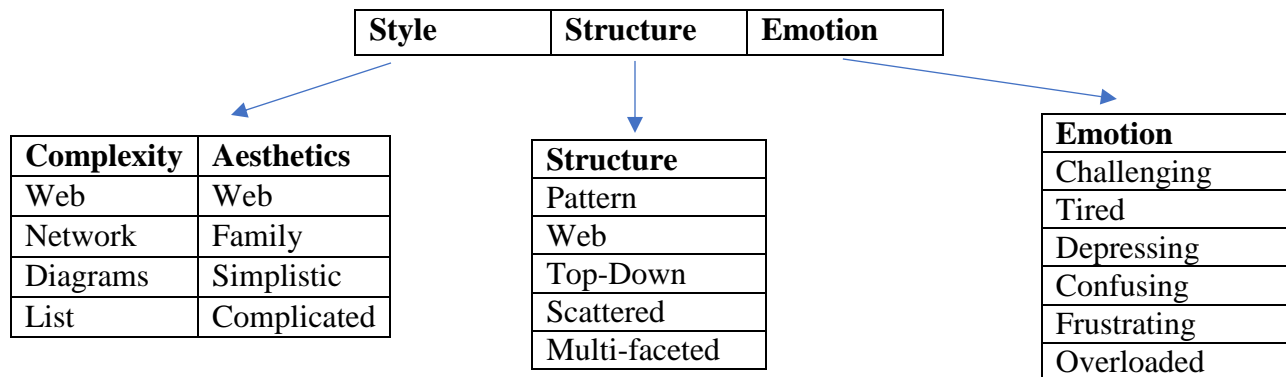
40 I click on "Das Bündnis" again. Now I am getting a picture that seems dark and depressing.  
41 Fabric coming out of the abyss. It says we are on our way. It says "to become better, worldwide."  
42 Better how? And who? There are no pronouns in this headline. The initiative wants to improve

43 the conditions of the textile industry. This is supposed to happen through the individual  
 44 accountability of the members. If one member doesn't meet their goal it reflects on the whole  
 45 collective.

46 I click on "Themen". What are the topics? Now it says "Wissen aufbauen und lernen. Für mehr  
 47 Nachhaltigkeit". Again I am thinking who and how? Interestingly enough the text asks the same  
 48 questions. The answer to how is "Prozesswissen über die Umsetzung von Sorgfaltspflichten".  
 49 So, the idea is to know the process regarding the implementation of rules for proper care.  
 50 Something like that. It's about know-how, they say. So, does the initiative educate? Why didn't  
 51 the brands and organizations already know the right procedures?

52 Due Diligence. I click on the link about "Sorgfaltspflichten" and suddenly I feel like I am  
 53 reading someone's PhD paper in economics. There are diagrams and words like "compliance  
 54 risk". I have to look up everything. Policy, risk analysis, monitoring. These are all interesting  
 55 aspects. But there are so many. I feel like I am being overloaded with information. There is an  
 56 info paper for each aspect. I click on one. 16 pages on why it is important to have a policy. I read  
 57 the info paper. It is extremely informative. Every little detail of the policy is explained. Why it is  
 58 important. What is it aimed at? It is clear and precise. Very detailed.

59 On the bottom of the page I find links to Instagram and Twitter as well as their general info-  
 60 email address. I feel like it's going to take a very long time to assess and understand all the  
 61 information that is given.



## Appendix XI: E-Interview: Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien

- 1           **1) Wann und aus welcher Motivation heraus ist das Bündnis entstanden?**  
2           Das Bündnis wurde als Reaktion auf die tragischen Unfälle in Textilfabriken in  
3           Bangladesch und Pakistan im Oktober 2014 gegründet. Ziel ist es, die Bedingungen in  
4           der globalen Textilindustrie zu verbessern. Initiator war Bundesentwicklungsminister  
5           Dr. Müller, die GIZ stellt das Sekretariat des Bündnisses.
- 6           **2) Was genau ist der Sinn einer solchen Initiative? Was wird getan?**  
7           Das Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien zielt auf verbesserte Bedingungen in der  
8           weltweiten Textilindustrie ab. Es gibt verpflichtende und freiwillige Ziele für die  
9           Mitglieder. Jährlich wird über den Fortschritt bezüglich der Zielerreichung berichtet.  
10           Zudem gibt es Bündnisinitiativen, in denen sich verschiedene Mitglieder zusammen  
11           tun und sich beispielsweise für besser Arbeitsbedingungen im indischen Tamil Nadu  
12           oder für den Ersatz giftiger Chemikalien im Produktionsprozess einsetzen  
13           (<https://www.textilbuendnis.com/buendnisinitiativen/>). Außerdem bietet das  
14           Textilbündnis eine Plattform für gegenseitigen Austausch an. Die Mitglieder können  
15           voneinander lernen und gemeinsam Lösungen für unterschiedlichste Probleme  
16           erarbeiten.
- 17           **3) In wie fern sind Konsumenten eingebunden?**  
18           Im Textilbündnis ist die Zivilgesellschaft in Form von NGO vertreten. Der einzelne  
19           Konsument bzw. die einzelne Konsumentin kann sich auf unserer Website über  
20           verschiedene Aktivitäten informieren und im Download-Bereich auch  
21           Informationsmaterialien einsehen.
- 22           **4) Was ist das wichtigste Ziel der Initiative?**  
23           Das Ziel des Textilbündnisses ist die Verbesserung der Bedingungen in der globalen  
24           Textillieferkette.
- 25           **5) Auf Ihrer Website erklären Sie, dass Sie "mit großen Engagement" zur**  
26           **"Verbesserung der sozialen, ökologischen und ökonomischen Bedingungen**  
27           **entlang der gesamten Textil-Lieferkette" beitragen möchten. Wie wichtig ist**  
28           **Ihnen dabei die Transparenz individueller Modemarken? Ist dies ein Fokus der**  
29           **Initiative?**  
30           Das Sekretariat begrüßt es, wenn die Mitglieder ihre Mitgliedschaft und ihre  
31           Maßnahmen zur Erreichung unserer Ziele kommunizieren. Dies liegt jedoch in den  
32           Händen der Mitglieder und ist weder Aufgabe des Sekretariats, noch Fokus des  
33           Bündnisses.
- 34           **6) Wie können die Bedingungen denn verbessert werden?**  
35           <https://www.textilbuendnis.com/buendnisinitiativen/>  
36           Unter diesem Link finden Sie unsere Bündnisinitiativen, die vor Ort tätig sind.
- 37           **7) In wie fern ist der Konsument in die Verwirklichung dieses Ziels**  
38           **eingebunden?**  
39           Konsument\*innen sind kein aktiver Teil des Bündnisses. Zivilgesellschaftliche  
40           Akteure sind verschiedene NGO.
- 41           **8) Das Ministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung hat**  
42           **mich an Sie weitergeleitet. In wie fern besteht dort eine Kooperation?**  
43           Das BMZ ist Auftraggeber des Projektes.

## **Appendix XII: Ethnographic Protocol: *Kampagne für Saubere Kleidung*, Team meeting at BIZME**

1 Ich komme im BIZ Büro an, 3 Minuten zu früh. Erst eine Person da. Eigentlich sind immer  
2 alle schon da, wird mir gesagt. Ein paar Sekunden sitze ich an einem großen Tisch mit  
3 mindestens 12 Stühlen, ganz allein und trinke ein wenig Tee. Dann auf einmal klingelt es  
4 Sturm. 6 oder 7 Teilnehmende kommen auf einmal rein. Alle lächeln, sind freundlich. Die  
5 Atmosphäre ist angenehm, außer dass es draußen sehr laut ist. Ich mache die Fenster zu. Ein  
6 paar Bilder und Urkunden sind an der Wand zu sehen, aber der Raum ist eher bescheiden  
7 ausgestattet. Frau Gauer-Süß, anscheinend in leitender Position, druckt noch mal allen einen  
8 Tagesablauf aus. Der Drucker funktioniert nicht. Aber es druckt doch etwas, auch wenn es  
9 kaum lesbar ist.

10 Nun gibt es eine Vorstellungsrunde. Die Teilnehmenden sind weiblich, außer eines  
11 Praktikanten aus dem Politikwissenschaftsbereich. Es gibt Modedesigner, Ladenbesitzer,  
12 einfach Interessierte, mich als Studentin und zwei Praktikanten, manche sind auch von  
13 kirchlichen Organisationen dabei.

14 Erstmal wird die letzte Sitzung besprochen. Ich ärgere mich, dass ich aufgrund von Krankheit  
15 nicht dabei sein konnte. Man soll nochmal genau wissen was abgesprochen wurde, damit wir  
16 schauen können, wie es jetzt weitergeht. Die Teilnehmenden scheinen sehr engagiert. Sie  
17 möchten die ganze Sache gerne endlich voranbringen, unter die Leute, in die Politik bringen.  
18 Die Modenschau am Hafenumuseum, welche am 14.07.19 stattfand, wird nun nochmal  
19 reflektiert. Ich war auch da, und bin sehr gespannt was so an anderen Beobachtungen, vor  
20 allem aus dem Organisationsbereich kommen. Eine Teilnehmerin schwärmt sie habe noch nie  
21 so viele tolle Klamotten auf einmal gesehen. Es wird eine Weile über die Stoffe gesprochen.  
22 Man sollte doch vielleicht aber beim nächsten mal in Fast Fashion Läden stöbern, was gerade  
23 so angesagt ist. So könnte man dann vielleicht Sachen herstellen die ALLE ansprechen und  
24 die Leute engagieren. Außerdem sollte man doch auch mal so eine Art „Ethnomix“ machen,  
25 damit auch Menschen aus anderen Ländern da Lust drauf haben. Dann stellt sich die Frage  
26 nach der Werbung. Es war zwar in der Zeitung angekündigt, aber irgendwie muss das mal  
27 mehr werden. Auch auf der Modenschau war irgendwie der Fokus nur auf die Mode selbst.  
28 Ein paar Leute waren interessiert an Infos der Kampagne, aber irgendwie nicht so richtig.  
29 CCC wurde als Veranstalter nicht mal genannt. Das ist nicht so schön. Die Pressearbeit ist ein  
30 bisschen fraglich, laut Teilnehmenden. Die Organisation war anscheinend ziemlich einfach,  
31 alles hat gut geklappt. Auch das „auf einmal spontan zum Model werden“ wurde als positiv  
32 aufgenommen. Nun stellen die Teilnehmenden begeistert weitere Ideen für Modenschauen  
33 vor, aber Frau Gauer-Süß erklärt, dass das eigentlich viel zu viel Arbeit ist und sowas sich  
34 nicht wirklich lohnt. „Viel Aufwand, sehr geringe Resonanz“. Solange es also nicht Teil eines  
35 anderen Projektes ist, soll man es lieber lassen.

36 Der zweite Punkt auf der Tagesliste ist dann der Film zu Vivienne Westwood. Eine  
37 Teilnehmerin fragt was das überhaupt soll und warum diese Person denn so wichtig sein soll.  
38 Sie findet es nicht wirklich wichtig, irgendeine Person zu verherrlichen. Frau Gauer-Süß  
39 erklärt, dass sie halt eine kritische Frau war, die Fast Fashion kritisiert und sowas bei  
40 Zuschauern gut ankommt weil sie ja auch „schräg“ und „irgendwie interessant“ ist. Flyer  
41 werden dann im Kino bei der Ausstrahlung auch ausgeteilt.

42 Dritter Punkt: Es soll ein Podium in der Baumwollbörse geben. Super Aktion, meiner  
43 Meinung nach. Ich freue mich diese Infos überhaupt bekommen zu haben und frage mich kurz  
44 warum das so exklusiv ist und nicht mehr Werbung gemacht wird. Man wird an dem Tag zB  
45 das Textilbündis hinterfragen. Das finde ich total wichtig. Ich frage in die Runde ob man das  
46 nicht irgendwie besser verbreiten kann. Es kriegen ja nur ganz wenige diesen Newsletter von  
47 der Kampagne. Und da ein Siegel bewertet werden soll, welches ja so viele Leute betrifft,

48 sollte man das irgendwie besser teilen. Ideen werden gesammelt. Vielleicht eine  
49 Presseerklärung zum Verfahren der Siegel-Arbeit? Das finde ich super. Frau Gauer Süß  
50 erklärt, dass es eine Stellungnahme geben wird. Aber mehr wahrscheinlich nicht. Aber man  
51 wird versuchen, irgendwie die Thematik „gesetzliche Regelungen vs. Freiwilliger Prozess“  
52 beleuchten. Nun fragt sie, wer denn dabei sein möchte. Ich melde mich. Zwei weitere  
53 Personen. Eine andere Teilnehmerin sagt sie würde ja gerne dabei sein aber sie weiß doch gar  
54 nichts davon. Ich empfinde dies als fragliche Position. Lernen ist doch immer gut. Andere  
55 nicken ihr zu und zeigen, dass sie es auch so empfinden. Ich frage mich nun, ob einige  
56 Teilnehmer denken, weil sie sich engagieren müssen sie eine Art Expertenfunktion  
57 übernehmen. Ich sehe das nicht so. Ich glaube es wäre total super, wenn man so was offen  
58 angeht und versucht so viel wie möglich zu lernen und für sich mitzunehmen. Die Diskussion  
59 dauert zu lange. Nächstes Thema ist dran.

60 Die Fair-Wear Foundation als Beispiel für eine Multistakeholder Initiative soll beleuchtet  
61 werden und dazu sollen Repräsentative der Initiative eingeladen werden. Leider melden die  
62 sich aber anscheinend genauso wenig wie das Textilbündnis. Verständlicherweise reagieren die  
63 Teilnehmenden genervt. Eine Teilnehmende erklärt, dass sie es wichtig fände, dass  
64 Studierende aus dem Kultur- und Modebereich dabei sind. Damit die „richtigen“ Fragen zu  
65 „gut und schlecht“ gestellt werden. Ich finde die Idee prinzipiell gut, aber ich frage mich halt  
66 ob Studierende die richtige Wahl sind, oder ob man mal Professorinnen und Professoren aus  
67 dem Forschungsbereich einladen sollte, denn Studierende sind doch schon oft zurückhaltend.  
68 Darauf wird mit Skepsis reagiert. Man soll ja dann nicht irgendein Gespräch haben das „kein  
69 Mensch versteht“. Ich glaube nicht, dass das problematisch wäre. Selbst wenn, wenn es darum  
70 geht mit der Fair Wear Foundation ins Gespräch zu kommen und ihre Handlungen zu  
71 hinterfragen und dies auch öffentlich darzustellen, dann ist es doch gut wenigstens jemanden  
72 dabei zu haben die oder der dann auch wirklich Ahnung hat und die Repräsentative  
73 konfrontiert. Jetzt gibt es einen Rückblick auf einen vorherigen Fachworkshop. Das hat  
74 anscheinend mit den Studierenden gut geklappt.

75 Nächster Punkt: Veranstaltung zu Existenzlohn. Es soll irgendwie erklärt und dargestellt  
76 werden, was das eigentlich bedeutet und wie man damit umgeht und was getan werden kann  
77 und, und, und... Ein Philosoph wird dabei sein. Jetzt frage ich mich gerade, was denn daran  
78 der Unterschied ist. Philosophen haben doch auch normalerweise Wissen, was andere nicht  
79 haben.

80 Nun wird die geplante Kleidertauschparty angesprochen. Dazu nun mehr Begeisterung im  
81 Raum. Fast alle wollen dabei sein. Ich denke kurz darüber nach, dort hinzufahren, um für  
82 weitere Forschungen Kontakte zu knüpfen.

83 Das nächste Thema ist dann das geplante Gespräch mit Joachim Schuster. Er ist SPD  
84 Abgeordneter. Gauer-Süß erklärt, dass es eine super Sache sei, sich auch mal mit EU-  
85 Parlamentariern zusammen zu setzen, um voneinander zu lernen und einfach mal ins  
86 Gespräch zu kommen. Ich finde es super. Das Problem ist wohl, dass auch in den EU-Ländern  
87 nicht immer living wages gezahlt werden. Darauf sollte man auch aufmerksam machen. Und  
88 wenn das dann Thema ist, kann man von dort aus weiter an Lösungen für Menschen in  
89 anderen Ländern arbeiten. Sie Teilnehmer (und ich) zweifeln an der Ehrlichkeit des  
90 Abgeordneten. Es herrscht auf einmal eine große Skepsis im Raum. Ich empfinde dies als  
91 positiv. Man hatte anscheinend schon vorher das Gespräch gesucht, und das letzte Treffen  
92 kam sehr oberflächlich rüber. Als ob einfach nur ein Image vertreten wurde. Das Gespräch  
93 soll nun tiefgründiger sein. Man will sich viel besser vorbereiten und auch von seiner Seite  
94 erwarten, dass er sich besser vorbereitet. Die grobe Atmosphäre im Raum ist, dass die Politik

95 schon doch eher limitiert ist, dass sie nicht viel bewirkt, und viel herumgeredet wird. Dazu  
96 sagt Frau Gauer-Süß dann ganz einfach: „Die Hoffnung ist einfach irgendwie einen Schritt  
97 nach vorne zu machen.“ Somit ist die Besprechung des Themas dann auch vorbei.  
98 Nun werden andere Sachen diskutiert. Es gibt anscheinend ein Preisgeld, was gewonnen  
99 wurde, womit ein großes Projekt um den Black Friday gestaltet werden soll. Es soll  
100 irgendwas mit Lieferketten zu tun haben.  
101 Ich schalte gerade innerlich ein bisschen ab. Ich finde es schade, dass nicht mehr Interesse an  
102 großen Schritten besteht und eher Interesse an den Veranstaltungen selbst. Ich verstehe schon,  
103 dass man das ganze interessant gestalten muss, aber ich habe einfach einen anderen Zugang  
104 zum Thema. Ich finde es viel wichtiger, sich darauf zu konzentrieren, Wissen zu teilen. Man  
105 kann ja auch sehen, dass es nicht viel bewirkt, wenn so eine Modenschau stattfindet, aber  
106 keiner wirklich Informationen zu den Hintergründen der Bewegung haben möchte. Ich fühle  
107 mich ein wenig fehl am Ort.  
108 Langsam habe ich den Drang zu gehen. Ich fühle mich ausgepowert und auch irgendwie  
109 missverstanden. Ich möchte die Dinge und meine eigenen Gedanken reflektieren und sie  
110 aufschreiben und über weitere Schritte nachdenken. Die Haltung gegenüber Forschern hat  
111 mich ein wenig gestört. Auch die Verbissenheit auf Aktionen, die aber nicht wirklich mit  
112 Informationen verbunden sind. Auf der Busfahrt nach Hause lasse ich mein Gehirn ein wenig  
113 abschalten und höre Musik.

**Offizielle Erklärungen von**

Nachname: \_\_\_\_\_ Vorname: \_\_\_\_\_  
Matrikelnr.: \_\_\_\_\_

**A) Eigenständigkeitserklärung**

Ich versichere, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel verwendet habe.

Alle Teile meiner Arbeit, die wortwörtlich oder dem Sinn nach anderen Werken entnommen sind, wurden unter Angabe der Quelle kenntlich gemacht. Gleiches gilt auch für Zeichnungen, Skizzen, bildliche Darstellungen sowie für Quellen aus dem Internet.

Die Arbeit wurde in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form noch nicht als Prüfungsleistung eingereicht.

Die elektronische Fassung der Arbeit stimmt mit der gedruckten Version überein.

Mir ist bewusst, dass wahrheitswidrige Angaben als Täuschung behandelt werden.

**B) Erklärung zur Veröffentlichung von Bachelor- oder Masterarbeiten**

Die Abschlussarbeit wird zwei Jahre nach Studienabschluss dem Archiv der Universität Bremen zur dauerhaften Archivierung angeboten. Archiviert werden:

- 1) Masterarbeiten mit lokalem oder regionalem Bezug sowie pro Studienfach und Studienjahr 10 % aller Abschlussarbeiten
- 2) Bachelorarbeiten des jeweils ersten und letzten Bachelorabschlusses pro Studienfach u. Jahr.

- Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass meine Abschlussarbeit im Universitätsarchiv für wissenschaftliche Zwecke von Dritten eingesehen werden darf.
- Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass meine Abschlussarbeit nach 30 Jahren (gem. §7 Abs. 2 BremArchivG) im Universitätsarchiv für wissenschaftliche Zwecke von Dritten eingesehen werden darf.
- Ich bin nicht damit einverstanden, dass meine Abschlussarbeit im Universitätsarchiv für wissenschaftliche Zwecke von Dritten eingesehen werden darf.

**C) Einverständniserklärung über die Bereitstellung und Nutzung der Bachelorarbeit / Masterarbeit / Hausarbeit in elektronischer Form zur Überprüfung durch Plagiatsoftware**

Eingereichte Arbeiten können mit der Software *Plagscan* auf einen hauseigenen Server auf Übereinstimmung mit externen Quellen und der institutionseigenen Datenbank untersucht werden. Zum Zweck des Abgleichs mit zukünftig zu überprüfenden Studien- und Prüfungsarbeiten kann die Arbeit dauerhaft in der institutionseigenen Datenbank der Universität Bremen gespeichert werden.

- Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass die von mir vorgelegte und verfasste Arbeit zum Zweck der Überprüfung auf Plagiate auf den *Plagscan*-Server der Universität Bremen hochgeladen wird.
- Ich bin ebenfalls damit einverstanden, dass die von mir vorgelegte und verfasste Arbeit zum o.g. Zweck auf dem *Plagscan*-Server der Universität Bremen hochgeladen u. dauerhaft auf dem *Plagscan*-Server gespeichert wird.
- Ich bin nicht damit einverstanden, dass die von mir vorgelegte u. verfasste Arbeit zum o.g. Zweck auf dem *Plagscan*-Server der Universität Bremen hochgeladen u. dauerhaft gespeichert wird.

Mit meiner Unterschrift versichere ich, dass ich die oben stehenden Erklärungen gelesen und verstanden habe. Mit meiner Unterschrift bestätige ich die Richtigkeit der oben gemachten Angaben.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum, Ort

\_\_\_\_\_  
Unterschrift