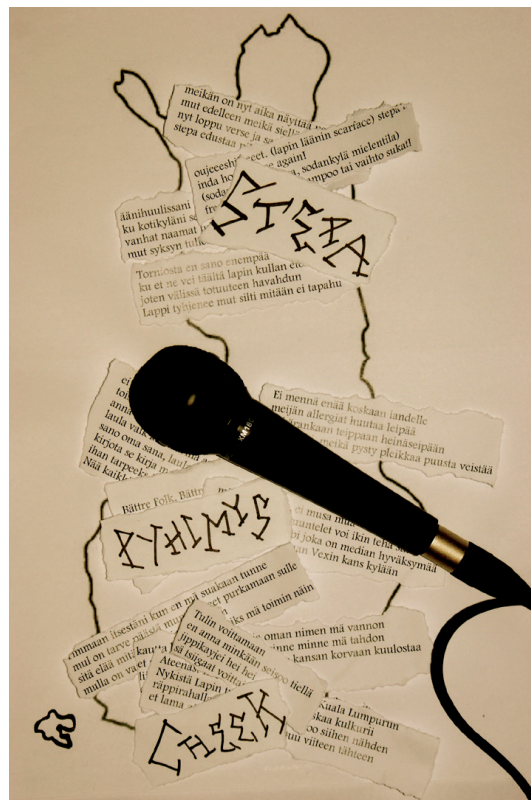


Elina Westinen

The Discursive Construction of Authenticity

Resources, Scales and Polycentricity in Finnish Hip Hop Culture



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Elina Westinen
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UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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JYVÄSKYLÄ 2014

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the construction of authenticity in Finnish hip hop culture. More specifically, I investigate how three Finnish rap artists, *Cheek*, *Pyhimys* and *Stepa*, construct their authenticity via linguistic and discursive resources and repertoires, projecting several scale-levels and orienting towards various centers of norms. The data of the study comprise rap lyrics, interviews and ethnographic observations of these three rap artists, who differ in their origins, genre and experience. To examine this contemporary, global phenomenon with relevant theories and concepts, and to involve the artists themselves in this study, I draw on the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the sociolinguistics of globalization, discourse studies and ethnography. Although the global spread of hip hop culture, and its local appropriations, has nowadays been extensively explored, research in and about the Finnish context remains scarce, particularly within sociolinguistics. Thus, the present study is a pioneering effort in Finnish hip hop research, while also contributing to the global sociolinguistic hip hop research tradition. Authenticity ('keepin' it real'), one of the most significant values and mantras of hip hop culture, is constructed in a complex relation to both oneself and others, and in local, national and global contexts. Traditionally, authenticity has been understood in fairly dichotomous and categorical terms vis-à-vis, for instance, 'race', 'language' and 'genre'. The findings of this study suggest, however, a (more) multifaceted and nuanced view of authenticity: one constructed via (semiotic practices in) language and discourse, organized on (fractal and subjective) scales and oriented to several norm-providing centers. The artists studied here construct authenticity in their own, unique (but also shared) ways and occupy different (partly fixed, yet mobile) positions in the 'ideological topography' of Finnish hip hop. This study also highlights how centers, margins and periphery are not 'fixed' categories but maneuverable and subjective. In sum, making use of ethnographic knowledge, multiple data sets and relevant theoretical orientations, enables hip hop authenticity to be viewed as linguistic, discursive, scalar, fractal, polycentric, and both urban and rural – as complex, yet ordered.

Keywords: authenticity, discourse studies, ethnography, Finland, Finnish, globalization, hip hop culture, interview, lyrics, polycentricity, rap music, repertoire, resource, scale, sociolinguistics

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting 'the scene'

"Kellareiden kasvatit" ('Sons of basements') (2000) by the Finnish rap group *Fintelligens* was the initial spark for my Finnish rap fandom – at the time, it was (for a Finnish audience) unheard of that Finnish rappers could rap 'fluently' and 'convincingly' onto 'proper' hip hop beats. Later on, that fandom also turned into an academic interest (Westinen 2007), which is thus the initial and main reason why we are now dealing with Finnish hip hop culture and rap music in the context of this PhD study. The specific focus in this study is current (i.e. 21st century) Finnish hip hop, and in particular three Finnish rap artists: *Cheek*, *Pyhimys* and *Stepa*. The aim of the study is to explore how these three artists construct their 'authenticity' in various ways in *discourse*, by drawing on and mobilizing various linguistic and discursive resources. The particular data that I will analyze consist of rap lyrics, interviews and ethnographic observations of these three rap artists. Before turning to the central concerns and theoretical orientations of the present study, I briefly characterize hip hop culture, along with the more general research strands of which the present study forms part.

Hip hop consists of various "cultural practices including MCing (rappin), DJing (spinnin), writing (graffiti art), breakdancing (and other forms of street dance) and cultural domains such as fashion, language, style, knowledge, and politics" (Alim 2009a: 2).^{1 2} Hip hop has also been defined

¹ The concept of hip hop has many orthographic variations, such as hip hop, hiphop, hip-hop, or Hip Hop. In this study, I will use the form 'hip hop', except in direct quotations, where the original orthographic form is kept.

² Although the term hip hop is most often used of the entire culture, whereas rap refers to the music, these concepts tend to overlap. Scholars (see e.g. Berns & Schlobinski 2003: 199) and artists also acknowledge the interchangeable use of the terms (like Cheek, who commented in one of our interviews that rap is hip hop music, i.e. the music of hip hop culture). Hence hip hop can occasionally also refer to music in this study.

not simply as music, but as a whole philosophy of life, an ethos that involves clothes, a style of talk and walk, a political attitude, and often a philosophical posture of asking hard questions and critically challenging established views and values (Shusterman 2005: 61),

and thus refers to one's whole outlook on life. This, taken together, is the multifaceted cultural phenomenon we call hip hop, which is in itself highly illustrative of various globalization and localization processes: issues that have to do with language (choice), discourse(s), culture(s), amongst many others. The present study on Finnish hip hop is a case in point.

Various cultural forms are taken up and appropriated in different ways all across the globe. Androutsopoulos (2003: 12)³, however, suggests that hip hop is a unique case in terms of its 'extent and durability' and proposes five characteristics that account for this uniqueness. The first is *the accessibility* of hip hop culture in that no formal training is required to participate in (the practices of) breakdance, MCing, DJing or graffiti painting (cf. also other 'sub'cultural forms, in general, as opposed to 'high' culture). The second characteristic is the *performative character* of hip hop which refers to the participatory nature of the culture: the community is brought into being through the active participation of its members. Third is the significance of *style* in hip hop: a unique style is created through 'individual creativity'. The fourth characteristic is 'the principle of competition': in constructing their own individual styles, youth compete with one another in various ways. Last, all the elements of the culture, most notably rap music, are made use of in the representation of 'local experience'.

On the very macro level, this study is about *popular culture* and *popular music*. This topic, as Pennycook reminds us, has been "largely overlooked in applied linguistics" (2007a: 9), but has perhaps been somewhat more welcome in sociolinguistics (see e.g. the recent and ongoing work of Leppänen et al. 2008; Leppänen et al. 2009; Leppänen et al. 2014; Jousmäki forthcoming). Thus, the present study is an effort to engage in the discussion in and about the Finnish context within global popular culture. According to Pennycook (2007a: 151), "popular culture has to do with desire, mobility and multiple identifications", ranging from one's style of clothing to being a member in a given community but not in others, to the pleasure (of "listening, watching, feeling") and one's place in the world. All of this, then, "has to do with complex ways in which we construct our identities" and with what kinds of "people, sounds, images and lifestyles" we want to identify with (ibid.). Popular music is, thus, one format, one 'space' (without boundaries) through which we can explore and construct our identities, engage in various lifestyles and cross various borders (e.g. Frith 1996b). According to Connell and Gibson (2003: 271), music contributes to the construction of "transnational networks of affiliation, and of material and symbolic interdependence". Music also "nourishes imagined communities, traces links to distant and past places" (ibid.). Finland (as a 'nation'), and the Finnish music scene, are part of this 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991),

³ Here, I draw on Pennycook's (2007a: 92) translations (from German to English) of Androutsopoulos' text.

linked with the past and present of the rest of the world. In addition to its global linkage, popular music also has the ability to create (rather than just reflect) national, ethnic and cultural identity:

words, music, audio samples, and video and photographic images in popular music culture contribute to the construction of historical knowledge, activating memory and bringing the past into dialogue with the present (Zuberi 2001: 4).

As we shall see (particularly in the analytical section 4.4), the words and music in Finnish rap engage strongly in the dialogue between past and present.

Of the three strands of popular music research, namely production, texts and reception (Aho & Kärjä 2007: 26), my study thus focuses on the *texts*, the discursive aspects, of Finnish rap music. More specifically, this study is not only about the discursive aspects of popular music and culture, but about the *broader (sub)cultural complex* revolving around the music.^{4 5} In this study, hip hop culture is seen as both unified and ‘shared’ and, importantly, also as highly divergent and fractal (see chapters 4 and 5, respectively); this is one of the most significant observations to be made in this study. The key elements of this culture are not fixed or pre-determined, but rather changing and fluid. I also use the concept of ‘scene’ in this study: hip hop, as a whole cultural complex, consists of several local ‘scenes’ – i.e. “located and ‘subcultural space[s]’” for the production and consumption of culture (mainly music) (Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004: 13) – for instance the (metropolitan) Helsinki or Tampere scenes in Finland. Alternatively, the whole Finnish hip hop culture can also be conceptualized as one (large) scene.⁶ Current Finnish research on subcultures is characterized by a ‘new ethnographic turn’ (‘new’ here referring to the fact that ethnographic work already characterized the research of the Chicago school in

⁴ Various subcultural research traditions have developed from the initial Chicago School, with its interest in various youth gangs, to the highly significant Birmingham school (CCCS – Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies), focusing on issues of hegemony and the impact of class in subcultures. The latest research phase is characterized as ‘post-subculturalism’ in which the emphasis is on heterogeneity, but within which researchers have not been able to produce a unified theory and terminology. (Salasuo & Poikolainen 2012.) However, a more elaborate discussion on research on subcultures is not within the scope, or interest, of the present study.

⁵ Lately, the notion of ‘subculture’ itself has been heavily challenged and alternatives such as ‘scene’ (a non-essential complex of various interlocking cultural practices; Kahn-Harris 2004, drawing on Straw 1991), ‘tribus’ (neo-tribes: fluid, unstable groupings, which provide “temporary identifications”; Maffesoli 1996) and ‘street culture’ (‘katukulttuuri’, e.g. Salasuo & Poikolainen 2012) have been suggested instead; none of these have, however, fully replaced the established notion of subculture. An extensive discussion on these notions is not within the scope, or interest, of the present study, since I am particularly engaged in *hip hop* culture, under whichever more general label it may fall. If, in this study, I occasionally refer to hip hop as a subculture, by the prefix ‘sub-’, I do not want to emphasize in any way its inferiority to other forms of culture. Nor do I want to emphasize hip hop culture as a coherent and fixed (sub)culture, whereby all of its members dress, act and think alike (cf. Bennett 1999: 605; Salasuo & Poikolainen 2012: 12).

⁶ The Finnish word ‘skene’ is currently heavily over-used in/of hip hop culture (or at least it was in the early 2000s), but I nevertheless intend to use it here, for the lack of a better word, to refer to the issues mentioned above. My apologies to Pyhimys, who, in our first interview, commented on being very against its over-usage.

the early 20th century) – it seems that scholars now want to gain an *emic* understanding of a younger generation, one whose life is markedly different from that of the previous generations and characterized by technological advances, consumer culture, polarization and individualism (Salasuo & Poikolainen 2012: 23). Thus, the ethnographic approach of the present study (combined with a sociolinguistic discourse analysis orientation; more about this below) is particularly suitable for these reasons, too.

Even more specifically, this study joins the group of *global hip hop studies* in an effort to map the various hip hop cultures outside the US, a trend that has largely come about since the early 21st century (e.g. Mitchell 2001a; Bennett 2000; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003). Hip hop studies as a field of research of its own has slowly become significant since the 1990s. The move from the margins to a more central position within research has coincided with the hip hop culture itself finding a more “central position in popular culture” (Sarkar 2009: 140.) Originally, most scholarly interest focused on the US hip hop culture. In fact, many US researchers have largely overlooked the significance of hip hop culture elsewhere (Sarkar 2009: 142; Mitchell 2001a). Global hip hop did not become widely studied in academia until fairly recently (Mitchell 2001a: 2); now, however, hip hop culture and rap music are attracting researchers around the world, many of whom are eager to study the very local scenes of hip hop. The starting point for global hip hop studies is generally acknowledged to be *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA* (Mitchell 2001a). My study, then, is part of global hip hop studies. In this, I join other scholars who “both recognize and resist the centrality of American [...] influences on global hip hop as a collection of sites of cultural and intellectual production” (Sarkar 2009: 142). Thus, while I fully acknowledge the US influence on Finnish hip hop, at the same time, the Finnish hip hop scene should be understood as being (by now) fairly independent and original.

Studying hip hop cultures and rap music in an era of globalization is important and timely. As Pennycook (2007a: 6-8) argues, ‘transcultural flows’ – “the ways in which the cultural forms move, change and are reused to fashion new identities” as well as the processes of “borrowing, blending, remaking and returning, to processes of alternative cultural production” – may indeed be one of the most significant fields of study as regards the (cultural) processes of globalization. (I will discuss relevant hip hop research more specifically in sections 4.1 and 5.1, in the introductions to the analytical chapters).

Until fairly recently, a number of studies in Finland have concentrated on US hip hop culture and rap music. For example, Immonen (2004) explored the political influence and entrepreneurship of rap music in the United States. In his view, rap music functions as an influential channel from the ghettos to the ‘White’ suburbs. The phenomenon can also be described as a hip hop political movement. US rap music has also been the focus of many Finnish MA theses in different fields: for example Tajakka (1995), representing literary studies, investigated Afro-centric rap music and the themes of race and ethnicity in it; Reinikainen (2005), representing English studies, explored representations

and images of wealth and women in US rap music videos and historical, social and cultural reasons for these; and Hannula (2000), in her MA thesis in English philology, examined social, political and cultural meanings and messages in US rap music – and how they reflect Black culture and its history.

Prominent examples of recent research on Finnish hip hop include Kärjä (2011), who looked into ('alleged') humor and parody in earlier Finnish rap music through the lens of 'meta-historical discourse analysis' and post-coloniality. Tervo (2012; 2014), in turn, analyzed Finnish rap music videos from the point of view of localization and globalization within the framework of cultural geography; Brusila (1999, 2011) explored the Finland-Swedish rappers (within Finland-Swedish popular culture and music), in particular, and Rantakallio, in her recently commenced doctoral work, looks into the worldviews expressed in Finnish rap music, within the framework of musicology and religion (personal communication). Finnish rap and hip hop in their various forms have also been the topic of many MA theses, which suggests that the younger generations, who have grown up with Finnish hip hop, now see new, emerging trends and phenomena (and possible research topics) in this culture. In the field of education, Kuivas (2003a, 2003b) discussed hip hop as an ideology of its generation and the Finnish rapper *Asa* as an 'organic intellectual' (à la Antonio Gramsci); in political science Liesaho (2003) explored the connection between rap and politics in Finland, and, more recently, Kärnä (2008), in the field of social and cultural anthropology, looked into the relationship between Eastern Helsinki and its hip hop culture and Palonen (2008), from within folklore studies, explored Finnish freestyle rap and its composition and aesthetics. The first (non-academic) book on Finnish hip hop came out in 2004. In it, Mikkonen presented some information on US hip hop as relevant background for the entire culture, but the actual focus was on the Finnish hip hop scene: it set out to discuss 'the history' of Finnish hip hop, its present stage, artists and their genres and themes. For these purposes, he also interviewed some artists.

In sociolinguistics (which the current study represents), research on Finnish hip hop has been relatively scarce. A few studies have nevertheless been conducted. In my MA thesis (Westinen 2007), drawing on insights from sociolinguistics and discourse studies, I looked into the construction of hip hop identities in Finnish rap music through the uses and functions of English as well as Finnish-English language mixing. As data I used the lyrics of three artists and groups: Cheek, *Kemmuru* and *Sere & SP*. One general finding of the study was that the English (mostly nouns, but also verbs and adjectives) in the data was largely characterized as language mixing, i.e. a social style, with a few code-switching exceptions. Another finding is that the specific hip hop identity, which was constructed in the lyrics, was a 'glocal' (Robertson 1995) one. The global aspects could be seen in the language mixing (and code-switching) related to, for example, the specific (sub)cultural terminology and slang items. The local items, however, could be seen, first of all, in the 'matrix' (i.e. main) language, Finnish, but also in the specific self- and place references.

In his (socio)linguistic-pragmatic study, Kalliokoski (2006) looked into language use in the lyrics of one Finnish rap group, the above-mentioned *Fintelligens*, and focused particularly on their usage of Helsinki slang. He explored how the coming together of different languages makes them part of both Finnish and global hip hop cultures. Kalliokoski (2006: 315) concludes that the language of *Fintelligens* is in a way similar to the old Helsinki slang which also combined elements of different languages and varieties. Although we share an interest in ‘multilingualism’ in the lyrics, in comparison to the present study, Kalliokoski’s study is more linguistic in its approach than my study. In addition, he has only one group in focus and he only examines lyrics, whereas I am interested in drawing a more diverse picture of the scene. Sociolinguistic research has also been carried out by Cvetanović (2010, 2014)⁷, who, in her forthcoming PhD, compares Finnish rap lyrics with Balkan ones, with respect to their linguistic and discursive aspects. One of the differences between her work and mine is of course the (nationally) comparative aspect, which I do not deploy in my study, concentrating instead on generating an understanding of the Finnish context. In addition, her data comprises lyrics alone. Leppänen and Pietikäinen (2010; see also Pietikäinen 2010), in turn, explored *Amoc*, an Inari Sámi⁸ rapper, in the framework of sociolinguistics and in relation to economic and cultural globalization as well as critical discourse analysis and ethnography, using both *Amoc*’s lyrics and interviews as data. They concluded that he makes use of the globalized rap format and creates a local rap discourse in Sámi which also has language political effects for this endangered language. Market forces have enabled *Amoc* and also his endangered mother tongue “to break through to national and international awareness” (Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010: 158). Their research and mine draws on similar kinds of frameworks (apart from their specific focus on economic globalization and market forces), but the scope and nature of the study is different. Whereas they focus on one ‘minority’ rapper, I examine three ‘majority’ rappers.

All in all, the research described above differs from the present study in focus, scope, data and the theoretical and methodological frameworks applied. My study thus contributes to this emerging research domain by exploring multiple data and artists and by drawing on the sociolinguistics of globalization, discourse studies and ethnography (I will discuss these approaches below). Having outlined the various research strands that relate closely to the present study, I now embark on my own path. Next, I will discuss in detail the central concerns and theoretical orientations of the present study (section 1.2). Finally, I will give an overview of the structure of the study, a road map into it (section 1.3).

⁷ In these articles, however, the focus is on the various rap genres and lyrics in Serbian rap music and the development of the local scene.

⁸ In Finland, three Sámi languages are spoken: Northern Sámi, Skolt Sámi and Inari Sámi.

1.2 Central concerns and theoretical orientations

Nowadays, the widely spread and highly popular hip hop culture is one of the most fascinating sites for the study of globalization, identification and self-understanding for youth around the world (Alim 2009a), because it offers young people a medium through which they can express themselves and their identities in a globally understandable and meaningful way. Rap music, in particular, with its intensive reliance on the use and transformation of language and discourse, is interesting in this respect. Through this culture and music, young people can learn to understand themselves as well as their origins, belongings and positions(s) in the (globalizing) world. For rappers, the music offers an 'artistic license', through which they are "able to publicly voice feelings and opinions that would otherwise find little scope for expression" (Bennett 2000: 161). Hip hop can be seen as a metaphorical home for "culturally, ethnically and linguistically distinct young people" (Cutler 2009: 92) who can obtain empowerment through it. Hip hop "transcends the boundaries of culture, race, and history, while being uniquely informed by all three" (Boyd 2002: 18 as cited in Newman 2009: 209) - thus it can aptly be described as a global phenomenon, crossing all kinds of boundaries, but always having specific local meanings wherever it occurs.

Before we discuss authenticity, the main theme of the study, vis-à-vis hip hop culture, a few remarks on this notion in relation to (recent) sociolinguistic work, where it has sparked theoretical debates and questions, particularly in late modern times, are in order. Coupland (2001: 346) discusses how, traditionally, sociolinguists have considered the 'vernacular' the most authentic speech form (and, while doing so, presented a fairly static view of the vernacular), as a reaction to the earlier emphasis on real, proper and standardized language (Coupland 2003: 420). Thus, sociolinguistics has tended to see specific languages (or varieties) and speakers as more authentic and hence more 'valuable' than others (Coupland 2003: 418). However, this image does not accurately reflect the late modern reality, characterized by "layers of complexity and conditionality" (Coupland 2001: 369), in which many people live. It is precisely these conditions, which complicate the 'quest' for authenticity, and yet we continuously (seem to) *want* to measure our lives vis-à-vis 'truthfulness', 'reality' and 'coherence', which index authenticity (Coupland 2003: 417). Coupland (2003: 427, emphasis original) further argues:

Late-modern social arrangements are likely to make the quest for authenticity *more* rather than *less* necessary. The affective, subjective dimension of authenticity - the need to feel rooted through language to a community and even to a physical place, which has driven the sociolinguistics of vernacular communities - is *not* simply vanishing.

Thus, authenticity still matters, to a great extent, in late modernity. Vis-à-vis my own research, Coupland's insights are important, since within hip hop culture, authenticity does not reside (pre-existingly) in an individual, or in a variety. In

addition, there is often ‘a need to feel rooted’ to a (local and/or global) culture and also to physical places. Bucholtz and Hall (2004a, 2004b, 2005), in turn, have opted for the concept of ‘authentication’ to refer to the discursive and social *processes* in which authenticity is ‘claimed’, ‘imposed’ or ‘perceived’ (Bucholtz & Hall 2004b: 498; see Moore 2002 on authentication in popular music), and not to any ‘inherent essence’ (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 601). Like Coupland, then, they do not see authenticity as a (pre-existing) property or a characteristic of a certain individual. Despite our different terminology, I align with Bucholtz and Hall in their non-essentialist and non-static thinking on authenticity (/authentication): rap artists construct authenticity in performance, via various linguistic and discursive ways, and they cannot be (objectively) measured against some pre-existing criteria of authenticity (cf. Bucholtz & Hall 2004b: 498).

Questions about and around ‘authenticity’ are particularly important and interesting vis-à-vis hip hop culture (and research on it), as it is (and has been from the ‘beginning’) a highly significant, debated and discussed concept in the various scenes across the globe (more about this below in section 2.3). Thus, the *aim* of the present study is to map out the various ways in which authenticity is constructed, during an era of globalization⁹, within Finnish hip hop culture, using as data the lyrics of and interviews with three Finnish rap artists, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, as well as ethnographic observations. In doing this, I will not attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of contemporary Finnish hip hop culture and rap music, but rather identify and illustrate various positions from which we can analyze authenticity and these three artists. In this process, I aim at insider (emic) knowledge, by having both interviewed the artists and observed them on their gigs, on stage, over a period of four years. In all of this, I am trying to understand what it is like to be a rap artist in Finland.¹⁰

In aiming to explore the many ways of constructing authenticity, the key research question of the study is: how do Finnish rap artists, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, construct their authenticity? In answering this larger question, I will focus more specifically on linguistic resources and repertoire, discursive resources and repertoire and their functions, such as personal ones, i.e. indexing the rappers as specific kinds of artists, with their own individual trajectories as well as social ones, i.e. indexing the social, cultural and historical context in which they work as well as their specific kind of shared hip hop knowledge and expertise. These resources also have the possibility to project various scales. Thus, I will also explore the ‘scales’, the spatio-temporal frames of meaning-making (e.g. the local, the national, the global), within which authenticity is constructed as well as the various centers of norms (‘polycentricity’) – whether individuals, institutions or abstract entities – the artists orient towards whilst constructing authenticity (the aims are described in more detail in section 3.1).

⁹ See for instance Varis and Wang’s (2011) investigation on the authenticity of a Chinese rapper online, in the context of ‘superdiversity’.

¹⁰ Of course, there are and always will be a *variety* of understandings of ‘hip hop in Finland’. The value of a scholarly investigation is in interpreting them and their specific sociohistorical and -cultural context. This is what I aim to do in the analysis of both lyrics and interviews.

For now, we can take it as a hypothesis (to be verified) that a globalization feature, such as hip hop, requires a scaled and polycentric approach because of its complex and dynamic nature. Following one of the ways to do ethnographic research, I have, first, observed empirical facts (or cases) on Finnish hip hop, and, then, been able to see those facts as “probably meaning this or that” (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 13, drawing on Carlo Ginzburg’s ‘evidential or conjectural paradigm’ (1989); cf. also the ‘sensitizing concept’ proposed by Blumer (1969: 148) – something which “gives [...] a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances” and “suggests directions along which to look”). These facts “generate hypotheses that can then be verified” (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 13). This, in turn, will complicate the issue of authenticity, because we need to look at how authenticity is tied up with ‘emic’ construction of scales as well as with the various centers of norms the artists orient towards in their actions (more profound discussions of these notions will be offered in sections 4.2 and 5.2, respectively).

As regards the *social relevance* of the present study, we will see how a current global youth and music culture actually operates within Finland and how it is, in fact, ‘complicated’ through a complex interplay of various scales and centers of norms, drawing on elements from all of them. Both ‘scales’ and ‘polycentricity’ can be considered key features of late modernity – but this is not to say that polycentricity (and scales) were not a feature of earlier ‘world orders’, as well, at least to some extent (cf. Mignolo 2012 [2000]: 235–237: see also Pennycook 2007a: 24–30; though they do not use these exact terms to characterize earlier world orders). The difference is in the scope, breadth and multiplicity of centers of authority (on several scale-levels). In fact, according to Blommaert (2010: 42),

sociolinguistic phenomena in a globalization context need to be understood as developing at several different scale-levels, where different orders of indexicality dominate, resulting in a polycentric ‘context’ where communicative behavior is simultaneously pushed and pulled in various directions.

In this sense, then, this study is about one feature of social life within late modernity, namely hip hop culture, and thus it offers us ‘a case study’ of this phenomenon. Other possible features of social life – characterized by scales and polycentricity – could be various other popular / youth / music cultures as well as numerous activities in social media (see e.g. Blommaert & Varis (forthcoming) on the on/offline ‘authenticity’ of the hijabistas, i.e. hijab-wearing Muslim women interested in fashion). This can be seen for example in people’s linguistic, discursive and semiotic ‘ways of being’ and communicating with one another in various on/offline contexts – in which TimeSpaces of meaning-making they function and in relation to which norm-providing centers.

In relation to the current sociocultural and societal situation in Finland (vis-à-vis globalization processes, language (ideological) debates, center-periphery dynamics, marginalization of the youth, etc.), there is a direct (and urgent) need to scrutinize the hip hop phenomenon academically, as many hip hop cultural forms are becoming more and more mainstream and popular, and

relevant in, for instance, social and educational work (see e.g. Turunen 2007). Through this study, we will also, more specifically, tap into the language and discourse of Finnish rap artists: what kinds of resources do they make use of when creating meanings in their lyrics? In addition, I will investigate how (a particularly hip hop -related notion of) authenticity ('keepin it real') is actually 'done' in various ways within the Finnish hip hop scene, on various scales and orienting to numerous centers of norms. More generally, we will see how an overwhelming similarity (of the artists) will not preclude their (simultaneous) difference in any way, but rather complements it: the artists have both shared and unique features in their lyrics as well as in the stories they relate, and all of this contributes to their authenticity. Finally, we will be able to notice how hip hop as one particular facet of globalized popular culture is a fractal phenomenon: there will always be (new, more nuanced) centers and margins within each context, on each scale-level.

Theoretical orientations

As far as the theoretical orientations are concerned, Figure 1 below summarizes the approaches to the construction of authenticity adopted in this study. In addition to the previously addressed global hip hop studies perspective, the key theoretical orientations for the present study are the sociolinguistics of globalization, discourse studies and ethnography. These orientations help me to describe the language use and discourse of Finnish rap lyrics as well as to characterize the mobility and positions of the rappers. Together, these orientations and their concepts help me in constructing a holistic and emic perspective on the construction of authenticity in Finnish hip hop.

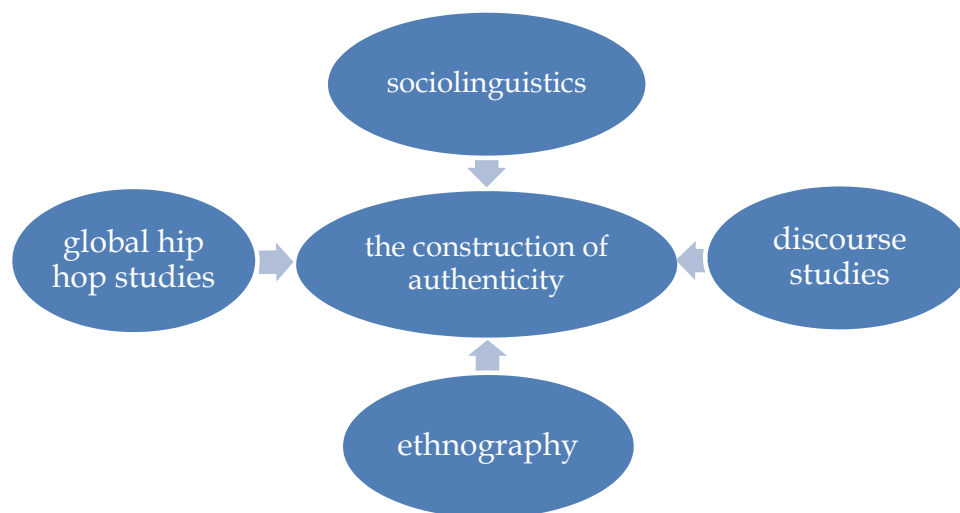


FIGURE 1 Approaches to the study of the construction of authenticity

First, my study is an example of the sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2010). I align here with the ‘new’ strand in sociolinguistics of late modernity and with, for example, Pennycook (2003, 2007a, 2010, 2012), who has focused for instance on hip hop culture and ‘the English language’ and their appropriation and practices in local contexts, Coupland (2001, 2003, 2007, 2011), who has explored, amongst other things, authenticity and style in late modernity and the significance of ‘place’ in music performance, Leppänen et al. (2014), who have explored the construction of (dis)identification through the processes of entextualization (e.g. Bauman & Briggs 1990) and resemiotization (e.g. Iedema 2003) in various popular cultural contexts, and Kytölä (2013), who has explored multilingualism and metapragmatic reflexivity on Finnish football forums from the particular framework of the sociolinguistics of globalization: all of these provide me with insights into the recent sociolinguistic research on popular culture. All in all, this ‘new’ kind of sociolinguistics is interested in the *flows* and *mobility* of people, culture, goods, language and discourse(s). And as Blommaert (2010: 14) has accurately pointed out, “popular culture such as Hiphop or Reggae can be a vehicle for the worldwide dissemination of particular language forms”. Thus, my study is a case in point of this (and other) kinds of ‘worldwide dissemination’ in the Finnish context. It is, thus, mobility in particular, which is at the core of this “paradigm shift we are currently witnessing”, or, in other words, “the dislocation of language and language events from the fixed position in time and space attributed to them by a more traditional linguistics and sociolinguistics” (Blommaert 2010: 21).

As Blommaert (2010) argues, a sociolinguistics of globalization is indeed a sociolinguistics of mobility where the objects of interest are the actual, concrete resources that people utilize (rather than abstract language systems), and to which people attach varying degrees of value and usefulness. These resources are never static but move in time and space (Blommaert 2010: 5, drawing on Hymes 1996) – and they are made use of in actual, sociocultural contexts. Thus, I am interested in the specific bits and pieces of language (such as various language varieties, registers, accents and genres) and of discourse that the rappers make use of – as well as in the repertoire that consists of these various resources. A repertoire, then, can be defined as a biographical complex of functionally organized resources (Blommaert 2010; Blommaert & Backus 2011), in that each resource in a repertoire has specific functions and is maneuverable in specific registers – and biographical in that a repertoire develops during one’s lifetime and thus reflects one’s life trajectories.

Scales – spatio-temporal frames, levels or dimensions of (and for) an indexically organized network of meanings – are other useful conceptual means through which a phenomenon like hip hop can be understood in a multi-faceted way: both space (e.g. local, national, global) and time (a particular past and the current stage – i.e. different historicities) are taken under careful consideration. As we will see in the analysis section, the ‘language’ and discourse(s) of Finnish hip hop project (simultaneously) many scales; they are never purely local, nor purely global. The scales entail and construct ‘semiotic

recognizability', as some things 'make sense' on one scale-level, but not necessarily on another (a more detailed discussion on (both linguistic and discursive) resources, repertoire and scales will follow in section 4.2.; see also below for an extended discussion on scales and indexicality).

A further theoretical and analytical notion that we get from a sociolinguistics of globalization is 'polycentricity' (a more detailed description will follow in section 5.2). In the world of hip hop, there is no one absolute 'center', although the strong emphasis on the US hip hop in both media and research may sometimes suggest this (cf. the global position of the United States, in general). Rather, as Pennycook (2007a: 126) reminds us, there are in fact multiple centers and 'circles of flow' within which there is "constant mixing, borrowing, shifting and sampling of music, languages, lyrics and ideas". Thus, the sociolinguistics of globalization is the framework with which we can tackle this "layered complex of processes evolving simultaneously at a variety of scales and in reference to a variety of centers" (Blommaert 2010: 20). I argue, along with Blommaert (ibid.), that a *historical* perspective is needed when exploring issues of scales and centers in that while rappers can address issues that are momentary, one-off, they can also simultaneously make use of more enduring and 'recognizable' discourses in their lyrics (and in their meta-talk), issues of a higher scale-level and of different centers. Historicizing sociolinguistic phenomena i.e. "looking into the very different leads that run from the object to the processes that produced it" (Blommaert 2010: 145) is a crucial task here. The lyrics and interviews do not, of course, take place in a vacuum: they have histories¹¹ and it is my task as a researcher to try and bring these out. My interest is thus in 'language in society', in this case a specific Finnish hip hop community, which is part of the global hip hop community (or 'nation', as suggested by Alim 2009a). In helping to map out the authenticity that the three rappers construct, I argue that we need the notions of resources, repertoire, scale and polycentricity.

My study also draws on discourse studies (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Johnstone 2002; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009). As argued by Blommaert (2005: 16), "the shape in which language-in-society [i.e. the focus of sociolinguistics] comes to us is discourse". Thus, there is a need to see "discourse as contextualised language" and to critically address various dimensions of contextualization (Blommaert 2005: 235). Blommaert (2007: 128) further emphasizes that discourse analysis "[needs] to start from a sociolinguistics that theorises the conditions under which discourse comes about or fails to do so". Hence, the combination of these two perspectives (sociolinguistics and discourse studies) is also crucial for the present study, and my approach could thus be characterized as sociolinguistic discourse analysis.

I see my data, both lyrics and interviews, as 'discourse', which entails various 'discourses' about the world. First, they are 'discourse' in the sense that, like most human communication, they rely on language and the knowledge

¹¹ History, as opposed to the past, is, of course, inevitably an *interpretation* of past events, not a collection of 'facts' (cf. Kärjä 2011, drawing on White 1973).

people have about language. Discourse is both the source and result of this knowledge. Thus, discourse, in the singular, denotes a specific field of study and theoretical thinking in which language (use) is understood as *social action*. Second, 'discourses' (plural) refer to conventional ways of speaking and thinking (about rap, for example: rap as a political movement, or rap as entertainment) which are mutually constitutive and which in their own way contribute to ideologies and power. Discourses are, thus, more specific realizations of (and within) 'discourse' and theoretical-analytical concepts for uncovering meaning-making. (Johnstone 2002; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009: 51.) The discursive practices of rap contribute to the construction of the social reality of rap and vice versa. For example, it has been argued by Forman (2002: 9) that it is important to study discourse in the context of hip hop authenticity (albeit in the US context) because "it is in and through discourse that the imaginings of cultural authenticity and the lived practices that express it are merged". Thus, discourse combines our 'ideal' and 'real' views on what authenticity means.

Similarly to Alim (2009a: 5), I view language as "one of the most useful means by which to read Hip Hop Culture" and its discourse(s) since it is via this medium that cultural practices, artist performances, productions and member identities of hip hop are "both expressed and constituted" (Alim 2009a: 5), as well as "contextualized and negotiated" (Androutsopoulos 2009: 43). In this process, the artists make use of earlier discourse(s) and simultaneously create new ones, as well as construct themselves, via discourse(s), as certain kinds of personae, belonging to specific social groupings. In the discourse of rap, the mobilization of complex and varied linguistic and discursive resources play a key role. In general, hip hop is significantly discourse-driven, as opposed to other musical genres (see also e.g. Forman 2002; Nieminen 2003; Alim 2009a).

Last, my study draws on ethnography as one of its key orientations. To me, ethnography is not only a method or a fieldwork activity. Rather, it should be seen as a theoretical perspective: such a view is emphasized in linguistic anthropology, following the work of Dell Hymes, in particular (Blommaert 2005, 2010; Rampton 2006; Blommaert & Huang 2009).¹² The ethnographic study of language has its roots in anthropology in that language is seen very much as a part of social life and of human activity, as a *social resource*, tied to a context. Thus, an understanding of language as a set of special, social resources for people is a particularly significant part of this perspective and it also characterizes the present study.

Blommaert (2005: 16) also reminds us of another common fallacy related to understanding ethnography, namely, that it is used to analyze (only) very small, local things. Although ethnography does indeed look into micro phenomena, it does this "against an analysis of big phenomena" – both levels of analysis are needed and they are only properly understood in relation to one

¹² For instance Kytölä (2013) and Peuronen (2013) are examples of recent work on popular (and fan) culture in which an understanding of (on- and offline) ethnography as (also) a theoretical perspective has been crucial.

another (originally emphasized by Hymes 1996; see also Blommaert & Dong 2010). Burawoy (2001), for example, has also discussed the seemingly paradoxical concept of ‘global ethnography’, and argues for its usefulness in that globalization is produced (and consumed) in real contexts and communities, and thus a study on ‘globalization from below’ and on the heterogeneous experiences of globalization is needed. Thus, in this study I look at small instances of Finnish hip hop, i.e. rap lyrics and interview extracts, but analyze them in relation to the bigger picture: Finnish society and the (‘imagined’) global hip hop community. A further, crucial element of ethnography, as Blommaert (2005: 64) argues, is that “the history of data is acknowledged as an important element in their interpretation”. Thus, the history of any given data makes a difference on how we see the data. All the surrounding conditions, like time, place and occasion, have an effect on the data that we have collected, as well as how I, as a researcher, have collected, recorded or treated it. The data can, thus, be seen as historicized and contextualized pieces of narrative(s) and they do not exist in a vacuum (e.g. Van der Aa & Blommaert 2011). Hence, it is important for me to be aware of the surrounding environment of the lyrics and their production as well as that of the interviews, all the while keeping in mind (and being reflexive of) my own process of data collection.

My ethnographic engagement with various facets of hip hop is not characterized by “a canonical [or, alternatively, anthropological] (in-depth, long-term) ethnography of a hip hop community” (Androutsopoulos 2009: 47). By this I mean that I have not, for example, lived with the artists, nor have I ‘toured’ with them around Finland. I have not spent long periods of time with them and I have not written elaborate, in-depth notes on their behavior on every single thing that they do. Instead, I understand ethnography in my work both theoretically and methodologically. This means that I see language as a crucial way of ‘being’ in a hip hop community and I am interested in the ‘small things’ of hip hop culture, as specified above. My study can also be viewed as an example of *hiphopography* (see e.g. Spady 1991; Alim 2009a), a critical methodology, which draws on ethnography, and which also engages the artists to interpret their own culture (this will be discussed in more detail in section 5.1). Thus, in addition to interviewing and talking to the artists several times, my ethnographic take arises from having experienced the Finnish hip hop scene over the past four years of research, during which I have attended gigs¹³ by Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa and also by other Finnish and foreign rap artists mainly in Jyväskylä but also in other Finnish towns. In addition, I have personal contacts with some of the people, the hip hop activists, who have organized

¹³ I use ‘gigs’ (i.e. musical performances of artists) here instead of performances because the focus of this study has not been on the very performative aspect of the live shows, as such. Rather, I have observed the gigs as ‘a whole’, as a way of getting knowledge about the artists, their groups, their behavior and habitus. I do, however, acknowledge the performative nature of the gigs (as well as of the culture, in general) but this is something for future research. Gigs are thus a more ‘neutral’ way of referring to the live shows performed by the artists.

these events, such as the hip hop festival *Pipefest*, and I have also followed news coverage on Finnish hip hop during this dissertation research process. Taken together, these activities and the knowledge gained through them, “offer valuable insights into the complexity and multiperspectiveness of hip hop discourses” (Androutsopoulos 2009: 47). To be more specific, this study is an ‘artist ethnography’, not a ‘fan (or audience) ethnography’, an issue which may merit treatment in future research. Hence, I am interested in the actions of the artists of the scene, not in those of their fans. Overall, then, it is the combination of ethnographic knowledge with sociolinguistic discourse studies which characterizes this research effort. (A more specific characterization of my role as a researcher is given in section 3.4.)

In sum, the following concepts are the key instruments deployed in the analysis. In chapter four, the focus is on: ‘resources’, the ‘little bits’ of language that people make use of when communicating; ‘repertoire’, which is a person’s biographical ‘collection’ of resources and ‘scale’, a spatiotemporal frame, level, metaphor and a scope of understandability (these will be explained in more detail in section 4.2, as well as in the ‘Scales and indexicality’ section below). The analysis in chapter 5, in turn, relies more on the concepts of ‘polycentricity’, referring to various ‘centers of norms’ that people orient towards while communicating, ‘centers’, thus referring to various (concrete or abstract) norm-providers, the ‘in-group’ of society, social groups, economy, culture, or geographical centers on the map, and ‘margins’, referring to the outskirts of society, social groups, economy, culture, or to the geographically marginal, i.e. ‘peripheral’ (these concepts are discussed in detail in section 5.2). In chapter 5, the understanding of a ‘scale’ will be of a different, meta-level order, referring to the relative positionings of the three rappers (see below for the section ‘Scales and indexicality’). With these approaches and concepts in mind, my aim is to explore authenticity in a new, unconventional way, seeing it not as a pre-existing or on/off phenomenon, as much research hitherto has understood it (I will characterize the approach in the next chapter, in section 2.3). Before moving on to the specific theme of the study, i.e. hip hop and authenticity (chapter 2), one more point about the theoretical notions in the study is in order.

*Scales and indexicality*¹⁴

A central empirical aim of this study is to describe hip hop in Finland as a polycentric phenomenon, in which artists orient not towards one ‘central’ set of meaningful (indexical) diacritics but to multiple centers, and in which these centers are dispersed over different scales. Before turning to scales, in particular, I first need to discuss the notion of ‘indexicality’ (drawing on Silverstein 2003, 2006; Blommaert 2005 and Agha 2007).

Indexicality is the dimension of meaning in which textual features ‘point to’ (i.e. index) contextually retrievable meanings. Put more concretely, in addition to ‘pure’ (denotational) meanings, every utterance carries a range of sociocultural meanings, which derive from widespread assumptions about the

¹⁴ The following text draws heavily on Blommaert, Westinen & Leppänen (2014).

meanings signaled by the features of a given utterance. Words and utterances may (and often do) index 'social norms' and 'identities' (Blommaert 2005: 11, 252). Thus, indexical meaning is what "anchors language usage firmly into social and cultural patterns" (Blommaert 2005: 12). Thus, for example, a foreign or a dialect accent may invoke stereotypical identity characteristics (and categories) of marginality, low levels of education, the countryside versus the city, a lack of cultural and intellectual sophistication, and so on. Every feature of speech has the possibility to be indexical for some range of inferencable associative and stereotypical meanings.

Such indexicals do not, however, occur and operate at random, but display complex and dynamic forms of 'order': sets of indexicals operate along each other in ways that suggest sociocultural coherence. For example, when we have qualified someone's speech as indexical of a rural and culturally unsophisticated background, we do not usually expect that person to provide elaborate and highly nuanced discourses on 'sophisticated' topics such as expensive French wines. Such forms of indexical order create broader frames of expectation with regard to meaning: we expect coherent sociocultural meanings to follow in an orderly fashion. Whenever we communicate, we draw on such coherent frames, hoping that they are shared by our interlocutors and that, consequently, what we say 'makes sense' to them. In fact, "text (utterances, statements, oral as well as written) are indexically 'made to fit' a particular (set of) context(s) by participants in the interaction" (Blommaert 2005: 43). Consequently, we (are likely to) understand something because that something makes sense in a particular context (*ibid.*). In this study, I see scales as a particular form of indexical order. But before that specific point is elaborated, I need to discuss the concept of scale a bit more.

As we have seen above, the notion of scale is closely tied to space and time and, in the (geographical) literature, scale is often seen as spatiotemporal scope, such as 'local' and 'global'. In sociolinguistic theory, however, Blommaert (2010: 34), underscores scale as "semiotized space and time". What this semiotization actually consists of, however, remains, for the moment, underdeveloped. In this study, I will make an attempt towards an empirical clarification of the semiotized nature of space and time: sociolinguistic scales can best be understood in terms of the spatiotemporal scope of understandability. We are thus looking at the degrees to which particular signs can be expected to be understandable, and "semiotized space-time" refers to the way in which space and time define the scope of meaningful semiotic activity.

By way of example, in Finland more people would have a set of inferences about a place such as Helsinki, the capital of Finland (even if they have never visited this place), than a place such as Tornio, a northern border town between Finland and Sweden. Consequently, speaking about Tornio will require more detailed and explicit information than speaking about Helsinki, since we can expect more people to have readily available (stereotypical) associations about the latter than about Tornio. Helsinki is thus more presupposable as a sign than Tornio, and hence operates semiotically on a higher scale than Tornio. Of

course, it also depends on *who* is speaking about Tornio, and *to whom* – the inferences are different for people from the Lapland area and for people from Southern Finland, due to, for example, distinctive histories, economic issues and past and present politics. Thus, people may have highly different stances towards and associations with various places, even if those places are well-known (‘presupposed’) as having certain characteristics.

The spatiotemporal scope of understandability – the understanding of sociolinguistic scales in this study – is a crucial instrument in a sociolinguistics of globalization, as the globalized (or ‘transcultural’; Pennycook 2007a) flows of semiotic material can be expected to create new scales and more complex forms of multiscalarity. Much of the present study will attempt to document such complexities: I will show how three Finnish rap artists develop scalar frames in their work (i.e. lyrics), and how such scalar frames can then be *redeployed* in discourses about themselves and other artists, about the quality of what they and others do, and about what it means to be an ‘authentic’ rapper in Finland (i.e. the interviews). Or more precisely: how the delicate projections of scalar frames make up the core of what they understand by ‘authenticity’, and how these scalar projections and understandings of authenticity are highly different in each case, revealing a fundamentally polycentric Finnish hip hop scene.

This latter point emerged out of reflections on what initially looked like a ‘problem’ of inconsistency in the study. Like many other researchers on hip hop, I had originally intended to focus my analysis on the lyrics written by the artists. The interviews were, in this design, conceived as ‘secondary’ data, useful for examining what the artists ‘really mean’ in their lyrics. While analyzing the lyrics, however, I started noticing something. The construction of scalar frames is overt and evident in the lyrics of these artists. As we will see in great detail, the rappers all weave intricate references to what I will call an ‘ideological topography’ of Finland (see section 2.2) into their songs: references to the geographical, but also social and cultural margins and centers of Finland, stereotypical distinctions between places, people, characteristics and activities within the Finnish horizon. Finland thus functions as a scale-level within which the three rappers construct a clear, overt and (within Finland) widely presupposable set of indexical and hierarchical distinctions that ‘make sense’ to themselves and to their audiences, and that project their own ‘chosen’ formats of authenticity. Chapter 4 documents this step in the analysis.

When I interviewed the rappers and afterwards started to analyze the interviews, something different emerged. The rappers absorb and incorporate the kinds of indexical distinctions deployed in their lyrics and largely driven by an ideological topography of Finland; and they use these distinctions (in their meta-talk of rap and hip hop) as indexical resources for addressing a variety of other topics. More precisely, on the basis of delicate ideological-topographical distinctions, the rappers build a set of scalar frames which create different degrees of locality and translocality as part of their ‘authentic’ rap songs; their authenticity is projected by the indexical ordering of these specific semiotic materials. Once these scalar frames are ‘in place’, however, they can in turn

become the semiotic materials by means of which different discursive distinctions can emerge: distinctions of artistic quality, of character, of relative position(s) within the Finnish hip hop culture and the global hip hop culture at large. Chapter 5 reports on this part of the analysis.

While these insights around the notion of 'scale' necessarily remain relatively underdeveloped at this point, I believe it is a step forward in theorizing sociolinguistic scales (and in mapping uncharted waters).

1.3 A road map for the study

This study is structured as follows. In this introductory chapter, I have briefly characterized my approach to the topic. In chapter 2, I discuss hip hop culture in general as well as the development and current stage of Finnish hip hop culture. I then examine the ('traditional') notion of authenticity in hip hop culture and offer my own view on it. Chapter 3 introduces the setting and context of the study. I discuss the specific aims of the study, the artists involved in this research, the data used, and my role and positions(s) as a researcher. Chapters 4 and 5 are analytical chapters in which I first elaborate on the key theoretical concepts used in the study, and then apply them in the data analysis. In chapter 4 I explore the construction of authenticity with respect to resources, repertoire and scales in the rap lyrics and, in chapter 5, with respect to polycentricity, centers and margins (and periphery) in the interviews. Chapter 4 focuses on the construction of Finnish hip hop as a scale-level, while chapter 5 shows how, within this scale-level, new, fractal scale-levels are emerging, along with their centers and margins. Finally, chapter 6 discusses how the analysis has answered the research questions of the study, summarizes the key findings and considers how they contribute to current hip hop research and sociolinguistics. I close with a discussion of possible future directions for (Finnish) hip hop research.

2 HIP HOP CULTURE AND AUTHENTICITY

In this chapter, I discuss hip hop culture and authenticity. A short review of Finnish hip hop is in order, so that we know more specifically what we are dealing with when we talk of authenticity construction in the Finnish context. In order to understand Finnish hip hop and rap, however, we need to look at the 'origins' of hip hop culture, the (stereotypical) African American and Bronx tradition and other 'origins', to find our bearings, so to speak, and to understand where the beat, the language and the discourse come from and what it is exactly that could enable a kind of 'a generic recognizability' in the case of hip hop. After this, I will move on to my case in point – Finnish hip hop culture – and its past and present, focusing on the element of rap music, in particular. In doing this, my aim is not to give an exhaustive account of the entire hip hop scene, but to illustrate some aspects of it. In general, I will describe how Finnish hip hop culture is part of a larger, global, hip hop culture and the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) of hip hop or the "Global Hip Hop Nation" (Alim 2009a – more below).

In section 2.1, I briefly outline the origins and history of hip hop culture in general and in Finland. Here, I also discuss the development of Finnish hip hop up to its present form. In section 2.2, I examine the specific ideological topography of hip hop Finland as well as the posses, artists, themes and topics of Finnish hip hop. Finally in section 2.3, I discuss the key issue, authenticity, in hip hop culture, first in its 'traditional' sense, after which I present an alternative approach to viewing and analyzing authenticity – one organized in terms of scales and in relation to various centers of norms.

2.1 Hip hop culture

This section introduces hip hop culture, both in general terms as well as the specific Finnish context and its development.

2.1.1 The 'origins' of hip hop culture

Hip hop is a multi-faceted phenomenon with no single history. Its histories depend on the viewpoint taken, and they are told and produced in their contexts of use (Bozza 2004: 178–180). However, for the purposes of the present study, it is not necessary to present an extensive historical account of hip hop culture and rap music. Instead, I will give a brief overview of how hip hop came into being and introduce some of the key characteristics, such as significant events, people and themes, in its history. (For an in-depth examination of the origins of (African American) hip hop, see e.g. Rose 1994; Light 1999; Perry 2004; Chang 2005). In doing this, my purpose is to contextualize Finnish hip hop culture as part of a larger, global hip hop culture. It is necessary to take into account the origins and subsequent history of rap and hip hop, since these have had an effect on how global hip hop cultures, Finnish included, came into being in the first place.

One view is that hip hop culture was originally an African-American, Afro-Caribbean and Puerto Rican youth culture, consisting of four elements: break dancing, graffiti and DJs (who create the beats) and MCs¹⁵, i.e. the rap artists (Rose 1994: 2, 34), the last two of which form the basis of rap music. The legendary DJ *Kool Herc* suggests that hip hop is much more than these four elements: it is also the way you talk, walk, look and communicate (Chang 2005: xi). For another legendary DJ, *Afrika Bambaataa*, the fifth element is 'knowledge', a specific knowledge and understanding about and through hip hop (but also about oneself) (Bambaataa 2005).

According to Rose (1994: 2), "rap music is a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music". One can even trace its development all the way back to the African griots, i.e. West African poets, praise singers and wandering musicians who keep the oral tradition alive (Bozza 2004: 179) (this and other origins-stories are discussed below). However, the more well-known, often shared as well as constructed (told and retold in hip hop literature) history of rap music is that of New York City and South Bronx in the mid-1970s (Rose 1994: 2), which provided fertile ground "for the birth of a revolutionary cultural movement called hip hop" (Price 2006: 4; Morgan 2005: 207). Before people even knew the term 'hip hop'¹⁶, there were street parties where a DJ would play records and people would dance, rhyme over the beats and paint graffiti (Fernando 1999: 14). One of the most famous DJ's of the time was the above-mentioned DJ *Kool Herc*, who had moved to the Bronx from Jamaica and started organizing street parties there, along with his MC's, b-boys and -girls, thus also inspiring other DJ's in the area (Price 2006: 11). During the 1970s, (the previously mentioned) DJ and a former gang

¹⁵ An acronym most notably from 'Master of Ceremonies', but, alternatively, it can also refer to 'move the crowd', or 'mic controller' (Paleface 2011: 18).

¹⁶ There are different stories as to who originally coined and used the term 'hip hop' in its musical sense, but it is claimed that Keith Cowboy, a member of the *Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five*, coined it (JayQuan 2005) and Afrika Bambaataa first used it of the subculture of which hip hop music forms part (Universal Zulu Nation).

warlord Afrika Bambaataa spread the word through his creation of the *Universal Zulu Nation*, a famous hip hop collective, which brought together DJs, MCs, b-boys/girls and graffiti artists (Price 2006: 12–13), in an attempt to “channel the anger of young people in the South Bronx away from gang fighting and into music, dance and graffiti” (Lipsitz 1994: 26). Indeed, during the mid-1970s, the former gangs, marked by long-established violent presence in various US cities, gradually started to evolve into crews and posses, using “dance and other expressive means to rid themselves of their frustrations” (Price 2006: 10). Hip hop culture, with its sounds and looks, offered a new reality for the formerly “marginalized and oppressed young people” (Price 2006: 8–11). The 1970s and early 1980s are now looked back on as the period of the ‘old school’. Artists associated with that period include, in addition to the previously mentioned Afrika Bambaataa and Kool Herc, also, for example, Grandmaster Flash (and the Furious Five) and *Kurtis Blow*.

Rose (1994: 51) argues that rap music is the most prominent aspect of the hip hop culture. Before rap was understood as a specific form of music, it referred to a speech form in African-American and Jamaican oral culture (Hebdige 1987). Rap originally meant “a fluent and lively way of talking”¹⁷ and it was particularly associated with sexually explicit talk by men, sometimes called ‘pimps’, to women with whom they want to have sex. (Kochman 1972: 242–243.) Hence, in rap music, rappers need to possess verbal and performance skills, i.e. control the language, ‘win’ their rivalries, master the rhythm and get the crowd’s attention. Their rapping style is often connected to boasting, a form of oral storytelling, whether political, aggressive, violent or sexist. (Rose 1994: 55.) The origins of rap music can be seen in the wordplay the black slaves invented in the fields of the American South. Later on, they developed into ‘playing the dozens’, a game played by black children (see also Labov 1972; Morgan 2002: 58). Other associated verbal routines in African American culture are i) (the above-mentioned) boasting, ii) bragging (Lüdtke 2007: 3), iii) signifying, “a tactic employed in verbal dueling” or “a way of encoding” indirect messages (Mitchell-Kernan 1972: 315), and iv) sounding, a verbal insult routine associated with playing the dozens (Kochman 1972: 258; see also Labov 1972: 297–353). In the 1960s, one of the most noted wordsmiths was the boxer *Muhammad Ali* along with radical black politicians, such as *Malcolm X* and the *Black Panthers* (Hilamaa & Varjus 2000: 145–146; Rose 1994: 55.)

Before the year 1979, the only documentation of hip hop music was on cassette tapes (Toop 2000: 78). The first commercial hit was “Rapper’s Delight” by the *Sugarhill Gang* in 1979. Its success began a series of events in the world of hip hop. (Toop 2000: ix.) The first significant motion picture depicting hip hop culture was a film called *Wild Style* (1982), starring actual practitioners of the culture. It was soon followed by *Style Wars* (1983), which showcased the graffiti movement inside the culture (Price 2006: 15).¹⁸ During the ensuing period, rap music was ‘discovered’ by the record companies, the fashion and film

¹⁷ See also Bruun et al. (1998: 441–2) for the ‘facetious chat’ in Finnish (music) culture.

¹⁸ Both of these films also became popular in Europe, including Finland (Paleface 2011).

industries, each wanting their own share of the success of what was expected to be a short-lived fad (Rose 1994: 3). Despite such pessimistic predictions, hip hop did not fade from the cultural scene. It was something the music industry had never experienced before, and it affected everything from the way of dressing to painting and a new language of musical speech. It also crossed racial boundaries and musical genres, and mixed the genres as well. In hip hop culture, it was possible for young and new talents to show what they can do. (Toop 2000: xii-xiii.) Most US rap music has always been “a product of urban neglect and a descendant of the civil rights, Black power and Black arts movements” (Price 2006: 19). During the 1990s, hip hop grew steadily from being ‘only’ a subculture into a successful mainstream phenomenon (Chang 2005: 445), with rap artists such as *Jay Z* and *Puff Daddy* (previously e.g. *P. Diddy* and *Diddy*) becoming brands and business moguls themselves, thus showcasing the empowering (business) aspect of hip hop (Chang 2005: 447; see also Immonen 2004). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, US hip hop culture became particularly visible on TV (e.g. *Yo! MTV Raps*) and in print (e.g. *Source* and *VIBE*), which helped globalize the culture. (Price 2006: 16).

Going (being) global

A couple of decades since the ‘birth’ of hip hop culture, it has spread across the globe, as a meaningful youth and music culture and as a global expression of youth experiences. As Mitchell (2001a: 1-2) has rightly pointed out:

Hip-hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity all over the world.

Thus, the (early) characterization of rap music by Rose (1994: 2), namely “prioritiz[ation of] black voices from the margins of urban America”, no longer quite captures exactly what has happened to this multifaceted culture. The previously mentioned DJ Kool Herc, one of the ‘founding fathers’ of hip hop, has argued that hip hop is “about you and me, connecting one to one”. This is the reason why the culture attracts (young) people around the world and gives them a view on their surrounding world, no matter where they are from. “I think hip-hop has bridged the culture gap. It brings white kids together with Black kids, brown kids with yellow kids”, he affirms (Chang 2005: xi).

Although we can, theoretically, talk about a singular hip hop culture, in practice we need to conceptualize the culture in the plural form ‘hip hop cultures’, as no single and unified hip hop culture exists (Alim 2009a: 3), or has ever existed. Together, the various hip hop cultures across the globe, form an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) called, as suggested by Alim (2009a: 3), the “Global Hip Hop Nation” (GHHN), which he defines as “a multilingual, multiethnic “nation” with an international reach, a fluid capacity to cross borders, and a reluctance to adhere to the geopolitical givens of the present”.¹⁹

¹⁹ The ‘nation’ can be understood as referring to “a relatively coherent social entity found in shared interests or values and collective practices that bind constituents

Thus, various hip hop cultures and communities worldwide are in contact with one another “through media and cultural flow, as well as international travel in ways that organize their participation in a mass-mediated, cultural movement” (Spady et al. 2006: 11). Thus, in an imagined *cipha* (a speech event in hip hop culture, whereby rhymer exchange verses; Alim 2009a: 1), “language ideologies and identities are shaped, fashioned, and vigorously contested, and [...] languages themselves are flexed, created, and sometimes (often intentionally) bent up beyond all recognition” (Alim 2009a: 2). Often, the use of English, and particularly African American (Vernacular) English (AA(V)E), can be “seen as a means of claiming membership” in this GHHN (Higgins 2009a: 98; see also Higgins 2009b: 92-115). In Alim’s (2003a: 54) definition, Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL), then, is a linguistic expression that enables its speakers to “connect with the streets as a space of culture, creativity, cognition and consciousness”. HHNL originates from AAE, and it thus “both reflects and expands the African American Oral Tradition” (Alim 2004: 393). Also the Finnish hip hop scene is part of this ‘imagined community’ and it makes some use of the global HHNL, by drawing on and appropriating a set of shared vocabulary and expressions. The local languages, such as spoken vernacular Finnish and local dialects, however, most often remain the main resource of the lyrics, as we shall see in the analysis in chapter 4 (and also in section 2.2.3 on the themes and topics of Finnish hip hop).

Alternative origins

Besides the ‘traditional’ Bronx and US story, alternative origins of hip hop culture have also been suggested and theorized in the recent (scholarly) hip hop literature. Omoniyi (2009: 116–117), for example, has argued for a ‘boomerang hypothesis’ according to which hip hop was born in the western parts of Africa, as “a part of a long-standing African oral tradition”, i.e. the practices of storytelling by the griots, the local poets/singers. From there (and them), the oral storytelling culture travelled to the southern US with the slaves. The oral tradition was kept alive through the centuries in the stories and ways of speaking in the cotton fields (e.g. Immonen 2004). Now, through the slave ships and through the ghettos of the Bronx, this culture and its music have come back to Africa, to its original home, with (western) Africa activating its scene(s). Rap artists themselves also argue for this view of its history (which also links to discourses of authenticity): *K’Naan*, a Somali-born Canadian rapper, sees hip hop as “an African form that has been Americanized” instead of an American phenomenon of African-origin (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 34); *Faada Freddie*, the MC of the Senegalese rap trio *Daara J* relates: “Now rap music is back home, and that’s the reason why we called the latest of the Daara J’s album “Boomerang” saying that rap was born in Africa, grew up in America but now rap is back home.” (Omoniyi 2009: 117). For Omoniyi (2009: 118), this represents a case of ‘reappropriation’: rejecting “the idea of an African appropriation of a

within a symbolic unity” (Forman 2004: 5). It is not “precisely placed and lack[s] agreed-upon boundaries”. (ibid.)

US form” and emphasizing instead the reclaiming of the previously US-appropriated form. This to me seems a plausible explanation in the context of African hip hop, as it makes sense in those local scenes in terms of their local and trans-Atlantic histories. In the Finnish context, however, I lean towards the explanations offered below, since they fit local conditions better than the ‘boomerang stories’, because no such (African griot) ‘reappropriation’ stories and traditions can be claimed or suggested in Finnish socio-cultural history.

The discussion of ‘origins’ which I align with the most in the present study is offered by Pennycook and Mitchell, who argue against the view that similarity ‘should’ always hint at a certain directionality, i.e. unidirectional spread – that, for example, similar phenomena and models *always* come to Finland from the US (2009: 29). They do not. In their view, “[c]onvergence and multiple origins are equally possible” (ibid.): while it is true that some hip hop behavior models might come from the US, it is equally and simultaneously true that other countries and their hip hop scenes can influence one another, too. I concur with this view in the sense that, to me, a unidirectional influence only from the US to the rest of the world is too simplistic a view. Living in an age of globalization and flows of various kinds, people all over the world have, at least in principle, the chance to be affected by cultural flows from anywhere else in the world (see also Pennycook 2007a: 4). In fact, all histories, once we understand locality and “localization in all its complexities”, are plausible (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 34). What this means is that there is no point in “tracing back a clear lineage” of ‘origins’ – rather, we can understand cultural forms as mixing and weaving into one another in various ways (Pennycook 2007a: 91). When dealing with ‘transcultural forms’ such as hip hop, “we have moved beyond questions of ownership and origins” (ibid.: 92).

By 2013, Finnish hip hop culture and rap music have created their own imprint and have their own frames of interpretation. They do not need to compare, draw on and look ‘back’ on the US any longer. Androutsopoulos (2009: 43–44) has claimed that local hip hop cultures “[evolve] in a constant dialogue with [hip hop’s] “mother culture”, by drawing on U.S. Hip Hop as a source for new trends and as a frame for the interpretation of local productions”. That may have been the case still during the second wave of Finnish hip hop but, nowadays, Finnish hip hop is more versatile than ever and is constantly developing in new, ‘original’ directions within the Finnish socio-cultural context and orienting towards multiple ‘centers’, not just (the US) one. This can be seen for example in the mixing of genres (like rap and pop / rock / folk / jazz)²⁰ in the context of a particular song, drawing on our local musical landscape as well as cross-genre collaboration between artists.

²⁰ Genres, i.e. “a particular kind of music within a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation and signification” (Holt 2007: 2), are, of course, not always clearly distinguishable from one another, but rather overlapping and intertwined – and often separated for the purposes of the researcher or the consumerist (Holt 2007). Coupland (2011: 583), in fact, argues that “genre is best seen as an idealisation of musical types and tastes rather than as a definitive predictor of performance style”.

What seems to be the most important observation here is that seeking a ‘clear lineage’ that would lead to the ‘true’ origins of hip hop may not even be necessary (cf. Pennycook 2007a) – whether these origins are in the western villages of Africa or the ghettos of New York. In light of the above discussion, it is as equally justified to explore a Finnish hip hop context vis-à-vis authenticity as any other. As Pennycook and Mitchell (2009: 35) remind us: “once hip hop is taken up in a local context, the direction of appropriation starts to be reversed: No longer is this a cultural form that has been localized; now it is a local form that connects to several worlds”. Seen from this point of view, then, hip hop presents itself to us as “a continuation of Indigenous traditions” (ibid.). Thus, it is not simply a cultural phenomenon that spreads across the globe from a single starting point only to be adapted and taken up in various locations (not even originating in Africa and returning there, like a boomerang, as suggested by Omoniyi), but rather as “one that has *always been local*”. (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 35, emphasis added.)

The ‘already local’ point of view can also be seen in the Finnish context, in the old Finnish traditions of self-expression and story-telling, which can be seen as kinds of predecessors of local rap music. *Kalevala*, a Finnish epic poem was constructed in the 19th century from older remembered verse fragments by *Elias Lönnrot*, who collected both Finnish and Karelian folklore and related mythology. Owing to (our) ancestors’ illiteracy, stories, both factual and fictitious, were passed down the generations orally via songs, poems, and even chants and spells. (See e.g. Piela et al. 2008.) Also *itkuvirret* (‘laments’) performed by women at weddings and funerals, particularly in the Karelia region, are part of the Finnish (but also Slavic and Baltic-Finnish) story-telling tradition (see e.g. Virtanen 1999: 147–149; Wilce 2014). Later on, Finnish song traditions include folksongs (traditional songs, whose composer and/or lyricist is unknown) as well as schlager (a type of light pop music, typically ballads). The popular and well-known Finnish rapper *Paleface* (2010) has also emphasized the folk music aspect of hip hop: he acknowledges the influence of both Finnish *rekilaulut* (i.e. rhymed, oral folk songs, originating in the 19th century Germany; see e.g. Virtanen 1999: 170–173), and North African folk songs in his album “Helsinki – Shangri La” (2010), which also includes the traditional *joik*²¹ style of singing. This is where we turn next, to the development of the Finnish hip hop scene.

2.1.2 The development of Finnish hip hop culture and rap music

The first wave of Finnish hip hop

As in other European countries, hip hop culture ‘originally’ came to Finland from the United States, and Helsinki, the capital of Finland, quickly established itself as a local center. According to *Paleface* (2011: 22), the arrival of hip hop culture took place mainly via graffiti culture and TV sky channels. In the early days – in the 1980s – it was possible to hear US rap music on Finnish radio, but

²¹ Joik is a traditional Sámi way of singing, i.e. the folk music of the Sámi peoples.

it did not gain much popularity or attention (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 194–195). At first, hip hop culture consisted mainly of graffiti paintings that started to flourish in the Helsinki metropolitan area at the end of the 1980s (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 194–195; Paleface 2011: 22). In their *Helsinki Graffiti* book (1998), Isomursu and Jääskeläinen explore the arrival of graffiti culture in Finland and the first wave of Finnish hip hop enthusiasts. Amongst the most significant media in this respect were films (such as the previously mentioned film *Wild Style*), through which youth could see the US street culture in its various guises, and which contributed to the spread of hip hop culture. (Paleface 2011: 22.)²² Gradually, Finnish youth changed from being consumers of (mainly American) hip hop culture into actual producers of it: they produced mix tapes and did local gigs in the same way as other young people around the globe (see e.g. Sarkar 2009: 143).

During the 1980s, or what Paleface (2011: 25) has named ‘the diaper age of Finnish hip hop’ (presumably referring to the ‘infantile’ stage of the culture, when it was only beginning to form)²³, a Helsinki club, *Lepakko* (‘The bat’) was one of the most important hip hop and breakdance places. The song “I’m young, beautiful and natural” (1983) by *General Njassa* (a Finnish DJ, musician and a radio journalist) and *the Lost Division* can be considered the first Finnish rap experiment. Njassa himself, however, denies being the pioneer of Finnish rap music and emphasizes that the song is electro funk. (Paleface 2011: 32.) Due to its experimental nature, the song did not give rise to any particular ‘hip hop fever’ in Finland (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 194–195).

After the initial English experiments, artists also began to use the Finnish language in their songs. According to Hilamaa and Varjus (2004: 195), the first significant Finnish hip hop wave came around 1989, and continued for about two years. However, the Finnish hip hop music of the time mainly comprised humorous elements and, in retrospect, it cannot be said to have created a real, serious hip hop culture, as the (general) audience did not know much about the ‘origins’ of the culture. The humorous aspect of early Finnish rap music had, at least partly, to do with the fact that the distance from the ‘mother country’ of hip hop, the United States, appeared rather long. Finnish and ‘African-American culture’ did not seem to have much in common back then, and, therefore, many rappers did not even try to create ‘serious’ rap but resorted to humor and even parody. (ibid.; see also Kärjä 2011: 88.) In addition, the Finnish language was considered to be very inflexible for rap lyrics compared to the English language. (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 195–196.)

In the mid-1980s, the record label *Def Jam* aimed to launch hip hop for white audiences (both in the US and worldwide) via the group *Beastie Boys*, who combined rock and rap in their music²⁴. Their example inspired the sound of a

²² Also *Beat Street* (1984), a film which described the early New York hip hop culture, had an effect on the early Finnish hip hop enthusiasts (Paleface 2011: 22).

²³ These first steps of Finnish hip hop are looked back on by many artists and activists in the episode *Kotipojat* (‘Homeboys’) of the *Rock Suomi* (‘Rock Finland’) television series in 2010 (Paleface 2011: 29).

²⁴ *Run-D.M.C.* one of the most influential US rap acts, also drew on rock in their music.

Turku-based rap group *Pääkköset*, who were in fact the first Finnish-language rap group to attract wide attention in Finland, particularly with their debut album “Pääkköset” (1989). (Paleface 2011: 35.) Due to its strong humorous tone, it is not, however, considered the first hip hop album in Finland – instead, this title goes to *Damn The Band* and their English-language debut album (1991), which was based on their long-term, serious work on hip hop. (Mikkonen 2004: 50–51.) Another group, *Raptori*, also gained popularity with pop-like humorous ‘hip hop’ (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 195–196). In fact, they were the first major success of Finnish rap music. Their debut album “Moe!” (‘Howdy!’) (1990) also included a couple of more ‘serious’ songs one of which, for example, took a stand against compulsory military service in Finland (Paleface 2011: 37).

In contemporary (i.e. the early 1990s) reviews, the style of the early ‘humor’ groups’ seemed to be “interchangeable with ‘disco’, ‘dance’ and [...] ‘house’” (Kärjä 2011: 81). Their lyrics addressed topics such as (the opposite) sex, drinking and politics in a jocular (and/or indecent) way. In addition, also their habitus was ‘comical’, such as the contradictory ‘heavy metal’ style of *Pääkköset*. Kärjä (2011: 82) also notes how “[i]ndeed their humour was recognized by the most acclaimed popular music critics of those days”. *Pääkköset*, with their ‘healthy self-irony’, were complimented for being ‘honestly Finnish’ (Voutilainen 1990). Bruun et al. (1998: 443), however, discuss *Raptori* as a serious and credible effort, somewhat comparable to earlier punk music. Despite the fact that *Pääkköset* and *Raptori* sold well and gained in popularity, they can hardly be considered ‘real’ rap groups and their music was not considered a ‘real’, serious effort in the world of hip hop, at least in the view of Mikkonen (2004: 50–51). In addition, in Paleface’s (2011: 38) opinion, *Raptori*, *Pääkköset* and MC *Nikke T* form the “unholy trinity” of the humor rap of the early 1990s.²⁵ Here, then, we can see a complex and contradictory relationship with the early rap music.

In this connection, Paleface (2011: 38) argues that humorous music has always had a foothold in the Finnish music landscape (cf. the notion of ‘funlandization’ of Finland and its music scene; Kärjä 2011). Humor rap might, in fact, be related to the category of humorous ditties, especially those of *Irwin* and *Jaakko Teppo*, both known for their humorous music in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2011, this tradition was continued by *Petri Nygård*, a Finnish rapper (in)famous for humorous and sexually overt lyrics. (ibid.) Kärjä, however, wonders about “the need to find ‘national predecessors’ of rap” (2011: 85) during the first hip hop wave, an idea I find somewhat perplexing. Even if the ‘original’ culture was stereotypically seen as African American and ‘Black’, along with Paleface I do not see why this ‘search’ (for national predecessors) could (or should) not be done, in order to understand how the rap format was accommodated in a way that was perhaps more locally meaningful.

²⁵ *Chydeone* (formerly Nikke T), one of the pioneers of Finnish hip hop, feels embarrassed about the whole Nikke T phase in his career and has refused to make a comeback under that alias, despite several requests (Chydeone 2012).

Why humorous music is (and has been) significant in the Finnish music scene might have to do with “comedifying as part of a broader cultural logic whereby somehow too different, disturbing or even threatening identities are distanced, and one’s own identity kept safe” (Kärjä 2011: 88; see also Prévos 2001 on humor in the French hip hop context). Through (humorous) music, it becomes possible to discuss the (ethnic) Other in various ways as well as “enhance the integrity and authenticity of national identity” (Kärjä 2011: 88). Humor can also sometimes “provide the only bridge” (ibid.) between two very distinct (music) cultures. Alternatively, humor can also be seen as an *alleviating* factor and as a specific form of entertainment (for instance, the music cultural phenomenon of ‘rillumarei’), particularly in the (post-)war years, in the 1940s and 1950s²⁶, which offered solace, encouragement and zest for life, both to soldiers and other people at the front as well as those at home (see e.g. articles in Peltonen 1996; Niiniluoto 1994; Tarvainen 2003).

Interestingly, Kärjä (2011) problematizes the whole notion (and use) of humor and parody in early Finnish rap music through a historiographical view. In his opinion (2011: 85), the category of ‘humor rap’, is an ‘output’ of later, (historiographical) accounts – whereas in “journalistic critique of the time” (ibid.) these early rap acts were appreciated. He argues that “the phenomenon of the 1990s has been ‘comedified’ on the level of a (sub-)genre” (ibid.: 87). While this may be true in many contemporary (i.e. during the 1990s) accounts of Finnish (rock) music and their genres, Paleface (2011), as an ‘insider’ in the scene, has (also) brought forth the multifacetedness of early Finnish rap music and acknowledged that, even at this stage, there were some *individual* rap songs that were more ‘serious’ in tone.

Related to this, Kärjä (2011: 84) also critiques the way in which Finnish rap was, at the time, ‘subordinated’ under the category of rock in many journals and books, and not treated as a genre in its own right. It is important to note here, however, that, at the time, there were no *rap* magazines in which, for example, record reviews could have been published and, on the whole, there was perhaps not ‘enough’ rap (history), either, for it to constitute a (genre) book of its own. Curiously enough, Raptori themselves “denied that they made Finnish rap” and that they “had nothing to do with hip hop” (Bruun et al. 1998: 443). It is interesting, then, to see how they are, nevertheless, categorized (particularly in the current literature) as ‘humor rap’, when the group did not (emically) even see itself as a *rap* group.

After the ‘humor’ period, Finnish hip hop was ‘doomed’ to stay in the margins for years (Mikkonen 2004: 52). In the shadows of the big names of humor rap, however, a fragmental group of enthusiasts were active across Finland, such as a Finland-Swede rap group, *Pumpa På* (Paleface 2011: 38).²⁷

²⁶ Finland fought Russia (or, then, the Soviet Union) in two wars in the late 1930s and early 1940, namely *Winter War* (1939–1940) and *Continuation War* (1941–1944).

²⁷ Finnish-Swedish rap has also been a topic of research, as a part of a larger interest in Finnish-Swedish music culture. According to Brusila (1999, 2011), *Pumpa På* were proud of their Finnish-Swedishness and also dealt with the topic in some of their lyrics, even in a very explicit, provocative and language-political way.

Little by little, the ‘authentic’ (Paleface’s definition) Finnish underground hip hop started to form (Paleface 2011: 39).

Under the ground in the 1990s

In the early 1990s, the Finnish underground (i.e. non-commercial, alternative) scene developed alongside (but kept its distance from) humor rap (Paleface 2011: 40). At this stage, Finnish audiences could hear more rap music than before: it was spreading from the youth clubs to (music) clubs, mostly in Helsinki. At that time, rappers cared more about ‘street credibility’ than reaching big audiences. (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 196–197.) Notable Finnish rap groups in this period include *Nuera* from Tampere and *Fellaz* from Pori (Paleface 2011: 43).

Besides groups and records, rap became increasingly visible in other ways, too. *The Funkiest*, a record store established in Helsinki in 1995, soon became the ‘throne room’ of the Finnish hip hop scene (Paleface 2011: 43). The first hip hop club (event), entitled *Berlin*, was organized for the first time in 1992 in Helsinki (Mikkonen 2004: 54).²⁸ In the late 1990s, the effect of the so-called ‘Bedroom Revolution’ of music also began to be felt in Finland. This meant that, thanks to the new technology, practically anyone could produce music in his/her own bedroom (Paleface 2011: 39), with his/her own computer and software programs. First, the CD-R-format (in which ‘R’ stands for ‘recordable’), i.e., compact disks on which one can record music at home, offered new recording opportunities (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 197–198). Later on, the development of mp3 technology and digital file sharing further enhanced the opportunities of rappers to distribute their music online. The vast growth of home-based studios has changed the music industry for good, even making it possible for (upcoming) artists to bypass record labels altogether. (Price 2006: 17; see also extract 3 where Stepa relates experiences of recording in a home studio.)

Yet another significant event in the 1990s was that a Finnish group, *Bomfunk MC’s*, became an international success. Although their music cannot be characterized as ‘pure’ rap music (as it also draws on electro music), it nevertheless set an example to other Finnish artists and boosted the self-confidence of the younger generation of rhythm musicians (Paleface 2011: 39; see also Kärjä (2008) for an analysis of Bomfunk MC’s music video “Super Electric”). At the same time in Sweden, rap music really broke through via *Petter’s* album “*Min sjätte sinne*” (‘My sixth sense’) (1998). Following the Swedish example, Finnish record companies also started to sign up Finnish rap artists, and so Finnish hip hop rose from the underground to be part of the mainstream. (Paleface 2011: 39.) It is to this we turn next.

The second wave – The scene taking shape

In many countries outside the US, rap music has gone through a process of linguistic localization (e.g. Mitchell 2001a). While the early attempts of rap are

²⁸ Later on, more club events, such as *Huuma* and *Worldwide*, were organized in different places around Helsinki. (Mikkonen 2004: 56.)

often in English, after a while, rap artists start feeling more and more confident about rapping in their own native language(s). Adopting one's mother tongue as the language of rap is highly characteristic of the local appropriation of the global cultural model. According to Androutsopoulos (2009: 44), this does not necessarily result in a monolingual local rap landscape, but the local or national language becomes the default 'against which other languages may gain symbolic meaning'. A similar series of events took place in Finland, too. Content-wise, the Finnish rap of the 1990s consisted mainly of 'clumsy' (English to Finnish) translations of the references used by US rappers, at least according to Paleface (2011: 50). In the first Finnish hip hop compilation album (1998), there is only one Finnish-language song, all the other songs being in English. The next compilation album (2001) included only three English-language songs, with fifteen songs in Finnish. This development indicates how rap has been (fairly quickly) 'domesticated' via the use of Finnish.

In an ironic echo of the past, the second Finnish hip hop wave also started with some humor hip hop through the songs by the rapper Petri Nygård (Mikkonen 2004: 70.) However, Finnish hip hop really came into existence and gained wide popularity with the rap duo Fintelligens from Helsinki. This is the time when rap music was no longer done in an ironic way but seriously and professionally, demonstrating what Kärjä (2011: 83) has argued: "it takes roughly ten years until a 'new' or 'foreign' musical phenomenon is accepted in a more serious fashion". Fintelligens were amongst the first Finnish rappers to use their mother tongue in a 'credible' and respected way (Mikkonen 2004). Its MCs, *Elastinen* ('Elastic') and *Iso H* ('Big H'), gained their inspiration to write lyrics in their mother tongue (instead of English) from France, where rap artists chose to rap in French (Mikkonen 2004: 65). Here, then, we can see a significant musical 'center' for this rap group. Their debut single "Voittamaton" ('Invincible'/'Unbeatable'), released in 1999, with its self-confident lyrics, was something hitherto unheard of. It caused a great deal of annoyance amongst Finnish hip hop activists, because just as the more experienced rappers were finally about to 'get rid of' anglicisms in Finnish rap, this group broadcast on radio rapping in 'Finglish' (i.e. a mix of Finnish and English) (Paleface 2011: 52). Thus, their 'main' rap language (in the sense of separate, categorizable 'languages') was Finnish, but this Finnish drew heavily on 'modified' and 'localized' (hip hop) English expressions (see also Kalliokoski 2006) and this 'mix' irritated the more experienced rappers.

For some Finnish listeners, it seemed unacceptable that the group 'translated' the boasting style of US hip hop into a Finnish version. Hence, some people criticized their overly self-confident style combined with the Finnish language - for these listeners, it did not seem credible to rap in Finnish and be self-confident in doing so. Perhaps this discussion, at the time, also tapped into issues of authenticity in the sense that some Finns did not see Finnish rappers boasting in Finnish as 'authentic'. Thus, the new kind of self-confidence and the new "linguistic distinctiveness grounded in local sociolinguistic realities" (Sarkar 2009: 143) became a highly contested issue. At the time when

Fintelligens started to gain popularity, English was still often preferred as it is the language of the 'original' US hip hop culture. Iso H wondered about the criticism leveled by the Finnish public at their music, which was both Finnish and highly self-confident: "They tried to put us down because we rhymed in Finnish and we talked positively about ourselves, that is, boasted in our songs. It was a format we had learned from the US. We were not aping [imitating], but this was hip hop for us." (Mikkonen 2004: 63.) Fintelligens had to fight hard against negative attitudes and prejudice, since, at that time, it was not easy to forget the 'trauma' caused by the humor hip hop groups, who had rapped in Finnish (Mikkonen 2004: 63). According to Paleface (2011: 52), the success of Fintelligens' "Voittamaton" song was, nevertheless, the *starting point* of the second Finnish hip hop generation and a song that set the direction for the following decade. To sum up, these two phases had little in common: whereas the first was an (often ironic and jocular) attempt to rap in Finnish, the second phase is characterized by seriousness and effort to actually make rap *ours*.²⁹

The first ('serious') Finnish-language rap album was *Seremoniamestari's* "Omin sanoin" ('In my own words') (2000) (Mikkonen 2004: 68). As suggested by Nieminen (2003: 169–173), this was also the time when hip hop music truly started to compete with other genres of popular music in Finland, the years 1999–2001 showing a significant increase in the sales of Finnish hip hop. The sudden popularity of the music was caused, for example, by the fact that the contemporary youth had grown up in an atmosphere in which it was already a (somewhat established) part of popular culture. In addition, the internet and Music Television enabled (easy) access to the culture. According to Paleface (2011: 52), one of the reasons behind the activation of the second wave of Finnish hip hop and the formation of the local hip hop scene was the existence of a group of web pages through which the small Finnish hip hop circles could stay in contact.

In the beginning of the 21st century, the Finnish hip hop scene overheated – there was an oversupply of artists and albums. The record companies signed 'everyone', no matter what his(/her) talent (apparently because they realized that Finnish rap music sells well and, thus, they assumed there was also a market for new rap artists) and that anyone could declare him-/herself a rap artist. (Paleface 2011: 52.) Suddenly, Finland was filled with rap artists and record labels. (Mikkonen 2004: 80.)³⁰ At this point in time, Finnish hip hop had just experienced its first 'boom' of extensive success (Nieminen 2003: 186). Mikkonen (2004: 190) argues that, particularly at this stage, the relationship of

²⁹ This is, of course, *one* possible, retrospective interpretation, though shared by many hip hop enthusiasts (but see Kärjä 2011 on the historiography of Finnish rap music).

³⁰ The boom peaked with the young (then only 16) rapper *Pikku G's* (Lil G) "Räjähdyksvaara" ('Danger of Explosion') (2003) album which sold more than 120 000 copies, especially amongst young people who were interested in the topics he rapped about, such as school life and friendship. (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 199, 202). Pikku G is not considered a 'proper' rap artist amongst current rappers mainly because he did not write his own lyrics (the German-born *Yor123* did) – and he was a 'product' of the *Royal Family* posse and *Rockin Da North*, a loose hip hop posse that organized hip hop parties in Helsinki at the turn of the millennium.

Finnish to the US hip hop was much debated as it seemed that some Finnish rappers were merely copying the roughness of the street culture and bragging from there. Although some Finnish rappers made a different kind of music from their American counterparts, they nevertheless (contradictorily) used US rap music as a point of comparison (and as a model) (Nieminen 2003: 185). Thus, in retrospect, Finnish hip hop had begun to establish its role within Finnish popular culture and now needed to find its own path(s), away from the US model. Writing in 2003, Nieminen (2003: 187–188) suspected that, in the future, Finnish hip hop scene would be more clearly divided into two: big record companies and mainstream hip hop, which resembled US hip hop, and marginal, original hip hop, published by small record companies or as author's editions. In this connection, a significant event took place in 2003 when *Räihinä* posse, including the members of *Fintelligens* and *Kapasiteettiyksikkö*, two prominent mainstream rap groups, decided to start their own record company to compete with the bigger record companies (Mikkonen 2004: 105).

In 2000, the first Finnish rap championship event was organized, offering an ideal place for the record companies to find new talent. Soon, it turned into an annual competition, providing some publicity for many new groups and artists, such as *Ceebrolistics*, *Redrama* and *Ruudolf*. (Mikkonen 2004: 78.) Thus, the Finnish hip hop scene started to form into a strong culture, with rap music as its most visible and popular element. The 'trauma' (an emic term – used, for example, by the rapper Paleface in his 2011 book) on the earlier humor hip hop period was almost forgotten as new artists, albums, record labels and competitions found their way into the mainstream or the underground.

Third wave – part of the Finnish music scene since the early 2010s

Finally, I will briefly characterize the present stage of Finnish hip hop as well as its possible future directions. Today, rap music continues to be the most visible and popular element of Finnish hip hop culture, both amongst fans and in the media. The other elements of hip hop culture are also alive and well in the 21st century, although they may not be as closely associated with one another as before. Nowadays, many (young) people practice breakdancing, even at school (e.g. Nurmi 2012), and Finland has gained international fame via breakdance; graffiti workshops are organized (for recent research on the Finnish graffiti scene, see e.g. Komonen 2012; Piispa 2012) and the DJ culture is also very much alive (see also Nives 2014³¹), as they are part and parcel of many live rap shows, including the club culture in general.

Finnish hip hop and rap have increased in visibility and popularity in the 21st century, particularly during recent years. After the hip hop boom ('the second wave') at the turn of the millennium, the years 2005–2007 can be characterized as 'the depression era' of Finnish rap, a time during which large numbers of people (and gig places) 'lost interest' in Finnish rap music: records did not sell, and if occasional hits were made, radio channels did not play them and venues were unwilling to feature rap artists. Also, many multinational

³¹ This book focuses not only on hip hop DJs but DJs of all genres.

companies withdrew from the scene and did not sign any new artists, after the earlier 'overheated' period. Cheek, who experienced the period and its challenges first-hand, confirmed this view of the 'depression era' in our first interview. Chydeone, a longstanding rapper from Turku, also argued in 2007 that Finnish hip hop was suffering from a hangover after the successful years (Moisio 2007).

Since 2008, Finnish rap has again become increasingly popular, as attested to by record sales, success in album charts, iTunes downloads, radio play and numbers of gigs in various clubs and other live venues.³² In fact, the post-2008 phase could be described as the *third wave* of Finnish hip hop (see also Kärjä 2011; Fiilin 2008) – in general, it is safe to say that in 2014 Finnish rap music is more popular than ever. It now seems to be a fixture in the Finnish music scene, as one significant genre amongst others. The visibility of Finnish rap is witnessed by, for example, the numerous awards that both rap artists and record companies have received – as well as by the invitations that rappers Paleface, *Signmark* and Cheek have received to attend the prestigious Finnish Independence Day celebrations (hosted by the president of Finland). Finnish hip hop is also visible in and through various events organized around the country. The popularity of Finnish hip hop is also exemplified by the fact that since 2001, hip hop has had its own festival, Pipefest, originally organized by a group of young people. The festival has become an important site for artists to meet each other and negotiate collaboration (Manner 2012; Paleface 2011: 54).³³ Other major hip hop festivals include *Summer Up* (established in 2003) in Lahti, *Blockfest* (est. 2008) in Tampere, *Oulu Hip-hop festival* (est. 2011) and, most recent of all, *Hustle*, first organized in the summer of 2013 in Helsinki.

A significant gap in today's Finnish hip hop, however, is the relative scarcity of *female* rap artists (something which can be seen as exemplifying the genre's stereotypical male domination). Since the early 21st century artists such as *Mariko* (of *Kwan*) and *Mariska*³⁴ (who, after publishing three rap albums, has become a schlager and pop singer), not many female rappers have risen to public awareness. A notable exception is *Sini Sabotage* who, in 2013, gained some mainstream attention and success (with her hit single "Levikset repee", 'My Levi's are torn').³⁵ Another emerging female rapper is *Mercedes Bentso*, a young woman with a harsh background of (drug) abuse.³⁶ ³⁷ Many male

³² In the popularity lists published by YouTube in late 2013, of the ten most watched music videos in Finland, six were Finnish *rap music* videos; Cheek featured on this list as number one and three (YouTube 2013).

³³ In 2011, the festival was moved from Vuokatti in northern Finland to a more southern location, Himos, in Central Finland.

³⁴ Mariska is also the only female rapper amongst the thirty Finnish rap artists who get their voices and lyrics heard in Paleface's (2011) book.

³⁵ Earlier, she was known as a DJ in the scene and she also featured as a background singer in Cheek's song "Fresh" (2009).

³⁶ It was in fact Pyhimys who 'found' her and asked her to make music with him (Pyhäranta 2013). She reveals that without Pyhimys, she might not even be alive today: Pyhimys was literally a 'saint' (pyhimys in Finnish) for her (Auvinen 2013).

³⁷ Other female artists, such as *Rauhatäti* and *Mary-A*, have recently become known in smaller music circles.

rappers have often called for female newcomers. According to Pyhimys (Hallamaa 2007: 21), the reason why there are so few female rap artists in Finland has to do with the fact that there are not that many prominent international female rappers, either. The categories for female rappers seem to be more limited than for men: either a *Lil Kim* (a US female rapper) type of ‘whore’ (i.e. an overtly sexualized character) or, then, a butch type (a male-like female) rapper. It has also been argued, by the rap artist *Setä Koponen* (‘Uncle Koponen’), for example, that the reasons may be financial – producers might not see a market for female rappers. (Hallamaa 2007: 21.) Another rapper, Elastinen, has suggested that the reason might be the lack of simultaneous processes of will, know-how and production (Elastinen 2010). The scarcity of Finnish female rappers has probably to do with all of the above reasons (lack of role models, financing, production and motivation), but the situation is slowly improving.

At the moment, Finnish hip hop culture is very versatile. The rap scene consists of several different artists and groups who, with their different styles, represent both mainstream and underground aspects of hip hop. This dichotomy is often emphasized by the media and sometimes by fans, too. Pyhimys, however, is not content that the discussion emphasizes these two extremes. He thinks that, if a dichotomy has to be drawn, it could be between ‘art’ and ‘entertainment’: artists representing the former do not want to succeed by following ‘ready-made hit formulas’, while ‘entertainment’ artists aim at gathering large audiences by using specific marketing methods. According to him, no successful rap artist is in the top ten of sales simply by chance. (Tervo 2013.)

Rapping styles have also become more and more individualized and artists combine various genres in their music. Thus, heterogeneity and continuing fragmentariness characterize the current situation: there is no one way to make Finnish rap music.³⁸ The current rap music also includes an increased use of live instruments and singing, alongside rapping. In addition, mixing various music genres with rap music is nowadays a common practice. For example the r’n’b artist *Karri Koirra* co-operates with the rapper Ruudolf and also many rap and reggae co-operations exist, for example between Cheek and *Jukka Poika*. There is also frequent collaboration between rap artists and schlager (‘iskelmä’) singers, such as *Teflon Brothers* (which Pyhimys is part of) and *Meiju Suvas*, respectively. In addition, the group *GG Caravan* combines rap music with Romany music, aiming partly at reducing long-standing racist attitudes towards the Romany people in Finland (Yhdenvertaisuus 2011).³⁹ *Elokuu* (‘August’) combine elements of rap, reggae, folk, and define their music as ‘cityhumppa’ (‘humppa’ is an old, traditional Finnish music style, which will also be discussed in section 4.4 in connection with Pyhimys and his “Bättre folk” song). According to them, in Finnish rap music it is no longer necessary to

³⁸ Condry (2006: 21) made a similar observation on Japanese hip hop: there is no ‘single scene’ there any longer but rather “a diversifying music scene”.

³⁹ There is also one (known) Roma rapper, called *Bulle*, in the Finnish hip hop scene.

borrow models from the US culture: the starting point may as well be our own national 'scenery' (Jansson 2012: 7).

According to Pyhimys, this fragmentariness of Finnish rap is not negative and does not refer to the birth of new sub-genres, but rather to less prejudice against Finnish hip hop in general (Hallamaa 2007: 21). Now, in the 21st century, it seems that although Finnish rap music has partly become mainstream popular culture, this does not by any means threaten its 'authenticity' (i.e. being 'real') (Mikkonen 2004: 192). As Paleface (2011: 39) argues, Finnish rap music has by now earned its place in the spectrum of the Finnish music scene. Finnish rap can be seen as part of Finnish music culture and history. For example, this continuation can be seen in the song "Sydämeni" ('My heart') by *Timo Pieni Huijaus* ('Timo Small Scam'). In it, he explicitly describes seeing himself as part of a continuum, walking the same path now as the 'old' (music) entertainers such as *Vesa-Matti Loiri* and *Spede Pasanen*, whom he describes as cornerstones of Finnish entertainment. Here, then, is another local predecessor – Finnish schlager, pop music and entertainment – of Finnish rap, alongside the folkloric chants and rekilaulut mentioned above. One might even characterize today's Finnish rap as a *key experience* for the current generation.⁴⁰ In order to understand the thinking, values, discourse, language and style of many current youth, familiarization with the numerous genres of Finnish rap is crucial.

Like any aspect of the future, it is difficult to predict exactly what will happen to Finnish hip hop. In an interview for *Sue Magazine* in 2007, rappers Setä Koponen, *Säkki* ('Sack'), *Tykopaatti* and Pyhimys said that they firmly believe that Finnish-language rap will continue to develop. As possible future styles Pyhimys mentioned grime- and trip hop -influenced hip hop, which the rap group *Kaucas* have already showcased, and reggae style, which can already be heard in the versatile music of rapper Asa. In Pyhimys' opinion, Finnish rap is mainly fairly Finnish in its style: because it has distinguished itself from the US rap style(s), it can now extend in other directions, too. In fact, Pyhimys believes more in Finnish rap than in rap in general. (Hallamaa 2007: 21.)

In my own interviews with the artists, the future of Finnish hip hop also came up. For example, in his first interview with me, Cheek emphasized how he is waiting for new, talented artists to appear, since (most of) the current artists, himself included, have been doing it for a decade already. Pyhimys, on the other hand, said he does not often think about what will happen in the future because one can never know for sure where things are going. Nevertheless, he had some visions of the future of Finnish hip hop: in his view, the 'boom' will no doubt at some point be followed by a 'recession' – it is all about the pendulum swinging back and forth. In general, he saw that Finnish rap is becoming more and more fragmented because that happens to all (popular) music genres. What still differentiates rap from rock in his opinion,

⁴⁰ See also a blog in which an anonymous writer evaluates the recent publications of Perhosveitsi & Lika-Aki, the alternative aliases of *Heikki Kuula* and Pyhimys, respectively, as well as Teflon Brothers (Koiranmutkia 2013).

however, is that it is still ‘all rap’ whereas rock is divided into several sub-genres: two rock bands might have absolutely nothing in common. Having now outlined the ‘origins’ and development of both hip hop culture in general and Finnish hip hop, in particular, as well as its current stage, we can now turn to the ‘ideological topography’ of Finland and Finnish hip hop.

2.2 The ideological topography of (hip hop) Finland

Moving away from the development of (Finnish) hip hop culture and its current stage, this section engages more specifically with the Finnish (hip hop) context and introduces Finland as ‘an ideological topography’, in which various rap artists and groups are active (section 2.2.2) and in which they introduce certain themes and topics (section 2.2.3). The rap lyrics by Kemmuru will get us started with the theme.

ne antaa sulle suunnan	they give you a direction
ja se suunta on kohti etelää,	and that direction is south-bound,
kasvukeskuksiin,	to growing centers,
ennalta määrättyihin lokeroihin,	pre-determined categories,
joissa pärjää vaan etuoikeutetut,	where only the privileged, hypocrites
tekopyhät ja menestyjät	and successful make it
ja missä me ollaan? me ollaan täällä	and where are we? we're here in
periferiaan menevällä essolla	esso ⁴¹ heading to the periphery
josta ei kuulu ääntä	from where there is no voice
ja missä ei sarterit lentele	and where no charters fly
How to survaiv in Suomi	How to survive in Suomi
motherfucking perkele	motherfucking perkele ⁴²

The lyrics of “How 2 survive”, a song by a Finnish rap group Kemmuru, relate to and are indexical of the issues raised in this section: issues of margins, periphery and various centers in the South – as well as the (uni-directional) movement between these loci. In fact, the Kemmuru members themselves, *Jodarok*, *Aksim* and DJ *J-Laini*, are from Joensuu, Tikkakoski and Rovaniemi respectively, and these places are, more or less, peripheral areas, at least from the point of view of the South. The song itself deals with how Finnish people, themselves included, with their various issues and problems, survive, particularly in the peripheral areas. The extract is taken from the end of the song and it basically describes how Finland is nowadays divided into ‘centers’ and ‘margins’ of different kinds. Although Finland is working hard on its

⁴¹ In this case, Esso refers to the gas station cafeteria, hub of a generally rather scattered community. This is a Finnish cultural phenomenon, somewhat comparable to the village pubs in the UK.

⁴² ‘Perkele’ (literally ‘the devil’) is a common, forceful swear word in the Finnish language, but directly untranslatable into English (see e.g. Hjort 2014).

international(ly appealing) image and 'brand'⁴³, the various working groups and delegations do not give people a new life but rather they "give you a direction and that direction is south-bound", meaning that nowadays economic, cultural, political and educational life mostly focuses on the Helsinki metropolitan area, whereas the margins become (even) more marginal. The (stereotypical) division goes along the lines of urban, educated, successful, international *versus* countryside, non-educated, a failure, peripheral - a description of 'Esso-Finland' (with isolated gas stations in the periphery, which often form highly local 'centers' for people) vs 'Euro-Finland' (where the money is made and success is created and sustained) that includes all aspects of life: whether geographical, economic, cultural, political or social. According to Uusitalo (2003: 28), globalization and integration processes further marginalize the peripheral areas and villages, as centralization has become the doctrine of the Finnish government.

2.2.1 The ideological topography of Finland

This section outlines the ideological topography of Finland. First, it should be noted that countries as such do not have ideologies, people do. However, an attempt to map Finland from an ideological point of view will help us in understanding the kind of a sociocultural context the artists of the study are situated in, before we move on to the lyrics and interviews: how Finland, with its capital, various regions, cities and villages, is imagined to be, ideologically - and how we, continuously, (re)construct these places as 'big', 'little', 'powerful', 'insignificant', 'long-lasting', 'short-lived', and so forth.⁴⁴

Topography as a concept originated in ancient Greece (Greek 'topos' referring to 'place' and 'graphein' to 'to write') as the detailed description of and writing about a place (Oxford Dictionaries; Wikipedia). Its meanings vary in different parts of the world: whereas in the United States it is nowadays almost synonymous with (only) a geological relief map, in Europe the broader meaning of *the study of a place*, "with its natural and artificial features, and even local history and culture", continues to hold (see e.g. London Topographical Society; Wikipedia). Admittedly, the concept can imply a certain kind of fixedness: established, static positions, margins and centers. My purpose here is not, however, to convey (only) a fixed image, but one of fluidity as well - a topography of continuity but also of change. This fluidity is an effect of the experiential, subjective dimension of place. A topography is thus never neutral - people attach various meanings to places, to their surroundings, based on the lives they lead (see e.g. Low & McDonogh 2001; Bennett 2000). According to Blommaert (2010: 78), in a (local social) topography, "places and trajectories acquire meaning and [they] structure events and subjects" - they add to the geographical meaning of a certain place. These topographies are part of our

⁴³ An official delegation was actually appointed by *Alexander Stubb*, the (then) current Minister for Foreign Affairs, in 2008 to develop Finland's brand as a country (Ulkoasiainministeriö).

⁴⁴ These ideas are (also) inspired by Ben Rampton (personal communication).

'local cultural codes' and the spaces they index, construct "discourses in which events and people acquire characteristics that are sensed to be attached to these places". (ibid.). Hence, towards the end of this section, I will also briefly discuss the (geographical spread of) hip hop posses and artists along with their lyrical themes and topics, as this is an integral part of the topography of Finland as a cultural and ideological space. Relatedly, Simeziane (2010) also refers to 'topography' when she discusses the identity of the Roma rap group *Fekete Vonat* ('Black train') in the Hungarian hip hop scene and the importance of personal, urban experiences in various places in Budapest.

There has been a lot of theorization about *ideology* in various fields, such as, sociology (by Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, for instance), political science (e.g. Heywood 2003), and, later on, (socio)linguistics (e.g. Kroskrity 2000; Heller 2007), to name but a few. Similarly to Verschueren (2012: 3-4), I argue that it is important to keep in mind that my understanding of the concept

bears on much more mundane and everyday processes than the grand political strands of thought it is usually associated with (liberalism, conservatism, socialism, Marxism, nationalism, anarchism, fascism, fundamentalism and the like),

although in this hip hop community, too, many ways of thinking are affected by such -isms.

In this research on Finnish hip hop, 'ideology' refers to three issues. Firstly, it refers to a set of ideas, values and beliefs which form a, more or less, uniform whole - in sum, a worldview. According to Verschueren (2012: 7), ideology is "associated with the underlying patterns of meaning, frames of interpretation, world views or forms of everyday thinking and explanations". What also needs to be acknowledged is that "the ways in which these beliefs, ideas, or opinions are discursively used" matters a great deal (ibid.). Secondly, ideology can be understood within the particular framework of politics and political orientations (Fagerholm 2013). A political ideology refers to an ensemble of values and beliefs about society and how that society should be organized, whereas a party ideology can entail ingredients from several political ideologies, such as conservatism and liberalism (e.g. Fagerholm 2013; Reunanen & Suhonen 2009). Thirdly, looking at ideologies from the language perspective entails, again, a whole range of varying views:

from seemingly neutral cultural conceptions of language to strategies for maintaining social power, from unconscious ideology read from speech practices by analysts to the most conscious native-speaker explanations of appropriate language behavior (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994: 58).

Many (socio)linguists share the view that ideology is "rooted in or responsive to the experience of a particular social position" (ibid.), thus making ideology also highly personal and subjective. In sum, in the present study, I understand 'ideology' as a more or less uniform (and partly subjective) worldview, as a political orientation (whether related to party politics or not) and, linguistically,

as implicit or explicit thoughts and ideas about languages and their usage in a given social context.

As was discussed above, in the European sense of the word, topography can never be neutral if it deals with the local history and culture of a given place. In this study, the topography of hip hop Finland is ideological⁴⁵ in the sense that, first of all, people have different values and attitudes and beliefs in (and of) different places, for example the big cities vs the countryside. In addition, there is a shared belief of Helsinki-centeredness in Finland – hip hop culture mostly revolves around Helsinki on many different levels. Both Helsinki rappers and other rappers are aware of the situation. Rappers from elsewhere might not want to live or move there, but understand nevertheless that in the music business, too, it is more or less ‘all about’ Helsinki. Secondly, the political ideologies of Finnish hip hop differ. Some rap genres, that of ‘conscious rap’, in particular, are, and have traditionally been, associated with themes such as (socio-economic) equality and solidarity between people, and helping the disadvantaged (see e.g. Rose 1994; Pennycook 2007a), something which can, in the Finnish context, be associated with the typical themes of the political ‘left’ and, particularly with the themes of the *Left Alliance* (Vasemmistoliitto; Paloheimo 2008). Many Finnish rappers exhibit a left-wing political stance, whether (directly or indirectly) in their lyrics, in the interviews or by performing in political events of various kinds. Recently, however, Cheek has asserted his own ideas and values, which can be seen as on the socio-economic ‘right’ on the political map, and include support for capitalism and money-making, individualism and the ‘self-made man’ stories. In fact, he wonders why taking a stand on societal issues always has to be associated with left-wing issues. (Lehti 2012: 1.)

Thirdly, the topography of (hip hop) Finland is ideological language-wise. Whereas some rappers still prefer English as their main rap ‘language’ (because it is the ‘original’ one but also because they are ‘trained’ in it), others want to emphasize local dialects and slang, their own, ‘natural’ way of speaking. Making use of one’s own local dialect can also be considered (local) language politics. What can also be seen in an ideological light is the sometimes negative stigmatizing (by ‘city people’) of the dialects of the ‘countryside’, the east, west and north of the country. Mixing ‘separate languages’, or resources and features of different languages, is also sometimes viewed in a negative light, although in

⁴⁵ The reason why I use ‘ideology’ instead of ‘discourse’ in this section is that, although the concepts are partially overlapping and interconnected, they nevertheless differ: ideologies affect (and change) people’s discourse(s) and people create, confirm and spread ideologies discursively (e.g. van Dijk 1995: 22). Thus, it is the underlying ‘force’ behind discourse(s), the ideas about discourse, which is the motivation for the notion of ideology. Rappers’ ideologies, whether salient or not, affect their discourse(s), their lyrics, and through their lyrics, the rappers spread their ideological thinking to others, to their listeners.

practice, almost every Finnish rapper does this, as do Finnish youth in general (cf. the discussion above about *Fintelligens* and language attitudes).⁴⁶

Moving on to Finland as an ideological topography, I will first briefly discuss how 21st century Finland ‘came into being’. This brief historical overview is necessary, as it will help us understand Finland’s ‘trajectory’, the current situation and nation in the age of globalization. Today’s Finland is a result of many layers of consecutive historical modes of livelihoods. The newly independent republic (since 1917) was, at first, an *agricultural* state, characterized by local life and the importance of nature. Moisio (2012: 55) calls this an *areal state*, in which only 15 % of the population lived in towns (Rasila 1982: 161). The regional structure of the state reflected that of the period of autonomy (under Russia) during which Helsinki became the undeniable center of administration, science and culture, as well as business and political organizations (Klinge 2003: 239). The next stage of the republic was the *industrial* Finland of the 1950s, during which the infrastructure (such as roads, factories and neighborhoods) was largely developed. Moisio (2012: 22) characterizes this period as a *decentralized welfare state*, its aim being to make life more governmental (i.e. national), instead of local, and to create regional growth centers. The current republic can be described as a *knowledge society* in which research and development has become important for companies to survive in global competition (Jakobson 2003: 235). Moisio (2012: 22, 191–194) characterizes present-day Finland as a *decentralized competitive state*, more centralized than the previous state, in which different municipalities and regions have to compete over (supra)national subsidies as well as aim to succeed internationally. According to Moisio (2012: 22, 302) the future of Finland might be that of a *metropolitan state* – a state in which global competition and demands will be even more important than today and in which citizens are expected to be creative and globally knowledgeable. A big question for the future is whether Finland will continue to be developed around many towns and growth areas, spread out geographically, or as a country in which there are fewer than ten big towns, all focused in the South. In the most extreme case, Finland would then be divided into a ‘knowledge economy’ and a ‘resource economy’ (Moisio 2012).

Helsinki is the undisputed center of a (nowadays) highly urbanized Finland. It was established in 1550 (when Finland was still part of the Swedish empire) and became the capital of Finland in 1812.⁴⁷ Helsinki is an economic center: careers are made there and it offers the best opportunities for money-making; it is an educational center: most top-ranked universities (for example,

⁴⁶ For qualitative ‘snapshots’ on the uses of English in Finland, see Leppänen et al. (2008); for a large-scale survey of the uses, functions and meanings of English in Finland, see Leppänen et al. (2011).

⁴⁷ Languages have also played a role in the history of Helsinki: up to the mid-1800, the city was almost ‘monolingual’ in Swedish, but then slowly became ‘bilingual’ (in Finnish and Swedish). In reality, Helsinki has always been very multilingual and multicultural: already at the 19th century, the city contained Russians, Germans, Jews, Tatars, Italians, Baltics and Roma people. (Paunonen 2010: 10–11.)

the University of Helsinki, Aalto University and the Sibelius Academy) are there; it is a political center: the government, the parliament and all the political headquarters are located there; it is a cultural center: the opera, prestigious theaters and concert halls are there as well as (important) music studios, venues and record labels; and, finally, it is a social center in that half of Finland's population live in the Helsinki metropolitan area. In sum, no other Finnish city comes near Helsinki in its 'superiority' (cf. Blommaert 2010 on Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania). This will emerge later, particularly in the interviews (chapter 5).

In addition to the Helsinki metropolitan area (including the cities of Espoo, Kauniainen and Vantaa), other centers exist, such as Tampere and Turku in the west, Jyväskylä in the middle, Kuopio in the east and Oulu and Rovaniemi in the north, but are, nevertheless, 'smaller' in terms of their population, business, education and culture. These can be characterized as non-metropolitan centers in the Finnish context. It is important to keep in mind that the nature of 'a center' depends on scales, too. On a national scale, Kuopio, for example, is in the 'peripheral' east, at least from the point of view of Helsinki and the south. On a regional scale, however, it is a 'center' for, for example, people moving in from smaller, nearby towns or from the countryside, and it is also a center of education, commerce and culture. Beyond these ('secondary') centers, are 'smaller' towns like Seinäjoki in the West, Joensuu in the East and Lappeenranta in the South-East and, even beyond these, smaller places, such as Sodankylä. This *layeredness* and *fractality* of the topography is one of the issues that will become clear in the course of this chapter (and study as a whole). What we also need to keep in mind is that, in the age of globalization, Finland, as a country, is very technologically advanced, which enables the blurring of urban-rural distinctions (Brunstad et al. 2010 make a similar observation in the context of Norway). Due to its appeal as an IT center, Oulu (600 km from Helsinki), Stepa's current hometown, has been expected to play a big role even in the metropolitan state (cf. Moisio 2012).

A significant point to be raised here is that Finnish rap music is not urban music alone. While many researchers (e.g. Kuivas 2003b; Pakkala 2004; Kalliokoski 2006; Mäkeläinen 2008) have explored the lyrics of urban rap artists, particularly from Helsinki, a few (e.g. Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010; Strand 2007) have also investigated rappers from outside (highly) urban contexts, such as Inari and Rovaniemi (the latter of which is a town, and significantly larger than Inari). Thus, in the context of hip hop and rap, one can sometimes see a divide between Helsinki and the rest of Finland, whether directly or indirectly. Another song by the previously mentioned Finnish rap group Kemmuru, "Landespede" ('A country dude', 'a hayseed' - (directly) untranslatable into English), can actually be seen as a 'hymn' for non-Helsinki Finland, as it discusses, for example, their group members' origins in the margins and their treatment by Helsinki people. Nowadays, it has become rare for (young) successful rappers to live in their original hometowns, as the growth centers of Helsinki and Tampere, in particular, continue to attract young people from all around Finland. Many rappers outside Helsinki deal with and relate these

feelings of love for one's origins, nostalgia and roots (which one does not perhaps want to go back to), and many Finnish people can, in fact, identify with these. These themes are by no means new in Finnish music, however, and they have been discussed earlier in songs such as "Juankoski here I come" by the late Juice Leskinen, a well-known rock and pop singer, and "Pohjois-Karjala" ('Northern Karelia') by Leevi and the Leavings, a very popular pop and rock band (cf. Berner 2012.) Here, we can clearly again see the *already local* storytelling tradition (cf. Pennycook & Mitchell 2009): rap is (just) a new way of relating local feelings of nostalgia and origins.

Depopulation and migration into center(s) always shows the real margins of any given country or area. This is particularly true for youth, in terms of the objective trajectories of social life, job opportunities, training, facilities, airports, etc. – the margins rarely have these, the centers most often do (see e.g. articles in Paju 2004). In his song entitled "Ei mennä enää koskaan landelle" ('Let's never go back to the sticks again') (2010), Pyhimys offers an ironic view of many Finns alienated from their own 'land' and the countryside: how they are almost allergic to anything too rural and 'primitive'. In a way, development has moved (too much) forward and there is no going back anymore. The margins have also showed their 'darker side' to young hip hop enthusiasts: in the early 1990s, when Jodarok of Kemmuru was young, the skinhead movement was particularly strong in Joensuu. The (hip hop) youngsters in baggy pants had to suffer because of their clothing, when the skinheads were unable to find any 'foreign-looking people' to attack. (Berner 2012.)

Another view on the topography of Finland is about making Finland and Finnish hip hop into a 'center'. By this I mean an exploration of "the ways in which members of various global hip hop communities furnish themselves with a hip hop history and ideology that *demarginalizes them and situates them squarely in the center* (Omoniyi 2009: 122, emphasis added). Without a doubt, Finnish hip hop is in the margins of the global hip hop nation, at least in the geographical sense, despite its location in the 'West' and 'North' of the world (systems) map. It is in the margins also in the cultural sense as not many of our rap artists, perhaps with the exceptions of Paleface, Redrama and Signmark, have 'made it' into the global music market (see discussions on these artists below).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, local rap artists continually make and construct Finland and Finnish hip hop as 'centers' in their own right, by discussing and highlighting Finland as a country and the excellence of Finland's rap music and artists, but also by problematizing and addressing its local and national issues. All of the three artists in the present study also do this both in their lyrics and in their interviews. For example, Pyhimys commented on this in our first interview by saying that his music is heavily based on the Finnish language, and he sees identification and closeness as crucial aspects in his music(-making). This is, in fact, why he thinks that Finnish rap is better at the moment (in 2009) than the

⁴⁸ In one element of hip hop culture, namely breakdance, Finland is, in fact, on the 'world map' through many successful individual b-boys and b-girls but also via groups such as Flow Mo.

US one, because he is Finnish and he lives in Finland. Here, we can immediately see the importance of 'the local' (ideology) in Pyhimys' answer: he feels a closeness with Finnish hip hop and wants to stay here and make local rap, with little regard to what goes on in the scenes in other countries, such as the US. Stepa also viewed Finnish rap music as better than its US 'counterpart', at least for him, because, in the US, it is 'all the same' ('the 50 cent stuff')⁴⁹ whereas Finnish rap is more versatile. Next, we learn more about the artists in the scene.

2.2.2 The (geographical spread of) Finnish rap posses and artists

As a sign of Finnish rap music's increasing popularity throughout the 21st century, more and more rap artists and groups have become known by, first of all, fans, but some also by the general public. Although most of the rap artists come from the Helsinki metropolitan area, also other towns and provincial places are being 'represented'⁵⁰ in the scene, extending from east to west and from north to south. Finnish hip hop culture thus consists of several local 'scenes', i.e. the local places and communities of the culture. According to the rap artist Paleface (2011: 18), there are about a couple hundred 'practicing' MC's in Finland, of which about a hundred publish music regularly and perform at gigs. Only a handful of these are full-time artists.

In order to give some background information on the geographical spread of the posses and artists in Finland, I will here briefly describe what the three artists of the present study told me about their conceptions of Finnish hip hop and its scenes. According to Stepa, Finnish hip hop is doing well and many artists can even make a living from it. He sees hip hop as taking place across Finland and, as an anecdote, mentions that they play Ruudolf's (a successful Finnish rap artist from Helsinki) songs even at night clubs in Tornio. He also told me that he himself has gigs mainly in the biggest cities of Finland. Like Stepa, Cheek also sees view hip hop as being done 'everywhere' in Finland, but rap artists actually 'break (out)' only from the biggest cities, like Helsinki, Tampere and Lahti, where the culture is laid 'deep'. These are the places where the music gets published and where actually the recording artists are. For Pyhimys, the Finnish hip hop scene is (and has been since the beginning) very Helsinki-centered. He believes that its influence will only grow in the future (in a country of this size), not only in rap but in 'everything'. Pyhimys also remarked that Helsinki has multiple hip hop cultures, coexisting and not minding each other. Additionally, Tampere and to some extent Oulu also have proper 'scenes' in Finland. Related to this, he also argued that one group of (rap) friends is not enough to constitute a scene but rather it requires a long

⁴⁹ 50 cent is a US rapper who is particularly known for his harsh, gangsta lyrics and violent image.

⁵⁰ 'To represent' is a hip hop expression referring to: "To stand for something you are convinced of and feel related to, and to express that feeling. For example your family, your upbringing, your neighborhood, your values." (Rap dictionary). In addition to places, it can relate to "symbols, memory, participants, objects, and details that together produce art of the space and time" (Morgan 2005: 208-209).

time for it to develop, people coming in from different places and in co-operation with each other.

Thus, as could also be seen in the previous characterization made by the artists, the geographical spread of rappers also says much about the importance of 'centers' and 'margins' – the heterogeneity and the ideological topography of Finnish rap. As explained in the previous section, Finnish society was characterized by structural changes throughout the 20th century, transforming from an agrarian society into a service and information society, with large migration from the countryside to the bigger cities. The northern and eastern parts of Finland, in particular, are facing large migration losses (Moisio 2012). Like other young adults, rap artists also move southwards, to the larger cities, particularly from the north and east, in search of education and work. Hence, in cities like Helsinki and Tampere, the local rap scenes have grown and become more versatile in part because of this migration phenomenon. Rappers often tend to form a group of their own, and these groups are called *posses*. In the US, posses are a kind of a relic of the gangs in New York that functioned up to the 1970s. In hip hop, the word posse continued to stand for a peaceful group or gang of friends. (Mikkonen 2004: 99.) In this section, I first present some Helsinki and Tampere posses and artists, and, then, other Finnish artists or groups. For the purposes of the study, the introductions need to be fairly compact. (For a thorough presentation on Finnish hip hop posses and artists, see Paleface 2011; Mikkonen 2004; for an interesting exploration on the *names* of Finnish rap artists, see a recent MA thesis on the topic by Räsänen 2013).

The Helsinki metropolitan area has the largest hip hop and rap scene in the country and it consists of several different artists and posses as well as genres, both mainstream (or 'club') and so-called conscious rap amongst others. In fact, one could argue (as Pyhimys did in one of my interviews with him) that the Helsinki scene should rather be understood in the plural, as scenes. The center thus has many centers but it also has its margins, such as the 'ghettos' of eastern Helsinki, with their marginal(ized) people (these places can, however, be sub-cultural 'centers' for some rappers and their fans). Many record companies, such as *Rähinä*, *Monsp*, *Yellowmic*, *3rd Rail Music*, *Roihis Musica* and *Ähky Records*, are located in Helsinki. The music of Rähinä Records posse mostly concentrates on the positive aspects of life: having fun, partying and (casual) relationships. Their music has been popular mostly in the mainstream and it has received a great deal of air play. The group was formed in 1998 amongst friends, including the groups of (the previously discussed) Fintelligens and Kapasiteettiyksikkö and, later on, Asa and Timo Pieni Huijaus (Mikkonen 2004: 103–105), the last of which has recently gained popularity with his party *and* societal critique kind of music. Fintelligens' albums from the early 21st century were *the* best-selling Finnish rap albums of their time (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 199). Asa, the nowadays most popular act of Roihis Musica, has created a successful and versatile rap career as one of the most well-known Finnish rap artists, both in the mainstream and in the underground. He was amongst the first rappers in Finland to rap directly (and in Finnish) about social problems

(Mikkonen 2004: 83), such as poverty, government decision-making and drug abuse. (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 199.) Later on, Asa's style of rap has been influenced by poetry and folk, as well as Slavic and reggae music.

Monsp Records in Helsinki hosts a number of significant rap artists, both mainstream and underground. Its artists include, for example, Ruudolf, the Christian rapper and Finnish rap champion of 2001 and 2005, who combines rap with rhythm and blues, funk and soul (for a multimodal analysis of Ruudolf & Karri Koiras's "Mammat riivaa" video, see Leppänen et al. 2014). Pyhimys, together with his rap act *Ruger Hauer*, is also a recording artist at Monsp. Another Monsp artist is *Steen1*, who deals with societal issues and criticism in his lyrics and who also ran in the parliamentary elections in 2007 in the Finnish Communist Party. Also Kemmuru (who introduced the 2.2 section with their "How 2 survive" song) are a recording group at Monsp Records. 3rd Rail Music hosts a number of underground artists, such as *Petos*, who are known for a 'darker' style in their music and lyrics. Another Finnish underground artist, *Julma-Henri* ('Cruel-Henry'; originally from Oulu, nowadays in Helsinki), deals with mental issues and marginalized people in his lyrics (see also extract 5 in section 5.3.2 about Pyhimys referring to him).

Tampere has been one of the most influential scenes throughout the history of Finnish rap, in addition to the capital. The record company *Turnin' Records* (previously *Open Records*) published the first Finnish hip hop compilation album (1998) and the first DVD on Finnish hip hop entitled "Syvällä pelissä" ('Deep in the game') (2003) (Mikkonen 2004: 109). *Joku Roti Records*, an active, rap-specialized record company founded by the rapper *Hannibal* in 2007, leads the 'Lappish diaspora' in the south - most of the artists on this label are originally from Lapland. Hannibal himself is from Rovaniemi where he and MC *Soppa* ('Soup') formed the famous funk-rap group *Tulenkantajat* at the end of 1990s. Their distinctive, funky style was characterized by real instruments on their gigs and the Peräpohjola dialect in their lyrics. Nowadays, Hannibal makes music together with the *Joku Roti Mafia* band. Other artists at *Joku Roti Records* are, for example, *Edorf* (originally from Inari, nowadays in Tampere) and *Funksons* (from Oulu). Other rap artists representing the Tampere scene are *Sere* (formerly *Seremoniamestari* - 'Master of ceremonies') who was, as previously mentioned, amongst the first Finnish-language rappers in the second wave of Finnish hip hop and *SP* (*Silkinpehmeä* - 'Silky smooth') who is, curiously enough, both a rap artist and a researcher at the University of Tampere.

Voices from other towns and scenes are represented, for example, by *Are* and *Kriso* from Jyväskylä, who often collaborate with *Stepa*, as well as the newcomer *Rekami* and the experienced *Joniveli* (and, earlier, *Urbaanilegenda*, 'Urban Legend'). Eastern Finland used to be represented by, for example, *Timi Lexikon* from Kuopio and *Laineen Kasperi* and *Kaucas* from Lappeenranta, but all of them nowadays live in Helsinki. The west, in turn, has groups such as *Vapaapudotus* from Vaasa and *Alamaa* from Pietarsaari. In Turku, *Ritarikunta* were active during the first decade of the 21st century. Turku is also home to

Felix Zenger, who has gained international popularity with his beatboxing skills. The Finnish rap north is represented by and large via Joku Roti Records and its associates in Tampere and elsewhere. Oulu is known, for example, through the MC/producer *Puukko-Allu* ('Knife-Allu'), who organizes hip hop festivals, and the previously mentioned Funksons. Most of these artists, separately and together, represent the more underground scenes in the smaller Finnish towns.

A few Finnish rappers have also gained international attention, notably Redrama and Paleface (both from Helsinki), during a phase when they both used English in their lyrics. Both of them have also done international collaboration with (rap) artists and groups. Redrama has, by now, also published a Swedish-language album, "*Samma på svenska*" ('The same in Swedish'), using his mother tongue in his music for the first time. For a short while, Paleface became known as the "face of Finnish hip hop" (Hilamaa & Varjus 2004: 198–199) and his debut album "*The Pale Ontologist*" was, in fact, considered the best global hip hop release of 2001 by Mitchell (2004: 120). Paleface's first Finnish-language album, "*Helsinki-Shangri-La*" (2010), sold well and gained several awards. He is nowadays one of the most appreciated and popular Finnish rap artists. In 2011, Paleface compiled his 'interim audit' of Finnish hip hop into a book entitled *Rappiotaidetta. Suomiräpin tekijät* ('Decay Art. The people of Finnish rap') (2011) in which he, as an insider, discusses the birth and development as well as themes of Finnish hip hop. In addition, 30 Finnish rap artists representing different genres get their voices heard, along with their lyrics extracts. Since Mikkonen's (2004) book *Riimistä riimiin. Suomiräpin nousu ja uho* ('From rhyme to rhyme. The rise and boast of Finnish rap') on Finnish hip hop, it is the only book-length treatment focusing on Finnish hip hop culture alone.⁵¹

Also minorities, such as the Sámi people and Finnish sign language community, are represented in the Finnish hip hop culture. Amoc (*Aanar Master of Ceremonies*) raps in Inari Sámi, an endangered indigenous language, with only about 300 mother tongue speakers. He has chosen to use Inari Sámi in his lyrics, because he wants to convey his message in his mother tongue and, after some initial hesitations, he noticed that Inari Sámi fits his 'heavy rap' style particularly well. Both Finnish and foreign media have taken an interest in him and he has won several awards. (Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010; see also earlier discussions on him in section 1.1.)

The world's first sign language rapper, Signmark, initially rapped in his mother tongue, Finnish sign language, but later on switched to American Sign Language. His rap act consist of him signing, a vocalist rapping (with whom he co-writes the songs; *mahtotapa* raps in Finnish and *Brandon* raps in (American) English) as well as rap music and beats at the background. In (his) music, it is important for Signmark to *feel* the low base sounds, as they make it possible to feel the rhythm and sign to it. His lyrics deal with his own experiences and, through them, he aims at 'educating' the world about the sign language community, its history and rights. (Haapsamo 2007: 34–35; Stenros 2008.)

⁵¹ In this study, I also use these two books as source references.

Currently, he is an active gig artist both in Finland and worldwide. Whether rapping in signs actually changes the discourses of authenticity would be an interesting topic for further reflection and examination. For now, it might be speculated that his own, lived experiences in a specific minority (but one which connects to other minorities globally) is very much part of the discourses of authenticity, in general. Likewise, the experience (and history) of a disenfranchised community, which has recently started to gain more recognition and empowerment, links to themes of authenticity more generally. In this sense, Signmark acts as the voice of the margins (see section 4.5 on Stepa as the voice of the geographical margins). One aspect, which is perhaps more significant in rapping in signs is the obvious emphasis on *visuality*, both in terms of publishing DVDs and music videos (of nearly all of the songs) as well as live performances, by making them into proper, all-encompassing multimodal 'shows'.

Many Finnish rap artists deal with more serious issues and take a stand and criticize Finnish society and its current shortcomings. Some of these artists exist only in the underground scene, and they are not widely known around Finland. Underground rappers do not necessarily aim at attracting large audiences, making money and making it to the radio play lists. (Mikkonen 2004: 173.) Many rappers, particularly the young ones, also publish their demo songs in Mikseri.net (a website on which people can listen to, upload and review Finnish music as well as create their own artist pages and gain fans) and hope to get some credit inside the local scene from there – also Stepa used this channel particularly in the early days of his rap career.

2.2.3 The lyrical themes and topics of Finnish rap music

After discussing the similarities and differences of Finnish rap poses and artists on the geographical, ideological and stylistic level, we now move on to the lyrical themes and topics of Finnish rap, with examples. What themes characterize Finnish hip hop lyrics? What is considered important? This section discusses *some* of the key themes in Finnish hip hop. For the purposes of introducing Finnish rap music to the reader, I argue it is useful to have knowledge not only on the sociocultural history of Finnish rap and hip hop but also more generally on the current themes and, more specifically, topics of the music: through the lyrics that the artists write, we can trace the ideological topography of (hip hop) Finland. We are able to tap into their thoughts, feelings, opinions and values – whether directly or indirectly ideological.

Hip hop in general covers a wide range of genres and styles including *old school*, *hard core*, *gangsta* (gangster), *gospel*, *social and political consciousness* and others. The choice of style is related to how the artist wants to construct him- or herself and/or the type of message in the rap. (Morgan 2002: 114.) Krims (2000) identifies four rap genres, categorized on the basis of style, flows and lyrical topics: *party rap*, *mack rap*, *jazz/bohemian rap* and *reality rap* (incl. gangsta). Pennycook (2007a: 85) adds *message/conscious rap*, dealing with political stand-taking, to Krims' list. In the US, in particular, the influence of the traditional

black church can be seen in the common call-and-response patterns between rapper and audience in that they resemble those between preacher and congregation. The political rhetoric in (some) (US) rap music has been inspired by the Black Power movement and the speeches of its key figures such as *Malcolm X* and the *Black Panthers*. (Mitchell 2001a: 4.)

The age-old and (still) ongoing hip hop tension between underground and commercial is also present in the Finnish context (see e.g. Nieminen 2003). While some MCs promote and speak for a more 'conscious' message that includes social justice and equality, others pursue larger audiences with their 'club rap', aim for radio play and, ultimately, also income and a livelihood. However, in Finland, at least, the divide is not always as clear-cut (and need not be). Artists originally associated with the message-type of rap music, such as Paleface, have also become highly successful in terms of record sales. Those artists who 'make it', i.e. become commercially successful, often have to deal with 'sell out' accusations (see more about this below in section 2.3).

Sampling, or "grafting of music, voices and beats" from (classic) rap or other songs, has been a very common and significant practice in rap music since its beginning. It is one of the ways of showing respect to the previous generations of music-makers and of presenting one's own historical knowledge. (Dyson 2004: 67.) According to Rose (1994: 89), "sampling in rap is a process of cultural literacy and intertextual reference" and, as Pennycook (2007a: 89) argues, using sounds bites from here and there enables us to see "hip-hop as a contemporary cultural practice, as an intertextual forum for cultural exchange". In global hip hop, making use of samples is also one of the key means for localizing the music (e.g. Omoniyi 2009), as also is resorting to other genres in the local musical repertoire.

This has been the case also in Finland, as several old schlager and pop songs have been used as samples. For example, Cheek's song "Maanteiden kingi" ('King of the road') (2010) draws on Leevi & the Leavings' song "Teuvo, maanteiden kuningas" ('Teuvo, the king of the road') (1988) and Pyhimys' song "Positivistinen junamatka" ('Positivistic train ride') (2011) draws on *Esa Pakarinen's* song "Lentävä kalakukko" ('Flying kalakukko')⁵² (1951). Cheek has, in fact, argued that whereas in the US, the original (sic) rappers had their 'treasure chest' of jazz, soul and funk to draw on, the Finns have great schlager and pop classics. Cheek sees them as an equally valuable source material (Aaltonen 2013: 48). Obviously, not only (old) local Finnish songs are sampled but also more globally known songs, such as "Fresh" (1985) by *Kool & the Gang* in Cheek's song by the same name (2009) and the Russian traditional folk song "Katjushka" in Stepa's "Viimeiset dollarit" ('The last dollars') (2008), to name but a few. Such sampling practices (and intertextual and cultural references) tie in with Imani Perry's notion of 'nostalgia' (towards the 'old school' of hip hop, in the US) (2004: 55). She argues that nostalgia often becomes 'an authenticating device' in the face of the commodification and commercialization, and hence

⁵² 'Kalakukko' is a traditional Finnish dish from the Savo area in Eastern Finland, made from fish baked inside a loaf of bread.

the loss of authenticity, of hip hop: “[g]ood MCs and DJs not only make the history present but they also enmesh it in the new entity created by the given song, to be enjoyed in a distinctive way” (ibid.).

Themes, categories and topics

By introducing the themes of Finnish rap music, the aim is to familiarize the reader with Finnish rap and its characteristics, and to show how Finnish rap acts as one local culture within the global hip hop culture. Where possible and relevant, I will discuss what is similar and what is different by reference to ‘global’ (or, in most cases, US) topics.

TABLE 1 Finnish rap themes, categories and topics

HAVING FUN/ ENJOYING LIFE	SOCIETAL CRITIQUE AND ISSUES	HOME, LOVE AND LIFE
Career (choices) & money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ career & occupations ▪ retirement ▪ money (or the lack of it) 	Society (& capitalism)	Home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ one’s origins ▪ regionalism
Materialism & consumerism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cars ▪ clothes ▪ shoes 	(Party/personal) politics	Love & loved ones <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ love ▪ parents ▪ family ▪ friendship* ▪ relationships*
‘Bad’ manners & illegalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ alcohol ▪ drugs ▪ graffiti ▪ the police 	Religion(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ personal faith* ▪ god(s)* 	Life & death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ contemplation* ▪ life ▪ death ▪ the devil
Freetime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sports ▪ travelling ▪ calendar 		Self, scene & posses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ self-presentation* ▪ scene* ▪ posses*
Nutrition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ food ▪ non-alcoholic drinks 		
Female body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ genital area & breasts 		

As inspiration for the discussion of themes, categories and topics (see Table 1), I have made use of the Finnish rap artist Paleface’s (2011) list of topics⁵³ (the

⁵³ Finnish rap themes according to Paleface (2011): ajoneuvot – vehicles, ammatit / uravalinnat – professions / career choices, eläke – retirement, epätavalliset aiheet – unusual topics, genitaalialue – genital area, graffiti – graffiti, Helsinki, kahvi / alkoholittomat – coffee / non-alcoholic drinks, kalenteri – calendar, kengät – shoes, kotiseuturakkaus – regionalism (love for one’s origin?), kuolema – death, matkailu –

topics marked with an asterisk are topics that I have added to Paleface's original list, drawing partly (but not entirely) on Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002⁵⁴). To avoid the shortcomings of his system, i.e. listing almost 30 various topics, different in their scale, and not categorizing them into larger chunks, I have created a more comprehensive list, with larger themes, categories and specific topics. Unlike Paleface, I fully recognize and admit that often one cannot locate a song under only one category. Rather, one song can feature several topics, but one of them may be foregrounded. The main *themes* of Finnish hip hop can be characterized as 1) having fun/enjoying life, 2) societal critique and issues and 3) home, love and life, each of which consists of several *categories*, and further, specific *topics*.⁵⁵

Having fun/enjoying life

The having fun/enjoying life theme is one of the most obvious in Finnish hip hop and it relates to individual freedom (Nieminen (2003: 182–183, 188). First, as regards the *materialism and consumerism* category, traditionally one of the major themes in some of the US hip hop has been the 'from rags to riches' stories: surviving ghetto life and becoming strong and (financially) independent through one's struggles (ibid.) In Finland, the stories from the streets may not resemble those of the US rappers, but they nevertheless describe local hardships and experiences. In this respect, materialistic showing-off is important because they allow one to show others that you have 'made it' (e.g. Nieminen 2003).

Cheek's song "Kaikki hyvin" ('All good') (2009) makes references to the topics of *clothes* and *shoes*, and in it, he describes a shopping spree in both Helsinki and Lahti and maxing out his credit card. People do not call him 'a prodigal son' for nothing (this is also a self-reference to a previous song of his). This song exemplifies rapper boasting about making money and spending it on whatever he likes. The most (commercially) successful Finnish rap artists can afford to do this.⁵⁶

travel, muistelu – reminiscing, paholainen – the devil, pillua! – pussy!, poliisi – the police, päihtet: alkoholi, kannabis, muut myrkyt – intoxicants: alcohol, cannabis, other drugs, raha ja sen puute – money and the lack thereof, rakkaus – love, ruoka – food, tissit – tits, urheilu/liikunta – sports / exercise, uskonto – religion, vaatteet – clothes, vanhemmat – parents, yhteiskunta / kapitalismi – society / capitalism.

⁵⁴ Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2002) categorized rap topics in the following way in their study: 1) Self-presentation, 2) Scene discourse, 3) Social critique, 4) Contemplation, 5) Love/sex, 6) Party/fun, 7) Dope, and 8) Other (topics that are uncategorizable). I return to this study in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ Of course, the topics of one category may often also overlap with those of another, like 'female body', which could be included in both 'Having fun/enjoying life' and 'Love and loved ones' categories (but is here included in the former).

⁵⁶ In the extracts, the origin of the lexical items is marked for clarity and the following symbols are used: spoken vernacular Finnish is the default text, Finland Swedish (which differs from the Swedish spoken in Sweden mostly in pronunciation and vocabulary) is underlined, standard / vernacular / African American vernacular / Finnishized English is **bolded**, Helsinki slang is in *italics*, standard Finnish is both *in italics and underlined* and Peräpohjola dialect, spoken in northern Finland, in areas such as Rovaniemi, Kemi and Sodankylä, is in *italics, underlined and bolded*. My aim in marking the resources this way is not to convey the traditional view of separate 'languages' and 'varieties' but to render the lyrics and the resources understandable

kesäkuun keikoista laskutin just popgramia
ja nyt oon stokmannilla miettii mitä ostasinkaan
palkkapäivä, voi *tuhlaa* ihan luvan kaa
kangasta ja kenkii tarttuu muutamia mukaan taas
ja kun lahdessa laitan visan vinkumaan
niin pointguard saa taas lisää tilaa ikkunaan
ei ne tuhlaajapojaks syyttä suotta nimittele
vaikka kuinka paljon tienais, tili tulee tili menee

I just billed popgram for the gigs in june
and now I'm in stokmann wondering what to buy
pay day, you *can spend* as much as you want
I'm taking with me some clothes and shoes
and when I'm maxing out my credit card in lahti
pointguard gets more room in the shop window
they don't call me a prodigal son for nothing
no matter how much I make, it comes and goes

Stepa's song "I don't give a fuck" (2010), in turn, illustrates the topic of a *lack of money in the category career (choices) and money*. In it, (using various linguistic resources), he talks about how he has no money in his bank account and that (unlike some of his American colleagues) the only bling bling he possesses is his reflector (which indexes the Finnish climate and geographical location).

Mulla ei haittaa vaikka lama mailmaa vaivaa
minua se on vaivannu jo pidemmän aikaa
pankkitili sanoo *ingen ting*
mun ainut *Bling Bling* on heijastin
katson vierestä ku osakkeet tippuu
haluan rahaa lippuun jolla pääsen taältä vittuun
faktat alkavat hajottamaan
ku ei maailmalla ole paljon tarjottavaa
ei mulla oo muuta tekemistä
ku harrastaa tätä vitun räppäämistä
mutta i dont give a fuck and i dont give a shit
nimeni on Stepa shut the fuck up bitch

I don't care that the world is struck by a decline
it has bothered me already for a long time /
my bank account says *no thing*
my reflector is my only *Bling Bling*
I'm watching the stocks going down
I want money for a ticket to get me the fuck out of here
the facts are pulling me to pieces
cos the world has nothing to offer to me, see
I have nothing else to do
than to do my fucking rapping
but i dont give a fuck and i dont give a shit
my name is Stepa shut the fuck up bitch

The song is an example of strong realism: how many Finnish rappers have to deal with quite ordinary problems in their lives, such as a lack of money (compared to some of their US colleagues). Some of the songs in the category '*bad' manners and illegalities* describe nights out and getting totally drunk together with one's posse or friends. In addition, in some of the songs that describe partying, a recurrent theme is also the use of (mild) drugs, although, according to Mikkonen (2004: 187), this is a theme more associated with some underground rappers. The *female body* category, the lyrics of which are often highly explicit, is a recurrent one in the male-dominated rap music genre, both in Finland and elsewhere.

Societal critique and issues

Societal issues and critique is one of the most significant themes in rap music in general, and also in the Finnish scene, and maybe even *the* most significant topic for some contemporary Finnish rappers (Paleface 2011; Mikkonen 2004). One might also categorize some of the topics in the category '*bad' manners and illegalities* here as well, since *police* issues, at least, are also societal issues (as is the topic of the legalization of *marijuana*, or of *graffiti* painting).

to the reader (as the reader may not be familiar with 'Finnish' or other 'languages') – this way, I can also show their 'hybridity'. The same markings will be used in chapter 4 in the analysis of the lyrics.

An example of the category and topic *religion* is the song “Doupeimmat Jumala seivaa” (‘God saves the dopest’) (2004) by Ruudolf, who describes himself as a frontline priest who spreads the ghetto gospel (by using multilingual resources). He himself is also the ‘living proof’ of God saving the dopest. This song presents an intriguing nexus of religion, popular culture and multilingualism, both on the discursive and linguistic level – and it, too, is autobiographical in that Ruudolf is in fact a believer.

Se on Ruudolf fresh out of poikamiesboksi, rough'n'tough niinku nahkarotsi, gettoevankeliumi ja munii ja pekonii ja laardii, for everyzone and everybody, Ruudolf fresh out of poikamiesboksi, jumalan rintamapappi ja gettokokki, ja sana leviää ku streptokokki, mitä mä meinaan? Ruudolf! Elävä todiste, et doupeimmat Jumala seivaa!	It's Ruudolf fresh out of the bachelor box, rough'n'tough like a leather jacket, ghetto gospel and eggs and bacon and lard, for everyzone and everybody, Ruudolf fresh out of the bachelor box. god's frontline priest and ghetto chef, and the word spreads like streptococcus, what do I mean? Ruudolf! A living proof that God saves the dopest!
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Another view on *religion(s)* and *society*, is offered in “Kobehärkä” (‘Kobe bull’) (2010) by Kemmuru, who discuss all kinds of gods, for example the god of rap and god of money. In this extract, Jodarok (one of the two MCs in the group) describes how he has learned that a human being can enjoy the little things of life and how the business world only renders people into numbers nowadays. The song illustrates an anti-capitalist ideology in its money-talk and includes also an intertextual reference to the book “The God of small things” (‘Joutavuuksien jumala’) (1997) by the Indian writer *Arundhati Roy*.

muista hyvä mies et kylänmies voi olla pyhä mies mut <i>hynämies</i> ei voi olla, hyvä mies persaukisten suojelupyhimys on <i>pykiny</i> kannatellu silti pinnalla yli nyt jo unohtuneiden esteiden humalistonkadun painajainen – Wes Craven joutavuuksien jumalan syntymäsjöilla opin miten vähästä ihminen voi iloita kuka tarvii <i>guruja</i> ? liiketalousliturgia tekee ihmisistä lukuja virastopirut, tukitoimintaperkeleet patruunoiden siunauksella valintoja emme tee	recall dear man that a village man can be a holy man but a <i>money</i> man can't be, a good man the patron saint of the poor has <i>struggled</i> held up on the surface still, now over the already forgotten obstacles the nightmare of humalistonkatu – Wes Craven in the birthplace of the god of small things I learned over how little people can rejoice who needs <i>gurus</i> ? business economics liturgy turns people into numbers bureau devils, fucking measures of support we don't make choices by factory owners' blessings
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Much of Finnish rap is characterized by (often ideological) criticism of society, capitalism and conservatism. Often, the lyrics seem to be more about life politics than party politics. The lyrics also discuss social problems, such as lack of democracy, drug abuse and Finnish drug policy and legislation, as well as criticize the materialistic world. (Nieminen 2003: 179.) In 2004, Mikkonen (2004: 187) argued that some Finnish hip hop, in fact, takes a very critical stand on society, similarly to the punk music of the 1980s.

Home, love and life

In Finnish rap, many songs describe life in Helsinki (and its various neighborhoods), as many rappers are either originally from there or have moved there. Numerous *regionalism* songs feature other regions or towns, too. In “Lapin gangsta” (“Gangsta of Lapland”) (2001), *Anno Fallo* describe their (supposed) gangster life in Lapland, filled with drugs, (threat of) violence and ‘bitches’, in an exaggerated style. Gangsta rap, which is known, in particular, for cruel and harsh lyrics that disrespect others, is, as such, a very difficult genre to directly transfer to the Finnish context. Nieminen (2003: 182) thinks that in Finland, rappers realize what the local context is and do not try to mimic US rappers in this respect, unless by means of irony or even parody. This we see here, as the song illustrates the localization of the ‘global’ theme and makes it matter in the local contexts, in an ironic small-scale way.

Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
työstää ympäri pitäjää	works around the parish
Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
länneestä itää, <i>pohojosesta</i> etelää	from west to east, <i>north</i> to south
Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
potkii turhat <i>niliikit</i> pois tieltä	kicks useless <i>dudes</i> out of the way
Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
vitut välittää mitä muut on musta mieltä	doesn't fucking care what others think of me
Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
työstää ympäri pitäjää	works around the parish
Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
lopulta tekee <i>niliikeistä</i> selevää	finally gets rid of the <i>dudes</i>
Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
tottakai <i>dunkkaa</i> aina hielta	of course always <i>stinks</i> like sweat
Lapin gangsta	Gangsta of Lapland
vitut välittää muut on musta mieltä	doesn't fucking care what others think of me

In the category *love and loved ones*, the topic of the *family* is present in “Toiseksi viimeiset dollarit” (“The last but one dollars”) (2010) by Stepa. The song is dedicated to Stepa’s mom and, in it, he lets her know that he appreciates her love for him and that he knows he can always go home to her. Stepa also addresses and thanks his other family members in the song. The specific topic of “the contribution of women and mother to humanity” is not a very common theme in hip hop, whether Eastern or Western (Lin 2009: 165)⁵⁷, and thus in this sense Stepa’s song is somewhat unique. Here, we can see that rappers often tap into their own lives and feelings – the lyrics are very revealing in their autobiographical quality.

Äiti, äiti näillä reissuil on rankkaa,	Mom, mom, these trips are hard,
niin rankkaa et sydän toimimasta lakkaa	so hard that my heart stops working
mut kyllä pumpppu vielä reissun kestää	but the ticker will last for this trip
sinun takii ku sillon paikka mun sydämessä.	for you because you have a place in my heart.
Siksi sulle tämäkin biisi soi	That's why also this song plays for you
ku tiedän että koti on paikka mihin tulla voi.	cos I know home is a place where I can come.

⁵⁷ The late US rapper 2pac’s “Dear mama” is also an exception to the rule, along with Fintelligens’ “Älä oo huolissas” (Don’t worry’).

Sitä saattaa elää, sitä saattaa kuolla,
mut soitin siskolle, et pitää sinusta huolta.

You might live, you might die,
but I called my sister to take care of you.

At the time of writing, in 2014, Finnish hip hop has developed into a very versatile scene as regards its themes. Globally recognized and recognizable themes such as social problems, friendship, everyday experiences and having fun connect our hip hop to the global hip hop nation. Rapping about love, relationships and women is also frequent. The most common themes are not related only to partying and having fun, but, alongside these, there are also more and more 'serious' lyrics about one's own life experiences or about marginal(ized) people. Of course, party topics continue to be frequent, but they do not describe the whole genre, although they might often get the most air play. Conscious rap (message rap) has continued to be popular, both in the underground and mainstream. The community aspect in Finnish rap music relates most often to friends and to the view that society should leave people alone and not interfere with their lives too much. There is a clear connection to US hip hop here in that the posse and loyal community membership are recurrent topics in rapping. Certain kinds of 'survival stories' also belong to hip hop music. One looks over one's past life and decisions, both good and bad, and raps about personal growth and the current state of affairs based on those experiences. (Nieminen 2003: 180-181.) This kind of a 'trajectory story' can also be seen, for example, in Cheek's "Orjantappuraa" ('Thorn') song (section 4.3).

Finally, some topics or issues seem to be *absent* in Finnish rap. First, Finnish rap features almost no (directly) misogynous lyrics, although some lyrics could be considered sexist, such as those by Petri Nygård, who often makes direct references to sex and female body parts. In addition, some of the early discography of groups like Fintelligens and Kapasiteettiysikkö addressed females in a sexually overt and explicit way, sometimes also through acts of humor and irony (though this is always a matter of interpretation) (see also Tervo 2014 for an analysis of Finnish rap videos and the use of irony when addressing females). In general, Finland can be considered one of the most gender equal countries in the world. According to the constitution, men and women have equal access to education and work, and Finnish women were amongst the first in the world to gain suffrage.⁵⁸ The (almost complete) lack of misogyny, (highly) characteristic of some US gangsta rap, in Finnish society is thus "an indication of the strong position traditionally held by women" (cf. Mitchell 2001b: 295 on the characterization of Maori and Pacific Islander rap; see also Brunstad et al. 2010, on the highly valued equality between women and men in Norway, and Tervo 2014 for similar observations about Finland).

Drugs (and their abuse), violence and 'ghetto life' are also fairly infrequent topics in Finnish rap music. These marginal topics are present only in some rappers' oeuvre, such as Julma-Henri, the psychedelic underground rapper from Helsinki and Steen1, another Helsinki rapper who deals with 'dark topics'

⁵⁸ However, debate continues on differentials in wages for men and women in Finland, and the relatively large amount of (domestic) violence against women in Finland.

in his music. This is not to say Finland does not have any socio-economic problems – but they are not as deep or widespread, for example, as in the US or South Africa (see e.g. Watkins 2004 and Williams & Stroud 2010 on hip hop in Cape Town). In fact, Finland is usually defined as a ‘Nordic welfare society’ where social (and also regional) adjustment has traditionally been one of the core societal values (Moisio 2012: 24).

In this section, I have discussed the themes of Finnish hip hop by creating a categorization, the main theme areas of which were: having fun/enjoying life, societal issues and critique, and home, life and love. I aimed to create a holistic picture of Finnish rap themes to show how diversified the scene actually is through its themes: while some rappers focus more on societal, and even political issues, others emphasize having fun and enjoying life, whether in the form of friendships, women or material goods. In this categorization and the lyrical extracts, we saw different rap ideologies on display and are now better informed about the ideological topography of (hip hop) Finland.

Here, then, we have seen a kind of a typology of the thematic domains of Finnish hip hop. The analysis (particularly in chapter 4) will show how these topics are in very intricate ways connected to scale, polycentricity and positioning. For instance, based on the knowledge we have gained so far, we will know that when Cheek raps and talks about ‘enjoying life’ or about cars such topics will be very differently positioned than they would be in the case of Stepa. They literally come from two different, subjective places. Here, I have defined the broad environment, the thematic building blocks, within which these three rappers operate – and drawing on this general framework of hip hop in Finland, I will focus on three specific case studies in chapters 4 and 5. Next, however, I discuss the specific theme of this study, authenticity, in detail.

2.3 Authenticity in hip hop culture

2.3.1 The ‘traditional’ approach

The concept of authenticity is, in general, often seen in connection with *tradition*, with ‘original’ contexts and features – and with ‘links’ to those (as this “tracing back to an original [...] validates the contemporary” Moore 2002: 215⁵⁹) – whatever they are in a given situation (for a critical discussion on this, see e.g. Moore 2002). Authenticity has for long been a topic of interest in research on (various genres of) popular culture and music. Different kinds of popular music have “different authenticities” (Davison 2001: 263; referring to Rupert Till’s paper in the same seminar) and they “assign differing importance to the process of establishing authenticity” (Armstrong 2004: 336). In music, authenticity is

⁵⁹ Also Armstrong (2004: 336) sees authenticity vis-à-vis ‘origins’, as he discusses whether “a performer has the requisite relation and proximity to an original source of rap” – this is then what makes the performer authentic.

often related to originality, creativity, seriousness, sincerity, uniqueness, musicianship, live performance and independent labels (Shuker 1998: 20).

Most significantly, authenticity, or 'keepin' it real', is a concept and an expression – a mantra – one often encounters in talk and research about rap music and hip hop culture. In fact, rap music is often seen as *embodying* authenticity (Huq 2006: 113). Morgan (2005: 211) sees authenticity as "the quest for coalescence and interface of ever-shifting art, politics, representation, performance and individual accountability that reflects all aspects of youth experience". Authenticity is a highly significant issue, both inside US hip hop culture itself but also, more and more, in the relationship between the 'original' US hip hop culture and the local(ized) forms of hip hop worldwide. So much has been written about it, both in relation to music, in general, and rap music, in particular, that I will not attempt to summarize the whole literature here. Instead, I will simply briefly note that in much hip hop research, the notion of authenticity is perpetually being emphasized, in one way or another.

In the following, I will discuss authenticity in relation to, first, 'race' and 'language', and, second, in relation to 'commercialism' and 'underground'. I will also discuss some of these questions in relation to the Finnish context. Last, authenticity in relation to the notion of 'the local' comes closest to the view favored in the present study. This discussion is important, since 'authenticity' is the key theme of this study. In order to understand how I view it (section 2.3.2), we first need to see how it has been conceptualized and discussed in rap research, in general.

Authenticity, race and language

Authenticity has been particularly important for African Americans, "a people who have been imitated and crossed over and sold out so relentlessly" (Rickford & Rickford 2000: 24). For them, authenticity "is the highly valued sense of what is genuine" (ibid.). Thus, authenticity relates to being and keeping it real to oneself and one's origins. According to Rose (1994: 2), one of the first scholars working on American hip hop, rap music "prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America"⁶⁰. Hip hop "is and always will be a culture of the African-American minority. But it has become an international language, a style that connects and defines the self-image of countless teenagers". (Bozza 2004: 176.) Thus, 'originally', anything African-American (or 'Black') in hip hop is considered authentic, almost by default.

Lipsitz (1995: 369) argues that Whiteness, "[a]s the unmarked category against which difference is constructed [...] never has to speak its name [or] acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations". However, at least in the US hip hop context, Blackness functions as the 'unmarked category' against which White people have to "measure up to the standards of authenticity" (Cutler 2009: 80). This normativity of Blackness in hip hop emerges from "a discourse that privileges the Black body and the Black

⁶⁰ See also Perry (2004: 10) who argues that "[h]ip hop music is black American music", (but does not deny its 'hybridity').

urban street experience” (Rebensdorf 1996⁶¹ as cited in Cutler 2009: 80). In his extensive research on authenticity in the US hip hop, using as data hip hop magazines, press releases and internet discussion forums, McLeod (1999: 139) argued for five interrelated *semantic dimensions* along which authenticity is defined and discussed. One of these is the *racial dimension* (Black vs White), whereby he concluded that “by disassociating oneself from ‘blackness’, a hip hop artist opens himself or herself to charges of selling out”. Perry (2004) has also introduced the notion of being ‘situationally black’ (in the US context), which means, in the global context, that rappers everywhere may also identify “with the racial politics that surround it [US hip hop]”, thus “being situationally black” is also always “tied to local relations of race” (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 37). Finland and the Finnish hip hop scene is still relatively (‘racially’) homogeneous, with the exception of a few upcoming young talents with a ‘migrant’ background (see the discussion in 6.2 on future research). Thus up till now, ‘race’ or ‘ethnicity’ has not been a particularly highlighted issue in local rap topics, perhaps because whiteness has been somewhat unmarked.

Relating authenticity to race has been one of the central themes in some hip hop -related discussions, but so too is the question of language. Stereotypically, what is considered authentic is to rap in African American Vernacular English (cf. Perry 2004: 10, 24–26). Many studies that have compared Cross-Racial African American Vernacular English (CRAAVE), the ‘non-Black’ usage of African American English, with the AAE of African Americans show that “although CRAAVE speakers may express a desire to affiliate with African American culture, their lack of linguistic mastery in using AAE marks them as inauthentic” (Higgins 2009a: 97). Thus, despite their wishes and desires to be seen as authentic users of AAE, they are often not seen as such, because their resources do not match the ‘native’, original ones. An important thing to remember here is that whether using other’s resources “leads to inauthenticity or not depends on the interpretation of the linguistic performance by members of situated linguistic communities” (Higgins 2009a: 97). Thus, whereas the multilingual ‘shout-outs till alla mina vänner’ (‘shout-outs to all of my friends’) by Pyhimys (see section 4.4 on his song “Bättre folk”) could be deemed as inauthentic in the US context, they have a highly local significance in referring to his local colleagues and friends in the Finnish hip hop context. In addition, whereas the ‘general public’ in Finland might judge this kind of multilingual speech or ‘crossing’ (making use of ‘languages’ that are not (traditionally thought of as) ‘belonging’ to you; Rampton 1995) into another’s speech, the local hip hop fans, or even the artists’ own fans, more specifically, may not judge the language use(d) in any way, but rather appreciate it as a significant part of the language of hip hop.

After the initial emphasis on the United States, the notion of authenticity in hip hop was expanded from the African American community and culture, to refer, apply to and “contribute to the musicalised dialogue that is held to exist between those displaced peoples of African origins who collectively make

⁶¹ The original text is not to be found on the webpage any longer.

up the *African-diaspora*" (Bennett 2000: 133, emphasis added; see also Lipsitz 1994: 23–48). This 'extension' has also been characterized as *the Black Atlantic*, which refers to the Black intercultural and transnational formation on both sides of the ocean, something which comprises African, American, Caribbean and British influences (Gilroy 1993: 7). But as hip hop, its culture, discourse and language have gone 'completely global', issues such as those presented above become highly contested.

As regards the Finnish context, Nieminen (2003: 177) argues, understandably, that no Finn can claim to be from the ghetto or an 'original gangsta'. In 2004, Mikkonen (2004: 190) suggested that as the Finnish hip hop culture has become more mature, for some rappers the question of who is 'original' and 'authentic' no longer much matter. In fact, according to *Raymond Ebanks*, the (former) MC of the (internationally known) Bomfunk MC's, street credibility is a very questionable value as such in a welfare society like Finland (Mikkonen 2004: 190). Nevertheless, we seem to have adopted some elements from 'their' hip hop culture via films, music videos and internet, and gotten so-called 'secondary experiences' (Ziehe 1991: 38) of life in the Bronx and Compton and, in this way, made ourselves a part of the 'imagined community', which waves their hands the same way, says 'yo!' in a credible way and, in general, knows the gestures, expressions, phrases and their meanings. (Nieminen 2003: 177.) Nevertheless, we do all of this in a local language, for local people and in a local context (more below). Thus, at least in 2013, there is little point in comparing or contrasting Finnish hip hop to the 'original' US context or 'model', but rather exploring Finnish hip hop as valuable and significant *per se*.

Authenticity, commercialism and underground

Another significant discourse around authenticity revolves around commercialism and underground, particularly in the US context, but also elsewhere in the global hip hop nation. This is the case not only in hip hop but in music, in general. In fact, the debates between 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' (i.e. 'entertainment' and/or 'commercial'), has characterized the history of popular music for several decades (Grossberg 1992, with particular reference to rock music; see also Shuker 1998; Moore 2002). McLeod (1999: 141) also included the *political-economic dimension*, Underground vs Commercial, in his hip hop study. He argued that selling out, going 'commercial', happens when the artists and their music are "distan[ce]d from an independently owned network of distribution (the underground) and reposition[ed] within a music business culture" (ibid.). Thus, authenticity, i.e. not selling out, is traditionally linked with the underground, particularly within hip hop.

The age-old and ongoing hip hop tension between the underground and the commercial is also present in the Finnish context (see e.g. Nieminen 2003; Kuivas 2003b; Mikkonen 2004). Those artists who 'make it' – become commercially successful – often have to deal with 'sell out' accusations. Fintelligens, in particular, has had its share of 'sell out' accusations. With a big record company, they sold very well and because of this, their 'street

credibility' came under question.⁶² An intriguing 'response' to the (Finnish) people and their hatred of commercial rap music is their song "Sori" ('Sorry') (see below for the chorus; see also Kuivas 2003b) from 2002 in which they, at first, seem to be apologetic about everything: starting a rap boom, annoying people, changing the whole industry from author's editions into gold-selling albums, their hit songs, clichés, etc., but reveal in the end that they only fake-apologize and that they are actually proud of everything that they have done for the Finnish hip hop scene thus far.

Soori... Me ollaan pahoillamme kaikesta,
nyt ymmärretään et *jengi* suuttu ihan aiheesta.
Sori näist biiseistä, näist kliseistä ja helyistä
kledjuist, näist sanoista, näist hiteistä ja levyistä.
Soori... Leikisti pahoillamme kaikesta,
anteeksi et tajuttiin tää vast täs vaiheesta.
Pakko päästä purkaa sydänt täst aiheesta,
et oltais muka pahoillamme kaikesta.

Soorryyy... We're sorry about everything,
now we understand that *people* got upset for a reason.
Sorry about the songs, these clichés and bling
clothes, these words, these hits and albums.
Soorryyy... Pretending to be sorry about it all,
sorry we realized it only at this point.
I have to share this all with you,
that we pretend to be sorry about it all.

This song is a suitable response to the 'sell-out' accusations, as it offers another view on the authenticity matter – Fintelligens themselves thought that (mainstream) pop rap was the best style and genre for them, and by doing it this way, they are not taking anything away from anyone. Different styles and genres do, and can, co-exist. In general, this emic viewpoint by "Sori" sums up the debate around mainstream, underground and authenticity quite neatly. In fact, a similar response to being accused of selling out, can be seen in the "Orjantappuraa" ('Thorn') song by Cheek (see section 4.3) where he, too, takes a stand on all kinds of accusations against him. In light of the above, I think it is very interesting to explore authenticity by investigating three Finnish rappers (one of them viewed as 'mainstream'), whose authenticity would appear to be quite different to begin with.

Authenticity and the local

Recently, within the *global phase* of hip hop research, *local* definitions of what matters in terms of authenticity have been emphasized. This is the case in the present study as well: I join those who expand the scope of research and ideology of authenticity in agreeing that hip hop is a *culturally mobile* and *inclusive* phenomenon. This 'new school of hip hop theorists' argues that, in the words of Bennett, "the notion of authenticity is constantly being re-made all over the world, in the global hip hop nation" (2004: 133). For example, in the Netherlands, Wermuth (2001: 150) argues that the following struggles over authenticity became actual themes as soon as hip hop was localized and appropriated: local versus global, artistic integrity versus sellout, masculine versus feminine, and black versus white, whereby "each first-mentioned term is associated with the good and positive qualities of the music", i.e. with authenticity. Interestingly, here, too, the emphasis is on the dichotomies, on authenticity being 'synonymous' with one end of the dichotomy (but not the

⁶² However, they have since established their own record company, Rähinä.

other), in fact in much the same vein as McLeod's (1999) semantic dimensions of authenticity construction – and it is against this dichotomous thinking that I argue in the next section.

Pennycook (2007b) has also been influential in emphasizing 'the local' in the construction of authenticity. First of all, he argues that authenticity is "not so much [...] an individualist obsession with the self" but rather "a dialogical engagement with community" (p. 103) – thus, the emphasis is not entirely on oneself but in matters beyond oneself. In fact, authenticity needs to be understood in relation to 'horizons of significance' (i.e. a background of intelligibility; Taylor 1991: 39) – and these horizons of significance "[pull] the ideology of keeping it real back toward local definitions of what matters" (Pennycook 2007b: 103). Thus, there is no point in measuring up or contrasting, for example, Finnish hip hop with the US one, as they have completely different 'horizons of significance' – i.e. what matters locally in the hip hop scene. There is, however, always

tension between on the one hand the spread of a cultural dictate to adhere to certain principles of what it means to be authentic, and on the other, a process of localization that makes such an expression of staying true to oneself dependent on local contexts, languages, cultures, and understandings of the real (Pennycook 2007b: 103).

Thus, while there might be 'pressure' from the 'original' (US) hip hop culture and rap music to be authentic in relation to it, authenticity is still, nevertheless, always a local expression and construction. There is a dialogue between the 'local horizons of significance' as well as the global ones – all in all, it is about understanding "the relationship to a wider whole" (Pennycook 2007b: 104), the wider hip hop community, which nevertheless shares some language, discourse and culture. Finally, I agree with the remark by Pennycook (2007b: 112, emphasis added) that "we can understand the hip-hop ideology of keepin' it real as a discursively and culturally mediated mode of representing and producing the *local*". Thus, in this study, too, the artists, linguistically, discursively and culturally, represent and produce various takes on 'the local' in different ways, both in their lyrics and in their interviews.

An interesting and humorous, even ironic, comment about authenticity in the Finnish context in 2003 is made by Nieminen, who, in his study on the state of Finnish hip hop, had asked a hip hop enthusiast to tell him how difficult or easy it is to make Finnish rap music and at the same time respect its 'origins' and 'authenticity'. The answer was: "[t]here are no ghettos, not even good streets here in Finland." In Nieminen's view, it shows an ironic stance on how Finnish hip hop cannot be, and it does not have to be, like (some of) the US hip hop. The contexts of hip hop here in Finland may be the everyday life in the suburb of Vantaa (part of the Helsinki metropolitan area) or the melting of the ice in Tenojoki (the river flowing along the Finnish and Norwegian border). (Nieminen 2003: 188.) These remarks aptly sum up the discussion of authenticity as they foreground the fact that Finnish hip hop music does not need to be measured against its US 'counterparts' (in the plural, as many different rap genres and scenes exist there as well). Finnish hip hop (and,

indeed, all local scenes across the globe) is a unique creation of the different local artists who discuss various local themes. Problematic issues still remain though, one of them being: who gets to define authenticity? Whose definition is right or wrong? With what kinds of resources is authenticity constructed? Why those resources, and why not others? In the next section, I argue for a more elaborate view and approach to authenticity in hip hop culture; one, which is not based on dichotomies and one which is based not only on the local scale, although it is a highly influential one, but also on other scales.

2.3.2 A more focused approach

Taking on board the issues discussed in the previous section, I argue that authenticity construction should be (re)viewed locally, in each given context (cf. Pennycook 2007a, 2007b). I approach authenticity differently from those who see it as a (supposedly very clear) on/off phenomenon (or quality): one either is or is not authentic according to very specific criteria (or dichotomies) (cf. e.g. McLeod 1999; Wermuth 2001; Armstrong 2004). Similarly to Condry (2006: 20), although he does not specifically address authenticity as such, but cultural globalization in the context of Japanese hip hop, I wish to refrain from dichotomies or binaries such as: authentic vs imitation and commercial vs creative. In this section, then, I want to expand but also sharpen the view on the construction of authenticity.

Here, I suggest an analytically more finely nuanced notion of authenticity – one which is dispersed over scales, and how the presence of these scales creates something we can call polycentricity. Authenticity, thus, becomes a blend of various issues. In this section, I will briefly elaborate on these two notions, scales and polycentricity, in general terms (these will be discussed in more detail in sections 4.2.3 and 5.2.1, respectively). For the present purposes, these concepts are very important theoretically, but at the same time also very practical. For instance, we will see that the very ‘center’ (of Finnish hip hop) is Helsinki and the ‘periphery’ is exemplified by Sodankylä. It is in the joining of these different places in relation to each other that we can see an example of polycentricity. Thus far, only a couple of studies have applied these two concepts in the context of hip hop culture. In their research on Chinese (internet) hip hop, Varis and Wang (2011) and Wang (2012) drew on the notion of ‘scales’ and ‘polycentricity’ in the construction of authenticity in the case of a Chinese (dialect) rapper. Likewise, Pietikäinen (2010) explored the Inari Sámi rapper Amoc via the notions of scales and polycentricity.

In addition to authenticity being scalar and polycentric, in line with the sociolinguistics of late modernity I also view authenticity as ‘a discursive accomplishment’: it is not something that pre-exists (inherently) in any individual but it is *done in performance*, in the way we speak and what we speak about, both on the linguistic and the discursive level, something which has been underestimated in much earlier sociolinguistic research (Coupland 2003, who discusses authenticity in the context of ‘the native speaker’). Thus, keeping in mind what we have already encountered in the previous section (2.3.1), namely

that “an expression of staying true to oneself [is always] dependent on local contexts, languages, cultures, and understandings of the real” (Pennycook 2007b: 103), we can now approach authenticity as something dispersed over scales, and oriented towards different centers of norms, as well as a discursive accomplishment.

Scalar authenticity

In this study, I see authenticity as organized on various scale-levels, i.e. spatio-temporal frames of meaning-making. Here, I discuss the ‘local’, ‘regional’, ‘national’ and ‘global’ scales (as well as their translocal connectedness) and give examples of what they mean in an age of globalization and with specific reference to hip hop culture. It is important to bear in mind the interconnectedness of all these scales. They are not separate from one another, but rather coincide, connect, overlap and mix in a variety of ways. Another important point to be emphasized here is that a scale is a concept related to *meaning*: what makes sense on what scale-level(s). Of course, it is never (simply) a case of ‘local’ versus ‘global’, for example. Rather, scales can more usefully be seen as relational ‘scopes’ of meaningful uptake, of understanding. (See also the discussion above in section 1.2 on the two meanings of ‘scale’ in this study.)

Local

The local scale refers to things and processes that take place below the state, and even below the regional scale. In the present era of globalization, a great deal of attention has been focused on the local, as that is where globalization processes actually take place (Blommaert 2010). Blommaert (2010: 79), however, reminds us that “even when touched by globalization processes, the local does not necessarily become more global” but can stay “local in structure, self-presentation and image”. We also need to understand the local not “as some static, traditional, unchanging place of cultural security” (Pennycook 2007a: 94). Rather, it should be viewed as “a space that is crossed by a variety of different collective sensibilities each of which imposes a different set of expectations and cultural needs upon that space” (Bennett 2000: 66). Pennycook (2010: 4) also reminds (or warns) us of how ‘the local’ is often seen as “the site of resistance, of tradition, of authenticity” when understood as the ‘opposite’ of a ‘homogenizing’ globalization but also, on the other hand, as “parochial, limited, constrained, unsophisticated” – in other words, in very black and white terms, in a dichotomous relationship to the ‘global’ (Higgins 2009b, for example, has also rejected the global-local dichotomy in her research on the multivocal and -lingual contexts of East African popular culture).

When new, translocal (more about this concept below) resources enter the local scene, they are always appropriated and “interpreted on the basis of local systems of meaningfulness” (Blommaert 2010: 79). This we can easily see in the case of hip hop culture, as language and discourse travel and are being refashioned in new places, to ‘fit’ the local context. The *very* local aspect of hip hop is inevitably peripheral (more about this in chapter 5): when rappers speak on behalf of the nation, for example, they cannot speak about very local matters

or in a very local dialect, because they have to address and produce meanings that are valid for the nation as a whole. Thus, whenever there is a 'central' function, there is very little locality. On the other hand, whenever there is 'deep' locality (i.e. highly local locality, which revolves around local matters and references), it is (often) produced from the margins (of society, for instance) or from the (geographical) periphery.

Regional

Like 'the local', 'the regional' is also a multifaceted concept. It is sometimes understood as falling between the global and the national, referring to, for example, the European or Asian region and sometimes between a continent and a nation, for example Southern Africa (e.g. de Blij 2008). In this study, however, 'regional' is understood as (somewhere) in between the national and the local (see e.g. Uitermark 2002; de Blij 2008), although the distinction between the very local and more regional is not, of course, always clear-cut. In general, 'regional' could be thought of as including many 'locals'; for instance, (Finnish) Lapland could include the 'locals' of Rovaniemi and Sodankylä.

Two of the most obvious 'regional' examples in the Finnish hip hop context would be those of the Helsinki metropolitan area and Lapland. Although most often 'representing' a specific place, like Helsinki or Sodankylä (respectively), rappers might also occasionally identify with a geographically larger area. This can also be seen in the knowledge they have about the area, both space- and time-wise: they know what has happened in that area before and when and what significance it has had for the present state of things. Forman (2002: xvii, emphasis original) also acknowledges both types of identifications: "Rap artists draw inspiration from their regional affiliations as well as from a keen sense of what I call the *extreme local* [i.e. highly specific sociospatial information or references to, for instance, particular streets or area codes], upon which they base their constructions of spatial imagery" (see also Omoniyi 2009 on the regional level of identification in the context of Nigerian hip hop). In the US, this kind of regional affiliation has been examined, for example, by Cramer and Hallett (2010: 256) in the context of the Midwestern and Southern United States (i.e. the 'Third Coast', or 'Dirty South'), where rap artists' "particular lexical uses aid [them] in their attempts at in-group solidarity and successful identity construction".

National

While many researchers emphasize the local and the global, the specifically national aspect (in between these two) is sometimes overlooked. As Blommaert (2005: 217) argues, "one of the widespread ingredients of discourses on globalisation and late modernity is a denial of the [nation] state as an important actor in linguistic and cultural processes". He (ibid.) also warns us of the widespread tendency to see 'state' as a 'nation state' - the latter is a uniform state, characterized by 'successful nationalism'. Although I will use the 'national' scale as one of the coordinates for these rappers, I will not try to

convey an image of Finland as a highly uniform, homogenous state. As we will see in the actual analysis, the national scale is an important anchor for these Finnish rap artists: it is something they orient to and within which they operate, but it does not mean a similar entity to each of them. This will become particularly clear in the course of chapter 4. As in the case of other scales, the national scale does not exist in isolation either, but has to react to processes “from transnational as well as intra-national” scale-levels, thus both from “above and below” (Blommaert 2005: 218). It can, thus, be seen as an “actor that organizes a dynamic between the (transnational) world system and (national) locality” (Blommaert 2005: 219). It is also worth pointing out that in some research on hip hop cultures across the globe, the national (scale) might also sometimes be included (or hinted at), one way or another, *in* the notion of the local, no clear distinction being drawn between them. For instance, Condry (2006), discussing various facets of ‘hip hop Japan’, does not specifically (and literally) address the ‘national’ context(s) but speaks of ‘the local’.

Global

The global scale-level “[constitutes] the highest level (determining) context for language usage in society, at any time” (Blommaert 2005: 18). It is thus the largest scale, and one which, in principle, covers the ‘whole’ globe (Mamadouh et al. 2004: 456). The present world system is characterized as globalization, of which increased mobility and flows of people, images and goods are key factors and in which economic, social, cultural and political relations are at stake (e.g. Pennycook 2007a; Blommaert 2010). Although what ‘global’ means now, in the 21st century, is very different from what it meant, for example a century, or even only a couple of decades ago, globalization, with people and goods moving around, is not an entirely new phenomenon. What is new is its vastly increased scope, breadth and effects. (e.g. Castells 2000; Mignolo 2012 [2000]; Pennycook 2007a; Blommaert 2010.) As Pennycook (2007a: 30) argues, we need to understand globalization processes both as part of ‘historical continuity’ as well as ‘historical disjuncture’, i.e. as partly different from the past.

While some scholars (e.g. Phillipson 1999) have argued that globalization suggests homogenization (and even Americanization), others (e.g. Pennycook 2007a; Higgins 2009b; Blommaert 2010) suggest quite the opposite: for example, according to Pennycook (2007a), we are dealing with various ‘(trans)cultural flows’, when we talk about globalization, and not global uniformity or similarity. These flows are *not* simply (and uni-directionally) ‘west-based’ but, rather, they may derive from many different spaces and go in many (new) directions (cf. Pennycook 2007a). For instance, Finland’s location, between the west and the east, influences the (circles of) flows that have a potential effect here: in addition to flows from the ‘west’, we appropriate (and have appropriated) those from the east (from and across the Russian border, as well as other ‘eastern’ countries), such as ‘Slavic melancholy’ (in music) and the Karelian song and music traditions, along with the Latino tango tradition (both in music and dance) from South America. Recently, influences and flows of

African origin, both musical and linguistic, have arrived in Finland with (im)migrants and refugees from the countries there. (see e.g. POMUS – the online Finnish popular music museum – for characterizations of each decade in the history of Finnish popular music).

Here, again, it is, important to avoid over-simplifying: namely, the notion that global cultural movements are (always) fluid, and the local is (always) tied to fixedness and tradition. Pennycook (2007a: 94) suggests that we should instead focus on several overlapping and simultaneous processes of fixity (“the ways in which music is about location, tradition, and cultural expression”), fluidity (“movement and flows of music across time and space”) and, finally, flux (“the constant changes that are part of a process of identity refashioning”), when considering the local-global dynamics of a music culture, such as hip hop. In the case of hip hop, the ‘global’ scale thus covers all the countries, where, in various ways, hip hop is being done and performed (which, by now, is almost every single country in the world). Whereas some journalists and researchers seem to have adopted the position that the global spread of hip hop refers to the spread of African American culture (e.g. Toop 2000; Bozza 2004; Osumare 2007), others have emphasized the local (and national) aspects of this process. For example, Alim (2009a) has suggested the term Global Hip Hop Nation for the worldwide community of various appropriated and ‘local’ hip hop scenes.

By having outlined (in a way, delineated) the ‘scales’ here under specific headings, I do not wish to emphasize their separate nature, nor do I see the scales as (necessarily) fixed: they are not *always* regional, for example. Androutsopoulos (2010b: 743), in discussing scales in various media, has also emphasized how “relations between spaces and linguistic resources are not essentially fixed, but evoked and reproduced in discourse”. In addition, the scales never occur alone but always co-occur in real semiotic work, via various resources that the rappers make use of and find meaningful. ‘Scale’ is a useful notion for the present study, as it enables analysis of various ‘scopes’ of understanding (i.e. semiotized TimeSpace) within Finnish hip hop. The rap artists project multiple ‘frames’ of reference in their lyrics, a topic I investigate in chapter 4, in particular. (As explained above, in chapter 5, in the analysis of the interviews, the understanding of ‘scale’ is different, i.e. it is understood as a relative positioning in the artists’ meta-talk.) The notion of scale seems to be contemporary at the moment, perhaps because of the nature of social life in late modernity: people are mobile and their communication and activities take place on various levels and draw on various spaces, not just one (see e.g. Brenner 2001; Mamadouh et al. 2004). Why scales are particularly pertinent for hip hop has to do with the multifaceted (hybrid, yet ordered) and nuanced nature of hip hop: its (various) roots, spread, uptake and appropriation (across the globe, ‘languages’ and cultures) and multiple-origin influences. Before we can move on to authenticity vis-à-vis polycentricity, we still need to discuss the idea of translocal connectedness, which can be seen in a significant relation to scales.

Translocal

The translocal permeates all the other scales, it is thus *cross-scalar* in nature and, thus, not a scale in itself. Rather, 'translocal' consists (simultaneously) of the local and the global, but also exceeds them (Leppänen et al. 2009).⁶³ Translocality can be understood in two ways (see Leppänen et al. 2009a, following Hepp 2009 and Nederveen Pieterse 1995). Firstly, translocality deals with the idea that today's locales are intricately *connected* to one another – therefore, the local still matters, but it tends to matter in relation to other locales (ibid.). In relation to hip hop, this connectedness can be seen, for instance, in the 'shared' hip hop vocabulary and references, and in the way (other) hip hop cultures and scenes (across countries) are being followed, commented and drawn upon. Secondly, translocality refers to a specific understanding of culture as outward-looking, exogenous and focused on hybridity and identification (ibid.). Hip hop is an outward-looking hybrid complex in the sense that it consists of and continually draws on several semiotic resources from different contexts; identification in hip hop is constructed in complex, simultaneous ways with reference to both the local and the global (and national and regional). Therefore, both territoriality ('we here now in our place') and de-territoriality ('they there beyond the bounds of our locale') act as reference points for identification. (Leppänen et al. 2009).

In hip hop culture, local rappers are part of both the local and the global hip hop nation through their linguistic and cultural action, for example their usage of (appropriated) African American Vernacular English to communicate local meanings to a local audience. Alim (2009c: 107, emphasis added) has, in fact, suggested that we understand the Global Hip Hop Nation as

a network of overlapping and intersecting *translocal style communities*, with members in particular localities "making a choice to be connected across recognized boundaries" (Cooke & Lawrence 2005: 1) and negotiating their identities and memberships in the simultaneously localizing and globalizing imagined world of Hip Hop.

In his earlier work, Pennycook (2007a: 6) emphasized English as 'a translocal language' ("a language of fluidity and fixity that moves across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations"), but has, since then, shifted his focus towards English (and hip hop) as *already local* within the context of globalization and various transcultural flows.

The connection between the previously discussed 'local' and 'translocal' is a complex one. Blommaert (2010: 79), in fact, argues that trans-local processes and patterns, from a higher scale-level, do not 'make' various localities

⁶³ The translocal is different from the 'glocal'. Many hip hop researchers still use this term: for example, Androutsopoulos (2009) argues that English is a main resource for constructing "'glocal' Hip Hop identities". The concept of 'glocal' was originally coined by Robertson (1995). In line with Blommaert (2010), however, I do not use the concept 'glocal' in this research, because it tends to suggest the local in(side) the global, therefore emphasizing the global nature of things. The translocal is also different from the 'transnational', as the latter suggests operating across *national* boundaries and is not a focus of the present study either.

inevitably more 'global' or 'deterritorialized'. Meaning-making is still done, appropriated and interpreted locally (ibid.). The key idea here is *mobility*: scales involve mobilities of meaning. They bring meanings into another scope of possible uptake. For example in the case of hip hop, the use of typical beats provokes a 'global' uptake: everyone familiar with hip hop will instantly recognize it as 'hip hop'. When Finnish rappers use Finnish in their lyrics, however, it restricts that scope of possible uptake. And when, for example, Stepa uses Sodankylä (his home municipality) as a point of reference in Finnish hip hop, it, again, further narrows the scope of the uptake. But it is when rap music from Sodankylä is made translocally meaningful (via the mix of various resources such as the local dialect and cultural references to US rappers or EU politics) that we become interested in the process and the phenomenon.

Authenticity as polycentric

Finnish hip hop is a *polycentric* complex and phenomenon, in which artists orient not towards one (norm-providing) 'center' but to multiple centers that are dispersed over different scales, scopes of understandability. Polycentricity is a key characteristic of any human communication. Whenever we communicate with one another, we orient towards various centers of norms. These centers can be individuals, for example, the US hip hop mogul Jay Z, whose style of rapping can influence young rappers across the globe; they can be institutions, like the school, with its own norms and policies, or they can be abstract entities, such as the nation state, whose politics can influence the rap lyrics of someone interested in, for example, income taxes.

If we acknowledge a broad view of global hip hop culture, we can see that it is, and has been from the outset, by definition, highly polycentric. First of all, the various centers in the US can include those of the Bronx, in particular, and New York, more generally, and even more broadly speaking, the East Coast. But within the US, there are also centers on the West Coast, such as those of California, Los Angeles and Compton. The emergence of hip hop in the Midwestern and Southern United States has made it the third larger center within the US (see e.g. Cramer & Hallett 2010). Second, the various centers within the African-diaspora are significant locations for the people active within that frame of reference and, of course, Western Africa with its griots (local storytellers) has an influence on some current US or Canadian rappers, such as *K'Naan* (as was discussed above in section 1.2; for an analysis of his lyrics and interviews, see Pennycook & Mitchell 2009). France (and the Francophone world, at large; see e.g. Sarkar 2007, 2009) has also been an active participant and contributor in the global hip hop nation for decades and some Finnish rap artists have also been inspired by it (as was discussed in section 2.1.2 in the case of *Fintelligens*). The Spanish 'circle of flow' can be seen as an important center for the hip hop scenes of Spain, Cuba, Mexico and South America (Pennycook 2007a: 122). In addition to these, of course, each hip hop scene has its own significant centers, both on the national and more local levels (as we will see in the analysis in chapters 4 and 5). Thus, centers can exist even in the 'periphery'

and these (emerging) centers can have a small (or larger) effect on other hip hop scenes via various flows. In this study, then, the rap artists orient to various norm-providing centers on different scale-levels. They do this by linguistic and discursive means.

After this extensive discussion on the significant themes of the study, i.e. hip hop culture and authenticity, we can now move on to the specific set-up of this study.

3 THE SET-UP OF THE STUDY

This chapter outlines the methodological framework of the present study. First, I introduce the aims of the study, including the more specific research questions, along with the methods and the particular steps of the analysis (section 3.1). Second, I introduce the artists, involved in the study, namely Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa (section 3.2). In discussing them, I will attempt to answer the following questions related to their trajectories and position(s): who are they? Where do they come from? What kind of music do they make? I will also elaborate on why I chose to study these particular artists. Third, I discuss the data of the study, i.e. the lyrics, interviews and ethnographic observations (section 3.3). Finally, I discuss my own role and position(s) as a researcher in this kind of study (section 3.4). My purpose in doing all this is to make the people and the setting familiar for the reader, before moving on to chapter 4, which focuses on Finnish hip hop as a scale-level.

3.1 Aims and methods

This section will first outline the research questions of the study, briefly introduce its key concepts and then elaborate on the way the analysis is conducted in chapters 4 (in which the analysis focuses on the lyrics) and 5 (in which the interviews are analyzed).

3.1.1 Research questions and aims

This study deals with hip hop authenticity in the Finnish context, focusing on three particular rap artists, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, as illustrative examples of different rap genres and positions in the Finnish scene: they exemplify both the mainstream and underground orientations, as well as various positions in the (geographical and cultural) centers and margins. In the course of this study, the research questions have been (re)shaped and (re)defined as part of the

research process, as is typical of ethnographic studies (e.g. Hymes 1996; Blommaert & Dong 2010). As a result of this process, the research questions of this study can be spelled out as follows. The *key research question* of the study is:

How do these three Finnish rap artists construct their authenticity?

In order to answer this larger question, it is broken down into smaller, analytical questions, which guide the analysis in chapters 4 and 5.

1. How do the artists construct their authenticity through
 - a) linguistic resources and repertoires?
 - b) discursive resources and repertoires?
 - c) What kinds of functions do these resources and repertoires have?

By functions, I refer to, for instance, personal ones, i.e. how their resources and repertoires can be seen to index them as specific kinds of artists, with their own individual life stories and trajectories, and to social ones, i.e. indexing the social, cultural and historical context in which they operate in as well as their specific, shared hip hop knowledge, expertise and communality. The second and third analytical questions are:

2. How do the artists draw on scales in their construction of authenticity?
3. How do the artists orient to different centers of norms (polycentricity) in their construction of authenticity?

These research questions will be explained in more detail in chapters 4 and 5, but what makes them justified as aims, deserves a brief explanation here. Authenticity in hip hop culture and rap music is an important and interesting research topic, because it is a highly significant, visible and debated concept in that culture (see chapter 2) and thus also in hip hop research. Over the years, hip hop culture has changed, transformed and been appropriated in many ways in terms of its spread, those active in it and its popularity, and therefore it is interesting to see what this change means in terms of how authenticity is understood and conceptualized.⁶⁴ In order for us to understand what authenticity can mean in this changed situation and in the present era of globalization, we need new concepts and approaches. I argue that these could be provided by the notions of resources, repertoires, scales and polycentricity.

The research questions set out above are justified in that authenticity is 'done' in and through language (or, linguistic resources, i.e. 'languages', varieties, dialects and slang) and discourse (or, discursive resources, i.e.

⁶⁴ This, of course, might not be true only for hip hop, but also for youth and music (sub)cultures in general. Thus, even if we are dealing specifically with hip hop in this study, the significance of authenticity construction in late modernity can be related and extended to other realms of life as well.

discourses, narratives, topics, speech act patterns and cultural references) via rap lyrics but also via discussions about rap and hip hop. Admittedly, authenticity in hip hop is constructed via a *variety* of semiotic resources (such as music, still and moving images, the body, clothing, etc.), and not only linguistic and discursive ones. Indeed, (rap) music as a whole is a multimodal construct (e.g. Frith 1996a; Machin 2010). However, due to research-economic reasons, the focus in this study is limited to the analysis of language and discourse.

In the context of hip hop culture, it is not only the 'local' or the 'global' (or a combination of these) that matters. Rather, through various resources, rap artists *project various scales*, i.e. 'scopes of understandability' in their rap lyrics, including the 'regional' and the 'national'. In addition, rappers also position themselves (in their meta-talk) in various ways vis-à-vis other rappers and their genres - this offers another kind of understanding of the notion of scale, as we shall see in the interviews. Finally, the question about polycentricity is significant in that people always communicate and behave with reference to specific norm-providing centers. Investigating the scales and centers of norms, in particular, will offer us new knowledge about the Finnish hip hop context, as these issues have not been addressed in earlier research. Authenticity, the main topic of analysis, is thus constructed i) via various resources and repertoires, ii) by projecting several scale-levels and iii) in relation to various centers of norms.

Earlier research on global hip hop cultures has already focused on hip hop culture and rap music as a translocal, transcultural and (re)appropriated phenomenon (cf. Mitchell 2001a; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003; Androutsopoulos 2009; Condry 2006; Sarkar 2007, 2009; Omoniyi 2009, amongst others); my study is part of this tradition. Although many sociolinguists have discussed hip hop with particular reference to globalization processes (e.g. Pennycook 2003, 2007a; Omoniyi 2009; Alim 2009a, 2009c; Higgins 2009a, 2009b), they have not, however, conducted their research from a sociolinguistics of globalization framework, using the concepts: resources, repertoires, scales and polycentricity. This approach makes it possible to foreground and explore more specifically how authenticity is not an on/off phenomenon of 'either one has it or not', and not (only) a linguistic and discursive phenomenon (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2009; Sarkar 2009); rather, it is a question of how authenticity is constructed in different ways, projecting different scale-levels, and how rappers orient to various centers of norms in this construction (see also Varis & Wang 2011). This is what differentiates my study from other studies: its key goal is to look at authenticity from the viewpoint of scales and centers of norms. What also contributes to the relevance (and topicality) of the study is the scarcity of (sociolinguistic) research on Finnish rap and hip hop (but see Kalliokoski 2006; Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010; and see section 1.1 for a discussion on this): my study is thus a pioneering effort.

3.1.2 Methods of analysis

The research questions are answered in chapters 4 and 5. In order to answer the first analytical question, I conduct a detailed, linguistic and discursive analysis

of three songs: “Orjantappuraa” (‘Thorn’) by Cheek, “Bättre folk” (‘Better folk’) by Pyhimys and “Made in Sodankylä” by Stepa. First, I analyze the particular *linguistic resources* – ‘languages’, varieties, dialects, slang – used in the song and their functions and meanings. Secondly, I investigate the *discursive resources*, which refer to a number of features of the lyrics – narratives, discourses, topics, speech act patterns and cultural references. I then also describe the repertoire comprising these particular uses of the linguistic and discursive resources drawn on in the songs (a more detailed description of both the linguistic and discursive resources, as well as repertoire, is given in section 4.2.1)

To answer the second analytical question, I aim to identify the ways in which authenticity is constructed (in each of the songs) by projecting specific *scale-levels*. This will be done by investigating how both the linguistic and the discursive resources used in the lyrics index more general, macro-level issues such as hip hop culture, or Finnish society. In other words, I explore the lyrics to show how various scale-levels are projected as specific contextual *frames for understanding* and what kinds of meanings they index. The scale-levels can thus be projected by both linguistic and discursive resources and these scale-levels often also mix and combine in a variety of ways.

The title of chapter 4 is ‘Finnish hip hop as a scale-level’. This refers to how all three artists work and are understandable within this same scale-level. In the case of Cheek and “Orjantappuraa” (section 4.3), I am particularly interested in how he constructs his authenticity by projecting the global scale within that of Finnish hip hop. “Bättre folk” by Pyhimys (section 4.4) offers me a perspective on the construction of authenticity on an emphatically national scale. Finally, Stepa’s “Made in Sodankylä” (section 4.5) highlights the construction of authenticity on a very local scale, within the ‘macro’ scale of Finnish hip hop. Thus, in chapter 4 on the lyrics, I analyze each piece in a separate sub-section – all of them represent a telling case of more general arguments about authenticity.

The second analytical question is also dealt with in chapter 5 (with artist interviews), but applying a different understanding of ‘scale’ from that presented above. In chapter 5, ‘scale’ emerges (in the rappers’ meta-talk) in the shape of the relative positioning of the speakers vis-à-vis the position(ing) of others in the same field. Thus, the choice to undertake two types of analysis (lyrics and interviews) is inspired by a hypothesis that ‘a scale’ is not a uniform empirical field but it can assume very different empirical shapes depending on the kind of research one undertakes. Finally, the third analytical question focuses on the interviews with the artists. More specifically, I analyze what kinds of *centers of norms* the artists orient towards: what seems to motivate and guide them, what seems important to them, and what does not. The analytical sections divide into two: in 5.3, I focus more on the issues of centers and margins in relation to authenticity: the artists’ (im)mobility, their trajectories and positions and their identity construction in various (often geographical) ‘locations’. In 5.4, I aim to explore the quality debates in Finnish hip hop: what is (seen as) good and real (‘authentic’) hip hop (and what is not), and how the

issues discussed in 5.3, such as centers and margins, transfer into (judgments about) their own and others' music. Here, the artists relate stories about their music and that of others – and how they compare (and compete) as artists; and what music means to them. I will make comparisons out of these comparisons, whenever this is relevant. In chapter 5, then, the focus is on the interviews with the artists. I analyze the data in terms of centers and margins and polycentricity (discussed in section 5.2), and seek to learn how the artists construct themselves as authentic in relation to these concepts, in relation to themselves and in relation to each other, as well as to other artists and genres. I thus focus on different kinds of narratives of authenticity (whether self-, other- or researcher-constructed).

The analytical chapters are divided according to the research materials (chapter 4 on lyrics and chapter 5 on the interviews), to further the aim of exploring different things in them. With the lyrics, my aim is to analyze language use and the discursive aspects, and to see which scales the artists project within the scale of Finnish hip hop. In the case of the lyrics, the aim is to see how 'Finnish hip hop' operates as a 'benchmark' for these three rappers. The interviews, then, provide an opportunity to explore the Finnish hip hop 'world' in a more nuanced, detailed and 'emic' way through the concept of polycentricity, one which complements the picture we have already gained of the scene, its various actors and issues, and the artists' own positions in it.

Next, we will get to know the three rap artist of the present study in more detail, with respect to their origins, trajectories and positions in the field.

3.2 The artists

From the outset, I knew that I did not want to focus only on texts, as isolated discourse, separate from the hip hop scene and culture. Rather, given my research aims, it was crucial to involve actual hip hop people, rap artists, in the study. Initially, I contacted seven Finnish rap artists (and groups) with a view to their participation in this research: I asked them to send (some of) their lyrics to me, for their permission to use the lyrics in research (and teaching) and also for their willingness to do interviews with me, at a later stage. These artists were chosen because of the versatility of the genres and styles of Finnish rap they represented, their varied experience in the scene and their different (original) geographical locations. Some of them never replied, some replied negatively and some initially said yes, but after a while, it turned out to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get any lyrics or help from them.⁶⁵

After careful consideration, I decided to choose Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa for the study. They were, from the outset, quite different from each other,

⁶⁵ I will not reveal their identities here, because I do not think it serves any additional, particular purpose – and I want to respect their privacy, as they did not (wish to) become part of this study, in the first place.

although of course they also share some characteristics: they are all Finnish, all male and all part of the same generation, i.e. born in the 1980s. All three artists are also White, which is, more or less, in line with the relatively (ethnically) homogenous Finnish society, as well as the Finnish hip hop scene.⁶⁶ More specifically, then, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa are part of my study because they represent the *diversity of Finnish hip hop* in terms of their genres, themes, topics, positions, orientations, geographical locations and experiences in the scene. What makes them interesting from the viewpoint of authenticity construction varies: as we will see later on in the analysis, each of them uses different, specific kinds of resources for this.⁶⁷ Thus, the artists are different (from one another) to begin with, but how exactly they are different is a case for a detailed, nuanced and concrete analysis, which centers (in this instance) around authenticity.

The reason I chose (only) three artists is that I did not want to over-extend my focus. The inclusion of too many artists would have made it impossible to fully and deeply concentrate on individual trajectories. I now think this has been possible with these particular artists. Conversely, a focus on one or two artists only would have been inadequate, as my aim was to bring more contrast and viewpoints into the story of Finnish rap music, instead of providing a simple monologue or a dichotomy. All three artists have been very co-operative throughout this process, while their initial relative accessibility and the easiness of communication with them also contributed to their selection to this study. In fact, it was not more difficult to gain access to the two more famous artists. As I already knew Cheek, it was relatively easy to approach him again, about this new research project.⁶⁸ Starting to work with Pyhimys was also unproblematic, as he was very enthusiastic and supportive of the study from beginning.

This set of artists is very intriguing, particularly if we think about how authenticity is traditionally (and somewhat stereotypically) viewed and understood in hip hop culture (see section 2.3.1): in terms of 'race', one 'needs' to be an African American (or Black, in general) to pass as somehow inherently 'real'⁶⁹; in terms of language, one 'needs' to make use of the 'original' language of hip hop, i.e. African American Vernacular English; in terms of place, one 'needs' to be from the Bronx, East Coast, West Coast, or some other 'cool' place in the US⁷⁰, or at least from the larger African diaspora (or Black Atlantic) to pass as 'real'; one 'needs' to be somehow marginal and/or in an unjust position in society; one 'needs' to be male because the culture and discourse of hip hop

⁶⁶ At the time of the selection of the data (and artists), there were no (well-known and recording) rap artists of immigrant ('non-White') background in Finland.

⁶⁷ Condry (2006), an American cultural anthropologist, also chose specific *case studies* for his analysis on Japanese hip hop: the established groups *Rhymester* (MCs *Utamaru* and *Mummy-D* and DJ *Jin*) and *King Giddra* (MCs *Zeebra* and *K Dub Shine* and DJ *Oasis*) as well as the more underground rap group *MSC*.

⁶⁸ But had this been my first attempt, I suspect it would have been more difficult, because of his hectic schedules and 'elevated' status.

⁶⁹ Admittedly, many White US rap artists, most notably *Eminem*, have also succeeded, particularly in the 21st century; in this sense, then, there is an ongoing 'expansion' of hip hop, also within the US.

⁷⁰ See for instance Armstrong (2004: 337) on geographical authenticity in US rap music.

is very masculine and male-dominated;⁷¹ and, finally, one ‘needs’ to be heterosexual because it is the dominant norm and discourse in the hip hop culture. Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, however, are all White, from Finland, Finnish-speaking and very far away from the Bronx and the US. They are examples of how hip hop culture and rap music have detached from its ‘original’, ‘authentic’ tradition. Therefore, we also need new concepts with which to describe them as ‘authentic’, to understand how and from what ingredients their authenticity is constructed. In this study, these concepts are ‘resources’, ‘scales’ and ‘polycentricity’.

3.2.1 Cheek

As mentioned above, I knew Cheek (i.e. Jare Tiihonen) beforehand: I had been in contact with him already in connection with my MA thesis (Westinen 2007), as his lyrics were part of my data then. Thus, continuing this co-operation seemed an interesting and logical choice. I chose Cheek because he is currently one of the most well-known and controversial artists in the Finnish hip hop scene – on the one hand, he is loved, idolized and appreciated; on the other hand, he is hated, despised and criticized. In terms of genre, Cheek represents so-called ‘pop rap’ or ‘club rap’, and he is extremely popular in the mainstream, his albums sell well, his songs are played on the radio and in night clubs, and his music videos are widely viewed on YouTube⁷². He is also often the headliner of several music festivals. Cheek is also supported by a more general fan base, many of whom are not necessarily rap fans. This was particularly the case after the TV series *Vain elämää* (‘Just life’), which featured seven Finnish artists performing each other’s songs in a new genre and arrangement. Through the series, the general public also learned about him and his music.⁷³ On the other hand, he is criticized (and despised) by the fans (and artists) of underground hip hop who do not see him as ‘real’, mainly because of the mainstream rap genre he represents and because of the money he makes with his music. In general, Cheek’s lyrics and attitude are overtly self-confident, a characteristic similar to some popular US rap artists, for example Jay Z or *Kanye West*.

Cheek was born in Vantaa (southern Finland, part of the Helsinki metropolitan area) in 1981. He got his artist name after his chubby cheeks, or at least that is the story most often told in the press. He himself cannot remember exactly if this is in fact the case but he has continued to affirm it, if asked. As a small child, he moved to Lahti (about 100 km north from Helsinki), where he is generally considered to originate from. After high school, he did a BBA

⁷¹ This is not to say that the US hip hop (or hip hop elsewhere) does not feature any females. Quite the contrary, there are many successful female rappers, such as *Queen Latifah*, *Missy Elliott*, *Lil Kim*, etc. who have made their own contribution in changing the focus of the scene and the lyrics in a more equal direction (see e.g. Price 2006).

⁷² For example, his “Timantit on ikuisia” (‘Diamonds are forever’) (2013) video has been watched 6 991 879 times by April 23, 2014.

⁷³ An indication of his extensive popularity is the 196,976 people who ‘like’ him on Facebook (April 23, 2014).

(Bachelor of Business Administration) degree at Lahti Polytechnic. In a book on Finnish hip hop, compiled by the Finnish rap artist Paleface (2011), Cheek tells us that the first (so-called) rap album that he owned was Raptori's debut album "Moe!" ("Howdy!")⁷⁴, but it was not until 1996 that he 'really' found rap music through the album "It was written" by the American rapper *Nas*. At first, Cheek tried to memorize the rhymes in American rap songs and learnt to rap through practicing them at home. A couple of years later, around 2000, he joined the local 5th *Element rap* group. (Paleface 2011: 67.) In addition to making rap music, 5th *Element* organized street events and gigs in Lahti. According to Cheek, the years spent in the group formed the basis for his later career and, through their events, he got to know 'the big names' in the scene (Mukala 2009: 4). Later on, he formed a rap group *Herrasmiesliiga* ('Gentlemen's league') together with *Brädi* and *TS* and has also published albums with this combination. Currently, *TS* and *Brädi* perform as his 'hype men'⁷⁵ on gigs. After graduating, Cheek moved to Töölö in the Finnish capital, Helsinki, in 2007.

For Cheek, the best Finnish rap song of all time is *Fintelligens'* "Voittamaton", since it can be considered pioneering work in rap music in the Finnish language. Cheek argues that he believed right from the beginning that Finnish rappers can make equally good music as any of the others. (Paleface 2011: 67.) It is interesting in this respect that Cheek's debut album "Human & Beast" (2001) was almost completely in English (with the exception of one song) and on his second album "50/50" the songs were literally half-Finnish and half-English. Thus, in a way these language choices on the albums reflect the common localization pattern in rap: starting in English and moving slowly towards 'local' languages. Since his third album in 2004, he has mainly used Finnish in his lyrics. Cheek says that had he wanted to continue writing lyrics in English and be fluent in it, he would have needed constant practice. The less one practices English, the more it sounds like 'rally English' (Mukala 2009: 4).⁷⁶

Cheek published his first two albums as author's editions. He signed a record deal with *Sony Music* in 2003. After two albums, he switched to *Räihinä Records*, a record label owned by, among others, the rappers *Elastinen* and *Iso H* of *Fintelligens*. In the fall of 2011, Cheek decided to set up his own record label and show producer, *Liiga Music*, and publish his albums on that label in the future. Table 2 shows Cheek's discography: a list of his solo and collaborative albums.

⁷⁴ As we learned in chapter 2, Raptori was amongst the commercially successful 'humor rap acts' of the early years of Finnish hip hop and is still not considered 'real rap' amongst many rap actives.

⁷⁵ A 'hype man' refers to the 'supporting' (rap) act on stage (often part of the same rap group) who 'hypes up' the crowd. More often than not, hype men also become solo artists later on (Pyhimys, personal communication.)

⁷⁶ 'Rally English' is a term, most likely coined by the Finnish media, used to refer to the kind of English that the Finnish Formula 1 and rally drivers, such as *Mika Häkkinen*, *Kimi Räikkönen* and *Tommi Mäkinen*, supposedly use. It is characterized by 'simple', (highly) Finnishized pronunciation as well as short, simplified sentences.

TABLE 2 Cheek's discography

Album	Year of publication	Record label
<i>Human & Beast</i>	2001	author's edition
50 / 50	2002	author's edition
<i>Pitää pystyy elää</i> ('Gotta live'), a mixtape with TS	2003	author's edition
<i>Avaimet mun kulmille</i> (('Keys to my hoods'))	2004	Sony Music
<i>Käännän sivuu</i> ('Turnin' the page')	2005	Sony Music
<i>Kasvukipu</i> ('Growing pains')	2007	Rähinä Records
<i>Kuka sä oot</i> ('Who are you')	2008	Rähinä Records
<i>Jare Henrik Tiihonen</i>	2009	Rähinä Records
<i>Jare Henrik Tiihonen 2</i>	2010	Rähinä Records
<i>Sokka irti</i> ('Pull the pin')	2012	Liiga Music
<i>Kuka muu muka</i> ('Who else')	2013	Liiga Music

Altogether, Cheek has published ten solo albums – he is thus one of the most experienced Finnish rap artists in the current scene. His latest albums have been huge commercial successes and, together with the single releases, they have ranked high on the official Finnish album charts. Cheek has also received several awards for his albums. In 2014, following his widespread success, he won a total of five *Emma* awards, including male solo artist of the year, at the Finnish music industry gala. Breaking and crossing genre borders is also typical of his music, as there is always at least one song on each album that mixes and combines genres. Various featuring artists from different genres include, for example, the pop and soul musician *Sami Saari* (with whom Cheek has collaborated since 2006), the heavy metal musician *Jarkko Ahola* and the reggae singer *Lord Est*. The hectic touring (at times, up to 140–160 gigs a year) around Finland and Cheek's financial success are an indication of the 'professional' and 'business-like' artistry that he portrays in the Finnish hip hop scene and that not many other rappers are able to do.

Cheek's reference points in his trajectory and career have been, first, Lahti and, later on, Helsinki and Töölö, the neighborhood where he currently lives. Cheek is (and has been) thus speaking from these particular loci and in order to understand these, I will here briefly characterize Lahti and Töölö.⁷⁷ These loci are part of Cheek's trajectory – with the help of this knowledge we are in a better position to understand his lyrics and, most importantly, his interviews, in which Lahti and Töölö come up as topics.

Lahti

Lahti is located roughly 100 kilometers north from Helsinki, and can thus be viewed as part of the metropolitan area, at least from a large-scale perspective. Lahti became an independent city in 1905 (thus, before Finland became

⁷⁷ Helsinki, the main reference point to both Cheek and Pyhimys, was already discussed in section 2.2 on the ideological topography of Finland – as the absolute center of that topography in many different respects.

independent of Russia, in 1917) (af Hällström 1983). It is nowadays, with 103 000 inhabitants, the ninth biggest city in Finland (Väestörekisterikeskus). When Cheek was young, his family lived in the Patoniitty neighborhood. Another neighborhood there, relating to Cheek, is, for instance, Mukkula, where the music video for the song “Rap-laulajan vapaapäivä” (‘A rap artist’s day off’) is shot. Cheek also often mentions Hämeenkatu in his lyrics – this was the street where he lived, when preparing his author’s edition albums early during his career. In addition to the 5th Element, also the Herrasmiesliiga rap group, featuring Brädi and TS, was formed in Lahti in the early 21st century.

Töölö

Töölö, with its 28 000 inhabitants, is one of the neighborhoods of central Helsinki. Only one block in the area, constructed between the 1910s and 1930s, was originally ‘meant’ for the working class (e.g. Nikula 1981) – thus, already to begin with, Töölö was characterized as a mainly middle class (or ‘above average’), wealthy and peaceful neighborhood, and it continues to have this reputation in the late 20th century (Bäcklund 1998; Vaattovaara 1998). The *Olympic Stadium* is also situated in the Töölö area. Interestingly, then, Cheek is to perform in his own ‘hoods’ in August 2014, when he will have two gigs at the stadium (I will discuss the significance of these gigs in chapter 6). By moving to Töölö, a posh, bourgeois, (upper) middle class neighborhood from Lahti, Cheek has clearly ‘upscaled’ himself (we will discuss this more in section 5.3.1). He clearly feels safe and comfortable in this neighborhood – when he was asked, if he is ever afraid on the streets of Töölö, he replied that he can walk safely there but when he went to Kallio (another Helsinki neighborhood) once, he was a bit scared (Hietaneva 2010; see also Forman 2002: 29 on ‘topophobia’). This is yet another indication of the (micro) distinctions between the different parts of Helsinki – what they mean for different people and how they view them. In discussing Pyhimys below, I will also characterize Kallio, the area with which he strongly identifies.

3.2.2 Pyhimys

Pyhimys (i.e. Mikko Kuoppala) (‘Saint’ in English), another of the artists in the present study, is part of this research because he is one of the most experienced, appreciated and versatile artists in the Finnish hip hop scene. In addition to his solo career, his two other, very distinct, rap projects, Teflon Brothers and Ruger Hauer, make him and his music even more versatile.⁷⁸ He also owns his own record company Yellowmic, which publishes rap music by up-and-coming Finnish artists, works as a hip hop producer and was previously also the manager of the suddenly popular rap duo *Jare & Villegalle*. He is also involved in *Katin Tavara* (‘Kati’s stuff’), an online hip hop store and t-shirt print house,

⁷⁸ On Facebook, 15 309 people ‘like’ Pyhimys. Teflon Brothers has 12 161 fans and Ruger Hauer 15 067 fans (April 23, 2014).

and is the CEO of *Ramin Väilitys*, a Finnish show producer,⁷⁹ as well as a newly appointed production manager at *Johanna Kustannus*, a Finnish record company. All in all, he is a true multi-talent of Finnish rap.

Compared to Cheek, Pyhimys' genre is not easily identifiable, but it is definitely less commercial and more 'alternative' than Cheek's. He tends to take a stand on societal issues, in one form or another, and he also mixes rap with other music genres, such as electro, jazz, folk, soul and pop. In one of my interviews with him, he aptly characterized himself as being "in the middle of the scene, underground in every possible direction" and stated that he could collaborate with every Finnish rap artist, no matter their style or genre. By this, it may be that he is referring to himself as an underground artist but who, nevertheless wants to retain his artistic freedom with regard to any specific genre (for a more detailed description on this, see section 5.3.2, extract 5). His music scene is not limited to rap alone: recently, he has written lyrics for other Finnish artists as well. He also participates in various youth music projects in the Helsinki area. In addition to his rap activities, Pyhimys studies mathematics, philosophy and pedagogy at the University of Helsinki. He could thus also work as a teacher in the future.

Pyhimys was born in 1981 in Helsinki, where he has lived all his life. Thus, he has always been in 'a center' in this sense, whereas both Cheek and Stepa have (had to) move(d) away from their original home towns. The story behind his artist name is the following (he explained it to me on Facebook on August 9, 2013).

The story has developed along the way. [...] My first impression was Simon Templar [a British fictional character known as The Saint]. He was a self-determined hero, an outlaw who defended justice. Simultaneously the kind of innocent habitus of the nephews of Donald Duck, when they've done something bad and have a halo above their heads. [...] Nowadays it [the name] has acquired lots of irony. My basic message is the questioning of all kinds of hierarchies and holiness is one of the highest appreciations one can get. Nothing is holy, except me, is maybe there in the background. (Translation by EW.)

This story thus emphasizes his versatility – even his artist name does not mean just one thing, but draws on multiple sources and personalities. He also ironically emphasizes his 'greatness' (his 'holiness') here. Pyhimys heard Finnish rap for the first time at the beginning of the 1990s, in the music of Raptori, the humor rap group of the first Finnish hip hop wave, which he considers a true part of Finnish rap history. The next contact with Finnish rap, for him, was the song "Voittamaton" by Fintelligens. He tried rapping for the first time together with Heikki Kuula (his nowadays long-term rap colleague) to a song by the American rapper *Ice Cube*. The language was English and the style consisted of cursing and dissing others. (Paleface 2011: 134.) Here, we can see a similarity in the early trajectory of Cheek and Pyhimys: both tried rapping for

⁷⁹ Pyhimys told me (personal communication) that he has consciously tried to 'blur' the line between his music and his other businesses – and, in this process, tried to link his companies to an imaginary Rami or an actual Kati.

the first time by rhyming over US rap songs, which is probably how many young kids across the globe start their rap experiments.

Pyhimys author's edition debut album trilogy, "Poikkeustapaus", "Ongelmatapaus", "Rajatapaus" ('Exceptional Case', 'Problem case', 'Borderline case'), came out in 2004. Since then he has published very widely, both alone and together with other artists. All in all, Pyhimys has released nine solo and nine collaborative albums. Table 3 shows his discography.

TABLE 3 Pyhimys' discography

Album	Year of publication	Record label
<i>Poikkeustapaus</i> (‘Exceptional case’)	2004	Yellowmic
<i>Rajatapaus</i> (‘Problem case’)	2004	Yellowmic
<i>Ongelmatapaus</i> (‘Borderline case’)	2004	Yellowmic
<i>Pyhimysteeri? The Pink Album</i> (‘Pyhimystery?’)	2005	Yellowmic
<i>Ai tähän välii?</i> (‘Oh at this point?’), an EP	2006	Monsp
<i>Salainen maailma</i> (‘A secret world’)	2007	Monsp
<i>Tulva</i> (‘A flood’)	2008	Monsp
<i>Arvoitus koko ihminen</i> (‘An enigma the whole human being’), with Timo Pieni Huijaus	2008	Yellowmic / Rähinä
<i>Medium</i>	2011	Monsp
<i>Paranoid</i>	2011	Monsp
<i>Katuvisioita</i> (‘Street visions’), with Perhosveitsi-Heikki (i.e. Heikki Kuula), Pyhimys as Lika-Aki	2012	Yellowmic
<i>Olen musta</i> (‘I’m black’), with Huge L, Pyhimys as Steve iVander	2013	Monsp
with Teflon Brothers:		
<i>T</i>	2009	Monsp
©	2010	Monsp
<i>Valkoisten dyynien ratsastajat</i> (‘The riders of the white dunes’)	2013	Johanna Kustannus
with Ruger Hauer:		
<i>Se syvenee syksyllä</i> (‘It deepens in the fall’)	2010	Monsp
<i>Erectus</i>	2012	Monsp
<i>Ukraina</i> (‘Ukraine’)	2013	Monsp

Pyhimys' discography is informative about his extensive and versatile career: for example, in 2013, he was involved in three published albums. After the publication of the album "Paranoid", Pyhimys announced that he is to end his career as a solo artist, but will continue in his two (or three) rap groups.

In his several rap projects and groups, he raps under different aliases. In Teflon Brothers he raps as *Michael J. Fix* and *Miguel Santos*, together with two other rap artists Heikki Kuula and *Voli*, who also have aliases in the group to mark this group off from their solo projects. Teflon Brothers makes extensive use of parody and irony in their music, lyrics and videos. Their debut album "T" (2009) consists of transforming and aggravating all the clichés and stereotypes of mainstream rap music into extreme versions, thus making them into pure jokes. (Pesonen 2009: 13.) According to Pyhimys, a Finnish rapper simply cannot rap about the same topics as his American colleague since it would sound 'fake' and rapping about ghettos cannot be taken seriously in Finland. (ibid.) On their second album, entitled © (2010), their style was more pop- and jazz-like, with no 'real' hip hop elements or sounds. Their third album "Valkoisten dyynien ratsastajat" is characterized by night club sounds – it aims at maximizing everything and makes the artists 'superstars' in their own universe (Ylitalo 2013: 9).

Whereas Teflon Brothers is a 'commercial' (if you will) rap group, which aims at large audiences at night clubs and big festivals, Pyhimys' other rap affiliation, Ruger Hauer, is a much more underground rap group, consisting also of *Paperi T* and *Tommishock*, all of them representing different rap genres and styles. Their albums are characterized by a 'darker' hip hop world in musical terms, particularly the most recent "Ukraine" album, although, they too include an ironic stance in many of their songs (ibid.). In addition, Heikki Kuula and Pyhimys form a rap duo under the artist names Perhosveitsi-Heikki and Lika-Aki, respectively. In 2013, Pyhimys became part of *Medium*, the band he made the "Medium" album with, and they have so far published one single, comprising the songs "Ukko" ('Old man') and "Herneet" ('Peas').

For Pyhimys, the most significant reference point in Helsinki is the Kallio neighborhood. Although he himself does not actually live there currently, his office is there and he also identifies with it strongly on a personal level. In order for us to understand his references to and arguments about his 'locus' later on, particularly in the interviews, I will first briefly characterize Kallio.

Kallio

Kallio is one of the inner-city neighborhoods of Helsinki, with roughly 18 000 inhabitants (interestingly, double the size of all of Sodankylä, Lapland, where Stepa is from). During the first half of the 20th century, Kallio was known as a working class neighborhood. Even today it is one of the strongest support areas of the parties on the political left (Kuntavaalit 2012). There is, thus, a striking contrast (at least on some level) between Kallio and Töölö, where Cheek resides. During the last couple of decades, Kallio has been (increasingly) inhabited mostly by students, young adults and artists – partly because of the availability of small (rental) apartments, its central location and good public transport as well as entertainment possibilities (e.g. Paunonen 2010). Kallio has often been referred to in various genres of Finnish popular culture: for instance, it is the context for *Pussikaljaromaani* ('The Tippler's Novel') by Mikko Rimminen (2004),

as well as Finnish rap songs, such as *Jontti & Shaka's* cover of (an old song) "Kolmatta linjaa", and others by Heikki Kuula and Julma-Henri. Both Kallio and Töölö, despite their differences, are nevertheless amongst the 'safe' (i.e. less criminal) neighborhoods in Helsinki, if one compares them to the neighborhoods of 'notorious' Eastern Helsinki, such as Kontula, Itäkeskus and Herttoniemi (Parkkari 2013).

3.2.3 Stepa

The third rap artist in focus in this study, Stepa (i.e. Joni Stenberg), is part of my research because he is a young, up-and-coming rap artist – he is one of the most talented young artists around, and he is also more of a novice than Cheek or Pyhimys. He is not (yet) very widely known in the scene, so this study also presents an opportunity to present him to a larger audience (of both rap fans and scholars). He is also a good choice for this piece of research because he comes from the 'periphery', in this case the Lapland rap scene, whereas the two other artists currently live in metropolitan Helsinki. The rap genre Stepa's music represents can be characterized as easy-going, laid-back gangsta funk, in other words, rap which is influenced by the American West Coast g-funk, known for its funk influences and low base (particularly noticeable in some of the work by, for instance, *Dr. Dre*, *Snoop Dogg* and *Tupac Shakur*). Stepa's music also sometimes deals with social and political issues and is, at times, also 'ironically' gangsta in its style. Apart from rap genres, Stepa also draws heavily on soul and funk music in his style.

Stepa was born in Sodankylä, Finnish Lapland in 1987.⁸⁰ Stepa's artist name is his nickname from childhood. His father was called *Stebu* (after the last name Stenberg), and he, in turn, Stepa. In 2007, he moved from Sodankylä to Tornio (a north-western, industrial seaside town in the Lapland region) for his community pedagogy studies. In 2013, he applied and was accepted for the teacher training program at the University of Oulu and consequently moved there. For Stepa, the first actual Finnish rap song he heard was "Rollofunk" by *Nuoret Herrat* ('Young Gentlemen')⁸¹, from Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland. The song 'hit hard', although its sound quality was not good. Stepa rapped for the first time with his friends when in the 5th grade, when they were listening to *Cypress Hill* and they made their own version of "Boom Biddy Bye Bye", which, according to him, was pretty 'nasty' since, as 5th graders, they were shooting and saying words like 'whore' in their lyrics, and, of course, in 'lousy' English. (Paleface 2011: 170.) Interestingly, this story also resembles those of Cheek and Pyhimys and their first rap experiments. With Pyhimys, they also share the experience of (making or imitating) 'transgressive' lyrics. Later on, Stepa was influenced by, for example, the (alternative) American rap groups *De La Soul* and *A Tribe Called Quest* (ibid.).

⁸⁰ To be precise, he is a Laplander (i.e. from and living in Lapland), not a Sámi (the indigenous people in the Lapland area).

⁸¹ Nuoret Herrat later formed the very well-known Tulenkantajat rap group. In "Rollofunk", Rollo is a nick name for Rovaniemi.

Thus far, Stepa has released one mixtape and three solo albums as well as one joint album. Table 4 shows his discography.

TABLE 4 Stepa's discography

Album	Year of publication	Record Label
<i>Aromii</i> ('Aroma'), mixtape	2007	author's edition
<i>MC</i>	2008	Joku Roti Records
<i>Made in Sodankylä</i>	2010	Joku Roti Records
<i>...ja naksuvat luupit</i> (...and clicking loops'), with Are	2012	Joku Roti Records
<i>Ultramagneettinen</i> ('Ultramagnetic')	2014	Monsp Records

His first album, an author's edition, is a mixtape entitled "Aromii" ('Aroma') from 2007. His debut studio album "MC" was released in 2008 and his second album "Made in Sodankylä" in 2010. Already before he was a recording artist, he often collaborated with the 'pioneers' of rap from Lapland, namely Hannibal and Soppa (originally from the hip hop group Tulenkantajat), and performed on their gigs. In recent years, he has collaborated with artists who come mainly from Lapland or (at least) are in the same record company, Joku Roti Records. News and media coverage about him is fairly limited, and at least the mainstream audience is not (yet) widely familiar with him, but nevertheless he has a steadily growing number of fans⁸². In 2012, he published a joint album "...ja naksuvat luupit" [... and clicking loops'] with the Jyväskylä-based rapper Are. It received many good reviews and the tour by the pair after publication was also very popular.⁸³ Stepa's third solo album was published in April 2014, this time with Monsp Records.

In March 2012, Stepa started his own tumblr blog (Stepapalupa). His reason for doing so was the will to teach people about (Finnish) rap, literally: "Teach the seeds you know!" [sic]. He also mentioned that, because he does not have his own website and because MySpace is 'clumsy', he wanted to start up his own blog (personal communication.) Several rap artists and other cultural workers have featured in his blog interviews and he has also, for instance, listed his favorite rap albums there. In addition to being an 'educational' site about (Finnish) hip hop, it works as a promotional space for him, as regards records and gigs (see also Westinen 2013).

Last, I will briefly characterize Stepa's trajectory - his geographical positions in various phases of his life so that we can get a better understanding of his 'loci'. All of the artists can be seen as speaking from particular loci, for Stepa this is either Lapland on a more general level (like Helsinki is for Cheek and Pyhimys) or Sodankylä on a more local level (like Töölö for Cheek or Kallio for Pyhimys) - these are also the places reported by the media when talking

⁸² On Facebook, 13 488 people 'like' Stepa (April 23, 2014).

⁸³ A telling detail about this album, or, actually, the album cover, is that, by Stepa's request, I feature on it, too, as part of a photo collage of their collaborators in the Finnish hip hop scene. This small instance also indicates my 'semi-insider' position in this research.

about him. Recently, however, also Tornio and Oulu have become meaningful coordinates for him, at least in terms of his educational trajectory.

Lapland

Lapland is the northern-most part of Fennoscandia, consisting of areas inside the national borders of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. The Finnish area is known as the province of Lapland and its center (in many respects) is the city of Rovaniemi. In Lapland, the distances between the populated parts are long, as Lapland is a very sparsely populated area, with most people living in and around the biggest towns of Rovaniemi, Kemi and Tornio⁸⁴. Lapland is also known for its indigenous people, the Sámi, of whom about 6 400 live in Finland – and in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia combined somewhere between 50 000 and 100 000⁸⁵. The climate in Lapland is harsh, with cold winters and short summers. (Tikkanen 2003.) Traditionally, Lapland is known for its reindeer management, fishing and hunting. Nowadays, livelihoods in Lapland come more and more from tourism, trade and industry. However, in northern Lapland in particular, the traditional livelihoods continue to be significant. Lapland is internationally known for its many ski resorts, while the growing tourism industry is also important for Finland as a whole. (ibid.)

Sodankylä

Sodankylä is part of the province of Lapland and became an independent parish in 1747 (Onnela 2006). Traditionally, both the Sámi people (i.e. Lappish people) and other Laplanders have inhabited the area (Kehusmaa & Onnela 1995). To improve communications, a road from Rovaniemi to Sodankylä was taken into use in 1902, ensuring that Sodankylä was not left (completely) on the outskirts (Onnela 2006). Nowadays, Sodankylä is a small municipality of almost 9000 inhabitants. Stepa is from the parish village of Sodankylä, which is the center of the municipality on a very micro-local level. Sodankylä is the second largest municipality of Finland in area, immediately after its neighboring municipality Inari. The ‘nearest’ large town is Rovaniemi, located roughly a hundred kilometers south.

Economically speaking, Sodankylä is not a major center in Finland but from a regional and local point of view, it can be considered such. The schools, shops and services attract people from the near-by villages and smaller municipalities. Sodankylä is also a ‘nature’ center in that two national parks are situated in the area. It is also a regional military center, home to the Jaeger Brigade. (Sodankylä.) In cultural life, the single most significant event in Sodankylä is the *Midnight Sun Film Festival*, which was established in 1986. The

⁸⁴ An interesting anecdote about the ‘North’ and ‘South’ of Lapland is offered by the Ivalo rapper Edorf, who commented on a radio show (*YleX at Ilosaari rock festival* in Joensuu, Eastern Finland, in 2009) that both Stepa and Hannibal are, in fact, “*etelän veteliä*” (‘losers from the South’) because they come from Sodankylä and Rovaniemi, whereas his Ivalo is the ‘real’ North, very far up in Lapland.

⁸⁵ The number differs according to who is counted as a Sámi: whether it is done by considering one’s close relatives, ‘mother tongue’, ethnic and cultural identification, traditional livelihood, etc.

festival annually attracts 20 000 people from all over the world to watch films, and meet and listen to directors and actors. (Midnight Sun Film Festival.) Sodankylä, and Lapland, are also within the reach of the internet, and people living there can thus also participate in global popular culture. Educationally speaking, Sodankylä does not offer any possibilities for higher education, as we have seen in Stepa's trajectory. The political tradition of support for the *Center Party* and *the Left*, combined with religious movements such as the Laestadian (conservative revivalist movement inside the Lutheran church; Ihonen 2003), give Sodankylä its particular nature with its own tensions. From the perspective of Southern Finland and Helsinki, Sodankylä is geographically peripheral and also otherwise marginal. On the regional and local level, however, Sodankylä is a 'center' for the people living in or around it. Ironically though, it can also be considered a *global* 'center' for the film industry because of its famous festival.

Tornio

Stepa lived in Tornio for six years on account of his community pedagogy studies. Tornio was established in 1621, and it is the oldest town in the province of Lapland. Although it can be considered geographically peripheral from the southern point of view, it is, nevertheless, a significant border town, a bridge, between Finland and Sweden, where its neighboring town is Haparanda. Together with Haparanda, Tornio attracts people from the nearby villages and municipalities, and from further afield as well, with its shopping centers and joint city center – travelling from one country to another is very easy in this specific geographical location. Tornio is also a harbor town, as the Tornio River runs through it to the Bay of Bothnia. (Tornio.) Currently, its population is a little over 22 000 people (Väestörekisterikeskus). Until 2010, *Hartwall*, a Finnish beverage company, was located in Tornio, employing several hundred people, but has since relocated to Lahti in southern Finland. Stepa also discusses (and critiques) this relocation in his "Made in Sodankylä" lyrics (see section 4.5). When resident in Tornio, Stepa lived in an area called Kiviranta, about which he also wrote a song. In it, he describes his locus as a ghetto on the national, Finnish scale (fully realizing that one cannot compare this place for example to the US ghettos). By 'ghetto', he is referring to the 'bad' reputation of the place: the youth, who are 'up to no good' and the drunks and unemployed people who are constantly buying beer from the local grocery store.

Oulu

In 2013, after finishing his studies in Tornio, Stepa started his teacher training studies in Oulu. The city of Oulu was established in 1605 and is the oldest city in Northern Finland. It is the fifth largest city in Finland, with 190 000 inhabitants (Väestörekisterikeskus), and thus significantly bigger than Stepa's earlier 'loci'. The city is situated at the mouth of the river Oulunjoki on the coast of Perämeri, the sea dividing Finland and Sweden, and is the most southern 'locus' in Stepa's trajectory thus far. Oulu can be considered a regional center, as, for example, the administration, commerce and education of the region are

all focused in this area. (Oulu.) It is particularly known as a city of technology and regarded as the 'driving engine' of the economy in the Finnish North (e.g. Moisio 2012). In fact, the first technology village in the Nordic countries was established there in 1982 (Technopolis). With its university and population of almost 50 0000 students, Oulu is also nationally known as a student city (Oulu).

Next, we turn to the data of the present study: the lyrics, interviews and ethnographic observations of these three rappers.

3.3 Data and their collection and selection

The main data consist of lyrics by and interviews with the previously introduced three Finnish rap artists, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa. My analysis is further supported and complemented by ethnographic field notes and observations from the artists' gigs as well as from hip hop festivals over the past couple of years.⁸⁶

The rappers' lyrics enable me to view Finnish hip hop both linguistically and discursively. In their own way, the lyrics provide me with access to the values, ideas and discourses that circulate around the notion of authenticity. In my MA thesis (Westinen 2007), I focused solely on the lyrical aspects of rap music. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, I felt it was necessary to expand that viewpoint by listening to what the rap artists themselves have to say about various issues and also observing them on the 'field'. Interviews, then, give the artists a 'voice' (Bakhtin 1981) and enable an 'inside' view of the culture: the artists' personal thoughts, values and opinions, including those on issues related to authenticity. Finally, to add to my understanding of Finnish hip hop, I observed the artists on their own 'turf', on the most visible (and sometimes also the most 'intimate') place for artists and their art – on stage. Thus, the ethnographic observations complement the image of the artists that would otherwise have been based only on the albums (the song lyrics) and the few interviews: it rendered the image of the artist and his art 'fuller' and more versatile. Through observation, I was also able to follow their trajectories and various positions in the field. The extensive 'field' knowledge I have gained over the years helps me to interpret the whole Finnish hip hop scene, the texts, i.e. the lyrics, and the people, i.e. the rappers.

In addition to these main data, I have also, for several years, read and collected different kinds of media materials, including newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, advertisements, event posters, social media comments and discussions, relating both to the three artists studied here and to

⁸⁶ I have also taken several photos of the gigs as, together with the notes, these have helped me to remember each gig better. I do not, however, use them here as data, due to lack of space as well as the focus of this study. Nevertheless, they do offer me important contextualizing information.

the (Finnish) hip hop scene in general.⁸⁷ These materials are not used as data as such, but rather as complementary background information and contextualizing materials, with the aim of better understanding the phenomenon of Finnish hip hop. But now, let us return to the description of the main data of the study.

3.3.1 Lyrics

In research on hip hop, lyrics are the most ‘traditional’ and common way to explore rap music (and authenticity) (as argued by, for example, Androutsopoulos 2009: 44). In my study, Finnish rap lyrics are part of the data since they offer me the possibility of looking at Finnish hip hop phenomena both linguistically and discursively. Through them, I can explore what Finnish rap artists talk about (the discourses, narratives, topics, speech act patterns and cultural references used in the songs) and how (the various resources of ‘languages’, varieties, dialects, slang, made use of in the songs). Thus, the lyrics give me access to the artists’ values and ideas about authenticity.

The lyrics data that I have collected consists of the two most recently published albums by each artist at the time when I selected the three artists, in 2011. The albums in the database comprise: (i) Cheek’s “JHT” (Jare Henrik Tiihonen) (2009) and “JHT 2” (Jare Henrik Tiihonen 2) (2010); (ii) Pyhimys’ “Medium” (2011) and “Paranoid” (2011) and (iii) Stepa’s “MC” (2008) and “Made in Sodankylä” (2010). I chose these particular albums as part of the more general data base because they were *current* albums (at the time of data selection): they reveal where each artist ‘is’ in his trajectory at the time. Dealing with current albums also gave me (preliminary) topics to discuss and talk about in our interviews. In addition, the number of albums per artist is two because, on the one hand, I did not want to limit myself to only one album and, on the other hand, confining myself to two albums was reasonable from the research-economic standpoint. Hence my decision to extend the data pool to the two latest albums in each case.

The database includes the song lyrics investigated in this study that I received from the artists themselves. From Cheek and Pyhimys, I was able to get the lyrics of all the songs on the albums (because they had them as electronic documents). Stepa, on the other hand, had never written his lyrics in electronic form, but had them hand-written (in his notebook) only. Therefore, he offered to type them down for me, but since this was obviously a time-consuming task for him, I received only a couple of songs per album from him.⁸⁸ Although it would have also been possible for me to write the lyrics down myself, I did not consider it suitable for the purposes of this study. In my

⁸⁷ The distinction between ‘traditional’ and ‘social’ media material is always somewhat negotiable and often they also overlap.

⁸⁸ From the “MC” album, these were: “MC”, “Lapsuusvuosi boogie” (‘Childhood boogie’) and “Vinkunat kunnossa” (‘Grooves are alright’). From the “Made in Sodankylä” album, the lyrics were those of: “I don’t give a fuck”, “Made in Sodankylä”, “Kiviranta” and “Kuolleet miehet” (‘Dead men’).

view, what is crucial is to know and study how the rappers themselves compose their lyrics and, specifically, the various linguistic resources in them. From these albums, then, I have selected (and translated)⁸⁹ one song per artist to illustrate a more general point in chapter 4. I will use excerpts from various other songs by these artists to illustrate further points about authenticity-related issues in chapter 5.

Next, I shall briefly sketch the central idea of each of the albums and give a brief description of them. In addition, I will provide a rationale for the particular songs chosen for detailed analysis in chapter 4. I will also include the album covers here to show what kind (and style) of rappers we are dealing with, for readers previously unfamiliar with these three rappers. According to Shuker (2008: 95), album covers fulfill various significant functions: they 'advertise' the artists and 'alert' (potential) consumers as well as contribute to the artistic ('star') image (see also Machin 2010: 32–57 on 'album iconography').

Cheek's albums

Cheek's discography, the two albums of the present study included, is highly characterized by his own life story (as is typical of rap music, in general; see e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). The first of these albums, "Jare Henrik Tiihonen" (i.e. "JHT") is very much autobiographical – this can already be seen in the title as it consists of Cheek's given name. Choosing such a name for an album also shows, literally, how Cheek has been able to make 'a name' for himself in the scene.⁹⁰ The autobiographical (and personal) nature of the album can be seen, for instance, in the song "Mitä tänne jää" ('What is left behind') in which he raps: "levyt on ku päiväkirja, tilinpäätös vuodesta" ('the albums are like a diary, a financial statement of the year'). The songs deal with his trajectory from Lahti to Helsinki as well as from the 'margins' to the (mainstream) center, his current position as the self-proclaimed leader and *the* entertainer of the Finnish hip hop scene, his hectic life touring (and partying around) the country, and the pressures and hatred he faces and how he deals with them. Thus, the album is mainly about him, but there are also references to his Liiga posse and how they 'rule' in the Finnish hip hop scene. Many of the songs also deal with the artist's relationship with the opposite sex: how he has no time for women at the moment, and how he always messes up his relationships and only has one-night stands.

The album, or the booklet, includes the lyrics of the songs as well as a 'thank you' list. It features several photos of himself and other Liiga and Rähinä posse members on stage, in an office and at the gym, as well as some 'random' women in his bed (which is a stereotypical feature of rap albums). The cover of the album is seen below: it depicts Cheek looking into the mirror, at himself, in

⁸⁹ At times, I felt I was 'lost in translation': every effort has been made by me and in the language check to ensure a 'smooth' and understandable translation from Finnish to English, but, at times, items such as puns, slang words, idiomatic expressions and culture-specific references have been a challenge to translate.

⁹⁰ Some US rap artists, such as Eminem, have also used their given names as album titles.

a serious way⁹¹. We can only see the reflection from the mirror, as he has turned his back to the camera. The mirror has frames which make it painting-like, something which reinforces the boasting-type rap character. He is wearing a t-shirt, a New York Yankees cap and an expensive looking watch – all stereotypical hip hop wear. For example, Shuker (2008: 95) considers album covers as particularly suitable sites for genre establishment and making ‘an artistic statement’ vis-à-vis the style of music – Cheek’s album cover is a case in point, as it presents him as a *rap* artist (and not, for example, a schlager artist). The background is black and his artist name (in the format of a logo) and his album name (‘hand-written’ and in italics) are situated at the bottom of the photo, in golden yellow.



Cheek’s second “Jare Henrik Tiihonen” album (“JHT2”), which can be viewed as a sibling, if not even a twin, of the previous album is, again, very autobiographical. As the title already suggests, it is a sequel to the previous album, part two of his autobiography. On it, he continues to explore his own life, role and success: his trajectory from a kid at the back of the class into a success story in his own right. He sees his role and the current situation as two-fold: on the one hand, he loves the life he is leading (with luxury cars, expensive apartments and many women), but on the other hand, (the effort at) success also imposes a continuous pressure (meeting deadlines, having no time for personal life, and dealing with backstabbers). The album contains, again, a great deal of posse (Liiga) highlighting and songs and references about and to women: he still has no steady relationships, because he can afford to choose and because he does not want any ‘high and fly Helsinki women’.

Also the “JHT2” album booklet includes the lyrics and a ‘thank you’ list, written by Cheek himself. The booklet also features photos of himself in

⁹¹ The photo is taken by *Eiler Forsius*. The logo and layout are designed by *Markku Wettentranta*. The cover image is reprinted with permission from Cheek.

hospital, in a track and field stadium, playing chess or at the back of the classroom, as well as photos of him and his Liiga posse touring on the road in their car. This time, women are not in central, highlighted, roles, but they are shot from behind or from a distance and are very unrecognizable and faded into the background, perhaps somewhat indexically. Below we can see the cover of this second album: in this photo, Cheek faces the camera and looks at 'us' again in a very serious way⁹². He looks self-confident and somewhat star-like. He has spread out his left arm and stretches his white scarf. Besides the scarf, he is wearing dark blue jeans and a dark blue sweater. The background of the photo is somewhat blurry but based on the lights at the back one might interpret this as a city environment. As such, nothing in this photo suggests 'hip hop' to the viewer, except the artist logo and album name in the bottom right corner, this time in white. This image is perhaps also somewhat more 'mature' (or adult-like) than the cover image of the previous album. Cheek has, in fact, emphasized (for example in the *Vain elämää* TV show) how he wants to update people's ideas about what hip hop is and looks like. It is no longer (only) about the 'yo, yo' and baggy pants (like it was roughly a decade ago). Nowadays, many rappers construct their artistic image differently and do not (want to) 'fit' into those (old) stereotypes but rather wear designer clothes (such as *Louis Vuitton* and *Burberry*), thus (re)presenting a somewhat 'posh' rapper look instead (see also Omoniyi 2009 on the Nigerian critical view on US hip hop street fashion).



I chose the song "Orjantappuraa", because it is autobiographical: it describes Cheek's own ('authentic') experiences with rap music and in the hip hop scene, and thus 'represents' Cheek's discography, in general. It is also illustrative of

⁹² The photo is taken by *Nana Simelius*. The logo and layout are designed by *Markku Wettentranta*. The cover image is reprinted with permission from Cheek.

his trajectory and current position in the Finnish hip hop scene. In addition, the song includes direct accusations about authenticity and his responses – in fact, it is a collective response made by Cheek to all of his ‘haters’, i.e. people who see him as ‘fake’, because of the mainstream rap genre which he represents.

Pyhimys' albums

All in all, Pyhimys' extensive discography is exemplified by versatility. His lyrics are technically complex and content-wise often cryptic. In his songs, he deals with both his own life and contemporary life in Finland as well as global concerns and problems. He hardly ever takes a stance (or a stand) in which he clearly and directly speaks about himself and as himself. In general, his lyrics are not as autobiographical as Cheek's and Stepa's lyrics – thus, they bring an additional, different viewpoint to the study of authenticity.

Pyhimys' "Medium" is characterized by his use of multiple characters,⁹³ who relate various aspects of their lives in individual songs. Robban is one of these characters (see "Bättre folk" in section 4.4), along with Sami (a Finnish first name) and Sirviö (a Finnish last name). Pyhimys addresses a variety of themes and topics via these characters, who are all more or less marginal(ized) in Finnish society. On this album, Pyhimys tackles both national themes, such as the minority-majority sensitivities in Finnish society, and more global themes, such as people's relationship to nature and time in an age of globalization (and capitalism and consumerism). In addition, he is interested in people (and life) as unfixed and always in flux; in the distinctions between 'normal' and 'abnormal' people, and in the distribution, prevention and fragmentariness of knowledge (via various media).

The music on "Medium" combines elements of jazz and funk with rap. On the album, Pyhimys performs together with a live acoustic band, and all the songs were recorded (in the studio) in one take, thus deviating drastically from the stereotypical rap music in which the musical background is often made by (the DJ using) various music programs and the rap and the music is not recorded in a single take. In fact, Pyhimys (2011b) himself has also argued that "Medium" is his most positive album thus far, and he (2011a) has also emphasized how an album is only one recording, whereas the place where the music is actually born is the gig. This is in line with Pennycook (2007a: 69, following Judith Butler's thinking) and his view on performativity: "the way in which we perform acts of identity as an ongoing series of social and cultural performances rather than as the expression of a prior identity" – thus, in a way, the album only comes to exist when it is *performed* on stage. According to Pyhimys (ibid.), a rap song is usually 'nailed down' on an album but in the case of "Medium", the music 'lives' (is not fixed) in the gigs and this is the point of the album.

⁹³ Various aliases are a popular practice in hip hop (e.g. Omoniyi 2006). For instance, Eminem, the US rapper, is known for his several aliases and characters in his music (such as *Slim Shady*).

The “Medium” album includes the lyrics of all of the songs on it. The booklet also features a drawn image of a green-haired man. He is wearing a red-grey flannel shirt and he has bags under his eyes, suggesting that he is tired and overworked. This image, indexed by the green hair, can be interpreted as a caricature of Pyhimys. This is because in many promotional images of this particular album, Pyhimys has green hair (as well as a flannel shirt).

Below we can see the cover of this album⁹⁴. The most salient aspect in it is the eye in white, black and green, which actually comprises the stylized letters of composing the word “Medium”, with the letter D in the middle depicting the iris.⁹⁵ The background to the image is in different shades of brown. The artist (name) is nowhere to be seen. In fact, not much in this image directly indexes rap or hip hop – except for the somewhat graffiti-like layout of the eye. The eye can be seen as representing one kind of medium, one which sees and observes its surroundings.



Pyhimys’ most recent (and, to the present knowledge, his last) solo album “Paranoid” is peculiar in the sense that all the songs on the album are entitled “Paranoid”.⁹⁶ The title of the album (and of all the songs) refers to all kinds of

⁹⁴ The cover image is designed by *Niko Kempas* and it is reprinted with permission from Pyhimys.

⁹⁵ The idea of the eye of the Medium is originally Pyhimys’ own (and he made a first draft of it in the notes for the 2006 album), although he himself did not design it here.

⁹⁶ The name of the album (and the songs) can also be seen as taking an ironic stand on the frequent and ‘popular’ jocular shouts of “Soittakaa Paranoid!” (‘Play Paranoid!’) at various (rock and pop) gigs. Whereas in the US, the audience yells “Free Bird” (a song by the American rock band *Lynyrd Skynyrd*), as a kind of a rock cliché (Fry 2005), in the Finnish context a similar, jocular act is done by referring to the “Paranoid” song by the heavy metal band *Black Sabbath*. The song “Paranoid #7” on the album begins with Pyhimys actually stating: “Soittakaa Paranoid”.

paranoia discussed in and throughout the songs, such as the fear of other people, or the fear of being killed or harassed, or losing control of one's life. All the personae on the album seem to be anxious about something in the world and in their own lives – they are depicted as 'on the edge' and 'transgressive', in one way or another, or even wanting to commit suicide. Some characters also ponder existential and psychological issues, which might be seen as a reference to Pyhimys' studies (and interests, in general). In our second interview, Pyhimys told me that the "Paranoid" album is a depiction, from afar, of himself, when he was younger. At times, on the album, it also seems that Pyhimys hints at being 'tired' of (and perhaps also frustrated with) the scene – and wants to quit rapping.

The Paranoid album does not include the lyrics of the songs. Below we can see the cover of this album⁹⁷. The most salient aspect in it is the black and white drawing of a person, who is sitting cross-legged and drinking from a cup. His pose and clothing (a robe) index that the character is Asian. Pyhimys himself (personal communication) commented that the character (he himself) relates to how, already on his "Salainen maailma" ('A secret world') album, he made references to Buddhist thinking in his discography – and how (also) here he wants to make a distinction between himself (as a 'saint') and the Catholic saints. The background in the image is a strong red. The artist name is not mentioned in the cover, only the name of the album (in white) is situated in the top left corner. Nothing in the cover image (or the images inside the booklet) suggests hip hop or rap as meaningful coordinates of interpretation. The cover image might be a reference to Pyhimys as a 'holy' Asian man, whose head is a house from which 'art' is emitted. Pyhimys himself (personal communication) commented (or corrected) that the small house actually refers to a bird box – and that the character is, rather, a 'pönttöpää' (literally 'a box head', meaning 'an idiot'). The man's vision (to the world) is also extremely narrow, i.e. the small holes, which creates an interesting contrast to the eye of the "Medium", which is 'open for (and observing) everything'.

The other pages of the booklet feature the same colors, images and forms. In addition, there is an image (in white) of a working man wearing a helmet and looking sad and worried. According to Pyhimys (personal communication), this is perhaps a self-image of the designer, Otto Maja. Interestingly, Pyhimys (as a 'real' person) does not feature in photos on either of these two albums. All in all, the photos (or the lack thereof) index Pyhimys' ambiguity and uncategorizability, something which we will see in the analysis, as well.

⁹⁷ The images for Paranoid are designed by *Otto Maja* and they are reprinted with permission from Pyhimys.



I chose the song “Bättre folk”, as it is a telling example of how Pyhimys often deals with various issues in his lyrics not directly from his own but from the perspective of other personae, by using various voices in this process. He often tells these ‘real’ life stories, which are not (at least overtly) autobiographical. His authenticity as a rap artist, then, is not constructed in a ‘straightforward’ manner, but *as a blend* of various voices and roles – and sometimes also of various linguistic resources, as in the case of “Bättre folk”.

Stepa’s albums

In general, Stepas lyrics are autobiographical (similarly to Cheek) and they revolve around his daily life: his own feelings and thoughts, his family, friends, studies, surroundings (the periphery), the relationship of this periphery to the global context as well as the global and Finnish hip hop scenes.

Stepas “MC” album, his debut, is his first official ‘mark’ on the local and global hip hop world. It is very much autobiographical, as it mainly addresses his own life, real people, real events and real problems, although often making a deliberate use of the ironic (and clichéd) gangsta world and imagery in which he is ‘the Scarface of the province of Lapland’ – a world that does not, in any way, resemble the ghetto gangsta life and world in the US. The album ‘places’ him in the world: as a young man coming from a small, peripheral village who is looking for his place in Finland and in the world. The main problem for him on this album seems to be the lack of money, which is addressed in many songs. Another potential problem for him is the lack of a special woman, or women, in general, in his life.

The “MC” album includes not the lyrics themselves but the *stories* behind the lyrics and the songs, as well as a ‘thank you’ list written by Stepas. Below we can see the cover of this album⁹⁸. The most salient aspect in the sepia-toned

⁹⁸ The cover is designed by *Jupi Tuominen* the photo is taken by *Juuso*. The cover image is reprinted with permission from Stepas.

photo is the car, an old *Toyota Corolla* (which, Stepa told me, belonged to his dad at the time). Behind the car, we can see a large registration plate with the text 'Stepa MC' (i.e. the artist and the album name) on it, instead of the common Finnish registration plate consisting of three letters and three numbers⁹⁹. Stepa stands in front of the car. It is a long-shot so we cannot clearly see, for example, his facial expression. He is wearing a cap, a flannel jacket, jeans and sneakers. The background in the image is white. In the top-left corner we can see Stepa's logo, a hand grenade which is formed from the characters s, t, e, p and a. Stepa told me that this cover image is inspired by another, US rap album cover¹⁰⁰ – except that the car in that one is a *Cadillac*. This is thus a localized version of that image, featuring a young rapper from Sodankylä with his old, rundown car. Stepa does, nevertheless, look like a rapper here, which is indexed by his loose outfit and laid-back posture. The booklet also features three other photos of Stepa. One of them is a close up of him in front of the same car, wearing the same clothes as in the cover photo. In it, he looks straight at the camera, smiles, and points towards us with his index finger. In another one, he is (supposedly) in the studio, wearing headphones and rapping to the mic. In the third image, he is wearing a beanie and a flannel shirt. He is facing the camera and showcasing his 'gun' – which in his case is a banana, thereby perhaps emphasizing his ironic 'gangsta' life in Lapland.



Stepa's second album, "Made in Sodankylä" is also very autobiographical, as it describes his (then current) life in Tornio. In addition, the album is a reflection on time: it is about reminiscing over the past (in Sodankylä) and wondering about the future, both his own and that of 'the world'. In general, it deals with more societal and political topics than the songs on "MC" – the depopulation of

⁹⁹ In the US, it is more common to 'stylize' and 'personalize' auto registration plates, to have them custom-made.

¹⁰⁰ *Too Short's* "Born To Mack".

Lapland, being on the side of good people and ‘slow life’ (as opposed to the consumer culture and business life). Many of the songs are (still) dedicated to his family and friends, and there is also a tribute song to his favorite (departed) musicians.

The “Made in Sodankylä” album also includes, not the lyrics themselves, but the personal stories behind the lyrics as well as a ‘thank you’ note by Stepa. Interestingly, neither Cheek nor Pyhimys include any ‘stories’ behind the songs in their booklets. With these stories, Stepa may have wanted to connect with his audience and fans more, by sharing his thoughts, and to elaborate on the themes of the songs in a more detailed way. Below we can see the cover of this album¹⁰¹. The most salient aspects are the three characters: Stepa is in the middle and two of his rap colleagues at his side. The other two (rappers Are and *Tapani Kansalainen*) are ‘making’ him (a reference to the album name) with various tools. They are supposedly in a studio and the background features large neon-colored tools. The artist logo and album name are placed in the top right corner. Stepa’s logo has changed from the hand grenade of the first album to one which has two hammers and his artist name on top of these. Stepa is wearing a black beanie/tuque, black jeans and black sneakers. His black t-shirt, with the US rap group *Wu-Tang Clan* logo on it, suggests a connection to and affiliation with US hip hop culture, or at least with this particular rap act. The booklet also features a couple of neon-colored photos of the tools used in the cover photo. The impression we get from this cover image is that he is (technically) being made into a rapper, an artist. The end ‘product’, then, is a rapper who can start fulfilling his duty by performing raps.



The song “Made in Sodankylä” was chosen for analysis because it describes Stepa’s autobiographical trajectory and position in a fairly extensive and

¹⁰¹ The cover is designed and the photo taken by Jupi Tuominen. The cover image is reprinted with permission from Stepa.

'telling' way: it is illustrative of Stepa's own ('authentic') experiences in his life. The song also exemplifies how Stepa constructs his authenticity in and through the (societal) margins and in the (geographical) periphery – and not in the (stereo)typical urban hip hop context.

3.3.2 Interviews

Interviews are part of my data because one of the key aims of the study was to give the artists themselves a personal 'voice' and to get an 'inside' view of the culture, that of the artists. Within the polycentric culture of Finnish hip hop, I am an insider as far as (some) (fan) knowledge and experience is concerned, but I am not an insider of one of the centers: the artists and their (private) knowledge. Hence, I needed to get at *their* knowledge.

As is typical of many research processes, I started in one place but arrived in another that I would never have imagined at the outset. My initial design was of an entirely different order: in addition to an analysis of the lyrics, I planned to conduct interviews related to the lyrics, to look at my analysis of these together with the artists. Gradually, I realized that this kind of enriched, philological interpretation of the lyrics was not what I wanted. Rather, I became interested in the artists' views in their own right: their stories and discourses about their trajectories, positions and mobility in the scene. The analysis of the lyrics is (and would also have been in this case) only a small fraction of this popular culture construction. Thus, through the interviews I was able to learn to know more precisely the artists' personal thoughts, values and opinions as insiders of the music culture and business. In addition, talking to the artists provided me with more detailed information about issues related to and around authenticity, both directly and indirectly. Perhaps most importantly, in our ('free-flowing') discussions I had the chance to hear 'small stories', i.e. fragmented tellings, heavily embedded in their discursive and socio-cultural surroundings (Bamberg 2004; Georgakopoulou 2007; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008), or anecdotes connected to authenticity, in one way or another, that I would not have been able to hear otherwise (nor would I have been able always to ask the 'right' questions that would trigger these stories) (cf. Blommaert & Dong 2010).

For the purposes of the study, I interviewed each artist (at least) twice (with Stepa I had three interviews, because in the first one, the focus was not entirely on him, as his rap colleague was also there).¹⁰² In the first interview, we talked about the rap artist's background: his origins and 'trajectory' thus far, along with how the artist first became involved with and interested in the world of hip hop and rap music. We also talked about hip hop culture in general, the hip hop scenes and artists in other countries, and Finnish hip hop culture, in particular: what it was like before and what it is now. In addition, we discussed what hip hop culture and rap music mean to them. As this was my first face-to-face encounter with the artists, I did not originally think of this

¹⁰² See appendix 4 for the details of the interviews.

interview as necessarily providing me with ‘proper’ data, but rather saw it as a ‘getting to know each other’ type of meeting. The (original) aim of the first interview then was to obtain background information for the ‘actual’ analysis; however, this turned out to be as ‘rich’ a source of data as the second interview.

In my first interview alone (i.e. second interview) with Stepa, we talked about his two previous albums and the differences and similarities between them: the visual aspect of the albums, the lyrics and themes. In addition, we talked about Lapland and his Joku Roti posse. In the third interview with Stepa, and in the second interviews with Cheek and Pyhimys, we talked about Finnish hip hop in more detail: how Finnish hip hop is organized in terms of themes, topics, posses, geography and various ‘centers’. We also discussed how they see themselves as part of the whole scene: what unites them with and what makes them different from all the others. By interviewing the artists, I was able to tap into (‘emic’) information of what it is like to be a rap artist in contemporary Finland. The interview data complements but also sharpens the analysis by revealing points and issues that would not have come up in the analysis of the lyrics only, or if I had interviewed the artists only about their lyrics.

The interviews I conducted were all *theme* interviews (e.g. Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980) in nature: I had preliminary themes and questions in mind before each interview, but of course the actual interviews always went beyond these original thoughts. As I did not want to ‘burden’ the artists too much (or create extra duties for them) because of my research, I negotiated suitable meeting times with them. Instead of ‘formal’ surroundings, such as my office at the university, I opted for more informal places where the conversation might then also be more ‘natural’. The first interviews all took place in Jyväskylä, in conjunction with their gigs, either before or after the gig. For the second interviews with Cheek and Pyhimys, I travelled to Helsinki, where both of them live and work. With Cheek, we met in a café in Helsinki.¹⁰³ After that, I met Pyhimys over lunch in a sushi restaurant (a passion we share) in Helsinki. With Stepa, it was more convenient to meet in Jyväskylä, as he often visits the place, both for professional and personal reasons. I recorded all of these interviews with an mp3 recorder. I will discuss the interviews more in section 5.1 – before we actually get to grips with the examples.

3.3.3 Ethnographic observations

As already (partly) pointed out at the beginning of this study (section 1.2), “the unique and situated events [an ethnographer has] witnessed can and do indeed reveal a lot about the very big things in society” (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 13) – in this case, the Finnish hip hop scene, and also (possibly) Finnish society in general. Thus, the data in this study comprise not only lyrics and interviews but also my own field notes, reflecting my ethnographic observations. The

¹⁰³ He came to pick me up from the railway station in his Italian *Maserati* – luxury cars are a passion of his, and today it is something that he can easily afford. This is also an iconic sign of his status in the scene, as well as related to his construction of authenticity.

observation process has been neither systematic nor all-encompassing but, nevertheless, during the fieldwork, my efforts to gain an 'insider's' view of the artistic 'center' has made me *partly* an insider of this polycentric culture.

I have experienced and observed the Finnish hip hop scene not only over the past four years of this research project but also for several years before that, too (but not with an eye to this dissertation) and, during this time, I have observed, in particular, the three artists studied here (but Cheek for a bit longer, since he was already part of my MA study; Westinen 2007). I have observed them in the media: watched their music videos and their occasional TV performances, read interviews with them and album reviews in newspapers and magazines. Most importantly, I have observed them 'live': I have seen their gigs mainly in different venues in Jyväskylä but also elsewhere, such as the hip hop festival Pipefest as well as Cheek in his biggest gig thus far in the Helsinki ice hockey arena. Altogether, I have seen the three artists five to nine times per artist (and, in general, attended five to ten hip hop gigs per year).

At all of the live performances I have seen in the various venues, I have made field notes, both 'scratch notes' (or 'observational notes'), i.e. "brief notations about actions, statements, dialogue, object or impressions", and 'headnotes', which can be described as "focused memories of specific events, as well as impressions and evaluations of the unfolding project" (Lindlof & Taylor 2002: 159). In general, all of this information *complements* the image of the artist that would otherwise have been based only on the albums and the interviews I have had with them: these observations helped to build a 'fuller' and more versatile image of the artist and his art. In this kind of fieldwork, there are certainly "things that can only be described as 'thoughts' or 'insights': immaterial things, things you just know because you have done your fieldwork" (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 64). These things might be, for instance, 'features of people's character', which are, of course, affected by my own thoughts, attitudes and preferences (ibid.). Nevertheless, these, too, are data (ibid.). All of this knowledge, then, combines 'professional' (academic) knowledge with 'fan' knowledge about the scene and the culture. However, I am not a full insider of the scene, as I am not actively involved in making, producing, or marketing the music. My role could thus be described as a semi-insider in the scene¹⁰⁴ (see the next section on the role of the researcher).

In addition to gigs by the present three artists, I have also attended several other rap artists' (both Finnish and international) live performances. I have been to gigs by the US rappers Snoop Dogg, Puff Daddy, *Common*, Kanye West, *Mos Def*, *Chamillionaire*, the rap groups *The Roots* and *N.E.R.D.*, as well as the Swedish rappers Petter and *Promoe*. Some Finnish rap artists and groups (both more 'mainstream' and 'underground') that I have seen perform live include, for instance, *Don Johnson Big Band*, *Solonen* and *Kosola*, *Paleface*, *Asa*, *Notkea*

¹⁰⁴ By no means here am I aiming to *essentialize* Finnish hip hop culture as a "known stable set of values, norms and beliefs" (Coupland 2003: 426) - rather, I see it as a living thing: constantly evolving and reaching out in new directions.

Rotta, Fintelligens, Elastinen, Redrama, Kemmuru, Steen1, Teflon Brothers, Timi Lexikon, Petri Nygård, Timo Pieni Huijaus, Hannibal, Ruger Hauer, amongst many others. Through seeing these Finnish artists, I have been able to familiarize myself with a wide variety of rap genres and styles. In addition to individual gigs, I have also attended several music festivals, both hip hop and 'general', such as the annual hip hop festival Pipefest (four times), Ilosaarirock in Joensuu and *Pori Jazz* festival (seven times) since the beginning of the millennium. In 2010, I also attended a hip hop discussion event in Helsinki, where rap artists, b-boys and graffiti artists discussed the past, present and future of Finnish hip hop. In 2012, I was an invited speaker at a hip hop seminar at the University of Turku. In addition, I have personal contacts with some of the people, the hip hop activists, who have organized these events, such as Pipefest. I have listened to a variety of Finnish rap artists on the radio and on albums as well as watched their music videos, and discussed Finnish rap music with other fans, collaborators and actors. The extensive knowledge gained over the years helps me to interpret the Finnish hip hop scene, the texts, i.e. the lyrics, and the people, i.e. the rappers.

The diversity of the artists included in this study can also be observed *on stage*. Here, I will give examples of the field notes that I have written on each the artists, before, during and/or after their gigs. I have taken the liberty of clarifying them later on, so as to make them more understandable to the reader. In addition to the previous artist and lyrics descriptions, these field notes help us to understand and situate these three artists better – in the scene, in general, but also vis-à-vis each other. Through the notes, we can further nuance the image of each as artist.

Cheek

An example of Cheek's (high-ranking) position already in 2010 is the fact that fireworks followed his performance in the hip hop festival Pipefest, although he was not the very last performer of the evening (Fintelligens was: it was their 10-year-anniversary gig, and also a comeback gig after several years) (July 31, 2010).

On his gigs, as in this case in the (night club) *Giggling Marlin* in Jyväskylä, there is always a large poster at the back of the stage; during the JHT2 tour, for example, it was the Superman logo, with his initials on it. There are also two or more screens that show photos of Cheek and his hype men as a slideshow before the gig, or his actual music videos, during the gig, thus making it a multimodal show. All of this speaks for his professionalism as an artist (and perhaps also as a business man) (March 16, 2011).

A recent indication of the role and status he has reached in the Finnish music scene were his two ice hockey arena gigs in Helsinki, which were sold out in a matter of minutes. I attended the gig as a VIP guest and it was interesting to see how the whole 'backstage' (or, in this case, the hallway of the arena) was filled with celebrities of various kinds, how there was a (rather iconic) red carpet leading to the main door and how they served (and sold) *Hennessey*, one of the most stereotypical (and 'authentic') alcoholic beverages

associated with rap and hip hop.¹⁰⁵ All in all, the gig was more than just a live show, it was an event, where they had a 'brand wall', in front of which many celebrities wanted to be seen and photographed as proof of attending the event, and where numerous featuring artists, representing both rap genres (such as Elastinen) and other music genres (such as the famous pop and schlager singer *Jari Sillanpää*) were seen on stage (September 21, 2013).

Pyhimys

In the Pipefest hip hop festival, Pyhimys was on stage together with his live band *Medium* and they were mostly playing songs from the album of the same name. During the performance of the "Bättre folk" song, he introduced the chorus by saying: "Come on, allihopa!" (Come on, all of you! - 'allihopa' is Swedish). His introduction to the second stanza of the song was the (again) Swedish sentence "lite historia" ('a little bit of history'). After the performance, he commented: "tää biisi oli kaikille suomenruotsalaisille" ('this song was for all Finland Swedes' (July 30, 2010).

During a *Poppari* (a Jyväskylä jazz bar) gig (November 25, 2011), he commented on the "Bättre folk" song: "suomenruotsalaiset rapujuhlat meneillään" ('a Finland-Swedish crayfish party going on'), thereby highlighting the Finland-Swedishness of the song and resorting to yet another stereotype the majority holds of the minority: that they always celebrate the 'crayfish season', together with many shots of schnapps being taken.

The actual song, "Bättre folk", is discussed extensively in section 4.4 - but these tiny extracts from the gigs already show us how Pyhimys orients to the use of Swedish, and his role as a Swedish-speaking Finn, Robban (who is the protagonist of the song), also in introducing and concluding the song by using snippets of the Swedish language as well as referring to their traditions and customs. Both of these examples show how he does not simply rap the song but extends its themes, in this case, the discourses and stereotypes of the Finland-Swedes into the discourse surrounding the song and offers also these for an audience uptake.

On their night club gig at *Escape* in Jyväskylä (March 27, 2013), Pyhimys characterized his rap group Teflon Brothers as 'a party group'. Here, we can already see a different orientation in terms of the locations where his rap 'projects' can perform: whereas Teflon Brothers can easily attract young people to a night club in the middle of the week (it was a Wednesday), his solo performance as Pyhimys or his other rap group, Ruger Hauer, could (and would) never do this, because it is not 'their place'. Interestingly though, Pyhimys wore a Ruger Hauer t-shirt for this gig, because "of course you can't advertise Teflon Brothers on their own gig - that'd be too much". I argue that this is an indication of him being 'original' and not too obvious or self-aggrandizing. It is one of his key characteristics - to blur the boundaries of himself, and of his music.

¹⁰⁵ US rap artists such as Tupac Shakur, Notorious B.I.G., Snoop Dogg and Eminem have referred to this particular brand in their lyrics.

Stepa

After the gig in *Rentukka* (a student village restaurant) in Jyväskylä (May 7, 2010), Stepa was very relaxed and happy. He was sincerely glad about how well the gig had gone. He commented: "All I had to do was to stand there, and the crowd yelled and was with me". He also told me how genuinely happy he was about finding a trainee position in Tornio, working with youngsters, which he loves to do. All in all, Stepa showed himself to be a really sympathetic character when reporting these things to me.

Before his Poppari gig in Jyväskylä (November 6, 2010), we had a chance to talk for a while on site. He mentioned that they (his hype man Are and him) had run late again, which is somewhat characteristic of him, being from Lapland. He also told me how it is a good thing to have the lyrics as documents on the computer (instead of only in his notebook), as he subsequently needed them for a book project for Paleface. It was initially me who had asked him for the lyrics, and since he had not had them in electronic form, he had offered to write some of them down for me. Writing and crafting lyrics into his notebook is clearly a diary-like practice for Stepa.

Both of these examples illustrate, in my view, how approachable Stepa is as an artist. He often has time for me either before or after a gig (or both) and he also likes to share personal matters with me, such as the fact that he had landed a trainee position in Tornio at the time. The second example shows how well our co-operation works: he wrote the lyrics as a document (initially) *for me*. Later on, it was useful for him, when Paleface asked for his lyrics for his book (*Rappioidetta*, 2011).

An example of Stepa's position in the field can be seen in the fact that he and his rapper colleague Are were cast as the main (last) act of the evening (the other two being *Suorat luupit* and *Aivovuoto*) in *Lutakko*, Jyväskylä (September 6, 2013). They also drew the largest crowd of all of the acts. This points to their central status in the more underground scene and scale. Later on in the evening, Stepa and Are engaged in a short dialogue in between the songs: Are said to Stepa: "Hoida homma, Ela" ("Take care of it, Ela") to which Stepa replied: "Anna mennä, Iso H" ("Go ahead, Iso H"). Both the names mentioned here are established Finnish rap artists, who form the duo Fintelligens. "Hoida homma" is a song of theirs from 2008. Here, we can see how Stepa and Are are well aware of the other (more experienced) rappers in the scene as well as their own position in it, as a more novice rap duo. In addition, these lines fulfill 'local' functions on stage: they are about to start performing their next song and here, collaboratively, frame it by using an intertextual hip hop reference.

The diversity and difference among the artists can also be seen in the *venues* where they perform. Here, I will briefly discuss examples of gig venues in Jyväskylä, my current home town, where I have witnessed their live performances. Cheek has performed mostly in the (trendy) night clubs in town. In late 2013, he also had a bigger concert with a live band in *Paviljonki*, a congress and trade fair center. All of the venues in which he performs are 'centers' of nightlife or of other events, which says much about his position in

the mainstream. Pyhimys has performed in Lutakko, a local live music venue, several times and I have also seen gigs in the small jazz bar Poppari and in Rentukka. As already mentioned, together with 'the entertainment group' (his characterization of Teflon Brothers), he has also performed in night clubs. The distinctions between these places testify to the dual nature of his career and projects: one kind of music and performance is for one kind of place, while another kind of music is for other places. Thus, Pyhimys can be seen as both underground and commercial. Stepa has also performed several times in the above-mentioned Lutakko, and I have also seen his gigs in Poppari, Rentukka and *Ilokivi*, a student building on the University of Jyväskylä campus. He has also performed in the 'rap section' of the night club *Bar Bra*. The fact that his hype man Are is from Jyväskylä has some influence on his frequent visits here. Stepa is often seen in small student venues and parties, as they probably attract the right age group. Thus, the image we get of Stepa here is that of (still somewhat) a novice and also an artist at the (center of) the underground. I have also seen all three artists several times at the Pipefest hip hop festival. There, Cheek attracts the largest audience and performs on the main stage. Together with Teflon Brothers, Pyhimys has gained in popularity and has performed to large audiences on the main stage. Stepa, on the other hand, has performed either on the smaller stages or quite early on in the program on the bigger stage, never being in the 'center' of the program.

Finally, in the next section, I will more closely characterize my role and position(s) in this type of (ethnographic) research.

3.4 Researcher's role and position

Nobody enters an interview situation as a blank page;
as soon as you enter, you are someone
(Blommaert & Dong 2010: 50).

In a study like this, which not only looks at lyrics as texts, but wants to achieve an emic understanding of the Finnish hip hop scene, mainly through artists' interviews, but also via ethnographic fieldwork, it is also important to reflect on my own role and position(s) in the process. As mentioned above, my position is that of a *semi-insider* of the scene owing to the fact that I am an 'old' fan of Finnish hip hop and I have been following the scene (and the artists) for a long time already; in addition, I am of the same nationality and generation as the artists, and I share an educational background (university studies) with Pyhimys and a geographical 'small place' history with Stepa.

When I started this PhD project, I was by no means a 'blank page'. I have been a fan of Finnish hip hop, more specifically Finnish rap, ever since the beginning of the 'second wave' (i.e. the 'second phase' of Finnish hip hop at the beginning of the millennium - this was discussed in detail in section 2.1.2) and Fintelligens' debut album in 2000. In that sense, I was 'there' when Finnish hip

hop really took off for the first time – I am part of *that* generation. I have never tried rapping myself – thus, I appreciate the artists and their music as a listener, not as a practitioner or representative of any specific genre. Hence, I am not a member of the very core group, the *inner circle*, which consists of different kinds of ‘cultural workers’ (Fischer 2007), such as rap artists, DJs, producers, managers, CEOs and other close associates, nor do I have their specific, detailed, historical – emic – knowledge. In this sense, I would belong to the ‘out-group’ of Finnish hip hop.

However, I would also classify myself as belonging to the ‘in-group’ of the scene in the sense that I know (and knew already before starting my MA or PhD theses) more about how Finnish hip hop ‘works’ and what it entails than the ordinary Finnish citizen. This has enabled me to interpret the lyrics and the interviews partly from an insider’s perspective: for example, I have been able to decipher various cultural, both local and global, references in them and to know who the rappers in my study are talking about when they have mentioned various names. My (previous) knowledge of the Finnish hip hop scene, and also about the artists themselves, has enabled me to ask the artists specific and detailed questions as well as understand and react to their answers. My role can thus be characterized as *partly* an insider (or an insider in *part* of the cultural system of hip hop). Similarly to, for example, Kytölä (2013; though in the context of football and sociolinguistics), I consider myself a *bridge* between two worlds, those of hip hop and sociolinguistics. During this process, I have made “the wonderful world of hip-hop” (Pennycook 2007a: 8) known as a fully legitimate area of research, as an interesting socio-cultural phenomenon, within sociolinguistics (of globalization, in particular).

In fact, Jenkins (1992; see also 2006) introduced the idea of an ‘aca-fan’ a couple of decades ago, to refer to the combination of two worlds and interests, the academic and the fan (community), and to oppose earlier views according to which academics cannot be fans (or, at least, make their fandom visible and relevant for research).¹⁰⁶ ‘Aca-fen’ (plural) can (easily) mix and combine these two ‘identities’, and they do not see doing research on their own (personal) interests as a hindrance, but rather as *an advantage* (because of access to specific knowledge and traditions), and openly discuss and reflect upon their (unique) position. Like Jenkins, I position myself in this study as an aca-fan of rap and hip hop. In what follows in this section, I will describe in more detail the particulate coordinates of this position of mine.

In this research, then, I have, in a way, first needed to ‘make the familiar strange’, and, then again, ‘the strange familiar’. A significant part of ethnographic research is indeed making something one already ‘knows’ (on some level) again ‘unfamiliar’, to not presuppose anything of its existence and nature but rather explore it and familiarize oneself with it (again) (e.g.

¹⁰⁶ See also Hills (2002), who discusses and critiques research both on scholar-fans (i.e. aca-fans) and fan-scholars (fans who write about and analyze their objects of affection, but outside academia). Both of these marginalized groups are often looked down upon in their respective groups: scholar-fans for “not being ‘proper’ academics” and fan-scholars for being “‘pretentious’ or not ‘real’ fans (Hills 2002: 21).

Blommaert & Dong 2010; Heath et al. 2008).¹⁰⁷ This partly characterizes the present study, too, in that through my experience with Finnish hip hop, I may think I know much about it, but for the purposes of this study, I have needed to question many issues and to elaborate on my understanding and not take anything for granted. After making it 'strange', I have hopefully rendered it (again) 'familiar' both to the reader and myself. Ethnography (and ethnographic fieldwork) can be thought of as a *learning process* (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 26), and thus, even though I knew quite a lot about Finnish hip hop beforehand, my ethnographic understanding and knowledge of the culture and its actors accumulated during the research for this study.

Naturally, also my *nationality* plays a role in this research. In a way, I am doing 'ethnography at home' with people I am more or less familiar with, at least on the artistic level. However, whether we are native or not, we are all "another's" in the field, because there will always be things we share with the people involved in our study and things we do not share (e.g. Narayan 1993) – I share the same nationality with the artists (it connects us) but I am 'another' in many other respects, e.g. gender, profession or origins in Finland (they differentiate us). Being Finnish, the artists and I share the same sociocultural and -historical context, language (we share spoken vernacular Finnish, for sure, but of course not all of our resources are the same: for example, the rappers' dialects and slang are different from my own) and various societal and hip hop discourses, much more than perhaps a foreigner would. On the other side of the coin, when analyzing the lyrics and talking to the artists and analyzing their interviews, I may take many things for granted. When explaining various issues to me, the artists may also assume prior, self-evident knowledge, but for a foreign researcher, the artists would perhaps feel the need to explain more of themselves, the context, and the issues at hand.

As regards my *age*, I am convinced that being approximately the same age as the artists, with the exception of Stepa (who is five years younger than me), has helped me to carry out this research. For example, I do not stand out from the crowd at a hip hop gig in a night club or festival because of my age (but maybe because of my notebook, which is a whole other issue). Secondly, communication (both in general and in the actual interviews) with the artists was also perhaps easier because we are roughly the same age: we have 'similar' generational experiences within the Finnish youth culture and socio-cultural context. My 'age' in the Finnish hip hop system also makes a difference here in the sense that I am an 'old' fan of Finnish hip hop: as described above, this gives me some advantages of 'knowing' what the scene and its history are all about.

As regards *gender*, I am sure it has had an effect, whether small or large, on how I have been perceived by the artists and others I have worked with in the scene. The stories they have shared with me might have been of another type

¹⁰⁷ Also for instance, Erickson (1984: 62), albeit in an educational context, argues how the ethnographer must "make the familiar strange", particularly in a setting where one is 'a cultural insider'. (See also similar remarks by Copp Jinkerson 2012 in the Finnish school context).

(more stereotypically man-to-man-like), had I been a male researcher, but there is no factual way to demonstrate this. As a woman, I might, at times, have been viewed as a more of a fan (or worse, a groupie) than a researcher, particularly because all of the artists in the study are male, and the scene, in general, is very much male-led and -dominated, and stereotypically heterosexual. This has perhaps not been the case so much with the artists themselves as with their colleagues and other associates in the scene (backstage, for example). At times, the artists have offered to pay the bills if we have met in a restaurant, bar, or club context, but the reverse has also been the case. Thus, I cannot say anything highly certain about the role of researcher gender in this study.

My geographical *location*, Jyväskylä, as opposed to 'the' center of Finnish hip hop, Helsinki, has, at times, made it somewhat difficult to conduct the research. More gigs would have been available in Helsinki and more artists live there, including Cheek and Pyhimys. Hence, living there would have perhaps made it easier to meet them and talk to them as well as attend more gigs. On the other hand, Jyväskylä seems to be quite a frequent location on their tours. Other hip hop artists also visit Jyväskylä on a regular basis. In that sense, I am not in the 'periphery' either in the Finnish hip hop geography, but rather part of the 'south', in an extended view. Coming from outside Helsinki also affected the interviews in one particular way: when Cheek and Pyhimys mentioned and told stories about various neighborhoods, I had almost no or very little prior knowledge about these places - thus, I was often unable to relate to these issues at all. On the other hand, what united me and Stepa (from the north) is the fact that we both come from small municipalities, or villages - thus we both, in a way, share a 'small place mentality'. I share an *educational background*, with Pyhimys (and nowadays also with Stepa, who became a freshman in the fall of 2013), in that we have attended university and thus it is perhaps easier for him to understand and discuss the academic world and its requirements, for example for a PhD. Taken together, all of these specific characteristics contribute to the habitus that characterizes me as a researcher in this particular study and context. This is what I brought with me to this research and what defines my role(s) as a researcher.

In this ethnographic study, I try to get at the *fragmented pieces of information* that the rap artists have at their disposal. In fact, "[m]uch of what we seek to find out in ethnography is knowledge that others already have" (Hymes 1996: 13). Naturally, in this task, I as a researcher am an "instrument of the inquiry" (ibid.). Thus, *who* I am also influences what kind of information I can or cannot find out or gain access to. How the artists categorize the interview (situation) affects what topics can be discussed, what (and how much) information they are willing to share with me and how personal they want to be in the situation (Briggs 1986: 49). The kinds of things that the rappers relate and reveal to me, the researcher, are bound to be different from what they tell journalists (who may have a particular story or a point of view in mind), other rappers (with whom they 'share' the scene with its particular past and its specific actors), or their fans (who occupy an admirer's position in relation to them). The rappers

may also treat some issues as so trivial, familiar and taken-for-granted that they do not even mention them to me (cf. Hymes 1996). Therefore, what might seem interesting to me might not be so for the rappers, and consequently I will never know what they did not share with me. Cameron (2001: 14) has, in fact, argued that in interviews people “[construct] a certain presentation of themselves for the researcher’s benefit”, i.e. they might tell something they expect the interviewer to want to hear, or what they want her to believe about a given topic. Thus, it is always worthwhile to remember that the ethnographic interview data that I have collected are *co-constructed*, i.e. constructed together with the artists in specific contexts and situations.

Thus, as regards the researcher’s position in the field making observations and in the interviews talking to the artists, my presence “makes me part of this research context and my interests guide how I represent the context and what phenomena I choose to examine” (Copp Jinkerson 2012: 26). The nature of the study is thus, inevitably, *subjective* and *partial*. As researchers, we must be *aware* of that subjectivity, and it needs to “play a role in the way in which one constructs ‘objects’, i.e. objective factual accounts of events (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 66, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s thinking on reflexive sociology). The fieldwork materials, then, “represent such subjectivity”, in that they reflect the “reality as seen, experienced and understood by you” (ibid.). Subjectivity, then, cannot (and need not) be avoided: in fact, it is “better to be aware of it and to question what you have seen, heard and understood from within that context, than to pretend that this context wasn’t there” (ibid.; see also Hymes 1996: 13). Thus, here, I have tried to make it clear to the reader what kind of subjectivities I have as a researcher and what the context(s) of the research is (or are).

Relationship vis-à-vis the artists

Finally, in order to reflect on the unique *relationship* I have (had) with each of the artists, I will briefly characterize these below. I feel this is necessary because it gives us information about the kinds of roles and positions we have adopted in relation to each other in this ethnographic study.

I have been in contact with Cheek since the beginning of my Master’s thesis work in 2006. His lyrics were part of my research data already then and, together, we discussed the analytical observations that I had made. When I asked him to continue with me in the present research, he was very eager to help. He has always been very friendly and helpful to me in this process and often replied to my numerous questions via e-mails. He has also often arranged for me to have tickets to his shows. Lately, however, as he is becoming more and more popular in Finland and his tour life is extremely busy, his responses and contacts have also been more infrequent, which is, of course, perfectly understandable. It is noticeable that he keeps his distance, a ‘pro’ attitude, and he always meets and treats me as another pro, a researcher, and perhaps also as an interviewer (of which, I am sure, he meets dozens nowadays). I have been to several of his gigs in Jyväskylä and places nearby. Before and after his gigs, he has usually been busy and in a hurry to travel to the next town (booked) on his

tour. Therefore, informal and impromptu encounters with him have been few. His schedule as a popular mainstream artist is hectic and filled with all kinds of activities and publicity events. Therefore his status is 'high', so to speak, and (consequently) his availability nowadays is sometimes limited.

I contacted Pyhimys for the first time in March 2009, when I had just started my PhD research. He was immediately interested in participating in it. Ever since our first encounters he has been extremely helpful, encouraging and supportive, both online and offline. He has instantly replied to my numerous emails and questions and given me feedback on articles and analyses I have written about (and published on) his lyrics (for a discussion on *ethnographic monitoring*, see section 6.1). Like Cheek, he has provided me with tickets to his gigs. More often than not he has had time to meet me before or after the gig. This has resulted in casual talk about the gigs, rap music and also life outside the hip hop world. During these moments, he has also introduced me to the other artists and group members. Pyhimys is nowadays fairly well-known as a rap artist, particularly through the recent commercial success of Teflon Brothers and his position as a production manager at Johanna Kustannus, but this has not affected his approach or availability in any way. We also often chat on Facebook (initiated often by me, asking for clarifications, or about other issues, but also sometimes by him) about past or upcoming gigs and events, his busy schedule, or more mundane matters – the threshold for starting a discussion is, by now, relatively low. In this process, we have indeed become acquaintances.

I have been in contact with Stepa since the beginning of my PhD research. Ever since his initial consent to participate in my research, he has been extremely friendly and approachable. He replies to all of my emails and questions, sometimes after a delay but nevertheless. In addition to often providing me with tickets to see his shows, he has almost always made the effort to come and see me before or after the gig and we have had numerous casual conversations about the gigs, his music and other things. One particularly striking encounter was when he contacted me and asked me for a ride to Pipefest (the hip hop festival near Jyväskylä) on a night when he himself was not performing there. I drove there and back and our conversation varied from hip hop life, music and research to our 'normal lives'. This kind of (spontaneous) behavior exemplifies his sincerity and our relationship. On March 16 (2012), I received an email from Stepa asking me to contribute to his tumblr blog.

Jou jou! Teen tuonne blogiin eri räp-tyyppien punchline haastiksia.. eli yks kysymys ja perään vastaus. Haluaisin sinut mukaan siihen vastaan seuraavaan kysymykseen: Teet Gradua [sic] Suomiräpistä. Miksi? Ja vastaa niin paljon tai vähän ku jaksat.. - stepa

[Yo yo! I'm doing punch line interviews about different rap people for my blog.. so one question and an immediate answer. I'd like you to reply to the following

question: You're doing a pro Gradu [sic]¹⁰⁸ on Finnish rap. Why? And answer as much or little as you can...-stepa]

I replied, of course, giving him my response to publish in the blog. This small anecdote is an interesting example of the co-operation between a researcher and an artist, and the two-way nature of the path between the two. Because of all of these informal meetings and talks we have had, he has, at times, felt almost like a younger brother to me. Stepa could still be characterized as a novice in the field (although he has already published several albums). Maybe this also affects his availability and informality in that he still has time for me, too. Another thing I see as connecting us, briefly mentioned above, is that we both come from small places, from the 'periphery', if you will – Stepa from Sodankylä and me from Taipalsaari, a small municipality in South-Eastern Finland. Thus, we might share a kind of 'small place mentality' and experiences – certainly different from those of the Helsinki metropolitan area. Perhaps it is also because of this that I sometimes sympathize him as much as I do.

Ethical considerations

Finally, it is also important here to pay attention to certain ethical considerations that arise out of this research, since it involves working and collaborating with real people. First of all, while I refer to the artists by their artist names, I have also mentioned their real names when introducing them (in section 3.2). This is because their names are public information (for example, they are mentioned in several interviews and Wikipedia) and because some of the artists also make a direct reference to them, for example in their album titles (e.g. 'Jare Henrik Tiihonen' is Cheek's real name). Thus, there has been no reason to try to 'hide' their real names. However, when speaking about and analyzing their work and interviews, I refer to them by their artist names, since these are their 'professional names'. As for access to the data, I have acquired all the lyrics data directly from the artists themselves and they have given me their informed consent to use them in research and teaching. This applies to my interview data as well, but along the way, I have made it my policy to seek confirmation directly from the artists as to whether a given extract can be used in research, if I have suspected that the information might be somehow sensitive or harmful to them or others concerned. I have also deleted any private information from the extracts. In reporting about interviews, I have been careful not to include any *highly personal* information about the artists, their families, friends or acquaintances, as this study is essentially about their artistic personae and thus deals mostly with what they do in and in relation to the world of hip hop.

Having outlined and described the set-up of the study, the research questions and aims, the artists, the data and my role as a researcher, we are ready to move on to the analysis proper. Next, in chapter 4, 'Finnish hip hop as

¹⁰⁸ In my e-mail response to him, I jokingly reminded him that I am in fact doing a doctoral thesis.

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a scale-level', I will analyze the lyrics, one song from each artist, from the point of view of resources, repertoires and scales.

4 FINNISH HIP HOP AS A SCALE-LEVEL

4.1 Introduction

This chapter approaches and interprets Finnish hip hop as one scale-level. Here, scale refers to *a scope of understandability*: what *makes sense* on this particular scale-level, vis-à-vis particular sociocultural phenomena. Here, I emphasize how Finnish hip hop culture and rap music can be seen as (mainly) united, coexisting and in cooperation. I will focus on the things that Finnish rap music and these three rap artists have in common – things that bind and bring them together, such as (i) their language use, in terms of their ‘mother tongue’ but also specific jargon, (ii) their discourse(s), related to specific themes, topics and cultural references and (iii) their socio-cultural history in different locations and contexts, but nevertheless within Finland. Thus, here we can see how these three rappers all operate within the same scale, and in reference to it, but in various ways. It should also be noted at this point that ‘Finnish hip hop as a scale-level’ is not a claim; it is an object of analysis in its own right, whereby a (hip hop) nation is not ‘a given’, but an outcome of an analysis.

In this chapter, I first discuss the key concepts, relevant for the topics to be dealt with here, namely: *resources*, *repertoire* and *scales*. After discussing and elaborating on these three concepts, I will present and analyze three specific cases in which I will show how these concepts become operationalized in the construction of authenticity. These carefully selected case studies, that is, the lyrics by Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa (sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 respectively) illustrate a more general argument about the scales in Finnish hip hop, each in their own way. As we will see in the analytical sections, all the artists *project* various scales, ‘point’ towards specific contextual ‘frames’ (or ‘scripts’) within the Finnish hip hop scale-level: for Cheek in “Orjantappuraa” (‘Thorn’), the scale is largely global, whereas for Pyhimys in “Bättre folk” (‘Better folk’) it is mostly national. Finally, the “Made in Sodankylä” lyrics by Stepa project mostly the local scale-level, within the Finnish scale-level. In the analysis of these cases, I do not claim that this is a thorough presentation of all Finnish hip hop. Rather,

I believe that these three cases are iconic of a more general argument: how Finland is a part of a global phenomenon, in very specific ways, and, more significantly, how rap enables positions and positioning at different scale-levels, within the macro scale-level of Finland and Finnish hip hop.

Language

In the present study, language is taken to be (one of) the most important aspect(s) of hip hop culture and rap music. The culture and music are filled with ideas, emotions, opinions and values people want to express and convey – via language. As Pyhimys stated in our first interview, the threshold for starting to rap is fairly low and, as the format is filled with space for texts, words and sentences, one has ample time and opportunities to say a great deal within just one song. Like Alim (2009a: 5), I thus view language as “one of the most useful means by which to read Hip Hop Culture” since it is via this medium, that the cultural practices, artist performances, productions and member identities of hip hop are “expressed and constituted” (Alim 2009a: 5), as well as “contextualized and negotiated” (Androutsopoulos 2009: 43). Pennycook (2007a: 147) also emphasizes how “rap lyrics put language on display, make features of rhyme, rhythm, dialect and difference salient in ways that other textual formations do not”. Rap can indeed be seen as “a significant tool for language awareness” (ibid.).

Thus, also my primary focus will be on language, but on language as a ‘*cultural resource*’ (instead of the ‘pure’ linguistic structure), emphasized by linguistic anthropology (e.g. Duranti 1997). I am interested in how speakers make use of whatever various linguistic resources are available to them in order to *index* multiple identities and various social meanings (e.g. Jørgensen & Møller 2014; Ochs 1992). These speakers are seen as real “social actors”, as “members of particular, interestingly complex, communities” (Duranti 1997: 3), in this case, the Finnish hip hop community.

The global hip hop youth of today use language in creative (and empowering) ways and “their appropriations and remixes of Hip Hop indicate that these heteroglot language practices are important technologies in the fashioning of their local/global identities” (Alim 2009a: 7). Indeed, hip hop culture has become “a primary site of identification and self-understanding for youth around the world” (Alim 2009a: 5). It is the linguistic resources, in particular, that these youth exploit in various ways – “manipulate, (re)appropriate, and sometimes (re)create” (ibid.) – to signal belonging in the global hip hop culture. They use varied linguistic resources and styles in indexing “the multiplicities of their identities through the often dangerous and contentious cultural terrains of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and other locally relevant sites of identification” (ibid.).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ In this study, instead of the concept ‘identity’, which indexes something stable and fixed, I will use (whenever necessary) the term ‘identification’ which I view as an “ongoing social and political process” (Bucholtz & Hall 2004a: 376), since “identities are seldom assumed or transparent” but, they are, more accurately, “constructed in active processes of identification and self-understanding” (Leppänen et al. 2014). (For

Rap language is peculiar kind of language that owes much to the “performance nature” (Androutsopoulos 2009: 43) of rap music. Rap music is made of speech-like features, because it is meant to be performed. Thus, it is rarely similar to standard languages (Androutsopoulos 2009: 50), or even wants to be similar, since the “vernacular speech in rap lyrics emphasizes the subversiveness of hip hop with respect to mainstream culture and its harmony with vernacular cultural values” (Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2003: 473). Originally, US rap made a disempowering language variety, African-American Vernacular English, into their own ‘resistance vernacular’, (Potter 1995: 57) i.e., a positively valued linguistic code, or even ‘a prestige code’ in some contexts. Rap is, and always has been, thus very much about the language on the streets, whether these are (stereotypically and traditionally) the streets in the big cities, or, alternatively, small village roads in the countryside. The choice and mixing of language(s) is unique to each MC’s lyrical style – a crucial element of rap music being about and embodying “personal ownership of lyrics” (Lin 2009: 145). The lyrics thus often reflect the language of real life and of the neighborhoods the rappers live in and experience, often resulting in language mixing in the lyrics, and their audience readily accepting and being open to this (see e.g. Sarkar 2009: 144–145). Further, the lyrics need to have a ‘flow’ – which is “a crucial part of the aesthetics of MC-ing”, as “having a good flow is widely recognized as central to the art of rap” (Pennycook 2007a: 129).

Language-wise, ever since the beginning, one of the most significant aspects in (US) rap has been *cultural referencing*. This practice goes back to the verbal games of ‘sounds’, ‘dozens’ and ‘signifying’ of African American youth, from which rapping originally evolved (cf. Toop 2000). In studying these verbal games and ritual insults amongst African Americans, Labov (1972: 297–353), noted that “the mass media and commercial culture provide a rich body of images” (p. 309), such as names of popular figures and artists and brand names, which are made use of in comparative or copulative constructions to refer to the speaker’s opponents (or their relatives, usually mothers). In contemporary rap music, cultural referencing is mostly used for self-reference, boasting or dissing (Androutsopoulos 2009: 49), such as in Stepa’s (already mentioned) self-remark “Lapin läänin Scarface” (‘Scarface of the province of Lapland’) on his “MC” song. In making use of cultural references, rappers create an abundance of “local knowledge that includes history and traditions, high art and mass culture, places and institutions”, which “indexes a hybrid cultural horizon, in which global media culture, European cultural heritage and specifically local traditions merge” (Androutsopoulos 2009: 49, in exploring rap lyrics from five European countries). Cultural referencing is thus one of the most significant ways in which rap music is *discursively localized*. This cultural referencing can also be done in an ironic way. Pyhimys rhymes and ‘name-drops’: “Olipa kerran lännessä maa/ joka lojaaleja seuraajia kasvattaa / Swoosh-tatskat ja Bluetooth pätkii / ironinen kuluttaja nauraa matkal Mäkkiin” (‘Once upon a

more on ‘identification’, see for example Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003; Brubaker & Cooper 2000.)

time there was a country in the west / that raised loyal followers / Swoosh tattoos and Bluetooth breaks up / an ironic consumer laughs on the way to McDonald's'), thereby taking a critical stand against today's consumer and brand culture.

Previous global hip hop research

In chapter 1, I situated the present study, on the macro level, within popular music and culture studies, and, more specifically, global hip hop studies. Before elaborating on the studies that have been conducted within hip hop studies, with particular reference to lyrics and (or) authenticity, I will first make a few remarks on the analysis of song lyrics in popular music and cultural studies, domains where they have long been a research focus in genres such as pop, rock and country music. My purpose is to provide a short introduction to some of the more typical aspects of and arguments concerning the study of lyrics before proceeding to the task at hand. An extended discussion would, however, go beyond the immediate concerns of this particular study. Song lyrics, in general, have personal value to people and they "are central to how pop songs are heard and evaluated" (Frith 1996a: 159). In addition, lyrics "can reveal much about cultural discourses of a specific time alongside which an artist may want to align themselves" (Machin 2010: 77), as well as reflect (and criticize) various contemporary social and political 'realities' and issues (Shuker 2008: 93-104; Connell & Gibson 2003: 71), as we shall also see in each of the present analyses. Machin (2010: 77-97) suggests the following steps in the analysis of song lyrics: the basic song structure (activity schema); participants, action and agency; and settings and circumstances. My focus is specifically on analyzing the participants, action, settings and circumstances in the rap lyrics, with special reference to the question of authenticity.

Hip hop culture has begun to attract researchers over the past two decades, and has slowly received recognition in academia (Sarkar 2009: 140). After its initial focus on American hip hop, research has taken a global turn, particularly after the above-mentioned groundbreaking book *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA* (Mitchell 2001a), which included investigations of the local scenes in, for example France, Germany, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Canada and Sydney. Since then, several book-length treatments about global hip hop cultures, whether in specific cities (for instance, Maxwell 2003 on the Sydney scene in the early 1990s) or countries (both Condry 2006 and Fischer 2007 on Japan) have been published.

Like these studies, my study also aims to explore one particular hip hop nation and one particular scale-level, Finland. Similarly to Fischer (2007), my data include lyrics, interviews and ethnographic observations (though more short-term and not as 'in depth' as hers). Fischer's focus, however, is somewhat different from mine, as she investigates 'blackness', 'race' and politics in Japanese hip hop and, alongside artists, also examines 'cultural workers' in general. Condry (2006) takes a more holistic view of *all* hip hop in Japan, including the fandom, female and market perspectives as well as engaging in

large-scale fieldwork in night clubs, recording studios and b-boy parks. Looking at hip hop scenes in Europe, Androutsopoulos & Scholz (2002, 2003) constructed a large framework for the study of French, Italian, Greek, Spanish and German rap songs and their 'rap discourse', consisting of song topics, speech act patterns and cultural references (in addition to 'rap discourse', they also explored 'the socio-cultural frame', i.e. the social base of hip-hop culture in each country, market and media infrastructures, and 'linguistic patterns', i.e. language variation, rhetorical patterns and English elements). My study makes use of their *rap discourse* category (this is elaborated in the next section) but does not specifically address the two others (apart from the 'English elements' in the sense of one linguistic resource among others that the rappers make use of).

In 2007, Alim and Pennycook edited a special issue (in *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*) entitled: *Glocal Linguistic Flows: Hip-Hop Culture(s), Identities, and the Politics of Language Education*, which aimed to introduce the issues of language, identity and education into the field of global hip hop studies. Two years later, Alim, Ibrahim & Pennycook (2009) discussed these issues of language, identities and education in an edited book *Global linguistic flows*, by extending their view to cover various settings across the globe. Of all the books written on the topic of global hip hop culture, I consider this to be one of the most significant and compelling, since it brings together (sociolinguistic) researchers worldwide and yet manages to find commonalities between the local contexts under investigation and makes a range of useful theoretical and methodological suggestions. For instance, the introduction by Alim (2009a), advocates the centrality of 'language' in (global) hip hop studies (as was seen above in this section) and the view on hip hop as an 'already local' story-telling tradition, as argued by Pennycook and Mitchell (2009) (discussed in section 2.1.1). With its emphasis on language and globalization from the point of view of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, the field of research represented in this book also comes closest to that of the present study. In fact, the book is about 'hip hop sociolinguistics', the interest being in language in society and language as a significant tool in the hip hop culture(s).

One of the most recent publications on global hip hop is Terkourafi's (2010) edited book, *Languages of Global Hip Hop*, which features such 'old' hip hop contexts as the US and Germany, while also introducing 'new' scenes from, for example, Egypt and Cyprus. Compared to *Global Linguistic Flows*, this book offers no systematic or comprehensive conclusions, and there is relatively little discussion on the similarities or differences between the cases reported on in the book (see also Ibrahim's 2012 review of the book.). Although the focus of the book is on language, no specific arguments or characterizations are made about the nature or function of this (hip hop) language, other than a somewhat rigid categorization of the articles, which focuses on a) national languages b) regional, immigrant or minority varieties, and c) a mix of the these in the form of code-switching/mixing. Terkourafi also attempts to create a 'third way' of looking at authenticity, namely by linking the 'sounding' practices (verbal plays and insults) of African Americans to the concept of 'tragedy' by the Greek

philosopher *Aristotle*. Although the comparison is interesting, she does not offer us concrete, empirical ways of conceptualizing and analyzing this.

Hip hop authenticity has attracted interest in several disciplines such as popular music, (social) geography, cultural studies, philosophy, musicology and (socio)linguistics. In many (US) studies, the focus has been on *racial* authenticity (as was elaborated on in chapter 2). For instance, in her sociolinguistic study, Cutler (2009) explored the construction of Whiteness in US rap battles. Eminem's (a White US rapper) construction of authenticity has been a topic treated in many studies, such as Armstrong (2004) in the fields of sociology and popular music, Fraley (2009) in communication and media studies and Grealy (2008) in cultural and media studies. Within global hip hop studies, 'race' has played a different role. In his research on the Japanese hip hop culture, Condry (2006: 20) argues that race plays a role in hip hop, but in a different way from that argued in the US: he explains that "[w]hen Japanese artists proclaim that they are yellow b-boys, they are not asserting a pan-Asian identity, but rather drawing attention to their specific location in a differently configured racial matrix". In her research on Roma rap in Hungary, Simeziane (2010: 116) emphasized the notion of race, if in a metaphorical sense, in studying global hip hop: "'blackness' remains an integral part of authenticity in hip hop". Unlike in all of these studies, race (and authenticity) is not the focus in this study. Instead, what I wish to investigate is the linguistic and discursive construction of authenticity on various scale-levels.

When they have been the focus of sociolinguistic research, *rap lyrics* have been explored from the points of view of language mixing and code-switching (e.g. Omoniyi 2009 in the case of Nigerian hip hop culture), the appropriation of African American (Vernacular) English, in particular (e.g. Higgins 2009a, 2009b on the Tanzanian hip hop scene), minority issues (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2010a; Simeziane 2010) and localization (e.g. Pennycook & Mitchell 2009; Androutsopoulos 2009), to name but a few. As in the present study, Brunstad et al. (2010) explored the textual norms and language use in Norwegian rap music, by making use of Androutsopoulos & Scholz's (2002) framework for the analysis of rap lyrics. In their research on identity construction in German rap lyrics, Berns and Schlobinski (2003) also made several remarks about authenticity. They examined the construction (and maintenance) of identity, particularly in relation to the kind of language and discourse used in the lyrics of two German rap groups. They argued that the 'gangsta rap' group lacked authenticity in that their ('ghetto-inspired') lyrics did not correspond to their everyday life in a small town in Germany. The other group, however, was seen as authentic because, despite their mainstream success, they stuck to their original topics and rapped about their 'real' social surroundings. In her study on the South Korean hip hop context, Lee (2010) explored how 'keepin' it real' was understood and constructed in the lyrics by four rap artists. She concluded that particular (local) topics of ageism, career, family, education and military service and meta-rap (talk about rap) 'glocalize' hip hop authenticity in the South

Korean case, also arguing that, (precisely) because of these specific topics, the scene is quite different from hip hop scenes elsewhere.

Pennycook (2003, 2007a, 2007b; Pennycook & Mitchell 2009) has been one of the most influential scholars in the study of rap music (lyrics), language *and* authenticity. In his research, Pennycook (2007a, 2007b) has emphasized the need for a *local* understanding of authenticity (as discussed in section 2.3.1), while always understanding the relationship to the wider whole, "the global hip hop cultural dictate" (Pennycook 2007b: 103). For example, in his discussion of the Japanese rap group Rip Slyme (Pennycook 2003: 528), he concluded that their (performed and performative) *raplish*, i.e. their own rap language in the lyrics, was a complex mix of English and Japanese, which cannot be characterized as either 'a mother tongue' or 'a foreign language'. Furthermore, he (*ibid.*) argues that the identity, which their language usage indexes, defies any clear or pre-determined notions but, rather, was fluid and constructed in *performance*. While not using the concept of performance in this study, I agree with Pennycook in that we should *not assume* any languages, identities, or, in fact, authenticities; instead they should be studied. This is what I aim to do in the analysis of the present Finnish rap lyrics: describe what kinds of linguistic and discursive resources the rappers draw on, what functions they have, and what consequences this has for authenticity.

In the next section, I introduce the key concepts to be used in the analysis of the Finnish rap lyrics: resources, repertoire and scales. Although little bits of language, along with topics, genres and cultural references, have been the focus of several rap studies (see e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003; and the many articles in Alim et al. 2009 and Terkourafi 2010;), the notion of 'scale' has not been used in hip hop research thus far, at least in the way I conceptualize it (except for Pietikäinen 2010; Varis & Wang 2011; Wang 2012, for which, see more below).

4.2 Central concepts: resources, repertoire, scales

This section deals with the concepts of *resources*, *repertoire* and *scales*, all essential to a sociolinguistics in the age of globalization (Blommaert 2010), or, more generally, late modernity (e.g. Rampton 2006). For the purposes of this study, I draw mostly on Blommaert's work (2005, 2010; Blommaert et al. 2005) but I will also briefly introduce and discuss the work of other scholars working within similar theoretical and methodological paradigms. These three concepts are particularly useful to my study, as they allow me to examine hip hop culture, a complex art form and phenomenon, in a fresh and fairly novel way, hip hop in itself being illustrative of several aspects of globalization and localization processes. Linguistic resources characterize the language use of and by rap artists in a very concrete, observable way. Discursive resources, on the other hand, describe the contents of and actions made by rap artists in their lyrics. On a more abstract level, then, it is interesting to see how all of these

resources make up an artist's repertoire. The concept of 'scales', in turn, characterizes the moves and positions projected and constructed by the rap artists in the spatiotemporal scope of meaning-making: that is to say, on which 'scale' am I understandable when I refer to this US rapper, or use my own dialect, for instance.

Before moving on to a detailed discussion of these concepts (and linguistic resources, in particular), I first need to critically discuss the notion of 'language'. Languages do not exist as empirical, observable 'objective' sociolinguistic phenomena. Rather, people use bits and pieces of language – whichever 'variety' or 'register' these bits and pieces may derive from – and their speech is characterized by heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981), hybridity and complexity. Viewing languages as separate, abstract entities simply does not suffice if we want to look at how people *actually* communicate in their real lives, in which boundaries between the so called 'languages' they use are not always clear-cut (and need not be so). The analysis of 'language' as a count noun (whether in singular or plural), an inseparable part of the modern paradigms and ideologies, no longer works in today's globalized and globalizing world of mobility.

Languages do, however, have a very significant existence as language-ideological constructs (influencing language behavior, perception and policies). Recent sociolinguistics, in particular, has questioned the traditional concept of 'languages' in the plural form and argued that they are (merely) ideologically and socio-culturally constructed and invented abstract entities, which do not actually tell us anything about real life language use (Jørgensen & Møller 2014: 73). Furthermore, it is important to notice that 'dialects', 'sociolects', 'registers' and 'varieties' are also (ideological) sociocultural constructions, and while they may seem useful categories for linguists, power holders, educators, and other gatekeepers (Heller 2007; Jørgensen 2008) – they do not reflect real-life language use as such (Jørgensen & Møller 2014: 73). As Makoni and Pennycook (2007: 2) aptly point out: "languages do not exist as real entities in the world and neither do they emerge from or represent real environments; they are, by contrast, the inventions of social, cultural and political movements".

The idea of languages as ideological constructs entails an 'ethnolinguistic assumption'. In Europe, in particular, the assumption of separate languages coincides with the rise of the nation states in the 1800s, and the Herderian, national, romantic ideology that accompanied it. A nation consisted 'naturally' of (only) *one people* and (only) *one language* (Jørgensen & Møller 2014; Lähteenmäki 2010) and of "language use and ethnic or cultural group identity in a linear and one-on-one relationship" (Blommaert et al. 2012: 2–3).

In the three sections (4.3–4.5) that follow, I will analyze the lyrics of three songs – in each case from the viewpoint of linguistic and discursive resources, repertoire and scales. But before that, I will briefly characterize the building blocks of the analysis, i.e. these concepts and their origin, history and earlier usage, as well as the rationale for their application in this study, so that we know how to use these concepts when we reach the analytical sections.

4.2.1 Resources

Following from the discussion above, instead of a fixed and stable notion of languages, I draw on the concept of *resources* (Hymes 1996; Blommaert 2010). The concept comes originally from Hymes, who argued that:

The place of language in the life of the community would be understood as more than a matter of sounds, spellings, grammatical categories and constructions. It would be properly understood as involving varieties and modalities, styles and genres, ways of using a language as *a resource* (Hymes 1996: 70, italics added).

Later on, Blommaert (2005, 2010) adopted this concept of resources to refer to such concrete forms of language as various accents, language varieties, registers and genres as well as different modalities. In addition, people's language ideologies can be viewed as part of their resources. (Blommaert 2010: 102.) All resources are specialized, in other words, they are function-specific: thus each resource has its own specific function in a given time and space. In addition, no two resources will ever have exactly the same function and potential. (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 27.) Blommaert's work is part of the fairly recent (strand of) sociolinguistic research, which prefers and emphasizes the notion of '(linguistic) resources' over that of 'languages'. In a similar vein, Heller (2007: 1), for example, argues strongly "against the notion that languages are objectively speaking whole, bounded, systems", and, instead, insists that people "draw on linguistic resources which are organized in ways that make sense under specific social circumstances". In addition, for example Jørgensen (2008) and Rampton (2006, 2013), characterize language use by people in terms of resources and features, instead of fixed entities of 'languages'.

People make use of these resources "in real sociocultural, historical and political contexts" and they attribute different values and degrees of usefulness to them (Hymes 1996, chapter 3; Blommaert 2010: 5). These resources are never static but, rather, they move in time and space (Blommaert 2010: 5). The nature of these resources follows their users: when people are socially mobile, their resources follow them, but when people are socially marginal, their resources are similarly in a marginal position. (Blommaert 2010: 47.) Access to various resources is not equal. While for instance 'hip hop English' has become a fairly democratically distributed resource, a distinguished standard variety, like British English, is not accessible to many disenfranchised people (owing to lack of access to education, for example) and, thus, it remains the property of exclusive learning environments (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 21). Thus, people never have (access to) the same resources everywhere. The resources one possesses and uses give an indication of the locality they derive from. Resources are thus very much 'placed'. (Blommaert 2010: 101.) In addition, they indicate traces of one's social position, class, age, gender and ethnicity, among other things.

Whereas Blommaert argues for 'resources', other scholars, like Jørgensen (2008; see also Jørgensen et al. 2011; Jørgensen & Møller 2014), speak more precisely of and for 'features'. For Jørgensen and Møller (2014) features refer to

“units and regularities” that are “typically (but not always) associated with one or more sociocultural constructions called ‘languages’”. However, the basic idea and thinking behind these two re-conceptualizations of language remains the same: what people in their actual lives make use of “are linguistic features as semiotic resources, not languages, varieties, or lects” (Jørgensen & Møller 2014: 77; Møller 2008). Similarly to resources, features can also index values, meanings, speakers, places, etc. (Blommaert 2010; Jørgensen 2008).

These linguistic resources always have the potential of being social resources, *social capital*, which index (underlying) social norms. This means that their usage in specific social contexts is indexical of their position in society. (Blommaert 2005; Wang 2012.) For example, in his song “Bättre folk” Pyhimys reveals traces of the position of the Swedish language in Finland, as a supposedly ‘elite’ minority language (as we shall see in section 4.4). Alim (2009a: 10, drawing on Kroskrity 1993) also reminds us of how specific linguistic resources can be used differently by different speakers and how they make use of the “potential multiple indexicalities of particular linguistic resources”. Pennycook (2007b), in turn, argues that the usage and reception of particular linguistic resources, is always dependent on the *local arrangement* of and relations between cultures, languages, and politics. Thus, the resources have and receive a different kind of meaning and value, depending on the context(s).

The added value of linguistic ‘resources’, then, for this study is crucial. ‘Resource’ is a very helpful analytical unit mainly because of its concreteness. Because I, too, understand ‘languages’ as (mere) sociocultural and ideological constructions, I do not want to focus on (and emphasize the view of) separate languages that can be taught, learned and mastered. People do not master separate blocks or entities of languages in their ‘real’ lives – rather, they know bits of language and they use these bits for suitable communicative contexts and purposes.

In addition to linguistic resources, I will also analyze various *discursive resources* in the lyrics. These resources include (i) *discourses* (explained in section 1.2), i.e. ways of speaking (and thinking) about various issues; (ii) *narratives*, i.e. the ways in which the lyrics are crafted as ‘plotted stories’ with a beginning, series of events and an ending, and how the main character in the narrative acts (in chapter 5, (where the interview data are analyzed) narrative is understood in a somewhat different way; this will be explained in section 5.1). The analysis here also aims to identify (iii) the ways in which the songs include particular *topics, speech act patterns* and *cultural references*. These particular discursive resources will be analyzed in the lyrics because, as indicated in a large-scale study on European rap music in five different countries by Androutsopoulos & Scholz (2002, 2003), they can be considered key elements of ‘rap discourse’ (see also Brunstad et al. 2010 who make use of ‘topics’ and ‘speech act patterns’ in their study on Norwegian hip hop).

According to Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2002, 2003), typical topics in rap lyrics include *self-presentation, scene discourse, social critique, contemplation,*

love/sex, party/fun, dope and *'other'* (I discussed my own categorization in section 2.2.3). Speech act patterns, or *genre-typical verbal actions*, refer to what rappers "do with words" (Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002: 4). This category includes *boasting* (with one's skills), *dissing* ('disrespecting someone', usually other rappers), *time and place references* of various kinds, *self-referential* and *listener-directed speech*, *identification* and *representation*. Ibrahim (2012: 551) has, in fact, argued that "knowing these speech acts is the first step in belonging to the Global Hip Hop Nation". Finally, cultural referencing, an old routine associated with African American youth games, such as 'playing the dozens' (Morgan 2002: 58), is something contemporary rap artists make extensive use of in these verbal actions (see also the previous section).

In the analysis of the three sets of rap lyrics, my focus will thus be on the actual, concrete bits of language that the rap artists make use of. However, for the sake of clarity and describability, I will treat and mark the lyrics momentarily in a way which indicates certain features as if they belonged to different 'languages', because I want to show the 'hybridity' of the rap texts – i.e. how the rappers draw on *various* linguistic resources in their construction of authenticity. The important thing to keep in mind, though, is that language here refers to "a mobile complex of concrete resources" (Blommaert 2010: 47). The 'bits of language' here refer to particular kinds of words, phrases, expressions and longer sequences of text. The 'discursive bits' in turn refer to the discourses the rappers evoke, the narratives they share and the topics they deal with along with the various speech act patterns (i.e. genre-typical verbal actions) and various cultural references they make use of. I argue that the concepts of 'resources' and 'repertoire' characterize the actual language use and discourse by the rappers – they use any semiotic material (that is available to them) in their lyrics to communicate their meanings and messages.

4.2.2 Repertoire

The notion of *repertoire* is closely connected to that of resources, albeit it is a more abstract one. As Blommaert and Backus (2011: 2, following Gumperz 1986 [1972]) point out, the term 'repertoire' is part of the core vocabulary of sociolinguistics. Originally, the concept was defined by Gumperz (1986 [1972]: 20) as "the totality of linguistic resources (i.e. including both invariant forms and variables) available to members of particular communities". In his later (extended) formulation, Gumperz (1982: 155) drew on Hymes' ideas of 'means of speaking' which include information on the local linguistic repertoire. Later on, Hymes (1996) (re)defined a linguistic repertoire as the ways of speaking, as (all) the linguistic and semiotic resources that people 'have' and can make use of in their communication. Thus, also the discursive resources (specified above) can be seen as part of the artists' repertoires.

According to Blommaert and Backus (2011: 2, emphasis original), the term 'repertoire' thus became to describe all the 'means of speaking', that is, "all those means that people *know how* to use and *why* while they communicate". The means can be purely linguistic ones, such as language variety, or cultural

ones, like genre and style, and social ones, such as norms concerning language use. (ibid.) Originally, both Hymes and Gumperz associate a linguistic repertoire with a *speech community*, another key term in (early) sociolinguistics, which refers to a relatively stable and homogenous group of people who speak the same 'language' or variety (e.g. Hymes 1996: 30–34). Since then, the concept has been replaced by, for example, *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), which is more heterogeneous and less fixed than the idea of a speech community. It can broadly be understood as a group of people who have regular interaction with one another (online and/or offline) and who share an interest (and often also 'a language') for various activities and phenomena in the world (be they related to sports, faith, or the like; see e.g. Kytölä 2013; Peuronen 2011).

In this study, the notion of linguistic repertoire is, however, associated with *individual subjects* (cf. Blommaert & Backus 2011: 33–34; see also e.g. Räisänen 2013 on Finnish engineers' multilingual repertoires), with three Finnish rap artists, who, while part of the same Finnish hip hop community, all have their (at least partly) unique repertoires, which index aspects of their sociocultural lives and worlds. Because of their engagement with (Finnish) hip hop and rap, the rappers may also share quite a bit in terms of their resources and repertoires – this is also why we recognize them as rappers, and not, for instance, as rock singers.

A repertoire comprises "specialized but partially and unevenly developed resources" (Blommaert 2010: 23). As a result, we will never know 'all' of a language, just some bits and pieces of it. This is true both for our 'mother tongue' as well as the 'languages' we encounter and acquire during our lives. (Blommaert 2010: 23.) Our multilingual repertoires are thus, in Blommaert's words, always and inevitably 'truncated', never final, complete or perfect (ibid.; see also Blommaert et al. 2005; Räisänen 2013; Kytölä 2013). In this study, however, the notion of truncated will not be used to characterize the rappers' repertoire since I feel it has (too) negative connotations. Pennycook (2011), among others, has also critiqued this notion for precisely this reason.

More specifically, a repertoire can be seen from the point of view of (an individual's) biography: it is a *biographical complex of functionally organized resources* (Blommaert 2010; Blommaert & Backus 2011). As already pointed out, 'functionally organized' refers to the fact that each resource has specific functions, genres and registers. This functional organization is 'ordered' (i.e. non-random) in nature – and the features that make this repertoire are also 'ordered' and thus count as, for example, 'language'. The repertoire is biographical in the sense that it is acquired during one's lifetime and it reflects one's life trajectories, its changes and continuities. This also means that although one's repertoire changes all the time, it does not develop consistently; rather, it expands enormously in some stages of life and less so in others. (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 13.) In this sense, then, "repertoires are the real 'language' we have and can deploy in social life" (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 32–33). But not only are the repertoires connected to people's biographies, they

also relate to the *wider histories* of the places where they were composed (Blommaert 2010: 23). Thus, (even) within Finland we get relatively different biographical repertoires.

This can be seen, for example, when people, educating themselves further, learn new ways of speaking and writing. This is observable in my data as well, in the kinds of linguistic and discursive resources that are available for the artists. Stepa as a community educator (and a future teacher) knows about his own area of expertise and has been working, particularly with youth – this kind of life world is bound to affect his repertoire as well; Cheek as a BA in business studies can make use of his business skills, knowledge and discourse in his own record company and in advancing his career by making ‘smart career moves’ – thus business and success discourses are evident in Cheek’s repertoire; and Pyhimys who, as a student of mathematics and philosophy, is able to make use of and problematize these topics and fields, for example in his lyrics, further than the ‘average person’. These particular discourse worlds are, then, very much part of his repertoire. In addition to formal learning, however, acquiring specific resources can nowadays take place via access to certain communities and groups – one example of which is online interaction with its varied possibilities of resource and discourse acquisition (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 14; see also e.g. Leppänen 2011; Peuronen 2011; Kytölä 2013). Clearly, exposure to popular culture and access to global and translocal hip hop culture also offers these artists a wealth of resources of various kinds. Repertoires ‘take in’ whatever comes across as a beneficial resource, whether in terms of practicality or pleasantness, but first people must have proper *access* to that resource (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 21).

It is worthwhile remembering, however, that one’s trajectory brings more than linguistic resources alone into one’s repertoire. As Blommaert and Backus (2011: 31) argue, “[resources] contribute the potential to perform certain social roles, inhabit certain identities, be seen in a particular way by others”. These resources are thus *indexical* in that they “enable us to [...] produce social and cultural images of ourself, pointing interlocutors towards the frames in which we want our meanings to be put” (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 31). This will also become clear in the analysis.

This study explores the *synchronic* repertoires (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 22) of each artist. This means that I look at the resources that are active in the artist’s repertoire at this very moment of research (which does not mean that this moment is not infused with all kinds of historicities). By analyzing the artists’ repertoires, then, I hope to show what happens when the artists, “carrying their language luggage, move around or when their messages move around” (Blommaert 2010: 24) – and how all of this is relevant in terms of their authenticity.

These repertoires are also multilingual¹¹⁰, but they are multilingual *not* as a collection of ‘languages’ in the traditional sense, “but rather as a complex of

¹¹⁰ Recent sociolinguistic research has criticized the notion of ‘multilingualism’, since it focuses on the *multitude* of *separate* ‘languages’ that one ‘knows’. The following

specialized semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined ‘language’, while others belong to another ‘language’ (Blommaert 2010: 102). More specifically, in the present study this means that my analysis focuses on the investigation of what kinds of resources (whether from different ‘languages’ or not) the artists have at their disposal, what kinds of functions these resources have and in what kinds of contexts they use them and for what purposes.

4.2.3 Scales

The third key concept of the sociolinguistics of globalization for the present study is that of *scales*. Scale as a metaphor is borrowed from fields such as (social) geography and history (Swyngedouw 1996; Uitermark 2002). Scales can be understood as spatio-temporal frames, ‘levels’ or ‘dimensions’ (Lefebvre 2003: 136–150), but, at the same time, as ‘relational’ (i.e. not fixed) (Brenner 2001; Mamadouh et al. 2004). Scale is thus both a spatial and temporal concept, something which Wallerstein (1997: 1) has described as a single dimension of *TimeSpace*, incorporating both aspects: time and space. Furthermore, the concept of scale is *social*. The social aspect of scales refers to the fact that all phenomena occurring in this *TimeSpace* are social in nature – they do not take place in a vacuum. People make *TimeSpace* social through various semiotic practices. (Blommaert 2010: 34.). For example, in the case of the rappers, such semiotic practices might include their usage of ‘language’ and ‘discourse’ for specific purposes (like writing lyrics or rapping them out loud) as well as (physical) positioning and moving (like posing or waving the hand in a specific way on stage while performing), and looking like a certain kind of rapper with specific clothing and accessories. In addition, the resources used are often quite different in their social reach: some meanings ‘travel’ so to speak, whereas others stay quite local. The scale thus becomes a *spatio-temporal frame of meaning*, i.e. a *scope of understandability*: what makes sense within which particular scale-level (and what does not).

Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck (2005) introduced the notion of ‘scale’ (as well as ‘space’) into the sociolinguistic discussion from Wallerstein’s World-

concepts, amongst others, have been suggested to replace it: *metrolingualism* (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 240), which is “a product of modern and often urban interaction, describing the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language”; *polylingualism* (Jørgensen 2008; Møller 2008; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Jørgensen & Møller 2014), according to which “language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages” (Jørgensen 2008: 163); and *translanguaging* (García 2007, 2009, drawing on Williams 1994 and Baker 2001, 2003), which can be seen as the normalization of “bilingualism without diglossic functional separation” (in Spanish-English classrooms in the United States). However, in general, this scholarly debate around (and about) the terminology remains outside of the focus of the present study. For the lack of a better term, I will use the notion of multilingual(ism) whenever necessary and applicable.

Systems Analysis, of which they form a key part (Wallerstein 1983, 2001).¹¹¹ In this line of thinking, social events take place on a continuum of layered scales, which are organized from the strictly global to the strictly local with all sorts of intermediate levels, such as that of the nation state, in between (Lefebvre 2003; Blommaert 2010; Mamadouh et al. 2004). Particular forms of normativity, i.e. what is correct and what is not, and patterns of language use and expectations concerning usage are organized on these different layered scale-levels (Blommaert 2010: 5), which are hierarchically ranked and stratified (Blommaert 2010: 33; Mamadouh et al. 2004) and vertical, as opposed to horizontal. It is important to notice, however, that the notion of 'scale' does not deny the horizontal aspects of space but rather adds the vertical aspect of hierarchical order and power relations (Blommaert 2010: 34). With the notion of scale, it is thus possible to understand and interpret society and all social events as inherently power- and inequality-invested (ibid.: 36).¹¹²

The connections between the scales are *indexical*. This refers to the way in which unique and momentary instances of communication of a lower scale-level can be understood in terms of indexing, "pointing towards socially and culturally ordered norms, genres, traditions, expectations – phenomena of a higher scale-level" (Blommaert 2010: 33). Blommaert (ibid., following Silverstein 2006; see also Silverstein 2003) further argues that the two directions of indexicality – presupposing, i.e. the retrieval of available meanings and entailing, i.e. the production of new meanings – are key to understanding the local processes at the level of higher-scale, common meanings. According to Blommaert (2010: 35), the TimeSpace moves, i.e. scale-jumping (Uitermark 2002: 750), "index norms, expectations and social order".

Access to and control over these scales is unevenly distributed: it is, thus, very much a matter of power and (in)equality (Blommaert 2010; Blommaert & Rampton 2011.) It is important to notice the asymmetry in the scaling processes: while some people can jump between scales, others cannot – they lack the necessary resources to do so. For example, a well-educated person may have better access to higher scale-levels and standard language resources than a less-educated person for whom the (available) scales and resources are typically local and also stay local. Issues of power and thus 'outscaling' (Uitermark 2002: 750) come to the fore when, for example, an interlocutor raises a discussion to a higher scale-level through a standard variety, leaving the other person unable to respond, since s/he does not have the requisite resources in his/her repertoire for so doing. (Blommaert 2010: 36.)

¹¹¹ "In WSA, the world is seen as a system of capitalist production and exchange between structurally different parts of the world: centers, semiperipheries and peripheries" (Blommaert et al. 2005: 201).

¹¹² See also Collins, Slembrouck and Baynham (2009) for a discussion on the notion of scale in the context of migration, and Dong (2009), who, in her study on migrant identities in Beijing, based the analysis on three different, layered scales: linguistic and communicative exchange scale, scale of metapragmatic discourses and public and institutional discourse scale (thus, from micro to macro).

As Blommaert (2010: 32) argues, globalization processes occur on various scale-levels – and in order to understand the various processes we need to look at the interaction and relations between the scales. Scales are thus seldom separable from each other. Different scales tend to interact, overlap, mix and/or clash with one another in a variety of ways, because normativity plays a role in each process. (Blommaert 2010: 36–37; see also Brenner 2001.) Micro and macro can be present at the same time and they may be quite inseparable from one another. The *translocal* (a more elaborate discussion in section 2.3.2) touches upon and connects all of them, as it necessarily needs two ‘ends’ between which it operates. Indeed, the understanding of scales as *relational* refers to the “mutually constitutive character of scales” as “[no] scales exist without the others” (Mamadouh et al. 2004: 457). Each scale, then, is to be visioned vis-à-vis “its embeddedness or positionality within a broader scalar hierarchy” (Brenner 2001: 600). Thus, whatever is ‘outside’ the local, always defines the local, and vice versa – “[the] global is part of the local as much as the local is part of the global” (Mamadouh et al. 2004: 457).¹¹³ Scalar processes refer to shifts between scales and these shifts necessarily entail “re-semiotizations of TimeSpace: new images of time and space, new patterns of acting upon them”. The concept of scale is indeed essential in understanding the complex dynamics between the local and the translocal in the ongoing globalization processes. (Blommaert 2010: 26–37.)

The notion of scale has also been criticized within sociolinguistics. For example, Pennycook (2011: 886) reminds us that Blommaert “is at odds on this score with other spatial theorists and critical geographers such as Thrift (2007: 174), who critiques this “absurd scale-dependent notion” in which space is “seen as a nested hierarchy moving from ‘global’ to ‘local’”. If by this ‘nested hierarchy’ Thrift (and Pennycook) mean that the (fixed) ‘global’ is always necessarily ‘higher’ and (thus) more meaningful than the local, I do not agree with their view. Hierarchical positions or stances should be explored, rather than assumed. In fact, in many rap lyrics the local scale is often (made) much more important than the global one (shown through the use of linguistic and discursive resources). Thus, the global scale does not always systematically prevail over others, but exists in relation to them (see also Mamadouh et al. 2004). To be more precise, scalar hierarchies do not constitute ‘pyramids’, i.e. “a single nested scalar hierarchy”, but are “better understood as a mosaic of unevenly superimposed and densely interlayered scalar geometries” (Brenner 2001: 606).

Pennycook (2011: 886) also criticizes how “[t]he horizontal and vertical framing of scales, furthermore, potentially inserts into this analysis a form of structuralism tied to the synchronicity that is elsewhere critiqued”. If by “a

¹¹³ Connell and Gibson (2003: 17) suggest the terms ‘fixity’ and ‘fluidity’ (and Pennycook 2007a follows their line of thinking) to “reflect more dynamic ways of describing and understanding processes that move across, while becoming embedded in, the materiality of localities and social relations”. Also they suggest that “the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ happen simultaneously”. Thus, even if our terminology is different, a similar understanding of various (globalization) processes underlies here.

form of structuralism tied to the synchronicity” Pennycook is referring to an ordered, unchanging and fixed nature of framing ‘done’ or ‘projected’ with the scales in a given (synchronic) moment, I do not agree with this claim either, because I do not view scales as fixed or static. Other scholars, such as Mamadouh, Kramsch and van der Velde (2004: 455, 457), also argue that scale is not ‘pre-given’ or ‘fixed’ but, rather, ‘processual’ and ‘(re)constructed’ discursively (see also Mamadouh 2004). In this sense, then, as emphasized by Brenner (2001: 606), “the meaning of scalar terms such as global, national, regional and urban will differ” in each process and context. He further argues (drawing on Smith 1987, emphasis added) that we could “speak of a ‘kaleidoscope effect’ in which the organization of scalar patterns changes qualitatively according to the perspective from which they are perceived and/or acted upon”. Perhaps we could even think of this kaleidoscope as a system of fractality: how scalar patterns break down into recurring, remodulated things. As we will see in the analysis in chapter 4, scales are, indeed, changing – and what they ‘mean’ for each artist and how each artist ‘projects’ or ‘constructs’ a particular scale is constantly changing and negotiated. The boundaries between scales are not clear-cut either. Scales ‘are there’ as possible frames or scripts (they are structured in that sense) but what they mean for different people and how they make use of and enact them, varies. The scales are never neutral (Blommaert et al. 2005), but rather process-generated scopes of understandability.

Furthermore, scales are *not* synchronic, since indexicality ‘fills’ them with *historically constructed* dimensions of meaningfulness, i.e. creates *historicity*. This relates to how the same things (or resources) resonate in (entirely) different ways at different scale-levels. Thus, scales can be seen as an *indexically organized network of meanings*, which is *intrinsically* historical. Even if I am interested in contemporary (and in that sense ‘synchronic’) Finnish hip hop (and its scales) in this study, this ‘snapshot’ is fused with entirely different historicities, which ‘coincide’ in the synchronic moment. Scales are not generalizations, but scopes of understandability, and meaning effects can never be purely synchronic: particular resources are understood (in each moment) because of the histories of their use, not (only) based on the local interaction.

For me, ‘scales’ are a useful (and concrete) conceptual means through which a non-unified phenomenon like hip hop can be understood in a multi-dimensional way, and how all of its dimensions can be seen as meaningful and functional. *Space* and *place*¹¹⁴ – and a strong sense of them – have always had a particularly significant meaning in hip hop culture and rap music, perhaps more so than in any other music genre. The production of rap music, and hip hop culture in general, as well as the construction of the genre’s ‘identity’ are very much connected to geography and physical space (Rose 1994; Forman 2002). Forman (2002: xvii) argues that “rap’s lyrical constructions commonly display a pronounced emphasis on place and locality”. Whereas other music

¹¹⁴ Defined in a simple way, ‘place’ is ‘space’ which is made personal (Forman 2002; see more discussion on this in section 5.2).

genres, such as blues or rock, might refer to cities or larger regions, rap, on the contrary, includes clear and direct references to particular streets, neighborhoods, telephone area codes and other “socio-spatial information” (ibid.). In rap music, both its local and global dimensions (and other scales, too, as we will see in the analysis of the lyrics in chapter 4) are always simultaneously meaningful. It is also important to notice here that the concept of ‘scale’ does not only denote geographical spaces of different sorts but it can also, for example, refer to a single discourse event such as a discussion thread on a web forum (Kytölä 2013; see also Dong 2009).

Analogously, hip hop can be seen as a *temporally* scalar phenomenon in that the notion of scale also helps to capture the ways in which hip hop is both a historical phenomenon (with its various roots and ‘origins’), whose particular past affects its meanings today, and something happening in the here and now. The issues and larger themes that the rap artists discuss, draw on or refer to in their lyrics also exist and move in time: they might look back over one’s personal past, or they might make references to the past on a more general scale, like that of the nation-state. Hip hop and its activities are inevitably always also *social*, through the semiotic practices of various figures involved in the culture, such as rap artists, producers, DJs and audience.

An important thing to remember is that the scales that a researcher observes and constructs need not be the only possible interpretation, but that rather there can be several. The observations, however, need to be grounded and based on the data. As described above, a scale is a scope of understandability. It emerges out of *understanding*, out of the dialogical process of interaction between someone who ‘hopes’ to be understood in a specific way by using very specific resources – and an uptake by another whose understanding might be entirely different. One who produces a sign can never be sure about how the interlocutor will understand that. Yet, we all have clear *expectations* about how the other will understand us, and it is the nature of these (ideological) expectations that prompts us to bring ‘order’ in the ‘chaos’ of the semiotizations of the surrounding world. This is the intrinsically *proleptic* nature of communication: whenever we produce signs, we anticipate a certain uptake on the basis of the frames or scenarios we know as meaning this or that (see also Blommaert & Varis forthcoming)

Thus, resources have a *possibility* to convey meanings to audiences of a certain scope; in the case of ‘Finnish’ this scope is thus more restricted than that of ‘English’, and, furthermore, specific (‘local’) references to Sodankylä might even be opaque to many Finns. No resource is ‘automatically’ attached to a particular scale or scales. We as speakers ideologically construct specific resources to be scale-indexical, for instance, ‘English’ as ‘global’ (but, of course, one cannot presume that the interlocutor understands this as such). Thus, the way in which rappers use resources is *proleptic* of scale: they draw on and assemble linguistic and discursive material in a way which reflects their expectations of how their audience will understand them. Scale is a particular kind of *indexical order* of which we (proleptically) believe that something we say

will be understood as 'local', 'regional', 'national' or 'global' (or, as a combination of (some of) these, as 'translocal'). The empirical shape of scales is thus that of 'pointing' towards specific contextual frames or scripts (which are by no means static) that are anticipated to convey particular meanings, such as Sodankylä as 'embodying locality'.

'Scale' can thus be seen in close connection with the contemporary phenomena of globalization processes and linguistic and discursive resources. In hip hop, rappers draw on various available discourses and resources from various contexts because they presuppose these to be meaningful to their addressees. Through these resources, they project various scales. They also produce ('entail') new meanings to new audiences and in new contexts – and project (new) scales. (cf. Silverstein 2003.) Through the usage of various resources, they project several scale-levels that interact, overlap and (or) are opposite to each other. For example, rappers can talk about very local stuff in their lyrics in a local dialect while simultaneously making references to the global popular culture – scales are indeed sometimes so intertwined that it is not possible (or even desirable) to separate them. And, since scale is scope of understandability, it is a matter of uptake, i.e. one can never be sure at which scale-level one's words will be interpreted by one's addressees. The (present) rappers move between different stratified and social TimeSpaces and, at the same time, index images of society (for possible uptake) in their lyrics, such as 'Finland as Helsinki-centered' or 'Finland as peripheral'. I also believe that the concept of scales is able to characterize in a significant way the moves and movements (mobility across TimeSpaces), positions, language and discourse that the artists make use of and enact both in their lyrics and in their interviews – as well as the changing norms and expectations that they (might) meet on these scales or when making 'scale-jumps'. Thus, for me, they offer a practical way of analyzing the data.

Very few sociolinguistic studies have applied the notion of scale to the performance of rap music. Some hip hop scholars, for example Forman (2000, 2002), have used the notion of scale (only) in its *spatial* sense. In his research on space, place and race, as well as the significance of 'hoods' in US rap music, Forman referred to 'the local scale', when discussing for example the (local) hoods. In his research, he drew on Agnew (1993: 251, emphasis original) who understood scale as "refer[ring] to the spatial *level*, local, national, global, at which the presumed effect of location is operative". Although hip hop scholars have not thus far used the notion of 'scale' in their research, or at least in the sense that I use it here, they have nevertheless approached hip hop culture and rap music as multi-scalar by emphasizing the multi-faceted nature of hip hop, focusing not only on the local, or the global, but also highlighting the dialogue and interconnectedness between these (see the notion of 'flow' by Pennycook 2007a), and by not de-historicizing hip hop culture and rap music, but always taking into account the roots and origins (whatever they may mean for each scholar) as well as the current situation.

Varis and Wang (2011) have, however, used the notion of ‘scale’ in a fashion somewhat similar to that here in their case study on Chinese hip hop online. They argue that, in and through his lyrics, MC *Liangliang* detaches himself from both the local folk theatrical form and the national opera tradition, while “orienting towards the global super-vernacular of hip hop” (p. 80). Here, the meaningful scale for the rapper was not the local or the national, but rather the global. In her research on globalized, multilingual Lapland and Sámi mobility, Pietikäinen (2010), in turn, explored how the Inari Sámi rapper Amoc, his music and his mother tongue were ‘upscaled’ from the (purely) local scale to the global scale: the very traditional language context changed into one of global rap spaces. On the other hand, Amoc was also simultaneously ‘scale-jumping’: mixing highly local resources with the global rap format and genre, and thereby maneuvering the values and functions of Inari Sámi (Pietikäinen 2010). The present study will, thus, be somewhat pioneering in its effort to analyze rap lyrics from the point of view of scale as a TimeSpace notion, one which needs to be understood as a scope of understandability.

In the next three sub-sections I will discuss and analyze three songs, three sets of lyrics, one from each artist. The analysis aims at exploring how the three rappers construct authenticity on several scale-levels within the more general ‘Finnish hip hop scale-level’. In doing this, I will analyze how each artist carefully makes use of both linguistic and discursive resources in this process. All three rappers in the study construct authenticity in their own, unique way, by resorting to various (hip hop -affiliated) resources. They have different ‘solutions’ for how they construct it, but all of them, nevertheless, construct their authenticity in a Finnish context, whether in an urban or a more rural environment.

4.3 The hip hop ‘trial’ – Cheek, ‘Messiah’ and global authenticity

This section discusses Cheek as the global ‘Messiah’ of Finnish hip hop. The particular aim here is to explore how Cheek constructs his authenticity as a Finnish rap artist by drawing on the globally recognizable rap format, the pop/club rap genre, which he represents (or seeks to embody) in and through the lyrics. The setting (the courtroom), which he has chosen for the song, as well as the particular roles that he makes use of in this ‘trial’, extracted from the Bible, all index globality. The lyrics of “Orjantappuraa” (“Thorn”)¹¹⁵ from the “JHT2” album (2010) constitute the data for this specific case study because, in them, we can see several ‘revealing’ instances of Cheek’s position and trajectory in the Finnish hip hop scene, as well as direct accusations and claims of (in)authenticity. In particular, I will focus on answering the following questions:

¹¹⁵ The three sets of original lyrics (analyzed in 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5) are included as appendices (1-3).

- a) What kinds of linguistic and discursive resources does Cheek make use of and how do they contribute to his authenticity?
- b) What is his (emergent) repertoire like and how does it contribute to his authenticity?
- c) How does he project scales in the construction of authenticity?

Exploring authenticity from the viewpoints of linguistic and discursive resources as well as scales will give us a more multi-faceted and complex picture than would be obtained were the pre-requisites of 'being authentic' defined and 'given' beforehand. According to Pickering (1986: 213 as cited in Moore 2002: 210, emphasis added) "'authenticity' is a *relative* concept which is generally used in *absolutist* terms". It is precisely this kind of simplified, dichotomous thinking I wish to avoid (as was pointed out in section 2.3.2). Here then, we would dismiss Cheek as non-authentic, as 'fake' to begin with (from the point of view of 'alternative' and 'underground' rap fans and artists), due to the 'fake' mainstream genre that he is seen as representing without exploring (in detail) how he, in fact, *can* be seen as creating and constructing his own kind of authenticity. Answering these particular questions will help us to interpret Cheek as a specific kind of artist in the Finnish hip hop scene. With this example, I will show how Cheek constructs himself as an authentic rapper by making use of particular kinds of linguistic and discursive resources that project various scales.

The sociocultural context

The setting, the micro-context of the song is a courtroom, a trial. The participant roles are those of the courtroom: Cheek presents himself as the defendant whom the prosecutor accuses of various 'crimes'. In the tradition of Western trials, Cheek displays himself in the song as 'innocent until proven guilty' - and the "Orjantappuraa" song is his 'defense speech'.¹¹⁶ As we will see in the lyrics, the context is evoked by a specific jargon as well as by a turn-taking pattern, i.e. the prosecutor asks questions and the defendant responds to these, with such turns as "Kuka sä oikeesti luulet olevasi?" ('Who do you really think you are?') and "Kansa tarvitsee sankarin ja syntipukin" ('People need a scapegoat and a hero'), respectively (although the prosecutor's question does not sound particularly 'official' and 'courtroom-like' here). The turn-taking and lines are, of course, stylized to fit the genre format of rap, with its rhymes and beats. Thus the courtroom context is (generically) Western. The specific accusations apply to Cheek and his actions in Finland, thus evoking the national context (and scale).

At the same time, the mainstream hip hop context (something we 'know' of Cheek's style beforehand, if we are familiar with his genre and something which is evoked also in the lyrics of the song) and claims of inauthenticity by

¹¹⁶ Also in the tradition of Western trials, the defendant does not necessarily need a lawyer: s/he has the right to present and defend him-/herself, which is what Cheek does here.

the judge in the song immediately link the context to the global scale, too, in that the discussion on mainstream and authenticity is a global one (see e.g. McLeod 1999), both in general and in the context of this particular song. It is not tied to the specific context of rap music only but rather it is a recurring topic in (the research on) popular music, in general (e.g. Moore 2002). While representing himself as the defendant, Cheek is also implying (i.e. boasting) here that he is ‘comparable’ to the *Messiah* (*Jesus Christ*) who was being accused of many things in a ‘trial’ (in front of *Pontius Pilate* and the Jewish elders). Particularly at stake was Jesus’ role as the self-proclaimed Son of God, the King. This setting and these roles, then, frame the story told to us in the song.

The macro-sociocultural context is the Finnish rap scene, in which Cheek is the one of the most controversial artists at present. As a mainstream rapper, he is both loved and hated. As was discussed above, both rap fans and artists, indirectly or directly, accuse or blame him for being ‘fake’, ‘mainstream’ and ‘making music only for money’. Some rappers comment on his success, style, genre and commercialism in their songs, interviews and also on their gigs. Another insight into the kind of hatred he faces, is given in other songs by Cheek. For example, a song entitled “Viimeiseen hengenvetoon” (‘Till the last breath’) (2010) includes the following lines:

Jos mä oisin sä, mä tappaisin itseni, niin kuulin niiden mulle huutelevan niillä ei oo ollu hajua mun bi[s]neksist, oon aina tienny jengin kuuntelevan keikat, levyt, loppuunmyytyjä, mitä muuta te tahdotte multa? mä annan kaiken siihen saatte tyytyä, multa saatte kerran kesään annoksen tulta	If I were you, I'd kill myself, that's what I heard them shouting at me they haven't had a clue about my businesses, I've always known <i>people</i> are listening to me gigs, albums, sold out what more do you want from me? I'm giving my all, you'll have to settle for that I'll give you a dose of fire once in a summer
--	---

The first line of this extract includes an intertextual reference to a previous song by Cheek: “Jos mä oisin sä” (‘If I were you’) (2009). In that song Cheek raps: “Jos mä oisin sä, kyl mäkin oisin mun kaa” (‘If I were you, I’d be with me, too’), whereas here, the latter part is replaced with “mä tappaisin itseni” (‘I’d kill myself’). In the next line, Cheek tells us that this is what he has actually heard his ‘haters’ shout at him – and it can be seen as one example of the harsh mockery he encounters. Other examples of this hatred are related in a song “Kaikki hyvin” (‘All good’) (2009), in which he is being blamed for ‘ruining the reputation of this music genre’ (“sä oot pilannu tän musagenren maineen”), and in another song “Se parhaiten nauraa” (‘S/he who laughs last’) (2010), in which he raps: “sä voit nimitellä mua läpäksi tai porvariksi/ fägäriksi tai rokkariksi, räppäriksi tai poppariksi” (‘you can call me a joke or a bourgeois/ a fag or a rocker, a rapper or popper’), thus referring to the way he is not seen as ‘real’ (a real rapper) by other rappers and by fans.¹¹⁷ A typical reaction by Cheek to this kind of ‘hate talk’ is captured, for instance, in the annoyance he has expressed at the fact that it is all right for pop and schlager singers to be commercial, but

¹¹⁷ Here, he is also called ‘a fag’, which is to equate the category of ‘homosexuals’ with ‘fakes’.

not rap artists. If commercialism means “reaching as many people as possible with one’s music”, then he wants to make commercial music all the more. (Huhtala 2009: 16.) With the help of such insights as these, we can already situate Cheek on the ‘map’ of Finnish hip hop and see what discussions he is part of as well as learn something of the position he himself takes with respect to this map.

Resources and scales in Orjantappuraa

“Orjantappuraa” is an ‘autobiographical’¹¹⁸ narrative by Cheek, who, as a self-appointed leader of the Finnish hip hop scene, both in terms of the number of records he sells and of the gigs he performs, has had to encounter a great deal of criticism and accusations about his career and music, particularly about the kind of mainstream club rap style that he can be seen as representing.

The song consists of three relatively long stanzas and a chorus – below, I analyze them in three examples. In the extracts, the ‘origin’ of the lexical items is marked for clarity and the following symbols are used: spoken vernacular Finnish is the default text; standard/vernacular/African American vernacular/Finnishized English¹¹⁹ is **bolded**¹²⁰; Helsinki slang is in *italics* and standard Finnish is both *in italics and underlined*. My aim in marking the resources in this way is not to convey the traditional view of separate ‘languages’ and ‘varieties’, but to render the lyrics and the resources understandable to the reader (as the reader may not be familiar with ‘Finnish’ or other ‘languages’) and, simultaneously, exhibit the *hybridity* of the lyrics. Hybridity can be seen as referring to the (sometimes unexpected) mixing and blending of various linguistic but also discursive and cultural resources (Bauman & Briggs 2003; Hinnenkamp 2003; see also Nederveen Pieterse 1995 on ‘globalization as hybridization’). In my analysis, I will also show how all of these resources in the hybrid repertoire serve a specific purpose: how they, on their own or mixed with others, all contribute to the construction of authenticity.

¹¹⁸ It is autobiographical not in the sense that Cheek has featured in any such trial, but in the sense that the critique refers to instances from his own, real life.

¹¹⁹ By ‘Finnishized English’ I refer to how various ‘English’ words or expressions are adopted and modified according to Finnish grammar, morpho-syntactically as well as phonetically, to ‘fit’ the surrounding linguistic context (see also e.g. Leppänen & Nikula 2007). I do not consider these ‘borrowings’, since this suggests an ‘old’ paradigm of code-switching and essentialist thinking about languages as separate (and separable) (Pennycook 2007; Heller 2007; Leppänen et al. 2008; Blommaert 2010). Instead, in this study, I am interested in the particular functions and (indexical) meanings that the *resources* and *features* (drawn on from different ‘languages’) ‘have’ in a given context.

¹²⁰ In the examples, I (try to) characterize what kind(s) of feature(s) of English is (are) in question.

Extract 1: “Stone me, wrap the thorns around my head”

käsi raamatulla vannon kertovani totuuden
oman näkökannan ja mun oman osuuden
mulla ei oo koskaan ollut mitään salattavaa
joten arvon herra syyttäjä, ei muut kun anna palaa

”Kansa haluaa tietää miksi teet noin *skeidaa* musaa
ei kai moista kuraa tosissansa veivaa kukaan”

Mä teen niin hyvää kamaa kun osaan - mitä sä teet?
päiväpäivältä mun nurkas lisää väkeä
tehnyt tätä tosissaan reilut kakstoista vuotta
JHT2 ei tuhannet jonota kassoilla suotta

”sul on itsetunto ongelmia, pidät niitä sisäl
räppäät ainostaan itsestä minä minä minä”

rimmaan itsestäni kun en mä suakaan tunne
mul on tarve päästä mun paineet purkamaan sulle
sitä elää mitä *spittaa* ja toisinpäin
mulla on vaan tää mun maailma siksi mä toimin näin

Ooo-oo-oorjantappuraa
ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo
kivittäkää kietokaa mun päähän orjantappuraa
valtakunnan vihatuin se ei voi olla sattumaa
kannan mun ristini, kuulen ilkeet kielet
via dolorosa mä tuun jäämään sille tielle

with my hand on the bible I swear to tell the truth
my own my point of view and my own part
I’ve never had anything to hide
thus, distinguished mister prosecutor, fire away

“People wanna know why you make such *lousy* music
surely no one makes that shit for real”

I make as good stuff as I can – what do you do?
day by day, more people in my corner
I’ve done this for real for more than twelve years
JHT2 thousands of people don’t queue for nothing

“you got self-esteem issues, you’re holding it inside
you only rap about yourself, me, me, me”

I rhyme about myself cos I don’t know you
I need to take it out on you
you live what you spit and the other way around
I only got my world, that’s why I do it like this

Thoo-oo-oo-rn
ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo
stone me, wrap the thorns around my head
the most hated of the nation, it can’t be a coincidence
I’ll carry my cross, I hear the nasty voices
via dolorosa I’ll stay on that road

The *narrative* begins with setting the courtroom context as Cheek swears his ‘hand on the bible’, to tell the truth and suggests that mister prosecutor can go ahead with his accusations. Cheek does this via standard Finnish (if one can categorize the courtroom register as such) in the line: “*käsi raamatulla vannon kertovani totuuden*” (“with my hand on the bible I swear to tell the truth”) and in “*joten arvon herra syyttäjä*” (“distinguished mister prosecutor”). The narrative continues with the prosecutor¹²¹ and Cheek taking turns in questioning and responding.

The first accusation of the prosecutor revolves around making bad music. A striking contrast to the standard Finnish features (in Cheek’s previous turn) is represented by the use of the local Helsinki slang expression, ‘*skeidaa*’ (‘lousy, shitty’) in the prosecutor’s first turn.¹²² One would most likely not encounter slang items like this in a normal (formal) courtroom setting. Cheek starts his defense by saying that the music he makes is as good as he can possibly make it. In addition, he confronts the prosecutor directly: “*mitä sä teet?*” (‘what do you do?’). He backs this up by indicating that he has more and more fans all the time and that because he has been doing this seriously for more than 12 years already, people queue up to see his gigs and buy his albums. Here, we can see a

¹²¹ The prosecutor’s voice is also spoken/rapped by Cheek: he initially modified his voice a bit himself and later on it was ‘fine-tuned’ in the editing phase.

¹²² It is important to note here that many Helsinki slang items, such as this one, have also spread *outside* the Helsinki metropolitan area.

(hip hop) cultural self-reference to “JHT2”, denoting the album of which the song is a part. Jare Henrik Tiihonen is, of course, Cheek’s actual given name. This reference has a (hip hop) cultural meaning in that not all listeners are able to decipher the meaning of this abbreviation.

Through Cheek’s answer, we learn that he has worked hard for his success and current position. In this story of incredibly hard work, we can identify (for the first time) the ages-old American-origin (and -oriented) *discourse of success and achievement* (or ‘rags-to-riches’ or ‘self-made man’; see e.g. Wyllie 1966; Cloud 1996). This discourse¹²³, based on the *assumption* of equality and individual effort (despite ‘race’, ‘class’ or other categories), thus also ‘applies’ to the African-American community (see e.g. Cloud 1996). In addition, the discourse is visible in (and sustained through) popular culture (e.g. Cloud 1996) – and ‘valid’ in the context of hip hop culture, too (see e.g. Forman 2000, 2002; Rose 1994). Although it is not a unified, global discourse in the sense that it is similar everywhere, it is nevertheless understood (and perhaps also appropriated) globally. Forman (2000: 86) discusses, for instance, how success and prosperity are part of the “dominant social values and the value system inherent within the rap industry”. This discourse is made prominent in the hip hop stories of, for example, many American rap artists, such as Puff Daddy, Jay Z and Eminem, who have risen from the ghettos to become wealthy, successful and recognizable superstars around the globe – and they have also narrated these stories in their rap songs (see e.g. Forman 2002 on the trajectory of Puff Daddy).

The prosecutor also claims that Cheek has self-esteem issues and that he only raps about himself. This is an accusation that one often hears in the Finnish hip hop scene – that Cheek’s lyrics revolve around himself only – for example from people following the scene, in general, or in the YouTube video comments section: “Cheek ”räppää” itsekeskeistä pinnallista paskaa suurimmaksi osaksi simppeleihin bile biitteihin.” (‘Cheek ‘raps’ self-centered superficial shit to mostly simple party beats’ (a comment by *Sheikkailija* to a Cheek gig video; YouTube). In “Orjantappuraa”, Cheek defends himself by saying that he rhymes about himself and his world because he cannot speak for other people and rap about them. Here (and also in the song, in general), we can see the typical rap topic of *self-presentation* (see also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002), which connects both the global and the national scales in that the topic is globally recognizable as a rap topic but it is also situated within a specific national context and scene, that of Finland. Although this song is not typical rap self-presentation along the lines of “my name is Cheek and I come from

¹²³ As already explained (more elaborately in section 1.2), by *discourses*, I refer to conventional, often culturally shared ways of speaking and thinking about a topic or an issue, which are mutually constitutive and which in their own way contribute to ideologies and power (e.g. Johnstone 2002; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009). Often, it is not possible to identify separate, clearly distinguishable discourses in the lyrics. Multiple discourses may sometimes overlap in exactly the same expressions, or word choices – either on the discursive level (what is said) or on the linguistic level (how is something said, for example, in a dialect).

Helsinki and I belong to this posse”, it nevertheless presents him as a particular kind of artist, who has done hard work, has received a great deal of criticism along the way, but who currently enjoys his success and position in the mainstream. Another globally recognizable rap topic, that of *contemplation* (cf. also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002), features here in how Cheek reminisces and reflects on the past and his actions and achievements in the Finnish hip hop scene, while he responds to the prosecutor’s accusations. Both of these topics thus simultaneously index (or project) the national and global scales.

Cheek also makes an authenticity claim here: he “lives what he spits and vice versa” – the lyrics actually describe the life he leads. Here, ‘spittaa’ (‘spitata’ – ‘to spit’), a feature originating from (‘global’) hip hop English, refers to the act of rapping and its usage is very common in Finnish rap music. I want to emphasize here (and this applies to the rest of the analysis as well) that by ‘global (hip hop) English’ I do not, by any means, refer to it as being solely global. Instead, I see it simultaneously as a ‘globally available’ resource as well as a resource taken up and made use of in local conditions and for local purposes. Thus, it is significantly (also) local, as it is *made meaningful* locally – not ‘somewhere out there’.¹²⁴

The song also evokes the discourse of *religion*, which becomes apparent for the first time in the title of the song: “Orjantappuraa” (‘Thorn’). In the lyrics, we first encounter the religious aspect in the last six lines of extract 1, which form the chorus of the song. The chorus explicitly introduces Cheek as Jesus, as a Messiah who is stoned, whose head is wrapped round with thorns (before crucifixion), who will carry his cross and hear the (voiced of the) evil spirits on the *Via Dolorosa*. The religious aspect can thus be seen in the (discursive) storyline of the song but also in the specific register. The religious register is noticeable in the mix of religious vocabulary and standard-like Finnish and syntax, such as “stone me, wrap the thorns around my head”. The socio-cultural and -historical reference, *Via Dolorosa* (‘Way of Grief’) in Latin, refers to the way along which Jesus Christ reportedly walked to be crucified. It is this path that Cheek now feels obliged (and perhaps also willing) to walk.

The chorus projects the global scale (to be specific: a ‘general’ global scale, and not a ‘global hip hop’ scale) via referring to the globally recognizable biblical events and Cheek’s (or Jesus’) specific role. The national, Finnish context and scale, in turn, is offered for uptake (to the audience) by how Cheek asks (Finnish) people to stone him and wrap thorns around his head. The (implied) message here is a messianic one: Cheek has brought the gospel, rap music, to the (Finnish) people and he has made it and himself popular. He now has large numbers of followers, as well as people trying to imitate his style. However, many people also dislike, or even hate him, again quite similarly to Jesus, which is evident in the ‘most hated of the nation’ reference. This, however, can be seen as an example of ‘(re)entextualization’ (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996; see also Leppänen et al. 2014), whereby

¹²⁴ The related processes of *en- and de-globalization* will be discussed at the end of the analysis, as well as in section 4.6.

speakers “take some fragment of discourse and quote it anew, making it seem to carry a meaning independent of its situation within two now distinct co(n)texts” (Silverstein & Urban 1996: 2) (see also Higgins 2009b: 93 on the re-entextualization processes in East African hip hop, for example in artists’ names and song names). Here, “Valtakunnan vihatuimmat” (in plural in Finnish) was originally a song by Cheek and another Finnish rapper *Skandaali* from 2005. The ‘text’ is then re-entextualized into a new song, to draw a parallel between himself and Jesus in a ‘global’ context. Thus, the line “se ei voi olla sattumaa” (‘it can’t be a coincidence’) is a retrospective as well as a ‘double-voiced’ (Bakhtin 1981) comment on how, already years ago, Cheek made a song about being the most hated of the nation, and how the hatred has only escalated since.

Extract 2: “If you don’t get arrogance, you don’t get this rap thing”

”On tainnut kusi nousta hattuun, itserakkaus paistaa läpi
sä painat nokka pystys omakehun haistaa träkilt” “I guess fame has got to you, self-love shines through
you’re stuck-up, you can smell self-praise on the track”

Jos et tajuu kukkoiluu, et ymmärrä tät räppihommaa
myönnän et täs asemas on yllättävän nättii olla
mut oon aina pyrkinyt pitää kiviä repussa
etten alkais leijuu tai suotta ikinä kehuamaan If you don’t get arrogance, you don’t get this rap thing
I admit that it’s pretty nice to be in this position
but I’ve always tried to keep rocks in my backpack
so that I wouldn’t fly or brag for no reason

”Sä osaat räppää ennen painoit kovaa läppää
nyt euron kuvat silmissä, sä oot vaan läppä
miks sä tuhlaat lahjas ja teet musaa rahasta
kaupallista paskaa, jota ei kukaan rakasta” “You can rap, you used to push tight stuff
now with euros in your eyes, you’re just a joke
why waste your talent and make music for money
commercial shit that nobody loves”

vedetiin ilmaseksi keikka monii vuosii
ennen kun tää oli muotii, joka itse luotiin
en voinut sillon uskoo et tää kasvais näin suureks
tai et joutuisin koskaan vastaa näin sulle
nyt yht’äkkii mies saa rahaa harrastuksestaan
älä oo kateellinen, mulle tää vastaa unelmaa we did gigs for free for years
before this was fashion that we created ourselves
I couldn’t believe then that this would grow so big
or that I would ever have to reply to you like this
now all of a sudden a guy gets paid for his hobby
don’t be jealous, this’s like a dream to me

”sä teet musaa mitä levylafka käskee tekemään
sekö muka unelmaa, äijä lähe menemään” “you make music the record company makes you to
so you call that a dream, dude, get out of here”

kun et tiedä tästä mitään älä pliis päde enempää
tässä taas yks syytös, josta pääsen kädet pesemään
aina tehnyt mit haluun, enkä mitä multa pyydetään
ennakkoluulottomasti miksannu musatyylejä
luonut oman saundin, jota jengi koittaa matkia
mut niin kauan kun mä seison ne ei voi voittaa matsia cos you don’t know anything, please don’t show off
one more accusation of which I can wash my hands
always done what I want, not what others ask me to
open-mindedly mixed music styles
created my own sound that folks are trying to copy
but as long as I’m standing, they can’t win the match

In extract 2, the prosecutor continues his accusations. This time, the charges deal with the self-love and self-praise that Cheek allegedly displays on his albums and in his songs (‘träkilt’ - ‘on the track’, thereby projecting the translocal connectedness of the scales, by means of Finnishized English). In his response, Cheek offers an explanation for all of this: being arrogant and rapping about oneself is part of the rap ideology (see also e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003). This has also been emphasized by Cheek in recent interviews. According to him, aggravating and bragging are an essential part of

hip hop. Those who do not understand the self-appraisal of rap music are critical of the style of the songs. (Huhtala 2009: 16.) He says that the Finnish audience does not often 'get' this self-praise, perhaps because the history of Finnish rap is not yet very long. He also emphasizes how the Cheek on the albums is almost the same person as Jare Tiihonen but that the 'I' persona on the albums does everything 'a bit over the top'. (Lehti 2012: 1.) Although Cheek writes his lyrics with 'a twinkle in his eye', even the 'easiest' and 'lightest' lyrics still draw on 'truths' about his own life. This ideology seems to be an overall message in his songs and discography, and it also connects him to a larger, global theme of rap, namely self-confidence and showing it to others. Thus, the global context of rap is indexed by Cheek's rapping style and bragging: an attitude which is particularly noticeable in, for example, some mainstream US rappers, like Jay Z or 50 cent. In a significant way, then, it also connects him to *one* line of thinking about authenticity: to be authentic, to be real, is to be (overtly) self-confident and also show it to others (this is not to say that his authenticity is constructed *solely* this way). After this line in the song, Cheek reminds us that he, nevertheless, wants to keep rocks in his backpack and he does not want to boast for nothing – he also wants to stay humble.

The prosecutor then admits that Cheek can rap ('räppää' – Finnishized English) and that he used to do better music ('tight stuff'). Nowadays, however, Cheek (allegedly) raps with money on his mind, is only 'a joke' in the scene and makes 'commercial shit', argues the prosecutor. The discourse, which is drawn on here is that of *mainstream and (versus) authenticity* in hip hop. This particular discourse revolves around what is mainstream and what is underground and who is authentic and who is not, and on what grounds. The relationship between authenticity and 'commercialism' or 'entertainment' is a complex one. These lines in "Orjantappuraa" thus foreground the old ('global') debate and discourse about commercialism and *making music for money* – characteristic of and pointing towards the 'fact' that it is common in hip hop cultures everywhere that artists doing 'commercial' rap are accused of 'fakeness'.¹²⁵ Thus, although the protagonist is Finnish and he is being interrogated about the work (done and performed) in Finland, the narrative tells a more general, *globally recognizable story of (in)authenticity* in the context of (mainstream) hip hop culture and rap music.

In his response, Cheek relates how (in the early years of his career) he and his posse "did gigs for free for years", before rap and hip hop ever became

¹²⁵ When asked (in an interview for a magazine) about how much money actually motivates him, Cheek says that it is *not* enough for him to be able to pay his bills, have a roof over his head and put bread on the table. Instead, he wants to make a profit and enjoy the fruits of his work by having a high standard of living: "In English, there's a good expression for this: 'finer things'. For example, I love to wake up in this apartment [in Töölö]. Or when I travel, I want to make a ridiculous trip and live in ridiculous hotels. On holiday, you don't sleep in sleeping bags but in the Ritz-Carlton. Money makes it all possible, but *I've never made music for money*. (Hakamo 2012: 23; translation by EW, emphasis added)." Here, we see how Cheek *explicitly denies* making music for money. Money matters a great deal to him but it is not a reason for his music-making.

popular and fashionable (which was partly because of them, the pioneers). Nowadays, he is in the happy position of getting paid for his hobby. In Cheek's response, we can thus see the (above-mentioned) discourse of success and achievement. Here, Cheek also orients to the rap topics of *social critique* and *scene discourse*, i.e. talk about the (local) scene (cf. also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). These are exemplified in his *scene critique* and response (i.e. *listener-directed speech*) in which he (implicitly) refers to 'haters',¹²⁶ i.e. people who hate both him and his mainstream music: "älä oo kateellinen, mulle tää vastaa unelmaa" ('don't be jealous, this's like dream to me'). This topic is also interpretable on both the national and global scales: it is his personal story that he is relating, but it is understandable within the national context and scene, which he discusses; and it is the global topic of the 'scene discourse' and '(scene) critique', which he presents here. After all, in hip hop scenes around the world, there will always be discussion (and evaluation) of the artists' own particular scenes (see e.g. Condry 2006 on Japan).

In the last accusation of this extract, the prosecutor insists on the theme of making music for dubious reasons: that it is the record company that decides what kind of music Cheek makes. The local scale is projected here through the usage of a Helsinki slang item. In 'levylafka' ('record company'), 'lafka' is part of the 'old' Helsinki slang and it derives from Russian, meaning a store or a small company, thus bringing a historical aspect to bear on the (linguistic) text as well. Cheek denies the accusation, however, and claims that the prosecutor does not have a clue about what is really going on. Cheek argues that it is he himself who makes the decisions about his music and that, in his music, he mixes different genres and puts them together to create his own unique sound. Others (i.e. other Finns) try to imitate him and his music, Cheek claims, but assures his listeners that they cannot beat him. Here, the global scale is projected via the biblical reference of washing one's hands of something. In the Bible, Pontius Pilate did not want to condemn Jesus Christ to death and washed his hands of the situation, thus palming off the responsibility for convicting Christ on the ('common') people (cf. Matthew 27: 24). The features of Finnishized English such as 'pliis' ('please'), 'miksannu' ('mixed') and 'saundin' ('sound') can be considered to be part of everyday youth language in Finland, thus in that sense, they project the translocal connectedness (of scales).

¹²⁶ A hater is "a person that simply cannot be happy for another person's success" (Urban dictionary). The word is used extensively in the context of hip hop culture and rap music, particularly in the expression: "haters gonna hate", which is "a catchphrase used to indicate a disregard for hostile remarks addressed towards the speaker" (Know your meme). Not surprisingly, Cheek himself also has a song entitled "Vihaajat vihaa" ('Haters hate') (2013).

Extract 3: "People need a hero and a scapegoat"

"kerro mulle onkse nyt sit kaikista upeinta
kun räpätään vaan *dokaamisesta*, naisist ja klubeista
käytät *statustas* hyväks, *scoraat* monta naista illassa
jos se on syy tehdä musaa, niin aitous aika hiljasta"

Huhhei! nyt vähän tarkempaa pohjaduunii
voisko ton kysymyksen ottaa uusiks?
kuuntele levyt eka ennen kun väität tollast
'sitähän se on' taitaa nappipäissään äijä olla

"Kuka sä oikeesti luulet olevasi?
supersankariko? puhees on suuret todellakin"

Kansa tarvitsee sankarin ja syntipukin
molemmat viitat mulle ankarimmat syyski lukis
superjare, mun on hyvä olla olemassa
jotta on joku johon *jengi* voi purkaa ongelmansa

"Kuulostaa rankalt taakalt kannettavaks
riittäkö sulla mitään takas annettavaks
et ota kantaa, en kuule yhteiskunta kritiikkiä
et puhu ikin siit, et puhuttele ihmisiä"

Mul on kaikki hyvin, en mä jaksa itkee mistään
Emma-patsas on mun hyllyl piste iin pääl
mut jos haluut, että kritisoin ja otan kantaa
tän verran voin pillittää ja lokaa antaa
laskekaa tuloveroo, alkää rankaisko ahkerää
viiskyt pinnaa veroi tekee räppäristä katkeran –
hahaaa!

"tell me now is it the greatest thing
to only rap about *drinking*, women and clubs
you're using your *status* to score many women per night
if that's a reason to make music, you're not keeping it real"

Heigh-ho! a bit more careful background work
can you ask that question again?
listen to the records first, before you claim that
"that's what it is" I guess you're on drugs, man

"Who do you really think you are?
a super-hero? your talk is big, for sure"

People need a hero and a scapegoat
the severest would hand me both robes
super jare, it's good that I exist
so that *folks* have someone to spill their troubles to

"Sounds like a tough burden to carry
is there anything left that you can give back
you don't take a stand, no criticism against society
you never talk about it, you don't address people"

I'm all good, I don't want to whine about anything
the Emma statue on my shelf is like the icing on the cake
but if you want me to criticize and take a stand
this much I can cry and throw mud
reduce income tax, don't punish the hardworking
paying fifty per cent taxes makes a rapper bitter –
hah!

In extract 3, the prosecutor moves on to Cheek's specific topics and motives. He claims that Cheek only raps about 'drinking, women and clubs', i.e. stereotypical (and 'global') mainstream (or club) rap topics. The direct *inauthenticity* accusation can be seen in: "käytät *statustas* hyväks, *scoraat* monta naista illassa / jos se on syy tehdä musaa, niin aitous aika hiljasta" ('you're using your status to score many women in one night / if that's a reason to make music, you're not keeping it real'). Here, Cheek is blamed for making music only for status and his reputation as a ladies' man – thus he would not be categorized as an 'authentic' artist who makes it out of 'responsibility' to himself, his art or his public (cf. Moore 2002). Here, again we can thus see the global discourse of mainstream versus authenticity – i.e. whether a mainstream rapper can ever truly be considered authentic.

In his response, Cheek does not directly address this issue or accusation but insists on more careful background work from the prosecutor and urges him (and the listeners of the song) to listen to his records first, before even hinting at *inauthenticity*. This kind of defense is often heard from Cheek, both in his other songs and in his interviews – that it is 'all there on the albums'. It is also implied here that Cheek does not take the prosecutor seriously as he seems to be 'on drugs'.

Linguistically, the features of Finnishized English namely, 'räpätään' ('rap'), klubeista ('clubs') and 'scoraat' ('score'), consist simultaneously of both global and local elements, and thus project the translocal connectedness of the scales – consisting of the local, but also going beyond the local. Helsinki slang is present, here, too, in expressions such as 'dokaamisesta' ('drinking') and 'duunii' ('work'), both of which originate in the Swedish spoken in Uusimaa, the province surrounding Helsinki (Paunonen 1995), thus rendering the local and regional scales possibly meaningful frames, too.

After this, the prosecutor blames Cheek for 'talking big' and thinking too much of himself. 'Who do you really think you are?' can be seen as referring to, or at least connecting to, a previous song of Cheek's entitled "Eksä tiedä kuka mä luulen olevani?" ('Don't you know who I think I am?') from 2008 – a song which ironizes the stereotypical expression of (and connotations associated with) "don't you know who I am?" used by (semi-)celebrities when they, for example, try to enter a night club (or get other favors). In "Orjantappuraa", Cheek replies to the prosecutor's accusation by saying that 'people need a hero and a scapegoat' and that he is willing to take on both these roles and so act as a 'superjare'. Cheek often refers to himself by this nickname, superjare, in his other songs, too. The logo appearing on the "JHT2" album cover¹²⁷ (this is the cardboard cover that appears 'on top of' the cd; the actual cover photo of the booklet was discussed in section 3.3 on data) imitates (the colors are the same as in the original), but also modifies, the original *Superman* logo, by having replaced the capital S (indexing Superman) with Cheek's initials J, H and T as well as the number 2 (indexing that it is the second album, a sequel, by the JHT name). Thus, he does not identify with being a superman linguistically alone, but also semiotically, via an image.



¹²⁷ The image is designed by Markku Wettenranta and it is reprinted with permission from Cheek.

In his response, Cheek again draws on religious discourse. In addition to representing himself here as a hero, a messiah-like figure, Cheek also pictures himself as a *scapegoat* (of the Finnish hip hop scene) who can shoulder the blame for people's problems. The role of the scapegoat also becomes evident and reflexive in the lyrics themselves as Cheek has to defend himself in front of the prosecutor. He willingly accepts both of these robes (and roles). People need a hero, a messiah and they want to be liberated, redeemed by the(ir) messiah and, at the same time, they want to destroy Cheek, nail him to the cross and to blame all their own shortcomings on him. The religious discourse is also two-fold: the national scale is evoked by the fact that it is the Finnish audience, Finnish hip hop fans, that Cheek addresses and in front of whom he claims to be the messiah, while the global discourse of the Messiah is also relevant: what Jesus did and how he was treated, is of course ages old and known around the world. This particular song, however, is not understandable globally (without translation) because of its use of the Finnish language, instead of 'global' English. Religion is, thus, a major aspect of the song, although it is not a *religious* song as such: it does not, for example, showcase Cheek as being 'in faith' (see below for discussion on the differences between this case and, for example, 'religious' US rap music). Linguistically, the extract makes use of a religious register in "kansa tarvitsee sankarin ja syntipukin / molemmat viitat mulle ankarimmat syyksi lukis" ('people need a hero and a scapegoat /the severest would hand me both robes'): a mix of religious vocabulary and (official-sounding) syntax. One cannot identify this as 'purely' standard Finnish; rather, it combines features of the spoken vernacular as well.

In the last lines of the song, the prosecutor admits that the double role must be a heavy burden for Cheek. He then wonders, if Cheek has anything to 'give back' to the audience. The final accusation of the prosecutor deals with how the defendant never takes a stand in his lyrics and avoids voicing societal critique (one of the global key topics of rap music ever since the beginning of the culture). This topic is often raised in the Finnish hip hop scene and in addition to Cheek, the rap group Fintelligens, for instance, is accused of not taking a stand on societal issues and instead rapping on, for example, enjoying life and having fun. Here, Cheek defends himself by asking (rhetorically) why he should complain about anything when everything in his life is good. As an example of his success, he makes a national cultural reference to the *Emma statue* he got in 2010 for the best hip hop album of the year 2009, namely "JHT".

After this, the only thing he admits to taking a (political) stand is: "laskekaa tuloveroo, älkää rankaisko ahkeraa / viiskyt pinnaa veroi tekee räppäristä katkeran - hahaaa!" ('reduce income tax, don't punish the hardworking / paying fifty per cent taxes makes a rapper bitter - hah!'). Here, we can see the (previously mentioned) discourse of success, achievement and hard work projected in the national scale, in the entrepreneurial ideology of the socio-economic right in Finland. Reducing income tax, not punishing hard-working people but rather encouraging and supporting them can be seen as one of the (continuing) themes of the *National Coalition Party*, in that they support

shifting the main burden of taxation away from work and employment (Kokoomuksen eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2011). In addition, his rapping here echoes the platforms of this party (Kokoomuksen eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2007; 2011; translations by EW) which emphasize, for example, that: “[a] responsible market economy appreciates diligence and enterprise and also rewards for these”. In addition, “[a] supportive society is one in which everyone can, by his/her own choices and work – from his/her own starting point – affect his/her future”.

In fact, Cheek often emphasizes people’s own responsibility for themselves and their well-being in his lyrics – there is a clear message on behalf of *individualism* in them. According to him, free education and social security [in Finland] guarantee everyone *an equal opportunity to succeed*. His support of (socio-economically) right-wing values and thoughts could also be seen in his participation in the presidential campaign of the current right-wing president *Sauli Niinistö* in 2012 and also in some of his positive remarks about the values of the ‘economic right’. How this relates to his popularity as an artist is not a straightforward issue. One option might be that Cheek (and his music) create a contrast with the (‘left-inclined and/or ‘conscious’) rappers, who deal with socio-economic problems and injustice – by rapping instead about equality of opportunity and exemplifying a ‘rags-to-riches’ story. However, instead of directly lecturing on his own world views on and through his albums, Cheek desires most to entertain people – politically conscious rap is not his cup of tea.¹²⁸ According to him, his music can be categorized as club music and its main point is passing on positive feelings. (Lehti 2012: 1).

Furthermore, this political stand-taking is something that is the effect of *him being located in the center*, earning a lot of money. The very last thing that Cheek expresses in the lyrics is laughter at the high taxes he has to pay because he has done so well financially.¹²⁹ The narrative has no ending in the courtroom sense as Cheek is found neither guilty nor innocent. But this final laughter can be seen as ridiculing the whole charade, the whole court case with all of its accusations, because he can ‘afford’ it.

In conclusion: Cheek as a globalized Finnish rap messiah

While in general, Cheek’s lyrics do not often include religious references,^{130 131} they have occasionally been made. For instance, “*Viihdyttäjät*” (‘Entertainer’) (2009), features the following lines: “*siin on takahuoneraideri suomi-twistillä / tätä vartenko se kundi kuoli ristillä / tää taitaa olla se suomiräppärin taivas / vedän sata keikkaa vuoteen, niin ei [tarvi] käydä thaimaas*” (‘there’s a backstage

¹²⁸ Originally, hip hop’s mission was two-fold: to entertain people *and* to talk about social issues. Thus, both genres and styles have been there ‘from the beginning’ (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002; Krims 2000).

¹²⁹ In Finland, income tax is progressive, which means that the more one earns, the more one pays in (income) taxes.

¹³⁰ I examined “*JHT*” and “*JHT2*”, the two albums in the present data pool.

¹³¹ Rentola (forthcoming), in her MA thesis (which I co-supervise), has, however, identified also religious elements in the ‘success’ and ‘destiny’ discourses constructed in Cheek’s lyrics.

rider with a Finnish twist / is this what the dude was crucified for/ this must be the Finnish rapper's heaven / I do a hundred gigs per year, so I don't [have to] go to Thailand'). Here, Cheek wonders if this (i.e. enjoying gig life with its amenities) is why Jesus was crucified and further indicates that his current rap life is comparable to life in heaven. In addition, in "Jippikayjei" ('Yippee-ki-yay') (2010) Cheek raps: "kyyneleitä, verta hikee / loppuun asti vetämistä vannomista herran nimeen" ('tears, blood, sweat / taking it to the end swearing in the name of the Lord'). In the context of the song, the reference can be seen as praying to God for strength and power to continue succeeding, against all odds.

"Orjantappuraa", then, is an exception in Cheek's discography as it has a clear religious frame and numerous biblical references. The song is an 'autobiographic' narrative by Cheek: the story is both historical and synchronic as he tells us what he (or, at times, Jesus) has done in the past and what he currently does. In the song, we can see how Cheek constructs himself as an authentic, globalized Finnish rap messiah. He effectively catches all the (sell-out) accusations that he has received during the past few years of (mainstream) success, from the fans of other rap genres, 'haters' and Finnish people, in general. The prosecutor here can be seen as voicing the nation, the Finnish hip hop scene and the haters. The song is Cheek's way of collectively responding to all of those charges. The audience of the song is thus (mainly) this group of 'haters', but simultaneously also Cheek's fans: so that they know and realize that he will not yield in the face of criticism.

The discursive storyline connects both the national context (and scale) and the global(-scale) mainstream rap format. Here, Cheek uses particular discursive resources to index the audience towards *specific interpretative frames*, those in which he wants the audience's meanings to be 'put'. The discourses of *success and achievement*, *religion* and *mainstream versus authenticity* are all (projected as) emphatically global, while they also simultaneously relate to the national context. The particular topics of self-presentation, contemplation, scene discourse and social critique (cf. also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002) are, likewise, both global and national in their orientation. In and through the different discourses and topics, Cheek makes use of the shared socio-cultural knowledge he assumes the audience to have.

The song thus functions in the nexus of rap world, religious world and the world of justice and courtrooms. The (projected) global and national scales thus 'meet' and combine in interesting ways. This song is a prime example of Cheek seeking to embody the genre of globalized mainstream hip hop culture: how to be simultaneously commercial and authentic. Here we can see an enactment of globalized hip hop motives and bringing them down to (the national scale of) Finland: how Cheek looks up to, but also modifies and localizes, the global format and the widespread hip hop trope of being real and self-confident (and the speech act of boasting), in the context of Finland. "Orjantappuraa" can be characterized as a meta-rap rap. Cheek raps about his own rapping (i.e. the speech act of self-referential speech) and the Finnish rap scene. The context of

the song is set to a (globally recognizable) court(room) in which the prosecutor accuses Cheek of all kinds 'crimes'. The globality of the song is also suggested by way of religious discourses, several biblical references and comparisons with Jesus Christ and the biblical events. Jesus Christ is a globally recognizable and ('well-)known figure¹³² – in a way, a globally available resource, which Cheek takes up, appropriates and identifies with in order to construct and index an image of himself as a messianic figure. That said, these biblical references are made in a local context, by a local person, to local people – there is thus simultaneously a highly local characteristic to the frame and references (cf. Pennycook 2007a: 111 on the locality / globality of a pair of *Jordans* in rap lyrics). Thus, the global(ity) in the song is not something 'out there' but it is made meaningful in the local context – and these meanings and indexicalities always need to be investigated 'on the ground'.

When compared to Pyhimys and Stepa, Cheek is definitely more global (at least in this particular song): he orients to global frameworks thematically, stylistically and generically. The lyrics of "Orjantappuraa" act as pointers, as evidence for this. In her research on Tanzanian hip hop enthusiasts, Higgins (2009a: 96) similarly notices that "[other rappers] orient to more global frameworks in styling themselves as members of the Hip Hop nation" – it is this kind of *global stylization* that we see here in the case of Cheek as well.

Linguistically, Cheek's repertoire, in the case of "Orjantappuraa", consists mainly of spoken vernacular Finnish, which projects the national scale as the context is (set to) Finland. His repertoire also consists of other resources: standard Finnish surfaces together in a mix with spoken vernacular Finnish to form a courtroom register and a religious register. Helsinki slang appears in words of Russian and Swedish –origin; these can be considered fairly 'old' resources in Finnish society, dating back several centuries. Finnishized English is (mainly) made use of in rap- or music-oriented terminology, something which also characterizes the Finnish spoken by contemporary youth in general. This kind of English, then, can be seen as partly representing the global currency of hip hop authenticity, although it is localized and Finnishized (i.e. being 'translocal') – and thus made (possibly) relevant on the national scale, too. In this song, Cheek makes use of three varieties of 'Finnish' – Helsinki slang, spoken vernacular Finnish and standard Finnish – in such a way that they index his 'locus' in Helsinki, in a vernacular youth culture in Finland and in a (mainstream) rap genre in Finland. He thus positions himself globally, nationally and locally through his (here emergent) repertoire.

In general, "Orjantappuraa" is not particularly 'global' linguistically: it does not include extensive use of English but only draws on a few features, which are modified and localized into Finnish. The important thing to remember here is that one can of course never, a priori, assume a clear connection between 'English' and 'global', i.e. that English has a global, uniform meaning and the same indexical effects everywhere. That is something for

¹³² By this I do not mean that Christianity and Jesus Christ are, in fact, known and meaningful to the same extent in every corner of the world

ethnographic analysis to establish. English, however, is a resource of a different order, it comes from a different sphere, or scale, than Finnish or a local dialect, and it often circulates in a very different way from the other linguistic resources (available). All the while, we need to be aware of ‘origins’ and explore whether these have an effect in the actual deployment of the resources. We can, in fact, analyze these instances of English usage as examples of *en- and de-globalization processes* (Blommaert 2011), which refers to how some semiotic forms, like hip hop “English”, are “prepared to go global” but also to how we can only understand these globally distributed resources when they are de-globalized i.e. localized to specific conditions (Blommaert 2011: 5; see also Blommaert 2010).¹³³ Pennycook (2007a: 115; see also Pennycook 2010) also reminds us of the role(s) of English: it may indeed be very global, but it is also (first and foremost) highly local in its nature, such as when it is used by people in a particular space and time and in specific local (language) practices – and yet nevertheless connected to Englishes in other places. The values and meanings represented by the various features in different circumstances are always liable to negotiation, opposition, language play, and identity work (Jørgensen & Møller 2014). The linguistic resources Cheek uses here, and the values and meanings of these, are thus constantly under evaluation by the (Finnish) audience, and they may also receive a different reception from his own fans than from the fans of underground rap music.¹³⁴

Such a multitude of resources can be seen as exemplifying hybrid language use.¹³⁵ In the context of “Orjantappuraa”, this can be seen in Cheek’s ‘multilingual’ repertoire, in how he draws on resources from more than one ‘language’ but also ‘intralingually’, by making use of features associated with a particular slang or variety of a ‘language’. In terms of discursive resources, hybridity can be seen in how Cheek makes use of the courtroom and religious genres and biblical intertextuality in both the prosecutor’s and the defendant’s speech. The historical and ideological aspect of the repertoire can also be seen in how Cheek, via his use of resources, compares himself to Jesus Christ and, in this, also draws on the ideology – his world view – of mainstream rap and success.

All of these resources can be seen as scalar: they are projected as having specific functions on specific scales; however the division is not always as clear-cut. This is (bound up with) the ideological property of the resources: the way in which their users imagine and expect their audience to interpret them, i.e. an anticipation of the meaning effects the signs will have. As regards the temporal aspect of the notion of scale, in particular, Cheek positions himself both historically, by claiming that he was amongst the pioneers of Finnish hip hop

¹³³ The term ‘en-globalization’ was originally coined by Ben Rampton, as acknowledged by Blommaert (2011: 5).

¹³⁴ The reception and reactions (of the audience) are indeed valid topics for future research.

¹³⁵ I understand hybridity as ‘ordinary’ – and not something that consists of clearly separate, and separable entities (cf. Pennycook 2012). See section 4.6 for a discussion on it.

and that he has done it for more than a decade already, and synchronically, by arguing (in a boasting way) that while he is (still) here, all the other good-for-nothing rap acts are simply trying to imitate him. In this, we can see him articulating one particular form of hip hop and one particular aspect of Finnishness in hip hop culture.

“Orjantappuraa” is not a *religious* text as such, but it nevertheless makes extensive use of the (global) religious scenario and the (well-known) biblical events, characters and roles. Cheek may utilize this to represent his position and treatment by others as comparable to those by Christ. To choose such a scenario is rather grand – perhaps as a lyrical strategy it is an example of what seems to be typical of (some) rap on the whole, self-aggrandisement, i.e. boasting. In general, too, Finnish rap does not largely address religious issues¹³⁶, with perhaps the exception of Ruudolf, who makes continuous references to, for example, God and his local parish in his lyrics (as was briefly discussed in section 2.2.3).¹³⁷ In some US rap, by contrast, references to religion and God are fairly frequent – and the year 2012 was characterized as “a great year for religion” in blog entries by hip hop enthusiasts (e.g. TyrantX 2013). In fact, religion(s) and references to it have been part of the hip hop culture since its beginning (e.g. Price 2006) (but, admittedly, not one of its *central* messages). For instance, “The Message” (1982) by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five includes many references to God. Later on, the West Coast rapper Tupac (2pac) Shakur made numerous references to different religions in his lyrics, for example in “Only God Can Judge Me” (1996). (TyrantX 2013.)¹³⁸

In 2004, the US mainstream rapper Kanye West published a song entitled “Jesus Walks” and, interestingly, posed in the cover of the *Rolling Stones* magazine (Rolling Stones 2006; reprinted with permission by Rolling Stones) wearing (what else but) *a thorn* on his head with the title “The Passion of Kanye West”. This is of course an intertextual reference to the US film *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) – as well as a (self-)reference to his considerable ego, as an artist. Here, we can thus see a (probably unintentional) linkage between the two superstars of their respective hip hop scenes: Kanye West in the mainstream US rap music and Cheek in the mainstream Finnish rap music. What can be seen as uniting them is their overtly self-confident attitude and role and position in their own scenes.

¹³⁶ Interestingly, a PhD on ‘world views’ and ‘religiousness’ in Finnish underground rap music is currently in the making by Inka Rantakallio, at the Department of Musicology, University of Turku. It will offer us more insights into how (some) Finnish rap *can* be understood in terms of religiousness.

¹³⁷ Some explicitly religious Finnish rap is performed by, for instance, the rap groups *Pastorit* (‘Pastors’) and *Immanuel*.

¹³⁸ See also Alim (2005) for an exploration of the relationship between hip hop and Islam.



“Orjantappuraa” effectively feeds into Cheek’s interviews (see sections 5.3 and 5.4) and it resonates well with what he says in them. His position both in the song and in the interviews is that of a (mainstream) *center* in his own right. In the song, Cheek seems to convey an image of himself in the center of a national hip hop culture, even almost literally as the Jesus of all the other rappers in Finland, as the artist who had done it for years before the rap music broke through and in that sense, made life easier for other rappers later on. He also refers to others (namely other rappers) in relation to himself, and rebuts the criticism that others make of him. Thus, Cheek places himself in a specific position in the Finnish rap scene: a position of leadership, of the one who brought the real ‘gospel’ of hip hop to Finland, but also as one who, in that world, assumes a particular hip hop attitude to boasting (one of the typical rap speech acts; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002): he is an artist who became rich because of hip hop and now shows it with all his material goods. In general, bragging, exhibiting one’s success and being proud of oneself are highly characteristic of Cheek and his actions. However, his character and way of being do not (easily) fit the ‘traditional’ Finnish culture of *modesty*. In Finland, it is a *stereotypical* cultural value *not* to be ‘on display’ in any way and *not* to show and brag about one’s success but rather be silent about it or belittle it, i.e. be one amongst others (see e.g. Keltikangas-Järvinen 1996; Kivimäki 2012). In this (stereotypical) scenario, then, Cheek is perhaps not considered authentic by some Finns, who see his (overt) self-confidence as not ‘authentically Finnish’ and not as something that ‘belongs’ here.

In fact, Cheek also alluded to this attitude of his in the previously mentioned TV show (entitled *Vain elämää*) in which he commented that he feels it is “his robe to carry” to bring *positive attitude* and feelings of achievement into Finnish society, because he has noticed that “someone has to do it”. Interestingly, he made also use of religious imagery in his comments on himself: “I’m on a crusade with this matter... we go one leg at a time and we conquer and teach and show people what this thing is... this has been my

mission". He compares teaching about rap to a crusade, in which the mission is to bring 'the rap gospel' to the (ignorant Finnish) people. Here, we can clearly see his central position – one in which he makes use of global motives and a global format. Whether this kind of religious discourse intertextuality appeals to his fans, or what they make of this, remains an open question (and possibly a topic for future research) at this point. We now turn to the construction of a *national* authenticity in Pyhimys' song "Bättre folk" ('Better folk').

4.4 The minority claiming voice – Pyhimys, Finland-Swedes and national authenticity

In the previous section, we discussed and analyzed Cheek's song "Orjantappuraa" as an example of the construction of a global authenticity within the Finnish hip hop scale. Here, the focus moves from the global to a national authenticity within this particular scale-level. The aim of this section is to explore how Pyhimys constructs his national authenticity as a rap artist in his song entitled "Bättre folk" from the album "Medium" (2011)¹³⁹. In particular, I will focus on answering the following questions:

- a) What kinds of linguistic and discursive resources does Pyhimys make use of and how do they contribute to his authenticity?
- b) What is his (emergent) repertoire like and how does it contribute to his authenticity?
- c) How does he project scales in the construction of authenticity?

Answering these questions will give us an indication of one position that Pyhimys, as a Finnish rap artist, occupies. With this particular example, I will show how Pyhimys constructs himself as a nationally (oriented and recognizable) authentic rap artist. Here, 'national' refers to the shared history, society and culture of Finland. Before embarking on the analysis of the lyrics, I will briefly discuss the socio-historical context of Finland, with specific reference to the period of Finland under Swedish rule and the Swedish-speaking minority in today's Finland.

The sociocultural and -historical context

Finland and Sweden are neighboring Nordic countries. Earlier, from c. 1150 to 1809, Finland was part of Sweden. As a consequence of this long, shared history, Finland has two national languages: the majority of Finns (89.7%) speak Finnish as their mother tongue while a small minority (5.4%), mostly living along the coast and in the Helsinki metropolitan area, has Swedish as their

¹³⁹ See Westinen (2011, 2012) for an analysis of "Bättre folk" from the viewpoint of Pyhimys offering a 'sociolinguistic critique'. Westinen (2012) also includes a small interview with Pyhimys about his views on the article and the analysis (in Finnish).

mother tongue (Statistics Finland; but see e.g. Heikkilä 2011 on the difficulty of statistical ‘categorization’ by mother tongue). In principle, the rights of the Swedish-speaking minority are protected by law (Constitution of Finland 17. §; Suomen perustuslaki 1999), but the reality is often quite different. Views on the Swedish language in Finland are extremely polarized – it is both appreciated and hated. The same goes for the allegedly better-off Swedish-speaking Finns, often referred to in Finland in a derogatory way, by using the Swedish expression *bättre folk* (‘better folk’).

The current socio-cultural and -historical context evoked in the song is that of the contemporary Helsinki region. In this bi/multilingual urban city, young, educated people often have both Finnish- and Swedish-speaking friends and acquaintances – and often they themselves, too, use both languages in their daily communication. However, as elsewhere in Finland, even in this metropolitan context, Swedish and the speakers of Swedish face suspicion and hostility. Some monolingual Finns still consider Swedish and Swedish speakers as a ‘(foreign) elite’ striving to enforce its language and power over Finnish-speaking Finns (see e.g. Vaattovaara & Soininen-Stojanov 2006; Nyman-Kurkiala 1996; McRae et al. 1988).

There has long been public debate over the status of Swedish and, in particular, so-called ‘compulsory’ Swedish (‘pakkoruotsi’). This term is often used to refer to the fact that Finnish-speaking Finns are obliged to study Swedish (and vice versa), at every level of education starting either in elementary school or, at the latest, in junior high school – all the way to university level. One extreme of the debate is represented by the Swedish-speaking Finns who are concerned about the ‘domain loss’ of the Swedish language: some of them feel that official services in their mother tongue are insufficient (Grönlund 2011a: 7). Therefore, if knowledge of Swedish was no longer required of staff in public agencies and offices, the Swedish-speakers would face injustice, as they would no longer get service in their mother tongue.

At the other extreme, some Finnish-speaking Finns see the state’s official policy of bilingualism, and hence the Swedish language, as a burden left over from the past and an unnecessary and problematic privilege ‘favoring’ the Swedish-speaking minority. These attitudes towards Swedish-speaking Finns and the Swedish language have recently become increasingly hostile and threatening. This shows in many public forums, in letters-to-the-editor sections of newspapers and social media, for example (Grönlund 2011a: 7). Some political parties, particularly the contra-Swedish populist party *Perussuomalaiset* (‘The Finns’¹⁴⁰) (2011), and the pro-Swedish *Svenska folkpartiet* (‘Swedish People’s Party’) (2011) have also been vocal in the debate over ‘compulsory’ Swedish. The topic has also been addressed in different ways in popular culture – one example of this is “Bättre folk”.

¹⁴⁰ The direct translation of *Perussuomalaiset* would be *Basic* or *True Finns*. The party has, nevertheless, officially decided to choose *The Finns* as their English translation.

Resources and scales in Bättre folk

The clearest indication of the *Finland-Swedish perspective* in the song is the fact that its protagonist and narrator is *Robban*, a young Finland-Swede from Helsinki, who shares details about himself and his life. In addition, we learn about historical and contemporary confrontations between a minority, the Swedish-speaking Finns, and the majority, the Finnish-speaking Finns, along with the shared history of the two Nordic countries, Finland and Sweden. Thus, *narrative-wise*, the story mainly projects the national scale but the local scale is present, too.

Bättre folk comprises three stanzas, a chorus and a coda. In the extracts, the ‘origin’ of the lexical items is marked for clarity and the following symbols are used: spoken vernacular Finnish is the default text: Finland Swedish (which differs from the Swedish spoken in Sweden mostly in pronunciation and vocabulary) is underlined; standard/vernacular/African American vernacular/Finnishized English is **bolded**; Helsinki slang is in *italics* and standard Finnish is both *in italics and underlined*. In my analysis, I will also show how each of these resources in the hybrid repertoire serves a specific purpose: how they, on their own or mixed with others, all contribute to the construction of authenticity.

Extract 1: “Hejsan, Jag är kallas Robban”

Hejsan

Jag är kallas Robban

mul on Volvo, takaluukussa koppa

kessuu halv toppa

jag kan inte stoppa

mul on autossa aina sama CD,

Lasse Melbergs första EP

mut en äänestä RKP:T,

jag är ingen cliché¹⁴¹, en säästä huvi-veneeseen
Lainaa satanen,

Jag kan inte ringa min folks, jag hatar dem

lukeeks mun otsassa pappa betalar

ku toivomus kaivost taas kolikkoja naaraan

min credit är slut

mut mä en huolestuta ihmisiä niinku noi muut

kai se riippuu mistä sä tuut,

ja miltä näytät, Uffist *kledjut*, men ser bra ut

mun aina uskotaan selviävän,

selviithän? Nej. En selvinpän

mitä sä koet syrjinnän merkitsevän

koska mä koen sen myös toisinpän

Hello

I am am called Robban

I got a Volvo, a crate of beer in the trunk

half a pack of smokes

I can't stop

I've always got the same CD in my car,

Lasse Mellberg's first EP

but I don't vote for the SPP,

I'm no cliché, I'm not saving for a yacht

Lend me a hundred,

I can't call my folks, I hate them

does my forehead say daddy pays

when I'm picking coins out of the wishing well again

I'm out of credit

but I don't worry people like those others do

I guess it depends where you come from

and how you appear, *clothes* from Uff, but looks good

they always think that I'll make it

will you? No, Not sober

what do you think discrimination means

cos I experience it also the other way around

Robban explicitly introduces himself already in the very first line of the song: “Hejsan, jag är kallas Robban” (‘Hello, I am am called Robban’) and, line by line, we gain a more complex picture of his situation via the themes and characteristics of his narrative. Here, we can identify the rap topic of *self-*

¹⁴¹ The word cliché is, of course, a(n originally) French word adopted into English.

representation (cf. also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002), but in a quite untypical form: while it is common for rap artists to talk about themselves via their MC name and argue that they ‘represent’ a certain place, for example Helsinki, or a particular ‘hood’ within it, for example Kallio, here Pyhimys adopts a persona, through which he ‘self-represents’. Robban is thus the narrator ‘animated’ (Goffman 1981) by Pyhimys as the voice of the Swedish-speaking Finn, a minority member.

The linguistic resources Robban here makes use of are (Finland) Swedish, spoken vernacular Finnish and their mixture. This kind of language use, using these particular resources and mixing them, clearly indexes Robban as a Swedish-speaking Finn, and also sets the context and the scale of the song as a national one. In the above-mentioned opening line, we can see a difference between Robban, an insider, and Pyhimys, an outsider. One may perhaps recognize that Swedish is not Pyhimys’ mother tongue. The grammatically correct sentence would be one of the following: “Jag är Robban”, or, “Jag kallas (för) Robban”, or, “Jag är kallad Robban”. Pyhimys, in turn, combines these expressions in the sentence, ‘doubling’ the meaning (and, hence, rendering the sentence ‘ungrammatical’ according to the norms of the standard language).

In the first lines, then, although linguistically Robban is (or tries to be, despite Pyhimys’ non-nativeness) a Swedish-speaking Finn, discursively or culturally he is not, in any particular (stereotypical) way, classifiable here as such, but consumes tobacco and alcohol like any other Finn would do. In one *self-referential speech act* (i.e. referring to himself) (Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002), Robban also tells us that he has a car, a *Volvo*.¹⁴² Volvo has been known to make basic, safe cars for many decades and a Volvo can be seen as a regular car choice for any Finn. Thus one definitely cannot see it as a luxurious car or a brand that often figures in the context of the stereotypical hip hop life and rap lyrics. Robban also tells us that he has some beer in the trunk. He smokes and he cannot stop. Thus, he relates some ‘unhealthy’ personal habits.

Robban always listens to the same *Lasse Mellberg* CD in his Volvo. Lasse Mellberg is the real name of a Finnish rap artist called Redrama. This cultural reference to another rapper in the Finnish hip hop scene requires ‘insider’ knowledge from the listener. Thus, here Pyhimys incorporates a ‘voice’ (Bakhtin 1981), the expression of a subjective meaning position, or ‘footing’ (Goffman 1981), a stance in communication – in this instance that of hip hop culture. This (authentic) hip hop voice, manifest via his use of specific cultural references, is only meant for certain audiences: access to these is restricted. This voice also projects the national scale (as a scope of understandability) in that it refers to another rapper in the Finnish hip hop scene. According to Perry (2004: 55), “references to other artists constitute a signature feature of the hip hop

¹⁴² Volvo was originally a *Swedish* car brand, which was sold to the American *Ford Motor Company* in the late 1990s and, in 2010, further to the Chinese corporation *Geely* (Clark 2009). This particular car brand can thus perhaps also be (stereotypically) seen as indexing Robban’s Finland-Swedishness.

version of the call-response trope's¹⁴³ intertextuality" – here, we can see how this (intertextual) reference contributes to the construction of the scene. What is also interesting here is that Lasse Mellberg is himself a Finland-Swede and thus speaking of him, or rather, his first EP, in Swedish ("Lasse Mellbergs första EP"), which is the 'mother tongue' of both Robban and Lasse Mellberg, can be seen as indexing both Robban's and Redrama's Finnish-Swedishness.¹⁴⁴ All in all, we can see elements of *double-voicing* (Bakhtin 1981, 1984) here: Pyhimys talking 'as himself' (as a rap artist) and making a cultural reference to another rapper, but, simultaneously, Robban talking about himself and his musical taste, which happens to consist of the music of another Finland-Swede.

After this, Robban emphatically denies voting for the *Swedish People's Party* ("mut en äänestä RKP:t"). Here, he initiates the line with a coordinating conjunction 'mutta' ('but'), which further emphasizes the change in the tone of the story. Voting for this Party is, and has been, one of the most (stereo)typical characteristics of being a Finland-Swede (e.g. Grönlund 2011b) – for Robban it is one of the many things from which he wants to disengage himself. After this political dis-identification, Robban then explicitly and literally withdraws (in Swedish) from being a cliché, from being a stereotypical Finland-Swede, in the line "jag är ingen cliché". He then also adds yet another stereotypical characteristic of the Finland-Swedes, namely owning and sailing on a yacht (a hobby, which is particularly associated with the Finland-Swedes in the Helsinki metropolitan area; e.g. Viljakainen 2009; Ranta 2011), for which he himself is *not* saving money. The national scale is indexed by these particular stories and stereotypes in that they assume shared, sociocultural knowledge and understanding

The kinds of discourses that "Bättre folk", a 'small story' (Bamberg 2004; Georgakopoulou 2007; to be discussed in more detail in section 5.1), indexes and (re)formulates are manifold. Here, we can see how Pyhimys (via Robban) draws on and reformulates a discourse of *hip hop as a global voice for social equality*. Right from its beginning, rap music has always been a voice for minorities, disenfranchised individuals and group(s) in the margins (see e.g. Rose 1994) – and it continues to embrace this role and meaning in different parts of the world (for an example of this in the Brazilian context, see Roth-Gordon 2009). *Social critique* is indeed one of the most recurrent universal topics of rap music (Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). In the "Bättre folk" case, this global discourse (and topic) is localized, indexed and reformulated in a way that places a representative of the majority (Pyhimys) as the one who voices, via the character of Robban, the experiences and feelings of the minority. What

¹⁴³ 'Call-(and-)response' refers to the traditional oral practice in Black churches, and gospel music, between the preacher and the congregation, from which it has been adopted and adapted to (African) American rap music (see e.g. Shuker 2008: 128).

¹⁴⁴ Redrama has only recently started making music in his mother tongue, instead of English, because he was (initially) afraid of Finnish people's reaction towards him if he used Swedish, which is yet another indication of the sometimes suspicious, even hostile, attitude of some Finnish-speaking Finns towards the Swedish language and its speakers.

makes this particular version of voicing the minority quite different from, for example North American or Brazilian rap scenes, is that in this case this particular minority is *not* socially or economically marginalized or disenfranchised, but it is a linguistic and cultural minority that has for long been the focus of prejudice and suspicion because of its (historical) alleged '*elite*' status. In "Bättre folk", the discourse of rap as the voice of the disenfranchised can thus be interpreted to be done *ironically*: this shows, for instance, in the way in which Robban is represented as defending the rights of the so-called better people by denying the stereotypes often associated with Swedish-speaking Finns in his own case.

In the next few lines, he asks people to lend him money and he does this in Finnish, probably because the 'surrounding environment' in the context is Finnish-speaking. He then switches to Swedish, when he talks about his own, Finnish Swedish family. Here, Robban relates how – contrary to the stereotypical view 'pappa betalar' ('daddy pays') some Finns have about Swedish-speakers – he simply cannot call his parents and ask for money from his father. Like 'bättre folk' (which will be discussed in detail below), the expression 'pappa betalar' is another recurrent sociocultural concept that is attached to the stereotypically wealthier Finland-Swedes. The protagonist of the song, Robban, however, has to rely on other people for money, or even fish out coins from a wishing well. Thus, in doing this, Robban disengages himself from this particular stereotypical view of the wealthy and successful Swedish-speaking Finn. On the linguistic level, we can clearly see how the Finnish-speaking Pyhimys, again, makes use of the voice of the Other, the Swedish-speaking Robban, by animating Robban with the help of a mixture of vernacular Finnish and Finland Swedish. In addition, he uses an English word, 'folks', to refer to Robban's parents. This word, popular particularly amongst youth, has the effect of raising the scale temporarily to the global level again in that it is a globally recognizable English word, but it only gains its full meaning here as a local reference to Robban's parents, thus making the translocal connectedness (of scales) significant.

Here, in the 'pappa betalar' reference, we can see how Pyhimys draws on another, partly overlapping, national discourse of the prejudice often voiced in language ideological debates on *the Swedish-speaking minority as an elite group* who are more successful – for example, (are imagined to) have good, well-paying jobs (Kivistö & Mäkelä 1967: 133–135) – and are in every way 'better' than the Finnish-speaking majority (Heikkilä 2011: 22). The discourse thus consists of (re)constructing Finland-Swedes as a 'better' part of the nation, most notably evidenced in their mother tongue; in other words, Finnish-speaking Finns continually (re-)produce 'Finland-Swedishness' through (their) ways of speaking, which further legitimizes a certain, 'right' kind of understanding of Finland-Swedishness (Lönnqvist 2001: 443). It is 'ideologically motivated' in that some Finns believe in the ideology of monolingual/-cultural Finland: that Swedish and Swedish speakers are seen as only a burden of the past, which should be gotten rid of.

Somewhat paradoxically, then, (some) Finns also want to keep the myth of elitism 'alive', they want to protest (over) the language and people speaking it, something which seems to be a part of being 'a real Finn' – some Finns thus construct themselves (and their identifications) in relation to the Swedish-speaking 'Other'. Via Robban, Pyhimys address the prejudice and racism targeted at the Swedish-speaking Finns. Also this discourse is done – in the form of ironic counter-discourse – by denying the commonly held stereotypes about Swedish-speaking Finns. Robban both indexes and reformulates the discourse of 'Swedish speakers as an elite group' for example by his 'pappa betalar' reference. Here, contrary to the stereotype of wealthy Swedish-speaking Finns, Robban is represented as a poor man who has to borrow money from other people, instead of getting it from his parents, or father.

Robban is out of credit, but still, he tries not to worry other people with his problems. In the line "mut mä en huolestuta ihmisiä niinku noi muut" ('but I don't worry people like those others do'), the word 'muut' (others) looks on the surface, orthographically, Finnish, but, interestingly, Pyhimys pronounces it with a Swedish {u}, which is in 'between' (the Finnish) -u and -y (and hence it is marked as '(Finland) Swedish' in the lyrics). Thus it becomes a mix of Finnish and Swedish. The pronunciation might be done in this way, aesthetically, to make it rhyme with the previous line, with the Swedish word 'slut' (as well as with the following line and the Swedish 'ut'). It is unclear here who 'muut' refers to. It might mean other poor people, or, in particular, poor Finnish-speaking Finns. Thus, although Robban is poor, his outer appearance, and perhaps mother tongue stereotypically disassociate him from the other poor people. He relates that he gets his clothes ('kledjut') from the local UFF store (U-landshjälp från Folk till Folk i Finland rf), which is a non-profit humanitarian organization that has several second-hand clothing stores all around southern and central Finland (UFF). Thus, it is definitely not the ideal place for a (stereotypically) rich Finland-Swede to buy his/her clothes from. Robban tells us, in Swedish, that the clothes, nevertheless, look good ("men ser bra ut"), so he might be able to cover his poverty with them anyway. 'Kledjut', in Helsinki slang, indexes Robban's background as coming from and living in Helsinki, thus implying the local scale as meaningful in the lyrics.

In the last four lines of the extract, Robban addresses the key issue of the whole story, reverse discrimination. Finnish-speaking Finns stereotypically assume that Swedish-speaking Finns will 'survive' and that they would not normally face discrimination because they are wealthy and successful. Robban, however, does not fit into this stereotypical category. Whereas typically and traditionally, Finland-Swedes are not seen as an underprivileged group, here Robban feels like one. "En selvinpäin" ('not sober') might be seen as referring to Finnish-speaking Finns and their reported and assumed heavy drinking habits. In this sense, Robban can be seen as identifying with them more – that he cannot handle the situation, i.e. the reverse discrimination, sober.

Extract 2: "This's just a folk of better quality"

<u>Bättre Folk, Bättre Folk</u>	<u>Better folk, Better folk</u>
Tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille	This isn't for better people
tää on vaan parempaa musaa	this's just better music
<u>Bättre Folk, Bättre Folk</u>	<u>Better folk, Better folk.</u>
Tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille	This isn't for better people
tää on vaan paremman laatuinen folk	this's just a folk of better quality

In the second extract, the resources that Pyhimys mobilizes project both the national and global scales. Bättre folk is both the title and the theme of the song. The national scale is projected here in that it is a sociocultural and -historical concept and reference and very loaded, as it immediately triggers connotations of the stereotypical view the majority holds of the (better-off) minority. According to Tandefelt (2000: 71), this remains a familiar image for most Finns, although nowadays the difference between the majority and the minority is mainly that the Swedish-speaking middle class is relatively larger than the Finnish-speaking middle class. The political and cultural activities of the Swedish-speaking minority have, however, kept the image of 'bättre folk' alive (ibid.). Finland-Swedes themselves however, argue, at least in interview situations, that the stigma of 'betterness' is nowadays very outdated, wrong and even awkward (Heikkilä 2011: 49).

The loadedness of the concept 'bättre folk' can also be seen in the language - in Swedish. This particular concept would simply not work in the same way in Finnish, as it would not have the same power in Finnish. This is because in Swedish the concept indexes a significant historical and cultural image of the Swedish-speaking Finns as the stereotypically better-off and wealthier part of the nation. In his lyrics, Pyhimys decontextualizes the concept and recontextualizes it by giving a new meaning, one that indexes folk music on a global scale. Thus, the word 'folk' - a Swedish word referring to 'people' - no longer refers to people on a national scale ("this isn't for better people"), but, rather, its meaning is (suggested) to be understood in the sense that the word has in English, as folk music ("this's just a folk of better quality"). What we see here is the process of '(re-)entextualization' (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Silverstein & Urban 1996; see also Higgins 2009b; Leppänen et al. 2014) whereby Pyhimys takes a discourse element from the traditional, national discourse of the Finland Swedish people and reassigns it *a new meaning*, in another context, that of (global) hip hop. Pyhimys *may* thus be (very indirectly) hinting that rap music, in particular, is this kind of better folk music. At the same time, both meanings of the word 'folk' remain present in the song, and, in this sense, Pyhimys thus creates, in Bakhtin's (1981: 324) words, a 'double-voiced' discourse. "Bättre folk" simultaneously expresses "two different intentions" (ibid.), as it "[inserts] a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own" (Bakhtin 1984: 189). Here, via the song Pyhimys also

ironizes the original 'bättre folk' meaning, suggesting that there is, in fact, no 'better people'.¹⁴⁵

The chorus is followed by a music-only part. This part can be characterized as musical code-switching or *crossing* (Rampton 1995), since it mixes two music genres: a swinging and melodic 'jazz part' as well as a concluding humppa¹⁴⁶ loop. Jazz here can be seen as indexing the elite, the 'high' society – in this particular context, the Swedish-speaking people that Robban is ironically mis-representing. Jazz has stereotypically been understood and viewed as a (fancy) music style and preference of the (Finnish) (upper) middle class, particularly in recent decades (see e.g. Haavisto 1991 on the recent (higher) education in jazz in Finland as well as on the interest of the Finnish business world in jazz music and festivals.). Humppa, on the other hand, can be seen as very traditional Finnish music, a national symbol (e.g. Vanhasalo 2009), one which mostly attracts the 'common' people. In the context of the song, it can be seen indexing the 'masses', the 'normal' Finnish-speaking majority.

Extract 3: "In 1323 Österland got its Eastern border"

1323 sai Österland itärajan
Muttei menny Jussi suosiolla taakse vajan
ja vuosisatojen ajan
ni var orjat, vi var borgare
mut miten mun pitäis korjaa se
kaikki ristiin tääl paneksii
mut ei pultsarit pummi mult euroo,
vaan Amexii
kyl mä näen miten ne yytsii
et jos mul ois 99 problemer
niin raha ei ois yks niist
Kansanlauluissa aina sama teema
oma kulttuuriperimä korkeimpana ihanteena
jos ei yhteen sulauduta, jää vaan Adam och Eva,
låt mig leva
erityiskohteluu en haluu vaik sais
Jos vaiks menneet kokonaan unohdettais
ei kai kukaan tästä ääneen valittais
mut kaikki olis pelkureita jos ne uskaltais

in 1323 Österland got its Eastern border
but Jussi didn't go behind the shed voluntarily
and for centuries
you were slaves, we were bourgeois
but how am I supposed to fix it
everyone's just fucking each other here
but the winos aren't begging a euro from me,
but Amex
I can see how they're *staring*
like if I had 99 problems
money wouldn't be one of them
Folk songs always have the same theme
our own cultural heritage as the highest ideal
if we won't assimilate, only Adam and Eve will be left,
let me live
I don't want special treatment, even if I could get it
What if we just forgot all about the past
no one would complain about this out loud
but everyone would be a coward, if they dared

Shout-outs till alla mina vänner från Västra Nyland
till all the way to the Östra Nyland!

Shout-outs to all of my friends from Western Nyland
to all the way to Eastern Nyland!

¹⁴⁵ This interpretation was also *confirmed* by Pyhimys himself when he commented to me: "The idea started off from the concept of 'bättre folk' and that the word folk would refer to music in that."

¹⁴⁶ Humppa can be characterized as fast Finnish dance music, which evolved in the 1920s as one form of foxtrot (Vanhasalo 2009: 7). It is closely connected to the dance music of Western Russia and Ukraine but whereas there humppa is typically danced alone, separate from one's partner, in Finland humppa is a couples' dance. Humppa was particularly popular during the 1970s when it became the music and dance style of the elderly in the whole of Finland. In Eastern and South-Eastern Finland, it also attracted young (rural) people. (Vanhasalo 2009.)

In the very first lines of extract 3, we can see a cultural *time and place reference* (one of the seven speech acts; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002), consisting of the year 1323 and Österland. It is untypical of rap in the sense that it does not 'ground' the rapper or the protagonist in current times and places (cf. Forman 2002), but refers to a distant past – which nevertheless has meaning in the context and themes of the song. This cultural time and place reference indexes a specific place and point in history. In the year 1323, a peace treaty was negotiated between Novgorod (nowadays Russia) and Sweden, defining officially, for the first time, Sweden's eastern border (Gallén 1968). Echoing this historical relationship between the two realms, the song refers to Finland as 'Österland', the eastern part of Sweden, in Swedish, further indexing the particular role Finland played then, under Swedish rule. Here we can see the (historical) scale of 'Sweden as a Nordic superpower' being projected.

A particularly interesting word and name choice in the next line is the cultural reference to *Jussi*, a stereotypical, resilient Finnish man, who does not give up easily. Most (or at least many) Finns would in fact interpret 'Jussi' intertextually by associating him with the famous novel trilogy *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* ('Here under the Northern Star') (1959–1962) by Väinö Linna, one of the best-known (20th century) Finnish novelists. The trilogy begins with the sentence "In the beginning, there was the swamp, the mattock – and Jussi". One of the protagonists, *Jussi Koskela*, was an extremely hard-working and resilient man who, with time, came to be seen as an epitome of the Finnish man.

On the discursive level, the fourth line of this extract also refers to the period of Swedish rule, when Finns were the 'slaves' of the Swedish 'bourgeoisie'. Thus, the historical image we get from the beginning of this stanza is that Finns are subordinate to Swedes, the ruling elite, but not without a fight – 'behind the shed' is a cultural reference to execution. These asymmetrical roles ('orjat' and 'borgare') are expressed in each people's mother tongue. In this extract, we can also see Robban's viewpoint on the level of personal pronouns ('you' and 'we' in Swedish) – and he is (supposedly) amongst the Swedish bourgeoisie. The plural 'we' here suggests that it is not only Robban's narrative that is being told, but also a more *collective* narrative, that of the Finland-Swedes, in general. Whereas, in most of the lyrics, it is obvious that Robban is the narrator who shares his own life, opinions and views with us, here it is possible to notice a more collective narrator. These two narratives, or voices, are in a dialogue with one another. In addition, these different voices bring with them different 'historicities' – the collective 'we' here has historical origins, as it brings forward the voices of and from the past.

In the first four lines of the stanza, we can see how Pyhimys draws on *the national historical discourse* about the tension-ridden history of Sweden and Finland. As was mentioned above, the fact that Finland was colonized by the Swedish empire, has significantly contributed to the still current cultural suspicions towards the Swedish-speaking Finns (e.g. Lönnqvist 1981; Tandefelt 1995; Heikkilä 2011). The Bättre folk song indexes (and reformulates) this historical discourse in these lines. In and through them, Pyhimys contextualizes

the present (scale): he links it to but also contrasts it with the past (scale) – this particular history is the reason why Robban is still seen, by the Finnish-speaking Finns, as part of the ‘bourgeoisie’ and ‘Bättre folk’, although, as we have seen above, he clearly does not identify with the stereotype.

Here, we can also see how Pyhimys draws on the resources he has access to – those offered by (national, mainstream) education. By using this voice of ‘education’, indexed by the ‘general’, ‘national’ (historical) knowledge, Pyhimys evokes connotations of a nationally authentic spokesperson or educator. In Finland, basic education is accessible to everyone and its quality is relatively even, regardless of the school or area, and, therefore, most of his audiences can be expected to share his educational background. Thus, for example, when he here raps about history, he can, at least in principle, expect most of his listeners to know what he knows. His sociocultural references and their meanings, along with the linguistic resources (such as standard Finnish and Finland Swedish) he utilises, are, at least in principle, available and understandable to everyone. In these ways, the song is constituted and interpretable on the national scale, which is implied by the national history of Finland projected in the song as a meaningful interpretative frame.

In the next four lines, Robban wonders how he should be able to fix this ‘problem’, the current situation, caused by history and the specific historical roles of the bourgeoisie and their slaves. Nowadays, though, Robban sees that everyone is mixing and blending with everyone – i.e. the ‘folks’ of the nation do not keep to themselves (any longer) but ‘mingle’ with one another (‘everyone’s just fucking each other here’). Yet, the local winos do not come and ask for a euro from Robban – instead they want his American Express credit card. Amex, although being a global brand and index of money and wealth, has a local meaning here in that it refers to the stereotypical wealth of the Swedish-speaking Finns. These lines serve the purpose of a global cultural reference, temporarily raising the scale to a global one again, but with the same move, it is made local in the sense that the context and the people are local. Here, we can see how, like the majority of Finns, even the local winos (‘they’) stereotypically assume that money is no problem for the Swedish-speaking Robban – the minority is expected to be wealthy. The winos’ actions are described with the Helsinki slang element ‘yytsii’ (‘stares’), which furthermore indexes Robban’s grounding in (the) Helsinki (metropolitan) area.

Next, the extract also includes a cultural reference to a rap song entitled “99 problems” by a famous American (mainstream) rap artist, Jay Z. This is yet another instance of (re-)contextualization, since the meaning of this cultural reference is translocal – and also ‘double-voiced’ (Bakhtin 1981, 1984). In the ‘original’ song, Jay Z has 99 problems but “a bitch ain’t one”, whereas here, the phrase ‘99 problemer’ (in Swedish) is localized into Robban’s life and the Finland-Swedish context: both the winos and Robban are local characters and the problem that Robban is (stereotypically) *not* having is money. In addition, its meaning is related to hip hop culture, in particular, in the sense that only those who are familiar with American rap music, and Jay Z’s discography in

particular, are really able to recognize and identify this (re-)entextualized element in Pyhimys' song. Linguistically, the Swedish '99 problemer' (pro: '99 problem') is, furthermore, an 'ungrammatical' expression, perhaps indicating again the artist's non-nativeness as a user of Swedish (see the discussion above).

The two lines starting with "Kansanlaluissa aina sama teema..." ('Folk songs always have the same theme...') clearly index a purely national scale because, in them, we can hear an authoritative historical voice, the formal voice of education or, even, the voice of the state, which, linguistically and discursively, imitates (and recycles) a textbook-like style. This voice is done with the help of an official resource – standard Finnish: for example, all the words on these lines have been conjugated the standard way and no elision has been made. Content-wise, what is said in the standard, textbook-ish style implies protectionism and (ironic) reinforcement: how we should preserve and protect our 'own cultural heritage'. Through this kind of re-entextualization, Pyhimys makes an ironic comment on the nationalistic and protectionist cultural ideology thus seeking to criticize it.

In the two lines after this, starting with "jos ei yhteen sulauduta" ('if we won't assimilate'), the projected local, national and global scale-levels again combine and mix. There is a sociocultural reference to the Bible and the Paradise in which only *Adam* and *Eve* are left, with no chance of reproduction. This can be seen as simultaneously projecting global and national scale: the characters are 'global' (i.e. globally known images) but, on the national scale, this extract implies a situation in which, in order to survive, the (Swedish-speaking) minority cannot live on its own, separate(d) from the rest of the world, but it has to blend in with the others, the Finnish-speaking majority. The Biblical characters are referred to in Swedish, which further indexes the Swedish-speaking minority in the context of the song, and thus the national scale. The Swedish sentence "Låt mig leva" ('Let me live') can be seen as referring, on the local scale-level, to Robban's wish to live his private life as a Swedish-speaking young man – hence the reason why this particular line is in Swedish. In this stanza, it is interesting to notice how the significant theme of national history triggers an entirely different and 'separate' repertoire, consisting of standard Finnish and (Finnish) Swedish, and one, which does not include (African American Vernacular) English at all.

The last four lines before the coda, starting with "erityiskohteluu en haluu" ('I don't want any special treatment'), project the national scale. The lines describe the Finnish context and the situation between the majority and the minority. The Finland-Swedish Robban tells us that he does not want to be treated any differently from other people, even if that option was available. "Jos vaiks menneet kokonaan unohdettais" ('What if we just forgot all about the past') refers to him wanting to put the past, history, behind, and him suggesting this line of thinking to all (Finnish) people, regardless of their mother tongue. This line then directly states the same issue that is echoed indirectly in the chorus: there is no better people (just better music) – so why dwell in history. The last two lines "ei kai kukaan tästä ääneen valittais / mut kaikki olis

pelkureita jos ne uskaltais" ('no one would complain about this out loud / but everyone would be a coward, if they dared') seem to suggest that people like poor Robban, i.e. those who do not easily fit the stereotype of a wealthy and successful Finland-Swede, would voice their concerns about being 'different' in public if they only had the courage to do so. Perhaps they are stopped or blocked by the fear of then being ridiculed by Finnish-speaking Finns who still hold a strong, homogenizing stereotypical view of all the Finland-Swedes.

The last line of the song, the coda, is particularly complex: here, Pyhimys seems to make meaning on many levels, as he projects several scales: the local, regional and the global and, via these, exemplifies the translocal connectedness. These scales overlap and intertwine with each other. Firstly, the cultural reference 'shout-outs' is a hip hop greeting. It is a typical name-dropping practice for expressing kudos, respect, to one's friends and acquaintances, particularly at the end of a text or a song. This greeting, as it is expressed in English, also functions on the global scale, at least for the hip hop enthusiasts. However, 'shout-outs' can also be simultaneously seen as functional as a translocal reference: the fact that Robban, a Finland-Swede, makes use of this English expression is meaningful and understandable both locally and globally. Through this authentic 'hip hop voice', he identifies both with his own and the global (hip hop) culture.

Secondly, the shout-outs include a(n 'old') reference 'East versus West'. Stereotypically in hip hop culture, the East coast (or side) and the West coast (or side) are always set against each other, as if they were automatically each other's rivals and enemies. This was particularly the case in the 1990s, when they competed over the specific location of 'real' and 'authentic' hip hop (cf. Armstrong 2004). This image of them as enemies is also often strongly created and emphasized by the media. The most (in)famous example of this dichotomy was the long-term hatred between Californian rapper Tupac Shakur and New York rapper *Notorious B.I.G.*. Both were violently killed in the confrontations between the East and West coast in the mid-1990s. (Price 2006: 51-52.) In her research on Tanzanian rap and hip hop, Higgins (2009a: 108) argues that a Tanzanian rap group, named *East Coast Team*, thus "creates a globalized indexical tie to the much-publicized tension between the East Coast and West Coast Hip Hop scenes in the United States". As Tanzania is located on the east coast of Africa, the identification act of this rap group is 'double' - consisting of both local and global elements and references.

Here, however, Pyhimys does away with the dichotomy by extending his greetings to both the West and the East. These greetings clearly take the form of *listener-directed speech* (one of the seven speech acts of rap; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). The local scale can be seen in that his shout-outs are also to his local friends and he addresses them with resources both from Swedish and English. His repertoire, thus, includes both 'local' and 'global' resources for his own local use. Thus, we can expect these resources to be part of his friends' repertoires, as well. In this extract, there is also a specific regional place reference to Nyland (i.e. Uusimaa), the southern-most province of Finland,

which localizes Robban and his friends in a specific geographical area – they *represent* that place, in current times. Omoniyi (2009: 120) also reports on this “additional level of identification, a regional one” in his research on the Nigerian rapper *2-shotz* who “describes himself as ‘Abia State’s finest’” in one of his songs. Thus, here we can see that it is not only the local level that matters in terms of ‘representing’ – one can also identify with (geographically) larger areas than one’s home town, for example (we will also see this in section 5.3 in the case of *Stepa*).

In conclusion: Pyhimys as a national rap figure and educator

Via “*Bättre folk*”, we can see how Pyhimys constructs himself as an authentic, national rap figure and educator – even a sociolinguistic critic. His authenticity is a blend of two ‘voices’, the first one of which is that of national history and education. In this song, it is first and foremost the national scale, within the Finnish hip hop scale, that plays a significant role – it is the national ‘knowledge’ (or, alternatively, stereotypical assumptions) as (and of) a Finn that Pyhimys (via Robban) shares with us here and also expects us to have, to be able to interpret this context, this person and the song. Thus we can clearly see scale here as a scope of understandability. The other voice is that of hip hop manifest via his cultural knowledge and references. Despite the fact that the song does not address hip hop and rap in any particularly direct way (and even the music is jazz-like), there are (subtle) hints at this particular culture as constituting one of Pyhimys’ reference points as a(n rap) artist – and all of these (cultural) references are localized in Robban’s life. In addition to this view, we could see how *authenticity itself was a topic*: the (in)authenticity of Finland-Swedes, and Robban in particular, who did not seem to fit in to the many suggested stereotype(s). In that sense, authenticity is clearly at stake and ‘threatened’ by outside norms, and in this bears some resemblance to that in “*Orjantappuraa*” by Cheek.

Pyhimys’ national authenticity is constructed both on the discursive and linguistic levels, and these two levels are always intricately connected and intertwined. An indexical, sometimes even iconic, relationship seems to exist between the two levels. In several instances, Pyhimys amplifies the indexical meaning of the discursive resources (narrative, discourses, topics, speech act patterns, such as time and place references, and cultural references) by *how* he says it, in other words, through Finland Swedish, spoken vernacular Finnish, standard Finnish, English or a mixture of some or all of these resources. The meanings he wishes to convey become reinforced when, for example, an official-sounding, textbook-like voice and discourse is expressed in standard Finnish. Spoken vernacular Finnish could not be used to similar effect.

In sum, the scales on which the narrative and the discourses are anticipated to be meaningful are intertwining, complex and partly mutually conflicting. They are complex in the way they often partly overlap, such as the (*national*) *historical discourse of Finland under Swedish rule* and the still current discourse of *Swedish-speakers as an elite* – the latter is the ‘relic’ of the former. The

discourses conflict in the sense that the present age and the era of Finland under Swedish rule are set in opposition to each other: the poor Robban is definitely not part of the past bourgeoisie and its current 'remnant', (the) *bättre folk*. Through Robban, Pyhimys voices how, in the past, there was a divide between Finns and Swedes, but also that we should simply let bygones be bygones. In fact, the song is about resolving conflicts and forgetting the past – it argues that Finns are nowadays all equal and that there is no '*bättre folk*' (better people). This demand for equality is local and national, but it also relates to political themes typical of (global) hip hop culture more generally. Another conflict can be seen in the third discourse of *hip hop as a global voice for social equality*: the discourse has clearly been localized here to Robban's life, yet we can also see here an instance of reverse discrimination. Whereas in the global discourse, it is usually the underprivileged who face discrimination, here, in the very local context, it is the 'elite' members who have to deal with prejudice of all kinds. The story and the discourses thus project several, partly overlapping scale-levels, both in time and in space, indicating the need to understand rap music and lyrics in a multifaceted, layered way.

Throughout the song, we saw 'unexpected' but also planned use, juxtaposition and mixing of various resources. For example, the use of Swedish can be seen as *partly* 'unexpected'.¹⁴⁷ This is because, although Swedish is the other national language of the country, and Pyhimys lives in Helsinki, where Swedish is used and heard much more frequently than for example in Central Finland, Swedish is still a relatively uncommon resource in Finnish rap music,¹⁴⁸ particularly to the extent it is used in "*Bättre folk*".

On the other hand, the use of Swedish seems deliberate: the overall idea of the song is to foreground the voice and (unjust, un-stereotypical) experiences of a minority representative, the Finland-Swede Robban. Hence, the use of Swedish as indexical of Finland-Swedishness is justified. By making use of these particular resources, the rapper creates an ironic and reverse picture of the traditional division between Swedish-speaking Finns and Finnish-speaking Finns – the irony arising from the 'fact' that Finland-Swedes are stereotypically seen as the 'better-off' minority and in this case, Robban is far from any of the stereotypical assumptions that have to do with being a Finland-Swede. As regards the use of English in "*Bättre folk*", Pennycook and Mitchell (2009: 36) remind us that: "an assumption that English implies globalization and other languages local appropriations" is an over-simplification of the messy stuff that we often deal with. The use of English here can again be seen within the dynamics of en-/de-globalization (Blommaert 2011), whereby a resource is made global, i.e. en-globalized, *only to be de-globalized again*, in order to make it locally relevant. In "*Bättre folk*", 'folks' refers to Robban's parents locally – it

¹⁴⁷ But see the critique of 'expected/unexpected' languages and places in Pennycook (2012): nowadays, the unexpected has become 'ordinary' and we can no longer clearly identify or determine what is, in fact, expected or unexpected in a given place and time (cf. a tattoo in Hebrew on the back of a Filipino).

¹⁴⁸ But note, for instance, the Swedish-speaking Redrama's "*Samma på svenska*" ('The same in Swedish') EP album from 2009.

only makes sense here, if we understand the surrounding local co-text and context.

Thus, Pyhimys' hybrid repertoire (in and through Robban's narrative) can be seen as consisting of linguistic resources, i.e. different 'languages', 'varieties' and 'slang', along with a mixture of various voices, registers and styles, and a variety of discursive resources, i.e. various discourses, topics, speech act patterns (genre-typical verbal actions) and cultural references. Through these resources, Pyhimys orients to the still relatively delicate issues of social class, power and majority-minority sensitivities, and considers the marginalized voices and experiences of language minorities. In general, Pyhimys' skillful use, play and mix with local/national/translocal/global resources projects several different scale-levels that blend into, mix, and (or) are in opposition to each other. The conflict can be seen, for example, in that the lyrics 'demand' that the historical scale of Sweden-Finland, or at least the divide between the two peoples that is transmitted from this period, should be forgotten. What matters, here and now, is the local, contemporary scale in which people are, at least in principle, equal and no one should be judged on the basis of personal prejudice and stereotypes. We also see how, for instance, the decontextualizing of 'folk' from the national scale to 'folk' on the global scale, provide a means for his equality agenda, and for him to assert specific forms of legitimacy: that the song is, first and foremost, to be understood within the national (and local) framework, but not without significant, symbolic, reach to the global context, whenever it is meaningful, like in his final 'shout-outs'.

In connection with the song and its message, we can also ponder on Pyhimys' occupying such a position in the Finnish hip hop scene that it invests him with the authority and power, through his songs, to educate and 'enlighten' (young) people. The song's audience is presumably (mainly) the Finnish-speaking audience, which needs to be made aware of and encouraged to forget the past. His political and humanistic message, if one can call it that, seems to encompass the (importance of) equality for both parts of the nation (and of people, in general). In this demand for equality, he seems to play with the multiple, indexically stratified hierarchies at work in Finnish society. On the one hand, Finnish is the absolute (dominant) majority 'language', and nothing 'threatens' its status. In this scenario, the Swedish language is a very small minority language. On another kind of hierarchy, Swedish has the ('high') value of an 'elite' language, which is historically and culturally significant. In this scenario, it is very much a 'loaded' language – the usage of which 'reminds' (some) Finnish-speaking Finns of the past, when the country was under Swedish rule.

In this 'play' of hierarchies, Pyhimys also skilfully makes use of Swedish in the song, through the voice of the individual, Robban. Through demanding the equality of people, he might also be seen to hint at the 'equality' of languages in this respect – languages are people's languages and thus they, too, should not matter in terms of equality. The position of equality is something he, intentionally or not, seems to take in national debates over language and

identity. What Pyhimys might be seen as doing in and through “Bättre folk” is to “challenge the sociopolitical arrangement of the relation between languages, identities and power” (Alim 2009a: 13) and thus, in his own way, contesting prevailing ideologies and attitudes attached to Swedish and Finnish in Finland and, finally, producing linguistic awareness, consciousness and (a bid for the) equality of people and their voices.

Via “Bättre folk”, Pyhimys is thus not only constructed as a nationally significant educator (of the youth), but he might also be seen in the nationally authentic position of a sociolinguistic critic. In “Bättre folk”, Pyhimys constructs a sociolinguistic critique on the sociocultural and -historical situation of Finland by making use of the various discursive and linguistic resources described above. What makes this song particularly interesting is that it is, in fact, an explicit commentary on the polarized attitudinal climate in Finland. The Swedish-speaking Robban demands equality between people and possibly also languages, and encourages the audience to forget the past. By focusing on the language political tension in Finland, the song can even be seen to illustrate one of the core missions of politically aware rap on the whole: it represents and speaks for the underdog, in this case, the linguistic minority and its treatment in public and popular discourses. Thus, Pyhimys challenges the many hierarchies at play in the Finnish society, but in order to do that, he needs to exploit the hierarchical indexical order that defines ‘majority’ and ‘minority’. In this way, the song exemplifies how rap can explicitly take part in national language ideological debates in bi/multilingual societies in which one of the languages is dominant and the others have in some way a problematic minority role. In this sense, the Finnish example of rap as ‘sociolinguistic critique’ resembles and is linked to rap in other similar, tension-ridden bi/multilingual settings (such as English and French in Quebec, Canada; see e.g. Sarkar 2009). Next, we move on to the construction of an emphatically local authenticity, within the Finnish hip hop scale, exemplified by Stepa.

4.5 The vanishing/emerging supermarginality – Stepa, Sodankylä and local authenticity

The third analytical section deals with the construction of both vanishing and emerging supermarginality (I will discuss these notions in the conclusion of the section). In particular, the aim here is to explore how, within the scale of Finnish hip hop, Stepa constructs his local authenticity as a Finnish rap artist in a song entitled “Made in Sodankylä” from the album by the same name (2010). In particular, I will focus on answering the following questions:

- a) What kinds of linguistic and discursive resources does Stepa make use of and how do they contribute to his authenticity?

- b) What is his (emergent) repertoire like and how does it contribute to his local authenticity?
- c) How does he project scales in the construction of authenticity?

With this particular example, I will show how Stepa constructs himself as a locally authentic rapper by making use of several linguistic and discursive resources. Before analyzing the lyrics, I will briefly discuss the socio-historical context of Sodankylä, the municipality where he is originally from. In addition to Sodankylä, Stepa can be seen as speaking from the locus of Lapland.

The socio-historical context

Stepa is originally from Sodankylä, Finnish Lapland.¹⁴⁹ Lapland is traditionally known for its reindeer management, fishing and hunting. Nowadays, the livelihood in the sparsely-populated Lapland region comes increasingly from tourism, trade and industry. Sometimes, people from Lapland are, stereotypically and half-jokingly, characterized as either drunks (consumed by polar nights) or as overtly healthy (and absolutist) children of nature (see e.g. Malmberg & Vanhatalo 1985; Naskali et al. 2004). From the viewpoint of people living in the south, Laplanders must be somehow ‘abnormal’ to survive in the extremely cold, barren environment, in both the short summer (when the sun never sets) and in the long, dark winter (when the sun never rises) (Malmberg & Vanhatalo 1985). Politically, Sodankylä has been a heartland of the (agrarian) *Center Party* and the *far Left*¹⁵⁰, both being advocates of (geographical and socioeconomic) peripheries (Paloheimo & Sundberg 2005), while in terms of religion, the Laestadian movement¹⁵¹ has traditionally had a strong foothold there. Sodankylä is inhabited by a mix of ‘ordinary’ Laplanders and ‘original’ Sámi people, Stepa himself being one of former. Sodankylä is nowadays known as the site of the international *Midnight Sun Film Festival*. From the point of view of southern Finland and Helsinki, Sodankylä can be considered quite peripheral. On the regional and local level, however, Sodankylä acts as a ‘center’ for the people living in or around it in terms of commerce and culture, for example. Ironically enough, owing to the celebrated film festival, it can also be considered a *global* ‘center’ for the film industry.

Resources and scales in Made in Sodankylä

“Made in Sodankylä” is an autobiographical, first-person narrative. Although it starts with a story about Stepa’s childhood, it is not a straightforward chronological story. The song comprises four stanzas and a chorus and I will analyze these in four extracts. In the extracts, the ‘origin’ of the lexical items is

¹⁴⁹ The marginality or peripherality, on the one hand, and centrality, on the other hand, of both Sodankylä and Lapland was discussed from several angles, such as the economic, political, cultural and educational, in section 3.2.3.

¹⁵⁰ The concept of ‘backwater communism’ (‘korpikommunismi’ in Finnish) reflects this political (Communist) climate. In the 2011 parliamentary elections, the success of the populist Perussuomalaiset (The Finns) also extended to Sodankylä. (see e.g. Grönlund & Westinen 2012: 164–165; Westinen Jussi 2013.)

¹⁵¹ A conservative revivalist movement inside the Lutheran church (Ihonen 2003).

marked for clarity and the following symbols are used: spoken vernacular Finnish is the default text, standard English is **bolded**, and standard Finnish is both *in italics and underlined* and the Peräpohjola dialect, spoken in northern Finland, in places such as Rovaniemi, Kemi and Sodankylä, is in *italics, underlined and bolded*. In the analysis, I also show how each of these resources in the hybrid repertoire serves a specific purpose: what are they used for and why, and, how these resources contribute to the construction of authenticity.

Before analyzing the lyrics in the first extract, I shall briefly consider the ('English') name "Made in Sodankylä" of this particular song and the entire album. On the one hand, we can discuss it as an example indexing the global scale. It refers to Stepa and the album as coming from Sodankylä, being 'made' there, and in a way it addresses 'the world'. The phrase may also evoke connotations of the often seen label "Made in China" on various global(ized) products. The phrase "Made in Sodankylä" can, nevertheless, also be seen (simultaneously) as a local reference to his home village. Here, the projected scales overlap and many, simultaneous, interpretations are possible. What is local and what goes beyond local (being translocal) is blurry. However, instead of looking at this as an instance of globalization processes, it is again more accurate to point to the dynamics and simultaneous processes of en- and de-globalization, whereby a feature is made global only to be *instantly localized* again to specific conditions (Blommaert 2011; see also Pennycook 2010). The phrase "Made in Sodankylä" also echoes the US rapper Ice Cube's comment: "My music is a product of who I am and where I come from. I'm made in America. I'm not from Mars or nowhere else" (cited in Best & Kellner 1999). Of course, the difference here is that whereas Ice Cube identifies with his country of origin, Stepa makes an even more precise, local, remark on his origins. Here, we can also see a connection to Stepa's "Made in Sodankylä" album cover (discussed in section 3.3.1) in which he was physically being 'made', with various kinds of tools. In addition, the title is also a very clear and direct *place reference*, a genre-typical speech act (Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002).

Extract 1: "My home village is dying away"

Otin sen nuorena aika raskaasti
ku sodankylä kutsu minua narkiksi/
mutta ne sanat saatto kasvattaa
ku edessä tuntuu olevan vain raskaampaa/
kohdellu naista huonosti, *ittea* huonommin
enkä tiedä kumpi karma tulee takaisin/
kohdellu naista myös niinku prinsessaa
muttei *ite* niiltä prinssin kohtelua saa/
silti tytöt hymyilee ja halailee
ja kyselee et paljon keikoiltani rahaa teen/
jotku sanoo etten oo niink[u] ennen olin
no en niin.. oon aikuistunu jo tovin/
ja tyypit tulee kättelemään kylällä
mutta niiden kättelyt ei tunnu kovin hyvältä/
räällon outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen
ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen

As a young boy I took it pretty hard
when sodankylä called me a junkie/
but those words might have made me stronger
when there seems to be even tougher times ahead
treated a woman badly, *myself* even worse
and I don't know which karma comes back/
treated a woman also like a princess
but *I* not treated like a prince by them/
still girls are smiling and hugging
and asking how much money I make with my gigs/
some say I'm not like I used to be
well, I'm not.. I've been growing up for a while now/
and some dudes come shake hands in the village
but their hand-shakes don't feel that good/
it's weird to be *here* and I don't know where to go
cos my home village has (gone) passed away

äänihuulissani huolet soi

ku kotikyläni se kuolee pois/
vanhat naamat tulee kesäksi sodankylään
mut syksyn tullen kaikki lentää taas etelään

my vocal cords are playing worries

cos my home village it's dying away/
the old faces come to sodankylä for the summer
but come fall they all fly south again

The autobiographical narrative starts with a description of how, in Stepa's youth, people from Sodankylä (unjustly) suspected him of being a junkie and how upset it made him feel. Here, we can already see how the lyrics are 'placed' to a specific geographical context – there is a place reference to Sodankylä already on the second line and it projects the local scale as a (possibly) meaningful frame. After this, Stepa also ponders whether the insults might have made him stronger for the experiences to come. When I asked Stepa about the story behind the 'junkie bit' in the song, he replied that it was a 'small village thing'. His exact (text message) response to me was:

joo siis se läppä oli se et pikkukylä niin ihmejuttuja kuulee ja juorut liikkuu nopeasti. Jossain vaiheessa kaikki puhui et oon narkkari. Sodankyläläiset siis kutsu mut sodankylä kuulosti vahvemmalta sanalta ja valitsin sen. Sitä hain takaa ☺ mut nyt its all lovely!

[‘yeah the thing was it was a small village so you hear strange things and gossip travels fast. At some point everyone was saying that I’m a junkie. So the people from Sodankylä called me that but [S]odankylä sounded like a stronger word and I chose that one. That’s what I was getting at ☺ but now [it’s] all lovely!’]

In small ('peripheral') places, like Sodankylä, it is common for people to gossip about other people, spread rumors, and judge and speculate about deviant behavior or people.¹⁵² One gets easily categorized (or marginalized) if one does not conform to the norm(s) of the place (where it is, for instance, only acceptable to support certain political parties, belong to a certain church or dress in some particular way). Defying the norms of a 'monoculture', such as Sodankylä, seems to be a severe act (see also Tolonen 2010 on the 'monoculture' amongst the youth in Kajaani, Eastern Finland). Nowadays, however, the differences between Stepa and the locals seem to be settled, which is indicated by the end of the message: "mut nyt its all lovely!"

After the first four lines, Stepa describes his personal experiences in Sodankylä: how he has treated both women and himself badly – and wonders which karma will come back. He describes that he has also treated women like princesses but does not receive a prince's treatment in return. Throughout the extract (and the song, in general), the main linguistic resource for Stepa is spoken vernacular Finnish. In addition to that, in these lines, the local scale is indexed by some features of the (northern) Peräpohjola dialect: the dialectal form of 'myself' is 'itteä', whereas the standard Finnish equivalent would be 'itseä' (Mielikäinen 2010). Similarly, the standard form of 'I, myself' would be 'itse', instead of the dialectal 'ite'.

¹⁵² In a song entitled "Pikkukylä" ('Small village') (2008), Stepa explicitly addresses the(se) rumors: "kotikylässäni musta liikkuu ihmejuttui/ ne jotka niitä puhuu, ne on mun tuttui" ('in my home village, there's weird rumors about me / those who tell them are people I know').

Yet, despite these instances, the local girls smile at him and hug him. Here, we can identify, for the first time, a discourse of *(anti-)fame*, *(anti-)success* and *(anti-)money-making* as a resource in the song (which is, in fact, quite the opposite of Cheek and the discourses his song(s) evoke). Stepa then describes how (making) money is not an issue for him, but rather for others, for the girls that are hugging him, when they directly ask him how much he earns by music-making. Stepa also hears how people think that he has changed and he acknowledges this: he has been grown up for a while now. Stepa does not seem comfortable with people recognizing him on the streets of Sodankylä and coming to talk to him (“tyypit tulee kättelemään kylällä/mutta niiden kättelyt ei tunnu kovin hyvältä” – ‘people come and shake hands with me in the village/but their handshakes don’t feel that good’) – for him, this is a side effect of ‘being a (local) celebrity’. The people who come shaking hands with him in the village are perhaps interested in him because of his success and because he has ‘made it’. Stepa himself finds all of this weird and not comfortable at all. Thus, in contrast with Cheek’s “Orjantappuraa”, where earning money and being famous makes Cheek the center (at least in the commercial sense), for Stepa earning money draws him away from his center (his home) and he feels alienated. In public, too, Cheek seems quite happy with making money and being able to afford luxury cars and clothing, for example – and he openly shows his success and wealth to the public. Stepa, in contrast, seems to be losing his (local) grounding, because he is making money now – he is now seen differently, as a celebrity of sorts, by the locals. This creates an interesting contrast between these two artists and their trajectories and positions.

After this, Stepa continues describing his feelings about Sodankylä. He says that it feels weird to be there and that he does not know what to do or where to go. In fact, going back, he notices how his home village has passed away. The story is thus extremely melancholic. These two lines are repeated after each stanza, although they are not actually part of the chorus. The repetition can be seen as a device for the emphasis of a sad, yet important message. The story of ‘dying villages’, like Sodankylä, is of course a general and increasingly common phenomenon in today’s Finland. It is not only a local story, but a national one, too, since the structural changes taking place in Finnish society affect many areas in the North and in the East: these regions, too, are slowly depopulating (see e.g. Pesonen & Riihinen 2002).

The last four lines of extract 1 form the chorus of the song. They sound particularly poetic, part of which may have to do with the word choices such as ‘äänihuulissani’ (‘in my vocal cords’) and ‘syksyn tullen’ (‘come fall’), part with syntax, such as object-subject-verb constructions, and part with the official register of standard Finnish (which can be seen in the inflections of the nouns, for example: “äänihuulissani huolet soi” – ‘my vocal cords are playing worries’). In addition, the poetic aspect is partly a result of the simile comparing Stepa’s friends and himself to migratory birds – to birds returning to the North (of Finland) for the summer time and then flying back South again come the fall. The word ‘bird’, or similar, is never actually mentioned but the assumption is

there in the text, suggested particularly by the verb ‘fly’. The use of metaphors that (often) include cultural references, such as (real/fictional) people or brand names, are highly characteristic of rap lyrics and are often carried out in the form of comparisons (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). The kind of comparison made here to migratory birds, for self-referential purposes, is fairly unique. However, it deeply localizes Stepa and his friends to Finnish Lapland but the national context is also projected, as the two coordinates mentioned are Sodankylä and the ‘south’, which refers to Southern Finland in the case of these young men, and to Southern Europe in the case of the actual migratory birds that Stepa and his friends are here being compared to.

Throughout extract 1 (and the song), we can see the rap topic of *self-presentation* (see also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). It is not, however, of the ‘traditional’ kind. Typically, up-and-coming rap artists, in particular, tend to express themselves and their identities verbally using stereotypical phrases such as “X in da house” or “X representin’”, and in this way establish themselves in the scene (see also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). Such a ‘representin’ song from Stepa would be “MC” from his debut album (2008), in which he introduces himself to the Finnish hip hop scene (for a linguistic and discursive analysis of this particular song, see Westinen 2010). Although “Made in Sodankylä” includes bits of self-presentation, it incorporates neither these stereotypical expressions nor the speech act patterns of ‘boasting’ or ‘dissing’, the genre-typical verbal actions associated with this topic (Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). Stepa’s self-presentation shows mainly through the description of his life in Sodankylä (i.e. *the self-referential speech act*; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). In this extract, we can also identify another rap topic (see also Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002). *Contemplation* can be seen in how Stepa engages in an inner monologue with his feelings and thoughts about the local context and situation.

Extract 2: “I don’t know when my dad’s hair got so grey”

opiskelut minut sieltä pois vei

mut opiskelulle en voinu vaan sanoa ei/
ja käynti kotona on jääny niin harvaan
etten tiä koska isän hiuksista tuli noin harmaat/
Torniota en sano enempää
ku et ne vei täältä lapin kullan etelään/
joten välissä totuuteen havahdun
Lappi tyhjenee mut silti mitään ei *tapahu*/
kuulin vasta ylä-aste kaverista
son vasta kaks kaks ja kaks kertaa katkasussa/
kuka sen ois joskus uskonu tai tienny
et siltä oltiin pois se oma lapsiki viety/
eikä lapsen isä ollu kuvioissa enää/
ku hänki halus vain muissa maailmoissa elää/
räällon outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen
ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen/

studies took me away from there

but I just couldn’t say no to studies/
and visiting home happens so rarely
that I don’t know when my dad’s hair got so grey/
I won’t say more about Tornio
than that they took lapin kulta south from here/
so sometimes I wake up to the truth
Lapland is emptying out but still nothing is *happening*/
I just heard about a friend I went to junior high with
she’s only twenty-two and twice in rehab/
who would’ve believed or known
that her own kid was taken away from her/
and that the kid’s dad wasn’t around anymore/
cos he also wanted to live in other worlds/
it’s weird to be *here* and I don’t know where to go
cos my home village has (gone) passed away/

Stepa begins the second stanza by continuing to describe his personal experiences. The first line “opiskelut minut sieltä pois vei” (‘studies took me away from there’) sounds, again, stylistically, more poetic and formal than the rest of the extract, part of which may have to do with the syntax, the subject-object construction (although the verb ‘vei’ is not inflected, as in the standard ‘veivät’) instead of the pattern typical of spoken language, with the subject-verb construction: “opiskelut vei”. As we already saw in the earlier description of Sodankylä (section 3.2.3), there are no universities or polytechnics near Sodankylä – hence Stepa too has had to move away from there because of his studies. After this, he describes his family life, and how he visits (or is able to visit) his home so rarely nowadays that he has not seen his father’s hair greying.

On the next lines, the regional scale is projected by a place reference to Tornio, where Stepa lived and studied at the time, as well as to Lapland. The only specific thing he mentions about Tornio is the relocation of the beer brand *Lapin kulta* (‘The Gold of Lapland’) to the South: “ne vei täältä lapin kullan etelään” (‘they took the gold of Lapland to south from here’). This cultural reference to a specific brand of beer can also be seen as symbolic. The product is iconic of Lapland and the fact that that, too, has been taken to the South further reinforces the emptying of Lapland. In this particular example, we see the projected scales combine: this local (if one regards only Tornio), or regional (if one considers the whole of Lapland), imagery is also interpretable with respect to the national scale as proof of the structural changes taking place in Finnish society – the growing urban districts attract more and more people and businesses, while the periphery gets poorer and poorer.

Here, we can see two, partly overlapping discourses. One of these discourses is the *North vs South discourse*, a discourse of territorial opposition, which can also be extended to a kind of ‘us’ vs ‘them’ opposition. North here refers, of course, to the north of Finland, Lapland, and the South generally refers to southern Finland, sometimes also only to the Helsinki metropolitan area. In fact, Laplanders¹⁵³ are often (stereotypically) seen as waging a war of their own against the ‘southern masters’ (‘etelän herrat’) – against those in power (see e.g. Malmberg & Vanhatalo 1985; Naskali et al. 2004).¹⁵⁴ As we have seen, ‘South’ is specifically mentioned in relation to the relocation of Hartwall (a large Finnish beverage company), and its famous beer brand from Tornio to Lahti, a southern city (which is where Cheek is originally from).

Thus, at times, Stepa is faced with the reality: “Lappi tyhjenee mut silti mitään ei tapahdu” (‘Lapland is emptying out but still nothing is happening’) is a line which sums up the experience of depopulation and the fact that nobody is

¹⁵³ Whereas ‘lappilainen’ (‘Laplander’) refers to anyone living in Lapland, ‘lappalainen’ (‘Lapp’, ‘Lappish’) has often been used (in a derogatory way) of the indigenous Sámi people by others. The Sámi people themselves insist on being called Sámi. (e.g. Häkkinen 2008.)

¹⁵⁴ In this ‘battle’ they (often men) have one particular strategy at their disposal, the so called ‘fur hat’ delegation – which refers to the traditional Finnish winter hat they wear when they travel south to talk to those in power. This immediately (and stereotypically) indexes values of honesty and ordinariness. (e.g. Malmberg & Vanhatalo 1985: 75–87.)

doing anything to prevent it. Here, another, related discourse is that of *Sodankylä and Lapland as 'remote areas'*. It partly overlaps with the first North vs South discourse, as this has exactly to do with the 'North'. The overlap can be understood in the sense that spatial margins (i.e. peripheries) are also often defined as social and political margins.¹⁵⁵ Here (but also in and through the entire song), we get images of a marginal, poor, forgotten, and depopulated Lapland, and as a case in point, Sodankylä. Stepa voices regional concerns and criticism over social and economic issues. He relates stories about his friends and other local people in Sodankylä and Lapland: one of these includes, for example, a reference to his former classmate who had to give up her child on account of drug and social problems. Stepa witnesses this decay of the geographical margins in a weird no man's land, which will not soon even exist because people cannot live there anymore.

Stepa finds it weird to come back and see his home village dying and eroding away due to the structural changes in society which affect the margins. Lapland is emptying out of people, education and business. In this song, Stepa is talking *of* Lapland and *from* Lapland. Through him, we get images of and from the periphery (cf. Blommaert 2010: 76 on Tanzania). In Blommaert's (ibid.) words, "we get images of what it means to be from [Sodankylä] both within [Finland] as well as in the world". Thus, the local periphery is also the global periphery (ibid.). Here, we can also see elements of *fractality* in the sense that the centers-margins dynamics recurs on several scales (fractality will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5). We can clearly see Stepa in the margins; but those margins will soon be 'nowhere' because the ground is slipping from under them. The village is shrinking, disappearing and nobody seems to care about it at all. It is important to notice here that this kind of discourse about the margins is by no means new in Finland – it has been around since the 1960s–70s as a result of major socio-economic structural change, leading to increasing urbanization (this was discussed in more detail in section 2.2 on the ideological topography of Finland). And although Stepa visits Sodankylä every now and then, he is nevertheless partly already an outsider, looking in.

The most notable rap topic running throughout the song is *social critique*. This topic is incorporated in the previously mentioned, partly overlapping discourses. In this song, Stepa voices concerns for the fate of Lapland and what is happening to the area and the people living there at a time of momentous structural changes in Finland (and, further, the whole world). He is wondering why nobody is doing anything to stop the course of events. The local scale is also projected by Stepa's Peräpohjola dialect in for example 'tapahu', versus the standard Finnish 'tapahdu' and also in the use of 'son', instead of the spoken vernacular 'se on' (literally: 'it is'), or even more formally, in standard Finnish, 'hän on' (s/he is') (Mielikäinen 2010).

¹⁵⁵ Whereas 'margins' can refer to the margins of any aspect of society, for instance, social, cultural or economic, 'periphery' refers to *geographical* margins. (A more detailed discussion on these notions follows in section 5.2)

Extract 3: "There's no movie theater there anymore"

Näen sodankylässä ne vanhat sällit	I see the old fellows in sodankylä
me kokoonnutaan yhteen ja vedetään k[än][n]it/	we get together and get drunk/
aamun pikkutunneilla aikaisin	in the early hours of the morning
huomaan ettei se tuonu mitään takaisin/	I notice that it brought nothing back/
filmifestarit rok rokkaa joo	film festivals rock rock yea
ei siellä enää leffateatteria oo/	there's no movie theater there anymore/
ja kodin puolesta <i>mie</i> taistelen	and for my home <i>I</i> will fight
ku sieltä saan jouluna aina rakkauden/	cos there I always get love at Christmas time/
ku täällä se rakkaus saa vain itkemään	cos here the love just makes me cry
kun taas raha laittaa kaikki hymyilemään/	whereas money makes everyone smile/
ja juttelen siitä minun riimivihkon kanssa	and I talk about it with my rhyme book
muttei riimivihko mulle ikinä vastaa/	but the rhyme book never replies to me
siihen suttuiset jäljet jää	messy traces will be left
ku mullon pelkkiä kyyneleitä siveltimen pääs/	cos I only have tears at the tip of the (paint)brush/
<i>täällon</i> outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen/	<i>it's</i> weird to be <i>here</i> and I don't know where to go/
ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen/	cos my home village has (gone) passed away/

The third stanza begins with Stepa's autobiographical description of how he meets up with his old friends in Sodankylä for an evening out – and how, at the end of the night, he realizes that it did not change anything or bring anything (old) back. After this, the line "filmifestarit rok rokkaa joo" ('film festivals rock rock yea') is a particularly good example of where several scales are projected as relevant interpretable frames. It is a cultural reference to the *Midnight Sun Film Festival*, which takes place locally in Sodankylä. The festival also has regional significance, as it is considered an important event for the whole of Lapland. Furthermore, the film festival is of international, global relevance as it attracts many participants, actors and directors come from all over the world. The irony in this extract, and in real life as well, is that while Sodankylä is *the* place to be in the summer if one is interested in films, there is *no movie theater* in the village anymore.

In the next lines, Stepa engages in talk about his home and the love he finds there. He describes, quite poetically again, how he is ready to fight for his home: "kodin puolesta mie taistelen" ('for my home, I will fight'). In this, the dialectal form of the 1st person singular personal pronoun, 'mie' ('I'; 'minä' in standard Finnish and 'mä' in spoken vernacular Finnish), is part of the local Peräpohjola dialect and its usage seems highly indexical of his background – that he is truly from Sodankylä and Lapland and he wants to fight for them, too.¹⁵⁶ Here, Stepa also talks about his home as a place of love, particularly during Christmas time.

¹⁵⁶ On Stepa's first "MC" album, he used the personal pronoun 'mie' only once. In our interviews, he told me that he had deliberately tried to diminish the use of his own dialect on the first album, as he somehow did not feel comfortable with using the word 'mie' and instead decided to use the standard 'minä', because it was 'between' the local 'mie' and the more spoken vernacular 'mä' (which is used in Helsinki but also elsewhere in Finland). As for the reason why he chose to reduce its use, he suspects that he perhaps avoided the word so that people 'in the south' would not find the choice 'strange'. On the "Made in Sodankylä" album (of which the current song is part), Stepa makes use of his local dialect (and also 'mie') on almost all of the

A *nostalgia for home* discourse is drawn on in the song – this can be seen in how Stepa talks about his origins. He tells, in a nostalgic tone, how he and his friends go back there every summer (usually during the film festival, as he has often mentioned to me). The other time of the year he visits home is during Christmas time – to get love and support from his family. This discourse is also drawn on in the previous extract in which he discusses the move away from Sodankylä, because he could not say ‘no’ to studies, as well as in the chorus, which refers to returning South again, to study and work. The home discourse tells a story of, on the one hand, sadness, sorrow and nostalgia but, on the other hand, of love, hope and the family. In fact, according to Massey (2005: 124), the “imagination of going home [...] means going ‘back’ in both space and time”, i.e. going “back to the old familiar things, to the way things used to be”. Thus, one can never simply ‘go back home’ (or any place else, for that matter) – because home (in the way we remember it) does not actually exist in the present, because all places constantly change and ‘move on’ in one way or another (ibid.). Thus, we can only project space-times, i.e. scales, as scopes of understandability, but we can never actually go back in space-time.

After this, Stepa also creates a *spatial contrast* between ‘there’ (his home) and ‘here’ (his current place) – where love makes people cry, while money makes everyone smile. This can also be seen as relating to different values and lifestyles – in the north, family, love and closeness are appreciated but ‘here’ (perhaps suggesting Tornio, which is a more southern location than Sodankylä or, alternatively, southern Finland, where he often has gigs), it is money that matters. Stepa talks with his rhyme book (into which he writes his new rhymes and songs) about these thoughts and feelings – but of course receives no response. He cries in artistic solitude – this can be seen in the tears on his (not pen but) paintbrush.

Extract 4: “They’re not interested in depopulation in Brussels”

rankaksi menee ku joutuu katseleen
ku yritykset ottaa allensa askeleet/
aiva sama mitä nämä vanhaset pä[ä]ttää
jos ne tulee Lappiin ne vain lomailee täällä/
ja vähemmän välitän sen ystävästä
ei niillä kiinnostosta muuttotappio Brysselissä/
en tiä miksi tästä räppini teen
ku ei mitkä lie Hyssälät tuu tätä kuunteleen/
mut menen tunteen mukaan mitä tahansa teen
etten laittais enää asioitani vituilleen
ku asiat on ollu monesti siinä/
ettei korjaukseen anteeksipyyntöt riitä/
ja sitte ku ite anteeksipyyntöä oottaa/
huomaa ettei sitä saa koskaan/
täällä on outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen
ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen/

it gets tough when you have to watch
companies take their steps away/
it’s all the same what these vanhanens decide
if they come to Lapland they only vacation here/
and even less I care about their friends
they’re not interested in depopulation in Brussels/
I don’t know why I’m doing my raps about this
cos whoever Hyssäläs won’t be listening to this/
but I go with my feeling in whatever I do
so that I wouldn’t fuck up my stuff anymore
cos it’s often been the case/
that an apology isn’t enough to make things right/
and when you’re expecting an apology/
you notice you never get it/
it’s weird to be here and I don’t know where to go
cos my home village has (gone) passed away/

songs. He is not ‘afraid’ to use it anymore, perhaps because he feels more self-confident about his own style and language use.

Extract 4, i.e. the last stanza, begins with Stepa's sadness and disappointment with how (not only the people, but) also 'companies take their steps away from here' and head from Lapland to, presumably, the South or, on a more global scale (as a result of various globalization processes and tendencies) to Asia (or China, in particular). He then states how it's 'all the same' what politicians (to whom 'vanhaset', the plural form of the last name Vanhanen, is a general but iconic reference, since *Matti Vanhanen* is a former prime minister of Finland) decide because they only come to enjoy vacations there in the popular ski resorts. The regional scale is again indexed by direct place references to Lapland and by stories about the sad state of the economy in the area. However, some ski resorts, for example those of urban-like Saariselkä and Rovaniemi, are not as drastically affected by the (national) structural change as other places in the same area, as they get income from (ski) tourism and thus thrive in comparison with the rest of the areas.

Stepa then continues with his disregard for politicians – particularly those in Brussels. Here, the European (Union) scale can be seen in that, instead of Helsinki, he seems to orient towards Brussels and EU politics, when he voices his concerns about what is happening to Lapland: “ja vähemmän välitän sen ystäväistä/ ei niillä kiinnosta muuttotappio Brysselissä” (‘and even less I care about their friends / they’re not interested in depopulation in Brussels’). This is yet another indication of where the projected scales, this time local and European, meet and overlap: he addresses Brussels partly in his local dialect, “ei niillä kiinnosta” (‘they’re not interested’). The expression differs from the spoken vernacular: “ei niitä kiinnosta” or the standard: “ei heitä kiinnosta”.¹⁵⁷ Through these lines, then, Stepa seems to orient towards Brussels and EU politics, instead of Helsinki and national politics, in voicing his concerns about what is happening to Lapland. Lapland is not only ‘under the rule’ of the South, i.e. Helsinki, where most Finns live and where the parliament is located, but also under the rule of the European Union. In a way, the power has shifted even further away from ‘us’ in the North.¹⁵⁸

Stepa also then wonders why he even bothers creating a rap about the topic at all, since no politician will ever listen to it. This personal *contemplation* is also projected on the national scale via the specific reference to a national politician, *Liisa Hyssälä* (a former minister of social affairs and health), as a common noun (‘hyssälät’). The previously described North vs South discourse can also be seen in these references to national politic(ian)s (from the South),

¹⁵⁷ The use of ‘ne’ (‘they’), the partitive case being ‘niitä’, is common in spoken vernacular Finnish. Although literally it is the plural form of ‘it’ (‘se’ in Finnish), it is nevertheless used to refer to people. Likewise, ‘se’ is used for people in the meaning of s/he. To my knowledge, this particular linguistic inflection (“ei niillä kiinnosta”) has not been officially documented as belonging to any particular dialect or dialects but it is, nevertheless, characteristic of Stepa’s speech and, according to him, of other people in that area as well. He also uses it in his other lyrics, for instance in the song “I don’t give a fuck” (2010): “ei mulla kiinnosta” (I’m not interested), as opposed to the spoken vernacular: “ei mua kiinnosta”. My colleagues report encounters with similar expressions (Siironen, personal communication).

¹⁵⁸ With respect to the European Union, a similar discourse of ‘us’ and ‘them’, of ‘north’ and ‘south’, is also to be found in Northern Sweden (see e.g. Oskarson 2011).

who do not, supposedly, care about the fate of Lapland. Since Stepa seems to think that politicians neither in Finland (or Helsinki) nor in Brussels care about the region of Lapland, this song might be seen as his own personal (even political?) effort to make something happen and to make at least one voice heard – and to raise awareness of the situation.

In the very last lines, he shares his inner feelings and ponders about (mutual) forgiveness and about how he does not want to ruin his own life any longer. What is rapped in the song *after* this, is not stated in the written lyrics (or given to me by Stepa – instead, I transcribe the lyrics here myself). This is a kind of an ‘outro’ or a coda for the song.

Kevitsa rok rokkaa joo	Kevitsa rock rocks yea
varuskunta rok rokkaa joo	the garrison rock rocks yea
Hasetekki rok rokkaa joo	Hasetekki rock rocks yea
ku ei Sodankylää kohta vaan oo	cos Sodankylä won't soon even exist

Here, *Kevitsa* is the name of a mining company situated in Sodankylä (Kevitsa Mining); the garrison refers to the jaeger brigade situated in the municipality and *Hasetec* (‘Hasetekki’ in a Finnishized form) is a local timber factory (closed down in 2012, two years after this song was published; Sodankylän verkkolehti 2012). These stories further index the anticipation of sad, local (and partly also national) stories – how they still ‘rock’ (similarly to the film festival) but how, soon, the whole of Sodankylä will have changed, or even disappeared.

An interesting addition to the story represented in the song, is the ‘story’ behind the song, which Stepa has described in the booklet accompanying the album (see section 3.3 on the characterization of data; neither Cheek or Pyhimys have provided these kinds of ‘stories’ in their booklets, hence I cannot make ‘similar’ points in the context of their songs).

Biisistä tulee selväksi mitä tällä hain takaa. Sodankylä oli siisti paikka viettää lapsuutta ja nuoruutta, mutta nykyisin tuntuu, että kaikki yritykset kaatuu ja suurin osa tyypeistä muuttaa pois. Ei siellä asu vanhoista kavereista enää kuin pari ja se on sääli. Mutta miksi sinne pitäis jäädä jos ei töitä tai koulutuspaikkaa ole? Muistan kun joskus yläasteella meidän koululle tuli eduskuntavaalien alla tulevat ehdokkaat johonkin vaalipaneeliin. Yheltä kysyttiin, että miten Sodankylä pidetään kilpailukykyisenä koulutuksen ja töiden suhteen. Yks ehdokas aluksi naurahti, että kuinka helppo kysymys ja ehdotti, että rakennetaan ammattikorkeakoulu, jonka rakentamiseen ja pyörittämiseen tarvitaan työvoimaa. Ei ole ammattikorkeaa näkynyt.

[‘The song makes it clear what I was aiming with this. Sodankylä was a cool place to spend your childhood and youth in, but nowadays it seems that all the companies are collapsing and most people moving away. Only a couple of old friends of mine still live there and it’s a pity. But why should we stay there if there are no jobs or places of education? I remember when once in junior high school, just before the parliamentary elections, some candidates came to our school for a panel discussion. One of them was asked how Sodankylä will be kept competitive in terms of education and work. One of the candidates laughed at first at how easy the question was and suggested that we build a polytechnic for which we would need labor both to construct and run. No sign of the polytechnic yet.’]

With the help of this small anecdote, Stepa further emphasizes the importance and role of (local/national) politics in relation to such issues as marginalization, periphery and structural changes in society. If political decisions support (or cause) the emptying of the periphery, then many people do not have the choice of staying where they are, even if they wanted to. Talk is easy, but action is lacking.¹⁵⁹

In conclusion: Stepa as a local voice of the margins

The title of this section includes the notion of ‘vanishing/emerging supermarginality’. Here, I will briefly elaborate on how I understand it. First of all, *supermarginality* (i.e. ‘extreme’, or ‘deep’ marginality) refers to two issues. Finland can be considered a relatively marginal place, up in the (far) north, in the world system, at least in comparison to the United States, United Kingdom or Central Europe generally. The second level of supermarginality can be seen in the location of Sodankylä: it is on the outskirts of Finland, at least from the southern point of view. Secondly, ‘*vanishing*’ refers to the fact that this particular marginality, (life in) Sodankylä, is eroding away – the possibility for having a life ‘up there’ is in practice made impossible when the business and education are ‘taken away’. Thirdly, the simultaneous, but opposite phenomenon, that of *emerging*, refers to how Stepa, through this particular song, is making the region and its conditions known to the (general) public, even to the world at large. The margins emerge as a popular cultural product and Stepa becomes the voice, the “spokesperson and representative for those without power” (Whiteley 2004: 9).

In music in general and in rap music, in particular, it is very common to talk about oneself and one’s experiences, as well as about one’s location, one’s place in the world; these are among the most significant ways of *localizing the rap format* (Bennett 2004; Whiteley 2004). In fact, Bennett (2004: 2) argues that “music plays an important role in the narrativization of a place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationship to local, everyday surroundings”. Thus, in this analytical section, I explored how Stepa constructs his authenticity in a specific location, the ‘periphery’, and how, in the process, he makes use of and modifies various linguistic and discursive resources that project several scale-levels, and thus are scalar.

As regards the linguistic resources in Stepa’s repertoire in “Made in Sodankylä”, the lyrics seem, at least on the surface, ‘monolingual’ Finnish. The main linguistic resource is spoken vernacular Finnish, as also in Stepa’s other songs. This resource projects the national scale-level as a (potentially) meaningful frame for the song – it is a Finnish rap song rapped by a Finnish rap

¹⁵⁹ Later on (in spring 2014), Stepa told me that (at least according to him), the situation in Sodankylä looks much better now in terms of growth of population and businesses, and how Sodankylä may, in fact, be one of the few ‘villages’ of Lapland, which are actually growing (and thus a local ‘center’ for many people). At the same time, though, this often means that other, nearby villages are depopulating – and how, in the end, Lapland is not ‘on the winning side’ in the migration stakes.

artist and the text deals with issues related to Finnish society and geography. But although spoken vernacular Finnish sets the national frame for the lyrics, it is also equally justified to interpret this as a local or regional frame in the sense that for Stepa, along with other youth of his age, it is simply 'his way to talk', i.e. in spoken vernacular Finnish without too many dialectal elements (cf. Mielikäinen 2010). In this sense, using spoken vernacular Finnish is not only a national way of speaking, but a local and regional one as well.

However, on closer inspection, the lyrics and Stepa's repertoire are a hybrid combination and mix of features, associated with various resources. In addition to spoken vernacular Finnish, Stepa also uses some local dialect, some standard Finnish and, in the title of the song (and album), English. What seems noticeable is that although the name of the song is in English, there is, in fact, no English in the song itself. Thus, although the song seems to be addressing 'the world', people who do not understand Finnish will not be able to understand the lyrics of the song or its message. Standard Finnish is mainly used here to create poetic effects. Although the use of the local dialect is not extensive, it, nevertheless, significantly indexes Stepa's origins and is used in meaningful ways in the lyrics, such as in the use of the personal pronoun 'mie' ('I'). In this respect, Stepa's lyrics compare with, for example, Italian rap in which regional dialects are used extensively and in which dialect functions as a significant index of local identity (Mitchell 1996). All in all, this kind of combination of linguistic resources reflects Stepa's speech style in general, too, in his 'real life', as exemplified by his e-mails and text messages to me, and thus it is not something he adopts only for his lyrics.

In terms of the discursive resources in Stepa's repertoire, he narrated a problematic and ambiguous relationship with home. It was about leaving a place, a center, a feeling of dislocation and of him finding a new place, a center. Stepa does this very obviously in the song. The discourses that the lyrics of the song contain are those of *North vs South*, *remote districts*, *nostalgia for home* and *anti-fame/success*. They are reflected in and through the song's topics: *self-presentation*, *contemplation*, and *social critique*. Social critique shows most obviously in the North vs South discourse and the in the remote districts discourse. Contemplation shows in all of the discourses, since Stepa reflects on the issues through his own thoughts and experiences. Likewise, self-presentation can be seen in all of the discourses as they all have something to do with Stepa's life, but it is particularly salient in the nostalgia for home discourse, as it is such a personal issue.

The scales, spatio-temporal frames, which the various resources project in "Made in Sodankylä", are multiple. Here, we could see how scalar meaning effects take the shape of spatio-temporal, *ordered indexical complexes* ('frames') – and how Stepa makes use of specific resources to offer us various scopes of understandability in and through this song. The single most significant and noticeable scale is the local one – it is particularly through this scale that the song 'makes sense'. At times, it seems as if the local refers not only to Sodankylä but also, by extension, to Lapland. Stepa 'represents' both Sodankylä

and Lapland/the North, and both of these act as reference points for his identification. In fact, already in the first interview I had with him, he argued that he ‘represents Lapland’ (see section 5.3).

Albeit the lyrics are somewhat ‘monolingual’ in terms of their linguistic resources, the multiscalarity that “Made in Sodankylä” projects is significant. Stepa moves fluently between the projected scales, combines and mixes them. He presents local issues with local resources, in the global template of rap music, but also in the (national) template of the Finnish political song tradition: in fact, as a final note on the temporal aspect of the scales, the song paints a *contemporary* picture of Lapland, of Stepa’s life (as someone born in 1987), but simultaneously it is a *continuation of old topics* familiar in both hip hop and the Finnish political song tradition (this is discussed below). This multiscalarity suggests mobility and un-fixedness, an ability to talk about globalization, even ‘monolingually’, and a way to engage with the world. The simultaneous mixing and overlapping of scales that we witness here seems to characterize various globalization processes. What is also important to note here is that between the two projected ‘extremes’, the local and the global, the national scale, as a particular reference point, has not lost its importance even during the era of globalization (as we also saw, more emphatically, in the case of Pyhimys and “Bättre folk”). We can see an element of fractality here, too: the ‘national’ matters (or recurs) even when the ‘main frame’ of the song is a local one.

In and through “Made in Sodankylä”, Stepa shows *divergence* (i.e. a centrifugal orientation) from mainstream and commercial rap as well as the stereotypical luxurious hip hop lifestyle. He shows absolutely no elements of it, quite the contrary. He seems to argue that fame and making money are not his cup of tea and that he rather feels uncomfortable about the whole thing. In this song, Stepa shows *convergence* with, albeit maybe not intentionally, with the Finnish political (protest) songs of the 1970s (see also Kuivas 2003b for an analysis of the Finnish rapper Asa as part of the protest song tradition).¹⁶⁰ This can be seen as an example of what Pennycook and Mitchell (2009; more in section 4.6) have referred to as hip hop being “an already local story-telling tradition”. Stepa also shows convergence with the old hip hop values and themes of social critique and defense of the margins. Stepa’s lyrics ooze concern for regional, social, sometimes even political, issues and problems, and he defends the margins, his hoods, so to speak. His concern for his home village, and all of Lapland, emptying out of people, business and education is evident throughout the song. The audience in the song is ‘dual’: its message is simultaneously for both South and North. These meanings are partly overlapping but they evoke different viewpoints. For the South, the message seems to be: we (up here in the North) matter and we should not be forgotten;

¹⁶⁰ For instance, on the album entitled “Yhdentoista virran maa” (‘Land of eleven streams’) (1978), the singer *Mikko Alatalo* takes a critical stand against the emptying out and ‘hopeless’ future of the periphery (Nevalainen 2011). Another example is a song entitled “Euroopan syrjäkylät” (‘Remote Villages of Europe’) from 1973. The lyrics describe the anguish of people on the outskirts, of rural depopulation and of the power of money and market forces in decision-making. (Äänitearkisto.)

and for North: these are my roots and I will defend them. The song is Stepa's defense of the margins.

The nature of marginality or the periphery is an important topic here (the discussion continues in chapter 5). We need to think in terms of *how exactly* is something marginal or peripheral: culturally, socially, economically, etc. Stepa himself has lived in the 'margins' for many years, but has since moved, or had to move, to a less 'marginal' and 'peripheral' location, if that is what Tornio can be called. In "Made in Sodankylä", however, Stepa also seems to *problematize* the concepts of 'margins' and 'centers'. By naming the song and the entire album in this way, he seems (to want) to put Sodankylä on the world map, away from the margins.

However, Stepa is a *cultural center* in his own right, since, along with other local or regional hip hop artists, he has brought and continues to bring the ('Afro-American') hip hop culture to the 'periphery'. Although the periphery might often be seen as or referred to as sad and miserable, here it is also a center of love and home. The nostalgia that Stepa shows here for his home in the periphery is not unique in the context of Finnish hip hop. Similar feelings and descriptions (although with a more humorous tone and attitude) can be heard for example in the (previously mentioned) song "Landespede" ('A country dude', 'a hayseed') by Kemmuru. In the song, the group's two MCs, Jodarok from Joensuu (a middle-sized town in Eastern Finland) and Aksim from Tikkakoski (part of Jyväskylä in Central Finland), paint a picture of leaving life in the countryside behind them and moving into a city (Helsinki), but nevertheless remembering and appreciating their roots.

In sum, Stepa can be seen as renewing and modifying the Finnish rap genre in his own way. He *challenges* the dominant pattern of hip hop culture as solely an urban phenomenon: he incorporates the peripheral (and rural) areas with their problems and issues into the Finnish hip hop scene. The song is a description of peripheral and marginal life. As Finland, and particularly Lapland, is extremely sparsely populated, songs like this might also evoke interest in the local culture and artists and thus be seen as an opportunity for artists with a peripheral perspective like Stepa. Instead of the urban margins, he speaks of and for the peripheral/rural margins. By contrast, in France (e.g. Prévos 2001), for example, rap music often deals with the poor *banlieue*, the 'ghettos' (and often also immigrants with their hardships and problems). In Brazil, the *favelas* – the racialized urban ghetto as a site of power and knowledge – is the focus (and locus) of hip hop and its research (see e.g. Roth-Gordon 2009). In this section, I described how Stepa constructs himself as an authentic rap artist in "Made in Sodankylä". In and through the lyrics, Stepa's authenticity is constructed mainly as local but multiscalarity is a prominent feature as well. We will learn more about scalarity, centers and margins and various position(ing)s in chapter 5, in which the voices of the artists themselves get to be heard. This will follow the concluding section below.

4.6 Conclusions and theoretical reflections

In this chapter, we have seen how Finnish hip hop forms a particular scale-level, a coexisting and united community in the global hip hop nation. Finnish hip hop shares many things with and is also different from for example that of Brazil, Japan or Australia, in terms of its language use, discourse(s) and socio-cultural and –historical context. For the three rappers in this study, it offers a kind of a ‘benchmark’ for their action. Here, I look once again at the three cases and summarize what they suggest about authenticity within the scale-level of Finnish hip hop.

Recapitulation

In “Orjantappuraa” Cheek constructs himself as an authentic, global(ized) messiah of Finnish rap. This song effectively treats numerous (sell-out) accusations that he has received during the past few years of (his mainstream) success. In his case, authenticity is explicitly and literally at stake, as he is being accused of being fake, inauthentic – mainly because of his *central* position (centrality and ‘centers’ will be a topic of the next analytical chapter). The song is explicitly *multi-voiced*: in the courtroom setting, the prosecutor can be seen as voicing the nation, the Finnish hip hop scene and Cheek’s ‘haters’, while Cheek, the defendant, collectively responds to all the charges, at times by taking on the role (and fate) of Jesus Christ. Discursively and linguistically, “Orjantappuraa” connects the worlds and frameworks of rap, religion and the courtroom (and justice), thus combining the global and the national scales in an interesting way. The global framework of rap is evoked perhaps not so much linguistically, but rather in terms of the genre, style and themes. This song is a case in point of how to be *both* commercial and authentic – here, Cheek explicitly defends this point of view in his responses, as he represents the global(ized) mainstream hip hop culture (in the context of Finnish hip hop). Thus, commercialism should *not* always be seen as necessarily and automatically the opposite of authenticity. Cheek’s authenticity here consists of elements of autobiography and of the (global) mainstream rap genre and style, for instance the exaggerated similes, the attitude of boasting and hard work – all in all, taking pride in being successful and directly addressing authenticity issues.¹⁶¹

The song “Bättre folk” by Pyhimys (re)presents him as the ‘voice’ of a national minority and a rap educator. His authenticity, in this case, revolves around his ability to use multiple personae and voices in addressing societal (and political) issues. Pyhimys’ authenticity is also constructed around the power of complex ‘small stories’ – not of the autobiographic type – and around his sociocultural and –historical knowledge as a national, Finnish rap artist, who also wants to share this knowledge with others. Here, authenticity has a

¹⁶¹ Seeing authenticity as closely related to (overt) self-confidence is not to claim that it does not intertwine with other ways of constructing one’s authenticity, such as nostalgia (towards earlier hip hop) (Perry 2004; see section 2.2.3).

(multi-voiced) twist: Pyhimys himself is *not* a Finland-Swede, but he is voicing Robban, the protagonist of the song, who is. Another twist can be seen in how Robban is not a (stereo)typical, 'authentic' Finland-Swede in that he does not live their (assumed) wealthy and successful life. In fact, here, the song also treats authenticity as a topic: the (in)authenticity of Finland-Swedes as part of the Finnish population and the reality that they are not (all) wealthy and successful. Thus, authenticity here seems to have two functions and it becomes constructed in (at least) two ways.

The national scale is projected in this song on both discursive and linguistic levels, which intertwine and combine in various ways. By making use of (Finland) Swedish, spoken vernacular Finnish, standard Finnish and English, Pyhimys creates an image of a linguistically 'authentic' Finland-Swede, who lives his multilingual life in contemporary Helsinki. Discursively, however, Robban is far from 'authentic' in that his life is an ironic, reverse example of the rich, well-educated and in every way 'better' life that the Finland-Swedes are supposed to lead. Via "Bättre folk", we can also see Pyhimys in the position of an educator in the Finnish rap scene – through his experience and knowledge, he seems to have the authority and power, through his songs, to educate and 'enlighten' his audience. In addition, he might be interpreted as a nationally authentic sociolinguistic critic. His 'political' message seems to encompass the equality of people, but also, via them, their languages.

In "Made in Sodankylä", Stepa acts as the local voice of the margins and the periphery. He represents local authenticity in a variety of ways, both linguistically and discursively. Linguistically, Stepa makes use of spoken vernacular Finnish, some standard, or more precisely poetic, Finnish as well as his local Peräpohjola dialect. Although the usage of this dialect is not extensive in the song, it has significance here as it indexes Stepa's origins, for example via the personal pronoun 'mie' ('I'). The lack of English (apart from the name of the song) is perhaps surprising, as the song seems to address the world at large via the associations we might make from the title. Discursively, Stepa shares with us a narrative of a problematic and ambiguous relationship with home. Through various discourses, those of North vs South, the remote districts, nostalgia for home and anti-fame/success, he can be seen as renewing the Finnish rap genre. He challenges the conception of hip hop culture (and rap music) as solely an urban thing by emphasizing and incorporating the rural and peripheral areas with their problems and issues into the Finnish hip hop scene (see Brunstad et al. 2012 for an exploration on the Norwegian 'rural rap'). Stepa's authenticity revolves around autobiographical stories and feelings. As he is from the margins and periphery, he also acts and communicates accordingly – he becomes the voice of particular marginal areas and issues.¹⁶² His authenticity is not that of the mainstream but rather of the (commercial)

¹⁶² Marginal voices, of course, also characterize some US rap music – as well as rap music across the globe – in that attention is drawn to how less privileged people lead their lives (Rose 1994; Forman 2002).

margins – and also of the periphery in the national context, as opposed to the two other artists in this study.

In these three sets of lyrics, we saw how each artist thus produced and constructed authenticity in different places and roles. This was all articulated in the themes and in the language material. We could see it both in what they said and how they said it. The specific sets of resources, specific ‘batteries of indexicalities’ (Blommaert 2005, 2010), which the rappers draw on, point very strongly towards marginality or being in the center. Here, we can even see centrifugal and (or) centripetal forces – or, at times, oscillating forces – in play. In Stepa’s case, these resources are, for example, the local, ‘peripheral’ dialect and the theme of the depopulation of Lapland, whereas Pyhimys’ resources are features of (Finland) Swedish and the theme of reverse discrimination. For Cheek, the resources used, such as Helsinki slang or the theme of mainstream accusations and defense, index being in the center. All of these resources have a different ‘indexical value’, i.e. what they ‘point to’ in the world.

Through these batteries of resources, their repertoires, the artists all construct authenticity in their own, unique way. Despite these differences, these three young men also *share* many things. First, they are all rap artists and they operate in and make use of a (global) hip hop framework (and features such as rhyme patterns, gestures and movements – although these were not the focus of this chapter, or this study in general) in their lives and in their work and careers. Second, the artists are all Finnish and they construct their authenticity in a Finnish sociocultural and -historical context, whether in big cities or small villages. While this does not mean that they have a unified background, they are nevertheless bound together by certain elements of this context. Thus, even if they do not experience Finland in the same way, they are still able to (partly) understand each other’s experiences. In addition, they are all Finnish-speaking, with the resources of spoken vernacular Finnish and standard Finnish at their disposal – in each case part of their linguistic repertoire.

In addition to authenticity being a *discursive accomplishment* (e.g. Coupland 2003), I see it, similarly to Moore (2002: 220), as *partly* “ascribed to, rather than inscribed in a performance”. In fact, “every music, and every example, can conceivably be found authentic by a particular group of receivers and [...] it is the *success* with which a particular performance conveys its impression that counts” (ibid., emphasis original). Thus, the fans and audience of each of these three artists are *likely* to conceive and appreciate them as authentic, each in their own way and in their own genre (although, admittedly, this was not the particular research task here, but something for future research). Terkourafi (2010: 13, emphasis original) also acknowledges the possibility of several (discursive) views on authenticity in her Introduction to the edited book: they are not “either/or options”, but rather “co-exist, often challenging one another, and serving as constant reminders that *reality is not one-way, but emergent and discursively constructed*”. This is a good starting point. But in order for us to understand and conceptualize authenticity further, we need a more nuanced view. It is this that we (re)turn to next: to scale and polycentricity.

Scale and polycentricity

The main picture we get here in chapter 4 is that of Finnish hip hop as a scale-level. The defining criterion of scale is that of 'making sense', as it is a scope of *understandability*: at what level are the (present) rappers understandable, when they talk about the emptying of Lapland, make a cultural reference to a Swedish-speaking Finnish rapper or compare themselves to Jesus Christ. Thus, scale becomes a cultural and semiotic notion – an instrument by which these three rappers bring 'order' in their semiotizations of the social and material world. Here, scales function as *proleptic projections of indexicals* anticipated to convey specific meanings – they 'point' towards specific contextual 'frames' (or scripts) – whether local, national, global (or a combination of these and others).

While in the 'background', there is the global form and format of hip hop and its generic recognizability, the three rap artists articulate issues for which we need an understanding of one particular scale-level, that of Finland and Finnish hip hop. This then becomes a relevant unit for the investigation of (this) hip hop. However, the analysis of the three sets of lyrics offers us three different positions and three scale-levels *within* the scale-level of Finland and Finnish hip hop. The '*diacritics*', the small nuances, of the three rap songs largely make sense only within (the scale of) Finland here. The global roles and frames discussed by Cheek, the national history and minority-majority sensitivities evoked by Pyhimys and the local concerns and worries introduced by Stepa are all '*diacritics*' of the Finnish hip hop scale. In addition, these rappers draw mostly on the different resources offered by the Finnish language (standard, spoken vernacular, various dialects and slang) – thus, if the listener does not understand Finnish, engaging with any of this artistic work becomes virtually impossible.

Although we now have conceptualized a specific scale, this does not mean that everything happens or stays only within that particular scale. Scale could thus be seen as a chosen, specific position within Finnish hip hop. Thus, these rappers are not 'fixed' with respect to a scale but they have access to and can project scales – the rappers are mobile and flexible. This position comes with a set of affordances: when one projects a certain scale, for example the local one, it also implies making use of a specific dialect as well as engaging in certain topics (and not others). Scales and access to scales act as *resources* amongst other resources (linguistic and discursive) for the artists. As a resource it means that the rappers can (to varying degrees) project it, which also explains why another song by these artists could (or would) be very local, national or global (or, all of these) in its orientation. Scale thus becomes part of the artists' repertoire and what triggers a specific scale often seems to be the general theme or particular topic treated in the song – a sort of thematic anchor, which constructs a frame from within which all the (other) resources 'take their places'.

Pietikäinen (2010) also found the notion of 'scale' useful in her study of the Inari Sámi rapper Amoc and his *mobility* in the world (of hip hop). Though her research does not utilize precisely the same understanding of 'scale' (as mine does), it nevertheless shows how hip hop is worth studying from a perspective

that takes into account the various layers (here, scales) and their intertwining. Thus, the notion of scales helps us to explore the multifaceted and nuanced nature of hip hop, which does not consist (only) of free-flowing flows, but is 'ordered' in various ways. In fact, the notion of scales can be seen as defining the scope(s) and structure(s) of these flows. Scales make the analysis of globalization processes concrete, they give it a structure, which reflects the 'origin' of the materials, their 'pedigree' and the rationality of their deployment (why 'this ingredient' into 'that mixture').

Here, we can further nuance the notion of scale by (applying) the concept of *polycentricity* (i.e. various centers of norms that people orient towards in their communication; Blommaert 2010). What rap artists do within this scale is that they start pointing towards very different things, very different centers of norms (more in chapter 5). In these lyrics and in their analysis we were already able to see a number of hints about how this scale-level itself can be broken down into numerous micro-distinctions. Finnish hip hop can only be understood by looking at these distinctions, at the smaller levels of fractality within this scale, such as in the case of Helsinki and its various neighborhoods (this is discussed in section 5.3). Here we can see how 'scales' are constructed in hip hop (or possibly more largely, in (popular) music): these three rap artists bring all kinds of polycentric 'stuff' into this space of understandability, which I have here called a scale. Finland works here as a universe for a particular level of comprehension, an established unit within hip hop. All three bring their heterogeneous material into the same place, the same scale-level: Cheek from higher up ('the global'), Stepa from the 'sub-state level', the periphery and Pyhimys 'horizontally', from the 'actual' national level. They all address Finland and Finnish hip hop, their main point of reference, from a variety of positions (which will guide the interview analysis in chapter 5).

Positions

Much of what these rap artists do is 'similar', which is why we instantly recognize it as hip hop and why they are also 'institutionally' and generically categorized as hip hop, thus forming the distinctive scale-level of Finnish hip hop. Here, we need to explain the distinction between (broad) similarity and (sizeable) difference at the same time. This difference is one that obscures similarities because of a difference at a higher level, i.e. the *position* or *placing* that they embody within the Finnish hip hop scene. They index this placing, for instance, by drawing on a local dialect or slang: it matters that the vernacular for Stepa is different from that deployed by Cheek or Pyhimys. The interesting point here is that all the similarities (described above) *do not preclude* differences between them. But had I only analyzed the linguistic and discursive level of the lyrics, and not engaged in ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I would not have been able to explain the differences between these artists in such detail. The picture would have been 'incomplete'.

Thus, within Finland, we find hip hop being produced from entirely different positions. All three artists (and cases) *rap-present* the global, the

national and the local scale within the scale of Finnish hip hop. It is not only the various resources they make use of that build up this 'authentic representation', but more essentially their position in the field. The genre they represent differentiates them, yet they are nevertheless all, more or less, recognizable as rap. The linguistic resources (or features) they make use of, such as slang, dialect or vernacular are not entirely unique to them either. Thus, it is their particular point of view and the specific position that they embody that renders them authentic and unique. These positions, then, are part of the artists' repertoires – so, in addition to their linguistic and discursive resources, and the scales they project, they also have position(s), which they can make use of and 'control'. Thus, even if we witness a structural 'similarity' across all three cases (Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa), such as the use of a dialect (or slang), the position from which they speak and the position they embody in their work, gives a different 'flavor' to those resources. The 'indexical order' (Silverstein 2003), i.e. "the non-arbitrary, socially and culturally sensitive way in which indexicality operates in societies" (Blommaert 2005: 253), triggered by a vernacular in the case of Cheek is different from that in the case of Stepa, because they occupy different positions in the scene.

These positions are very much bound to particular themes and motives, such as that of urban life or life in the periphery, and mainstream or 'underground' (i.e. more marginal). The building block of resources, themes and position – all in a more or less neat package – can be seen for example in that Stepa could not rap in "Made in Sodankylä" in Helsinki slang. This would not be, or sound, 'authentic' because the theme also 'needs' elements of the local dialect. Alignment makes the difference here: although, on the surface, the rappers might be using the same elements of rap (for example rhyme), it is their particular positions, alignments, which differentiates them in terms of what they are using the elements, the resources *for*. They will never have exactly the same purpose and that is because of their position (cf. Blommaert 2010; Räisänen 2013).

In all of this, we can also describe hip hop as a *flexible resource*, that is, as a resource that does not (necessarily) fix these artists in one position but, on the contrary, enables mobility across positions. In fact, all of the lyrics analyzed here can be described as *multi-voiced* (see also e.g. Higgins 2009b): they all drew on more than one voice. In all three cases, their position (and voice) was challenged or it was ambivalent: in the case of Cheek, the prosecutor accused Cheek of selling out (i.e. moving from the margins to the center), in Pyhimys' song there was a delicate play of linguistic resources as well as Robban's and Pyhimys' own voices and role reversals in majority and minority (in the sense of who is who and on what grounds) and, in the case of Stepa, coming back home to Lapland, where he no longer feels at ease, he is (nowadays) an outsider looking in; the voices of business people and politicians mixing and competing with his voices, the voice of the margins. Thus, there is a feature of unclarity and unfinishedness in all three cases. The notion of hip hop we get here is one of *mobility*: the rappers may start from one position, but they do not necessarily

need to stay there. (Positioning will become more foregrounded as a feature of analysis in the next chapter on the interviews.)

Language revisited

Looking at rap lyrics from the viewpoint of language, one can see that they often mirror or reflect the (diversity of) everyday language, but in addition to that they also *produce* local language diversity (Pennycook 2007a: 138). This was also the case here: not only do these three rap artists reflect the diverse language usage of their local surroundings, but they are part of its production and, possibly, act as models for their (young) audience in this respect. The Swedish language (features of which we saw in Pyhimys' song) can be seen as an 'old' resource in Finnish society, whereas English is fairly 'new'. Swedish originates from the several hundred years of Swedish rule in Finland – it has thus been part of the linguistic landscape for quite a while, while English has gained a foothold in Finnish society, in education and through the media, only since the *Second World War* (Leppänen 2007; Leppänen et al. 2011). Globalization processes have, during the 21st century, made this resource increasingly important. Often the most important resource is the non-standard spoken vernacular that youth, in particular, make use of in their free time, in their hobbies and subcultural groups (see Leppänen & Nikula 2007). As part of this more general process of change, so-called *hip hop English*, or, alternatively, African American Vernacular English, is also spreading across the globe through popular culture and hip hop culture, in various forms. According to Androutsopoulos (2009: 60), 'Hip hop English' appears as a "'universal' strategy of hip hop identity marking" – creating "a symbolic connection between verbal art, media and fan discourse, on the one hand, as well as between various localized hip hop discourses on the other". I would argue that the notion of 'hip hop English' has to be understood in a more multifaceted way, as there is no one, unified hip hop English but rather several. Of course, they share some features but do not share all of them.

Significantly, in many cases, it is in fact a matter of the processes of *en- and de-globalization* – how some linguistic element, often an English one, is 'prepared' to go global but is instantly de-globalized, made local again (Blommaert 2011). Thus, nothing in 'hip hop English' is purely global. It is too simplistic to claim that vernacular language use always (and inevitably) points to the local and English, on the other hand, always to the global (e.g. Pennycook 2007a). This can be seen in the Finnish hip hop context too. In their lyrics, Finnish rappers en-globalize resources, to make them resonate with global hip hop but, simultaneously, they de-globalize them in order to make them locally relevant. This is why the process of en-globalization is never finalized or perfect in the sense that those not understanding Finnish (or its varieties or dialects) would not be able to pick up the small accent and dialect differences. Thus, we can only en-globalize 'stuff' in order to be able effectively to de-globalize it, such as when these three rappers are in front of their local audiences to whom they write their lyrics and with whom they want to resonate. Hip hop is a

specific case of en-globalized and de-globalized material – the *blend* is vital for understanding the phenomenon.

Here, I also want to make a small remark about the term *hybrid(ity)*. I use it to explore the *non-unified nature* of the data: what kinds of (linguistic and discursive) elements a ‘text’ consists of – and, possibly, where these elements originate. I am aware of the recent critique on ‘hybrid(ity)’. For instance Pennycook (2012: 19) has rejected the notion, in relation to multilingualism, because it includes “underlying assumptions about entities that are mixed together” and supports the idea of “the discreteness and the location of languages”. Instead, our focus should be on the “use of diverse resources where genres, styles, practices and discourses are mobilized as part of everyday linguistic interaction (Pennycook 2012: 19, drawing on Blommaert 2010), which is what I have also emphasized in this study. In this scenario, then, ‘diversity’ becomes the ‘ordinary’ (Pennycook 2012: 20, drawing on Higgins & Coen 2000). As Pennycook, Nederveen Pieterse also emphasizes how hybridity / diversity “has become an *ordinary* experience” (2010: 237, emphasis original). Nevertheless, he argues *for* hybridity: we ‘need’ (the concept of) hybrid(ity), as it “is a terminology and sensibility of our time in that boundary and border-crossing mark our times” (ibid.: 238). For him, these “boundaries are historical and social *constructions*” (ibid., emphasis added) – not fixed and pre-given. It is this understanding of hybridity that I adopt in the present study: that it is, as such, unremarkable and ordinary, but that boundaries (which are constructions, not fixed lines) ‘make’ hybridity. What my study and analysis has additionally shown is that the hybridity is *internally organized and ordered* (i.e. non-random and non-flat). It is not the case of ‘happy hybridity’, as in ‘anything goes’ (see the ironic takes on ‘happy heterogeneity’ in Varis & Wang 2011: 71, discussing a Chinese online rapper), but that this hybridity is, in itself, also ordered in various ways and layers, and composed of resources of a different order.

Alternative origins revisited

Through their lyrics (and their interviews, to be discussed in chapter 5) Finnish rap artists construct themselves “as artists who have an *equal right* to claim hip hop” (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 31, emphasis added). It is not only (African American) US rap artists that can assume this role. By avoiding or, alternatively, modifying stereotypical ‘American themes’, the Finnish rappers move towards more local themes, such as those we saw here in the three cases. In this ‘localization’ process, (Finnish) rappers resist and refashion some aspects of the message and style that they do not see as fitting the local context. The process here could be characterized as *(dis)identification* – as some elements are probably still retained. Pennycook and Mitchell (2009: 32), however, remind us that the rejection of (or, dis-identification with) ‘US themes’ often entails rough *simplifications* of American hip hop as this or that, for example as misogynous, while the local context is often romanticized at the same time. In their equal claim for hip hop, local rap artists seek legitimization through (various) local contexts (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 38). Despite their different geographical

locations, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa all represent the Finnish hip hop community and seek acceptance there, in different contexts and arenas.

Previous research on hip hop cultures across the globe (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003) has suggested that hip hop culture is, in fact, a local appropriation and re-entextualization of a global cultural model. According to Androutsopoulos (2009: 45), the 'glocal' hip hop identities "gain their meanings as local performances of a global cultural paradigm". Although this is one possible way of looking at the phenomenon, this is by no means a full story and not one I fully embrace. Like Pennycook and Mitchell (2009), I argue that hip hop culture can also simultaneously be seen as a *continuation* of the old, (already) local story-telling traditions that connect several worlds (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 35). This can be seen, for example, in the language choices, as well as in narratives, discourses, topics, and cultural references rappers relate in their lyrics. In the three cases presented above, we could, for instance, notice how Stepa continues (although perhaps unintentionally) the political song tradition. In explicating the 'global locatedness' of hip hop culture, Pennycook and Mitchell (2009: 40) argue for a rethinking of time and space. They suggest we turn to Mignolo's (2012 [2000]: 205) historiography that "spatializes time and avoids narratives of transition, progress, development, and points of arrivals". In a similar vein, Inoue (2004: 2) calls for a linguistic anthropological analysis that introduces "multiple, heterogeneous, and uneven temporalities and histories that the dominant historical narrative, often presenting itself as singular and linear, suppresses". Thus, as Pennycook and Mitchell (*ibid.*) argue, it opens up a possibility to call into question Western historiography with its linear temporality and narratives about origins.

To conclude, following Pennycook and Mitchell (2009: 40), I do not see that global hip hop cultures have only *one* point of origin, but rather "multiple, copresent, global origins" that encompass everything from the West-African griots and Bronx ghettos to the Indigenous Australia - and in this case, also Finland. Seeing this multiplicity of origins as possible, and even likely, renders how we should think about the (already) local self-fashioning with its "struggles between identification, rejection, engagement with local cultural forms, and uses of language" which "not only localize but also transform what it means to be local" (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009: 40). Thus what Finland and being Finnish means is also at the core of these processes and this change, as is being from Helsinki or from Sodankylä (in chapter 5 the differences within the Finnish context become the starting point).

In addition to this 'already local' and 'coeval origins' view, however, I would argue that hip hop is always and inevitably a *blend of different scales* and that, in projecting these scales, rap artists are able to occupy different positions and voices as well as mobilize various resources in their lyrics. The scales should not, thus, be seen as a dichotomy (or an absolute hierarchy) between the local and the global - rather, they are relational, inseparable and highly interwoven, mixing and blending in a variety of ways (see also Mamadouh et al. 2004). As mentioned above, the viewpoint of a "kaleidoscopic effect" is

useful here, as the scalar organization and its effects depend on “the perspective from which they are perceived / acted upon (Brenner 2001: 606, drawing on Smith 1987)”. The new kinds of discourses that are produced through these scales are complex and heterogeneous, and very typical of contemporary globalization processes. This view on authenticity as organized on various scales is one of the key points of the present study, one that has not been suggested to a great extent in earlier research.

In the light of the above it is thus a crude simplification to talk of ‘the Finnish rap’, as it is a *blend* of various elements. In hip hop communities, artistic rivalry is crucial. Being a unique, distinctive and individual artist is what (all) rappers aim at and what gives them (local) respect. Thus, while the global cultural ‘model’ and rules are somewhat the ‘same’, their outcomes have to be unique. We end up seeing numerous local versions of the same thing (see e.g. Androutsopoulos 2009: 50). The specific features that *separate* the present artists will be dealt with (with more refinement) in the next chapter.

This chapter was about lyrics: rap lyrics have been, and continue to be, the ‘hot spot’ for language-centered studies on hip hop culture (Androutsopoulos 2009: 44). A holistic view on language and hip hop, however, needs to take into account much more than this, such as communicating with and among rap artists, fans, b-boys/girls and graffiti artists (*ibid.*). Hence, the next chapter will deal with the interviews I conducted with the three artists in this study. While this chapter described Finnish hip hop as one scale-level, the next chapter will deal with fractal scalarity and polycentricity (within this scale-level) in the interviews. By dividing the chapters in this way, I do not wish to emphasize that Finnish rap lyrics are (all) somehow ‘unified’ and ‘similar’ and that all the interview material is always and necessarily somehow ‘unique’. Rather, the point has been to show how Finnish hip hop and rap are about *both* processes: about ‘similarity’ at one (higher) level of observation and about divergence on another level of observation that looks into the (recurring) micro-distinctions. The picture of Finnish hip hop is far from ‘complete’ yet – we have now seen half of the things I have wanted to emphasize in this study. In the next chapter, we gain a more detailed, (emic) view on what Finnish hip hop is and how we can understand it in contemporary Finland.

5 FRACTAL SCALARITY WITHIN FINNISH HIP HOP

In chapter 4, the focus was on Finnish hip hop as a scale-level: I explored and analyzed three sets of lyrics from the point of view of authenticity construction and concluded that the three rappers all operate within one scale-level and in reference to it, but in various ways. Within this particular scale, we saw the artists projecting different scale-levels in their lyrics. For Cheek, this was the global scale, for Pyhimys the national and for Stepa the local one – but nevertheless they all worked within the Finnish hip hop framework and discussed issues that matter and make sense on that particular scale. In chapter 4, I explored what the artists ‘shared’ within the ‘benchmark’ of Finnish hip hop. Thus, even if they come from different places, deal with different themes and topics, they all enter and make meaningful the level which we call ‘hip hop in Finland’. But, while emphasizing ‘similarities’, we also came across various differences between these three artists.

The aim of this chapter is to provide more detailed and nuanced picture of authenticity construction than offered in chapter 4. The title of this chapter, *fractal scalarity*, refers to the fact that within the single scale-level of Finnish hip hop, we have fractality: that is, when we look more closely into the micro-distinctions of Finnish hip hop, we see the same structures (and distinctions) of the ‘upper’ scale of Finnish hip hop repeated over and over again.¹⁶³ Here in chapter 5, the challenge is to explain *both* similarities and differences between the rap artists and how that can lead to a nuanced model of a specific cultural environment, in this case Finnish hip hop, is actually like and what the ‘deep’ structures of that cultural sphere are, and also how authenticity is constructed via these recurring micro-distinctions. The self-experience (as we will soon see in the interview extracts) of these three rappers is very different. Here, we can tap into the more unstable world of Finnish hip hop, and to the relative positionings and hence fractality within this system. This fractality is very much

¹⁶³ Blommaert et al. (2005: 202) also point to such fractal processes in the case of center-periphery dynamics, which do not occur only on the scale-level of the world, but also within states and cities, towns and neighborhoods.

'ordered'; it has a specific structure. The rap artists create centers and peripheries, their own world order, an order they hint at in their lyrics, as we saw in chapter 4, but dwell on in their interviews. Thus, while they point towards relatively 'stable' (i.e. presupposable) centers and peripheries in their lyrics, here we can see that they position themselves far more dynamically. One further point about scale needs to be made here: instead of 'a scope of understandability' (chapter 4), in another discursive layer of hip hop culture, the interviews (where there is an interlocutor), scale emerges in (the shape of) *relative (meta-)positionings* of the artists vis-à-vis each other, other artists and genres within the same Finnish hip hop scene. Thus, we see how the distinctions which organized scopes of understandability (in chapter 4), can here be 're-tuned' (and redeployed) in such a way that they mark different meanings in different domains. Here, 'scale' as a concept can be (or has the possibility to be) both 'horizontal' ('center'-'margin') and 'vertical' ('mainstream'/'top'-'underground'/'low') in nature.

To demonstrate these issues, I will now turn to the interviews with the artists and to Finnish hip hop as polycentric and fractal. Here, I aim to *complement* the picture we get of authenticity construction within Finnish hip hop - this is not a view contrary (or contradictory) to that gained in chapter 4, but rather, a more specific and nuanced one. The notion of en- and de-globalization, i.e. for example in the use of English in Finnish rap lyrics, can also be made use of in this chapter. Thus, while chapter 4 was about the uniformity of the Finnish hip hop genre, its en-globalizability (i.e. its global recognizability as a hip hop genre), chapter 5 will be about the de-globalizability of Finnish hip hop: the more uniform and recognizable Finnish hip hop becomes as a (genre) unit, the more it (also) starts splintering into all manner of micro-distinctions, such as the various neighborhoods in Helsinki, which, for the artists themselves, are fundamental in their construction of authenticity. Thus, the closer we look at the Finnish hip hop scene, the more fragmented it seems - and this fragmentariness is also recognized by the artists themselves. For example, Pyhimys *could* say (this is an imaginary example): "I don't want to be like Cheek, so I'd never make a reference to X".

In this chapter, I will first introduce the more general issues related to interviews (with the rap artists) and characterize (their) narratives and narrative positioning. I will then move on to the key analytical concepts: *centers*, *polycentricity*, *margins* and *peripheries* (section 5.2). Section 5.3 showcases examples of the centers and margins of Finnish hip hop and section 5.4 examines the debates on the quality of Finnish hip hop: what is considered good or best and what is not. In general, chapter 5 is be a (unique) case study on centers (within centers), margins (within margins), and/or centers within margins (and vice versa), and on the dynamics of moving or staying somewhere and trying to make sense of those positions. All in all, I aim to show the various dynamics, (un-)fixedness with regard to the scene in general, and the artists' positions in this scene. As the chapter proceeds, we will build a more

nuanced picture of authenticity, one that has to do with centers and margins of various kinds.

5.1 Introduction

The data of the present chapter revolve (mostly) around interviews. Bringing the artists' own voices 'onto the stage' is vital, as it helps me to explore authenticity issues from *their* point of view, and not on the basis of the lyrics and ethnographic observations alone. Here, it is also important to acknowledge the 'positioned' nature of the interviews – they project (co-constructed) visions of authenticity from the artists only (and not, for instance, fans or critics). As previously mentioned, my study can be viewed as an example of *hiphopography* (first explored and exemplified by Spady 1991¹⁶⁴; but see also e.g. Alim 2006a, 2006b, 2009a; Spady et al. 2006), which is a critical methodology that "integrates the varied approaches of ethnography, biography, and social, cultural, and oral history to arrive at an *emic* view of the culture" and forces academics "to directly engage with the cultural agents of the Hip Hop Culture-World, revealing rappers as critical interpreters of their own culture" (Alim 2006a: 11). Furthermore, hiphopography aims at explaining what it means "to *be* Hip Hop, to exist in a Hip Hop Culture-World, to possess a Hip Hop mode of being and way of viewing the world" (Spady et al. 2006: 29, emphasis original). This approach is "nonhierarchical and anticolonial" by its nature and it aims at "humaniz[ing] its subject" (Alim 2009a: 18; see also Spady 1991). In my study, hiphopography shows in the fact that I have engaged in discussions with the rap artists themselves about their various (critical) views on and their trajectories and positions in Finnish hip hop culture. I have considered it crucial also to foreground their voices, and not only the researcher's. In all of this, I consider them as 'equals' and do not place myself above them.

Interviews

I see an interview as a(n ordered) conversation (Blommaert & Dong 2010). This is what I have tried to accomplish when talking to the artists. As previously mentioned, the interviews were *theme interviews* (e.g. Hirsjärvi & Hurme 1980) (ordered, in that sense) – thus, I had a more or less thematic scheme in mind but the conversation also naturally grew in new (other) directions. By revealing bits and pieces of myself, too, I wanted to create a relaxed, conversation-like atmosphere in the interview situations. As a result of getting to know each other a bit more during the first interview, the second interview was much more open and easy-going.

¹⁶⁴ Later on, it was made use of in Spady, Dupres and Lee (1995): "Twisted tales in the hip hop streets of Philly" and in Spady, Alim and Lee (1999): "Street conscious rap", books to which I did not have access.

In focusing on specific themes, I always tried to ‘allow’ for new things and small anecdotes coming up, even if they ‘side-tracked’ the conversation (in my research universe), as they might (and often did) turn out to be the most fruitful data (cf. Blommaert & Dong 2010: 56). As Blommaert and Dong (2010: 56) argue, “the story provides you with contexts, experiences, motives, fragments of what Bourdieu called ‘practical reason’”. This refers to “the way in which people build argumentative constructs out of their socially and culturally conditioned experiences, and how such arguments help them to make sense of their world” (ibid.). In this research, the rap artists construct meanings from their own life experiences – this facilitates their own understanding of the(ir) world but also my reading into their life experiences. Finally, Blommaert and Dong (2010: 56–57) remind us that there is “no such thing as a bad interview” because the interlocutors’ “answers will reveal traces of their positions” – this is exactly what I aim at here, to find out bits and pieces about these rappers’ lives so as to be able to construct a position, or rather several positions, for them in the topography of Finnish hip hop.

During the interviews, I avoided paying too much attention to the recording device itself because I did not want the artists to feel bothered by it (although of course they might already be used to its presence in interviews by reporters). At times, it was difficult to know when to ‘actually’ start the interview (i.e. push the ‘record’ button), because the artists sometimes also shared very personal stories with me before we started talking about the specific themes of the interviews. Sometimes, in the midst, or at the end, of our conversation, the artists *were* aware of the recorder, such as when Stepa oriented and leaned towards the recorder in our third interview by thanking the recorder instead of me, at the end of our discussion. This was of course a joke on his part but it nevertheless made it clear that he had not completely forgotten about the recorder on the table.

After I had conducted all the interviews, I transcribed them.¹⁶⁵ As this research is also meant for an international audience, I have translated (from Finnish to English) the extracts that I chose as the final examples for the present analyses. No doubt some of the original meanings and messages may get blurred or lost in this process – they may not ‘travel’ globally – but I have tried my best to convey the (original) meanings.

Narratives

In all of the interview data, I focused on and chose to analyze the instances that deal with the central themes in this chapter, such as centers and margins and the quality debates in Finnish hip hop. I was interested in what the artists told me about themselves, their past, their current lives and possibly their futures, but also how they situated themselves, their genres and styles (thereby engaging in meta-talk about rap and hip hop), in relation to other people and other rappers, as well as places in the scene (and in Finland, in general). Thus, I have mainly focused on the ‘what’ in the analysis and in the artists’ narratives,

¹⁶⁵ See appendix 5 for the transcript symbols.

whether big or small, and whether self- or researcher-constructed (read more below).

However, also important is the meta-level of communication: *how* the rap artists tell me something about themselves or others, about their music or the scene in general. Thus, whenever it became relevant or significant to the story itself, I have also paid attention to how they speak about these issues. First, the 'how' aspect can refer to specific structures, such as repetition (of certain words) or silence. It can also mean using particular voices or other people's voices (Bakhtin 1981). In that case, I have then considered whose (or what) 'voices' these are, how the rappers make use of them and with what consequences, and, if there are many, overlapping or conflicting voices, how these are articulated in relation to one another. These voices can also be indexical of different things. Thus, if the stories include silence, repetition, different ways of speaking or different voices, or any kind of 'stylization', i.e. "project[ing] personas, identities and genres other than those that are presumedly current in the speech event" and "dislocat[ing] a speaker and utterances from the immediate speaking context" (Coupland 2001: 350; see also Coupland 2007), which shed more light on the central themes, I will analyze them but I have not performed a systematic analysis on this meta-level throughout the data set.

In my analysis I have both searched for (small) narratives in the artists' accounts as well as constructed them myself out of the bits and pieces the artists have shared with me. Similarly to Silverman (2009: 45), I do not regard the interviews, or the artists' responses, as "giving direct access to 'experience'". Rather, the interviewer's questions and comments are "part of the process through which a narrative is collectively assembled" and not direct "gateways to the authentic account" (Silverman 2009: 47; see also Gubrium & Holstein 2009: 41-53). Consequently, I also describe these interviews in a narrative and chronological way in my analysis. This can be seen in descriptions such as: "first I asked Stepa X, then he replied Y and I wanted to know more about X".

By narratives, I refer here to three (partly overlapping) definitions and approaches. First, I understand narratives as *small stories* (Bamberg 2004; Georgakopoulou 2007; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008), an alternative to canonical narratives, such as "tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared or known events" (Georgakopoulou 2010: 396). Such narratives are also 'small' in terms of the pages of transcript that they produce (ibid.). Metaphorically, 'the small' can refer to "the smallness of talk, where fleeting moments of narrative orientation to the world (Hymes 1996) can be easily missed out on by an analytical lens which only takes fully-fledged stories as the prototype" (ibid.). Thus, focusing also on these 'small stories', we can learn a great deal about these rappers and their positions within the field. In this work, small stories refer to the (sometimes incoherent, imprecise and 'unfinished') every-day stories that the artists shared with me in the interview situation, whether about themselves or about their relationship to other people, music or the scene in general. One such small story is that of Stepa in the metro station in Helsinki, trying to buy a ticket (see extract 3), a story which arose from my

asking if he is ever recognized on the streets by people, by fans, outside Sodankylä and Lapland.

Secondly, I am interested in the rappers' *trajectories*: their life paths and the different incidents, events, phases and stages in their lives. In addition, I see that one's trajectory can include several biographical *life stories* (see e.g. Atkinson 1998), those of a student or a rapper, for instance. In this, I adopt Wenger's (1998: 154) view of trajectory not as "a fixed course or a fixed destination" but as "continuous motion", which "has a coherence through time that connects the past, the present and the future". Here, I will mainly focus on the professional and artistic aspects, instead of the very personal life that has to do with their families and friends. This view on narrative includes my construction of it, as a researcher.

Finally, narratives can refer to *sociocultural and political discourses* on a macro-level. The rappers can orient to, share their views on as well as 'voice' these larger stories – and also modify and recreate them – in addition to their own stories, possibly also linking these two levels together. In their own narratives, they can thus invoke particular discourse worlds but it is then the researcher who constructs them into being.

Here, it is also important, from the perspective of discourse analysis (and studies), to take into account the *historical nature* of these texts (i.e. interviews and the narratives in them), i.e. in what ways they are historical, and the specific position or stance these rap artists are speaking from. They can be seen as "speak[ing] *from* a particular point in history, and they always speak *on* history (cf. Blommaert 2005: 126, emphasis added). This is what I (also) aim to characterize here.

Narrative positioning

Bamberg (1997; see also Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008) has, in fact, discussed narratives (as an interactive activity) from the specific viewpoint of *positioning* (which he adopts from Davies & Harré 1990). In conversations, and in narrating and storytelling, "people position themselves in relation to one another in ways that traditionally have been defined as roles". Moreover, people thereby "'produce' one another (and themselves) situationally as 'social beings'" (Bamberg 1997: 336). According to him, positioning takes place on three levels. Positioning level 1 deals with "how the characters [are] positioned in relation to one another within the reported events" – for example, the storyteller, 'the self', as a protagonist or a victim in relation to the others in the story. Positioning level 2, in turn, discusses how "the speaker position[s] him- or herself to the audience" – in this case, to me as the researcher – at the 'level of tellership'. Finally, positioning on level 3, refers to how "narrators position themselves to themselves" – thus, to various 'identity claims' ('who am I?') and social discourses *beyond* the here-and-now content and the interlocutor(s). (Bamberg 1997: 337; Georgakopoulou 2008: 380.)

The systematic investigation of positioning is not a key aim in my analysis of the artist interviews, except, in connection with the analysis of the artists'

'identity' (or (dis)identification) claims vis-à-vis authenticity, which could, in fact, be seen as involving an analysis of positioning level 3.¹⁶⁶ The analysis of positioning levels 1 and 2, in turn, is less central. However, at times, observation of positioning by the interviewees, in particular, can offer additional evidence of the ways in which they orient to various centers of norms, margins and periphery (or not). The analysis of positioning level 1 becomes most relevant in discussing the stories they tell me, involving references to and accounts of various people and events, within which they *position themselves to others* in particular (narrative) roles. For example, Stepa's story of his first encounter with the Helsinki metro is such a story where positioning level 1 becomes meaningful (extract 3 below). Observations on positioning level 2, in turn, become relevant when my and the artist's participant roles, or shifts in them, appear as in some way salient in the interview. An example of this kind of (general) positioning would be the way in which the artists - and I myself - orient to the interview *as an interview*: I ask questions as a researcher (somewhat knowledgeable about the scene) and they reply as artists in the scene. Observations on occasional shifts in the interviews involving our re-positioning ourselves, or our (dis)alignment in relation to certain topics, also illustrate positioning level 2.

Next, I will discuss the key local concepts applied in the analysis, viz. polycentricity, centers, margins and periphery, that assist us in describing the positions and trajectories of these three rap artists.

5.2 Central concepts: polycentricity, centers, margins, peripheries

This section engages with the concepts of *polycentricity*, *centers*, *margins* and *peripheries*. They are useful for the purposes of the present study because they help me to characterize the multifaceted nature of the Finnish hip hop scene, and the artists themselves, as well as their positions, trajectories and mutual relationships and positionings.

5.2.1 Polycentricity and centers

In the concept of *polycentricity*, 'center' is understood as an evaluative authority that people *orient towards*, and according to which they behave, in communication. This center can be an individual (teachers, parents, idols), collective (peer groups, subcultural groups) or an abstract entity (the nation state, the church, consumer culture). Whenever we communicate with each other, there is always what Bakhtin (1986) called a 'super-addressee' present in the interaction, in addition to our most immediate interlocutors. This center or super-addressee 'provides' the norms and the level of appropriateness in a

¹⁶⁶ As the titles of many of the extracts indicate, the focus is indeed on the various 'identity' claims the artists make in the interviews.

given context. Of course, there is never a single center in communication but rather multiple norm-providing centers, hence the term 'polycentricity'. (Blommaert 2010: 39–40.) What Bakhtin (1984: 6) characterized as 'polyphony', in reference to the "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses" in Dostoyevsky's novels, has much in common with the sociolinguistic notion of multiple norm batteries. The term polycentricity, however, focuses not so much on describing things but on interpreting them, with its focus on the social structures of power and inequality. Although the available batteries of norms are multiple, they are still not necessarily equal, accessible and open to all. Some centers systematically overrule others, such as bureaucratic ones compared to personal ones. (Blommaert 2010: 40–41.)

In the case of hip hop culture and authenticity construction, rap artists orient towards various centers of norms and they do this on several scale-levels. On a very local scale, they may see their own posse as one of the centers providing norms for their actions: communication, language, habitus and technique. On a more global scale, they may look up to an American rap artist and adopt and adapt his style into their own version (see e.g. Blommaert 2007 for an analysis of a South African radio DJ orienting towards the norms of Jamaican Reggae culture). People, thus the(se) rappers as well, always behave with reference to such evaluative authorities, i.e. centers – "an authority over clusters of semiotic features, including thematic domains, places, people (roles, identities, relationships), and semiotic styles (including linguistic varieties, modes of performance, etc.)" (Blommaert 2010: 39). Certain topics and contexts require certain semiotic styles, roles and relationships. For example, a rapper speaks as an expert when s/he is using a particular hip hop register, thereby indexing his/her membership in a hip hop community – and in other contexts, s/he may speak as a novice about other topics (see Blommaert 2010: 39–40).

In exploring London's Chinatown, Huang (2010: 58–59) observed that the place is "polycentric, and this polycentricity is the effect of a historical shift". Although Finnish hip hop is not a (physical, geographical) 'place' as such (comparable to London's Chinatown), we can nevertheless see it as a meaningful space, a reference point for Finnish rap artists. In this view of Finnish hip hop as a polycentric 'place', we can see a 'historical shift' consisting of globalization processes, which is actualized in the movement of 'transcultural flows' (Pennycook 2007a) from one place to another. In their research on 'internet hip hop' and one particular Chinese rap artist, Varis and Wang (2011: 81) concluded that "authenticity [...] is done by orienting towards different multiscale – and hence polycentric – sets of normativities", whereby the particular rapper of the study embraced other norms, such as 'global' hip hop English, and rejected others, such as 'national' Chinese opera.

Thus, all kinds of forces and norms are at play in hip hop culture, when discussing, for example, the language use in a community, such as the Finnish hip hop community. Some norms come from the outside, such as from the 'original' hip hop culture in the US, in the form of (African American Vernacular) English. Other norms can come from within the local Finnish hip

hop scene, urging instead the use of (spoken vernacular) Finnish. Thus, the Finnish hip hop scene can be “seen as a locus for constant negotiation and compromise concerning language choices” (cf. Huang 2010: 58–59 on the ‘languages’ in the immigrant community in Chinatown).

Furthermore, the concept (and idea) of polycentricity supports what I said earlier about the *proleptic dimension of communication*: we always have to *guess* the ‘center’ in relation to which people will understand what we say, because *every* social situation is always inevitably polycentric. Polycentricity underscores the *uncertainty* that characterizes the production of meaning, and the determining role of its uptake.

One further point of the concept of ‘center’ is still to be made here. As described in section 3.2 on the artists and their ‘places’, the nature of a center, depending on the context, can be economic, cultural, political, educational, and so on. It is also important to keep these characterizations in mind when speaking of a ‘centrality’ of a given place. A place can be central in all of the ways described above, a nexus of centralities, but it can also only be ‘central’ in one respect, but not in others.

5.2.2 Margins and peripheries

Margins and *marginal* is a spatial metaphor for being outside, on the edge, on the side. Consequently, ‘marginalization’ refers to “being beneath, behind or outside”. (Jokinen et al. 2004: 12–13.) ‘Margins’ are not unified places, and there are always margins within margins. ‘Margin’ can either be an ‘objective’ concept, for example a rural area versus a cosmopolitan city, or it can be a subjective concept, an *experience* of being marginal. Thus, people can feel excluded or marginalized even when they are ‘objectively’ in a center – and even vice versa (this will be important when we look at the interview data).

Margins and centers need one another; they construct each other as (seemingly) opposites. When speaking about marginalization, we are not only considering what is in the margins, on the edge, but also what is in the center, and thus perceived as normal. (Helne 2002; Jokinen 2004: 76.) Looking from the margins, we immediately spot these boundaries, when they are crossed or violated. A significant point to keep in mind regarding margin/center dynamics are “the particular ways that each is codependent and mutually influential as a set of social forces” (Forman 2002: 12). The two should not be seen simply as opposites but rather connected and interrelated, while also contested and struggled over (*ibid.*). The relationship between margins and centers is thus tense and always in the state of flux.

The concept of margins is multifaceted: while a person can be in the center in one walk of life, such as being highly educated, s/he can be in the margins in another, such as being an immigrant, outside ‘mainstream’ society and culture. Being and living in the margins need not be viewed only in a negative light – it can also be a desirable choice for someone. In fact, rap artists may “embrace aspects of marginality while they resist marginalization” (Fraley 2009: 50), thus being marginal on their own terms. Just as there are no unified margins, there is

no one, unified center – rather it can be and mean several things to different people. (Helne 2002; Jokinen et al. 2004: 13.) ‘Margins’ can refer to economic, political or cultural aspects, and they often intertwine (similarly to ‘centers’ and ‘centrality’). It is important to ask: who defines, or has the authority and power to define the margins? The concept is thus very complex and ambiguous.

But whereas ‘marginal’ is in the margins of anything – societal, social, economic, educational margins (e.g. Jokinen et al. 2004) – *peripheral* refers to geography, to geographical margins (e.g. de Blij 2008).¹⁶⁷ In this sense, the center of the world in the world system is often argued to be in the North (and in the West), as opposed to the South (and the East), which are typically characterized as peripheral areas of the globe. In Finland, interestingly, the opposite is true: the North is in the geographical margins, in the periphery (as we saw in section 4.5 in the case of Sodankylä). According to the *World System Analysis* (envisioned and developed by Immanuel Wallerstein 1983, 2001), the world is seen as divided into ‘centers’, ‘semiperipheries’ and ‘peripheries’, based on their division of labor (Blommaert et al. 2005: 201). In this “system of capitalist production”, the peripheries depend economically on the centers and provide basic resources (e.g. minerals) for them (ibid.). Lapland can be seen as an example of this kind of ‘resource provider’.

The image, however, is not always as clear-cut, since ‘peripheral’ can also be an ambiguous and multifaceted concept. For example, the Finnish people living in the North may not view their locations as necessarily peripheral or remote; rather, they form the centers of their own lives, on a very local scale. In chapter 4, we encountered images of and from the periphery via Stepa in his lyrics of “Made in Sodankylä” – he speaks simultaneously from within and outside Sodankylä. We can see that the local periphery is also a global periphery – and, consequently, “being marginal in [Sodankylä] is also meaningful in the world” (Blommaert 2010: 76), although its message is meant mainly for local, and Finnish, people. But while Sodankylä remains in the national margins and periphery, it is also a global center because of the film festival – therefore making the issue more complex.

Thus, in my study, ‘center’, ‘margin’ and ‘periphery’ will appear as *fractal* concepts, i.e. ones that appear (recur) on several scale-levels but always index different things on them. We continually (re)produce and (re)construct ‘centers’ and margins’ in various mundane and institutional practices, as well as ourselves as opposed to the ‘Other’. We also create beliefs about the places to which the ‘Other’ and I each belong – along with the rights and responsibilities that go with ‘that place’. (Jokinen et al. 2004: 10–11.)

In general, when looking at both ‘centers’ (of various kinds) and ‘margins’ or ‘peripheries’ (of various kinds) it is important to keep in mind the *subjective* ‘sense of place’ (Forman 2002: 29), and how human beings, thus also rap artists,

¹⁶⁷ Kemmuru, a Finnish rap group, literally argue in their previously mentioned “How 2 survive” song that: “periferia on ihan eri area” (‘periphery is a completely different area’), thereby indexing their origins and their different nature with reference to cities, for example Helsinki, where both of the MCs of the group have, nevertheless, moved.

actively transform ‘space’ into a particular ‘place’, to which they attach different kinds of meanings and feelings (Forman 2002: 28). Pennycook (2010: 80, following Massey 1994), also sees “space and place as intertwined rather than juxtaposed, place being a specific articulation of space, and both being far more dynamic categories than mere context”. Given the experiential and subjective dimension of ‘place’ and its connection to hip hop, we need to look at how the three rappers have ‘internalized’ such orientations to centers and, alternatively, margins or periphery into their artistic habitus. That is what the interviews are very useful for: finding the subjective dimensions of the ‘objective’ themes, topics and loci they engage with and represent in their work. In the interviews, these rappers talk about movement across spaces that are ‘ranked’ in a ‘*stratigraphy*’, in multiple layers of (subjective) centers–margins.

All of these central notions, ‘polycentricity’, ‘centers’, ‘margins’ and ‘periphery’, help me to characterize, first of all, the construction of authenticity in the Finnish hip hop scene and its various ‘loci’. These concepts clarify the dynamics of the multifaceted Finnish hip hop scene, in general, but also, more specifically, the artists themselves, their trajectories and positions (and changes in them), as well as their relationship vis-à-vis the other rappers and genres in the scene. In the analysis, we will see precisely how Finnish hip hop is polycentric – how it navigates in relation to various centers and margins. Next, in section 5.3, the focus is specifically on various kinds of centers and margins in the artists’ own lives, their (im)mobility, positions and trajectories.

5.3 Centers and margins

In this section, we move on to the actual interview analysis of the three artists: Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa. Here, I aim to explore issues of authenticity vis-à-vis centers and margins: the artists’ (im)mobility, their trajectories and positions, their (dis)identifications in these centers and margins, and their relation to other people and other rappers. I examine these because, first, as we have already seen both on the theoretical (cf. chapter 2) and analytical level (cf. for instance section 4.5 on Stepa), ‘place’ and ‘space’ have an undeniably large significance in the practices and discourse(s) of hip hop culture and rap music – as well as in the construction of authenticity (Bennett 2004; Forman 2002; also Rose 1994; Mitchell 2001a; Alim et al. 2009). Secondly, the particular issue of centers and margins is a complex and multifaceted one in hip hop. While constructing themselves as authentic, rappers always occupy certain positions in the scene, whether in the center, or in the margins, whether intentionally or not. They continually self-construct these positions as well as are positioned by others (other rappers, fans, media, etc.). Center has multiple meanings for them, as does margins.

In the analysis, I focus on the narratives (small stories, trajectories as well as sociocultural and political discourses) that relate to the theme of centers and margins (I deal with the ‘how’ question, i.e. how they told these stories to me,

where this is necessary for the theme). It is important to remember that although the artists' stories are divided here into two sections, 5.3 and 5.4, the categories are very much linked to one another and the discourses that arise from them build on and relate to each other (cf. Silverman 2009: 47). There is thus some overlap between these two sections and some examples could (also) fit into both sections. I will discuss this overlap as such examples arise.

5.3.1 Mobile trajectories

Extracts 1–3 tell us mainly of the *geographical* margins and centers within Finland – and the artists' trajectories (and positions) from and in these loci.

Extract 1: Cheek: complex relationship with Lahti and representing Töölö

The first extract is from the second interview I had with Cheek (May 29, 2012 in a cafeteria in Helsinki). Here, I analyze the way in which Cheek describes and characterizes his past: his home and history in Lahti as well as his current situation: his life in Töölö in Helsinki. I aim to explore issues that have to do with margins and centers, in one form or another. Before this extract we had talked about the geography of Finnish hip hop and rap and I had asked Cheek, where, in his opinion, rap music is made in Finland. In this extract, we are talking about where he makes his music and which places are and have been significant for him.

- Elina [...] tota mite sie oot sit. sie oot ite tehny musiikkii niinku Lahessa ja Helsingissä eikö?
[[...] so how did you then. you yourself have made music in like Lahti and in Helsinki, right?]
- Cheek joo
[yea]
- Elina onks tääl mitään niinku. tai miten sie näät niinku niitten paikkojen tai kaupunkien roolit sun. sun uralle?
[are there any here like. or how do you see the roles of those places or towns for your. your career?]
- Cheek mä yritän /mä oon/
[I try to /I have/]
- Elina /tai musiikille/
[/or music/]
- Cheek mä oon ollu vihanen Lahdelle ni mä oon yrittäny tota. pienentää sen roolii mun musas mut en mä sit voi oikeesti tehdä sillee et... se on... s- varsinkaan niinku... en mä voi tai en mä kyl. ni en mä oo yrittäny ehkä sitä mun historiast poistaa tietenkää
[I've been angry at Lahti so I've tried to. diminish its role in my music but I can't really do it like that actually cos... it is... i-especially cos.... I can't or I haven't. yea I haven't tried to delete it maybe from my history obviously]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek ehkä enemmänki täst päivästä
[maybe more from today]
- Elina okei

- Cheek [okey]
 mutta. mutta tota... vähän niinku nään että. et mähän en niinku ilman Lahtee
 ni en mäkään varmaan tee tai en mä /en mä usko/
 [but. but like.... I kinda see that. that without Lahti I wouldn't do or I don't
 /I don't think/]
- Elina /et sie ois tässä/
 [/you wouldn't be here/]
- Cheek en mä usko et mä tekisin musaa ees... et... se niinku oli sopivan.kokonen se
 kasvualusta mulle
 [I don't think that I'd even be making music.... so.... it was like a suitable.
 size that breeding ground for me]
- Elina mm
 [mm]
- Cheek nii et sielt oli helpompi nousta esii mut siel oli kuitenkin tarpeeks.. öö. follow
 uppii et sä pystyit tuntee olevas jotenki merkit-merkittävä
 [so that from there it was easier to rise up but there was still enough... mm.
 follow-up that you could feel somehow meaning-meaningful]
- Elina nii just
 [yea exactly]
- Cheek ja sitä kautta just saada sen olon et täs on jotain järkee
 [and through that to get a feeling that there's some sense in this]
- Elina mm. minkä takii sie oot sit. vihanen. Lahdelle? /mikset/
 [why are you then. mad. at Lahti? /why don't/]
- Cheek /sie-sie-/ jotenki kukaa ei oo profeetta omal maallaan. sen mä tajusin jossai
 vaihees siel vaa et
 [/the-the-/ somehow nobody is a prophet in their own land. that's what I
 realized there at some point that]
- Elina okei
 [okey]
- Cheek sielt oli sit hyvä päästä pois.. ja ja sitte taas se et. se niinku siin vaihees ku mä
 muutin Lahdesta.. nii saamari samana vuonnahan mun niinku ura. tärähti
 ihan älyttömään nousuun et en mä tiedä. niilki asioil saattaa olla joku..
 [it was good to get out of there.. and and then again. that like when I moved
 from Lahti... so hell it was the same year my career. got this incredible boom
 so I don't know. those things might have some sort of..]
- Elina yhteys
 [connection]
- Cheek nii yhteys
 [yea connection]

Here, I initially frame our discussion by suggesting that for him Helsinki and Lahti are important places. Cheek confirms this. When I then move on to ask what kinds of roles they have had in his career he says that he has been mad at Lahti, his hometown, and tried to diminish its role in his music. He admits that he cannot remove its role from the past but that maybe he is trying to move it from his current life. Nevertheless, it has had a significant role for him: without it, he would probably not be making music. Lahti was of suitable size: there were enough fans ('follow-up') there. Here, Cheek *positions* himself in the story as an (admired) artist vis-à-vis Lahti and the fan base (cf. Bamberg 1997). When I then asked more specifically about why he has been mad at Lahti, he does not

give a clear answer – he simply realized at some point that “nobody is a prophet in their own land”. At this point, there is a kind of *a break* in his narrative, as he does not elaborate on the reasons behind his being mad at Lahti. He only states that it was good to get away from there and that the same year he moved from Lahti to Helsinki, his career “got this incredible boom”. Here, we see a clear example of ‘upscaling’: compared to Helsinki, Lahti is in the geographical margins (although only 100 km north from Helsinki), and most importantly, in the cultural margins, at least compared to Helsinki.

It is worth pointing out here, however, that the rap group 5th element, which Cheek was part of, was influential there earlier and that Brädi, Cheek’s ‘hype man’ and rap colleague, still lives in and ‘represents’ Lahti. Thus, on a more local and even regional level, Lahti is (and has been) a very influential cultural center for local rap artists and fans, as can also be seen in Cheek’s ‘follow-up’ remark and in how this particular center had been important for him at an earlier stage in his life, because it made him feel ‘meaningful’ in terms of what he was doing. But, when Cheek moved to *the* center, Helsinki, he also became central music-wise: his career took off in a big way for the first time. Thus here we can see that Cheek concretely moved from the margins to the center, in many meanings of the words. In fact, the moment he moved, Lahti was ‘transformed’ from a regional center into a margin in his trajectory.

- Elina no mites sit Helsinki? onks tää niinku.. onks tääl jotai erityisiä. paikkoja tai kaupunginosia mil on erityinen merkitys sulle? /Töölö?/
[so how about Helsinki? is this like... are there any special. places or areas which have a special meaning for you? /Töölö?/]
- Cheek /no ohan/ toi Töölö nii. mä oon ostanu sellasen aatteen et se on mun juttu.. tota. on sit aina kiva oikeestaa ollukki vähä niinku edustaa jotai
[/well yea/ that Töölö yea. I’ve bought the thought that it’s my thing.. yea. it’s always been nice to kinda represent something]
- Elina mm.. no sitä mie just aattelin et ku ei. tai yleensä et jos on niinku alunperin Helsingistä ni sitte.. se alue tulee ehkä just siitä et mis on kasvanu tai
[mm.. that’s what I thought cos like no. or usually if you’re originally from Helsinki so then.. the area maybe comes from where you’ve grown up or]
- Cheek joo
[yea]
- Elina asunu suurimman osan elämästä mut.. siulle se tulee tota muuton kautta sitte
[lived for the most part of your life but.. for you it comes through moving then]
- Cheek joo joo siis ylipäättää et ehän mikään siis koe olevani mikää pitkän linjan töölöläinen mut must on kiva haippaa jotai ihan vaa et tää on paras mesta
[yea yea like on the whole like I don’t feel like a long-term Töölö resident but it’s nice to hype just something like this’s the best joint]
- Elina (naurua)
[(laughter)]
- Cheek niinku /ku ei/
[like/cos not/]
- Elina /kuuluuks sekini/ siihen räppikliseisiin et pitää /niinku änäs/?
[/does it belong /to the rap clichés too that you sort of /have to/?]

- Cheek /e:i/ vaan ylipäättään niinku jos jos mä juttelen mun. si-siit just juttelen mun kavereiden kanssaki. ni sit mä oon aina et Töölö Töölö tääl tääl oli sitä ja tätä ja @Töölös äänestettiin vähiten perussuomalaisia@
 [/no::/ just in general like if I'm talking with my. ab-about that talking with my friends. so then I'm always like Töölö Töölö here here it was this and that and @Töölö people voted the least for The Finns@]
- Elina (naurua)
 [(laughter)]
- Cheek se se /sellast niinku/
 [it it /that kinda/]
- Elina /siit voi olla ylpeä/
 [/that you can be proud of/]
- Cheek nii no siit voi olla tosi ylpee se tota öö. öö. tota tota se niinku. on enemmänki.. sillee vaa ha- et. haluu sillei jollai tietyl pienellä levelillä.. öö
 [/yea well you can be really proud of that. mm.mm. like like it's like. more like... in a way wa-wanting to on some specific small level.. mm/]
- Elina erottautua?
 [distinguish?]
- Cheek ni olla olla.. niinku dig- pitää omiensa puolta.
 [so be be.. so like dig- like defend your own.]
- Elina mm
 [mm]
- Cheek siinähan se itse asias on. ja mikä on ollu aina. niinku oli se sitte niinku henkilöitä tai mitä tahansa. sä pidät sitä. sitä niinku sä oot aina /niinku omies puolella/
 [that's what it actually is. and what has always been. like whether it's people or whatever. you defend that. that you're always like /defending your own/]
- Elina /eli Töölön puolella/
 [/so on Töölö's side/]
- Cheek nii. eli jos jos sä nyt vittu. ((iPhone-tekstiviestiääni)) e-edustat täs tätä hommaa niin nii tota... edustat täs tätä hommaa nii sä sun täytyy olla sen puolella
 [yea. so if you're fucking like ((iPhone text message sound)) rep-representing this thing here so so... representing this stuff right here so you have to stand up for it]
- Elina mm
 [mm]
- Cheek niinku jos sillee vaa... tai mitä mitä mä nyt selitän siis... mm... löytää s-ne. la-laittaa ne niinku omat kans juur- tai ne niinku. ankkuri heittää johonki
 [like if when... or what what am I explaining now... mm... find i-them. pu-put those like your own roo- or like those. throw the anchor somewhere]
- Elina nii nii. eli nyt se on Töölössä se ankkuri? /täl hetkellä?/
 [yea yea. so now the anchor's in Töölö?/at the moment?/]
- Cheek /joo joo/ joo. ja tota emmä sano siis. on tääl muitaki kivoi paikkoi tääl Helsingis mut se on iha hauskaa vaa.. reppaa jotai
 [/yea yea/ yea. and like I'm not saying. there's other nice places here in Helsinki too but it's just fun to... represent something]

Moving the discussion away from Lahti, I then ask more specifically about Helsinki and its significant places and, again, frame the discussion with Töölö,

since I know (beforehand) that he lives in that particular neighborhood. He confirms it and says that he has “bought the idea that it’s his thing”. However, there does not seem to be a deeper and more meaningful connection between him and this place since “it’s been always nice to represent something” and he “likes to hype ... something as the best place”. Interestingly, he does not link this to the typical ‘rap representation of a place’ (e.g. Forman 2002; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003) – but rather denies my suggestion (“is it part of the rap clichés?”). The only specific thing he mentions about hyping the place is that, when he is talking with his friends, he often says something about Töölö, for instance, that Töölö residents voted *the least* (of all the places in Helsinki?) for *The Finns* (this political party was briefly discussed in section 4.4 on “Bättre folk”). This he does in an animated voice, in a ‘proud’ (and loud) way, emphasizing the importance (or, alternatively, triviality) of this small anecdote. Here, we can see a connection with political ideologies, since The Finns are a nationalist populist party that gained (sudden) popularity in the 2011 parliamentary elections, winning 39 seats. In our discussion, I then reveal a bit about my political stance when I say that it (i.e. voting the least for this party) is something to be proud of and Cheek further emphasizes: “really proud”. In fact, words such as ‘proud’ can be seen to articulate the subjective aspects of place and centering (although, here, it was me, who initiated the use of this particular word). Here, we can see Cheek and I aligning (positioning alike; Bamberg 1997) in the political field, at least as regards this particular populist party. This one small thing he mentions about Töölö indexes strong *dis-identification*: he does *not* align himself with this party.

Although he does not mention it here, he identifies with *Kokoomus*, the National Coalition party, as we have already seen above (section 4.3). In fact, Töölö has traditionally been a bastion of the bourgeois political parties, such as *Kokoomus* and *RKP* (“The Swedish People’s Party”) (Lankinen 1998: 76). But although his geographical placement is nowadays in Töölö, he does not seem to have a strong mental connection with it (at least not at the time of the interview or in connection with my particular questions). It almost seems like a random choice but, then again, if we compare it to Pyhimys’ neighborhood, Kallio, it is much posher, and not as ‘working class’ or ‘multicultural’ (see section 3.2 for characterizations of Töölö and Kallio). Hence, Cheek must have had his reasons for moving to this particular area, although he does not elaborate on them here. After the discussion on Töölö and The Finns, Cheek moves the discussion onto the more general level of “being on one’s own people’s side” and that now, he has cast his anchor in Töölö, thereby suggesting that it, nevertheless, is ‘his place’ and thus also ‘a center’ (of a kind) for his life, on the micro-level of topography.

- Elina mut onks ne juuret kuitenkin sitte.. ne on niinku syvät ja merkittävät yhä niinku Lahessa sitte?
 [but are these roots anyway like.. they’re like deep and meaningful. still like in Lahti then?]
- Cheek nojoo siis mul mul on siis /sen kautta että/

- Elina [well yea I I have/through that/]
/perhe?/
[/family?/]
- Cheek joo. ja sit se vaa sen kautta et et mä en ois niinku ilman Lahtee pystyny tota. tekee tät. mut en mä sit enää reppaa
[yea. and through that I couldn't have without Lahti. like do this. but I don't rep it anymore]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek en mä en mä reppaa sit ollenkaa. mä oon mä oon kääntäny takin niin sanotusti. siin vaihees /ku must/
[I don't I don't rep it at all. I have I have turned my coat so to speak. at a point /when I/]
- Elina /nii et ei tulis/ mieleenkää täl hetkel kirjottaa mitää /Lahti/?
[/so it wouldn't/ even cross your mind to write anything /Lahti now/?]
- Cheek /ei. ei/ todellakaa. mä oon kääntäny takin. varmaan vähä niinku sen jälkeen ku must tuntu et mulle käännettiin takki siellä
[/no. no/ definitely not. I've turned my coat. probably a bit after when I felt that they turned their coats there]
- Elina okei. nii just
[okey. yea exatly]
- Cheek ni sen jälkeen mä oon kääntäny mun takin kans ihan täysin. en mä niinku en mä enkä mä myöskään. ikinä niinku elämäs oo niitten puolel myöskään. niinku jos puhutaan nyt vaikka just tota. vaik niinku. niinku myös ihmisistä et et jos sä oot niinku mun kans ni mä oon sun kans ja mä oon niinku tosi lojaali tyyppi
[so after that I've also turned my coat like completely. I won't like I won't and I won't either. ever in life be on their side either. like if we're talking now here like about. for example like. about people so so if you're like with me then I'm with you and I'm like a really loyal person]
- Elina nii
[yea]
- Cheek s- mä oon niinku sellai periaatteiden niinku. oikee hitto
[i-I'm like principles like. hell really]
- Elina mies
[man]
- Cheek nii. to-to-todella sellane.. ja ja mä oon aina niinku lojaali ja ja.. niitten omien puolella. ja sitte jos sä et oo mun puolella ni sit sä oot jonkun toisen puolella et
[yea. re-re-really like that.. and and I'm always like loyal and and.. on my people's side. and then if you're not on my side then you're on somebody else's side that]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek sit mäkään en oo sun puolella
[so then I'm not on your side either]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Cheek ja jos puhutaan näin niinku noist asuinpaikoista niin tota ei mul. en mä ei mul oo niinku pienintäkää. halua. edustaa Lahtee jos ne ei oo niinku mun puolella

- [and if we talk about like about like these living places so I don't. I don't I have like no. desire. to represent Lahti if they're not like on my side]
- Elina nii just.. joo..
[yea exactly.. yea..]
- Cheek siinä s-. siinä se oikeest on et miks. mä. olisin edustanu enää Lahtee. ku se ei nimenomaan. nii mä en tuntenu minkäänäköst sellast vastarakkaut silt kaupungilt
[so ther-. there it is actually so why would. I. have represented Lahti anymore. cos it really didn't. cos I didn't feel I was getting any kind of love back from that town]
- Elina niinii... okei. tuo on jännä. jotenki tota.. tollane kahtiajako mut siis tottakai mie niinku ymmärrän sen
[yeayea... okey. that's interesting. somehow like.. that kinda division but of course I like understand that]
- Cheek se on hauska /mä luulen et se on aika/
[it's funny /I think it is/]
- Elina /must tuntuu et/
[/I feel that/]
- Cheek mä us-uskon et tää on aika niinku.. ku yks toi kotiseuturakkaus on se yks näist teemoista ni toi on aika niinku.. ihan hauska esimerkki siitä et miten se niinku voi kääntyä se
[I fe-feel like that it's pretty like.. cos that regionalism is that one of these themes so that is pretty like.. a pretty funny example of how it can turn around like]
- Elina mm. niinpä
[mm. yup]
- Cheek homma ja silti mä tunnen sen kiitollisuuden sit kaupunkii kohtaa
[that thing and still I feel gratitude towards that city]
- Elina kyllä
[yes]
- Cheek niinku urast
[like about my career]

Triggered by Cheek's earlier mentioning of his 'roots', I then ask if his roots are nevertheless still "deep and meaningful in Lahti". He affirms my suggestion about his family but also refers to how he could not have 'made it' without Lahti. He then quickly adds that he does not rep(resent) it any longer – and that he has turned his coat (probably, in fact, meaning 'turned his back', i.e. abandoned, rejected), right after he felt that Lahti turned its coat (i.e. back) on him. He elaborates and extends his points: he is an extremely loyal person who is 'with you', if you are 'with him' – and, on the other hand, if you are not, then you are against him. This topic of loyalty he also deals with in a (previously mentioned) song of his "Jos mä oisin sä" ('If I were you') (2009), whereby he emphasizes the importance of mutual respect and support between friends and between an artist and his supporters. Cheek then gets back to the Lahti topic and says that he does not have the slightest desire to represent Lahti, if/when they are not on his side, 'with him'. Towards the end of this topic, he mentions this as a funny example of how *regionalism* (a typical rap theme, as seen in section 2.2.3; and, often, a 'source' of authenticity) can actually turn around, but

how he nevertheless feels “gratitude towards that city about his career”, because that is where he made his name. Here we can see how Cheek feels that his ‘center’ (at the time) abandoned him, which caused him to leave. Thus, Cheek positions himself here as ‘innocent’ (or a ‘victim’) (but also as ‘grateful’) and Lahti as the ‘traitor’ (but also as a place enabling a career start). These positionings might have been done this way to elicit empathy from me (cf. Bamberg 1997: 338), which seems to work, because I emphatically say “of course I understand him”.

The narrative foregrounds and describes a complex relationship with home and origins: it is both about abandonment and respect and gratitude. He seems to blame Lahti for abandoning him first, but he is simultaneously grateful for the opportunities it offered him at the beginning of his career. At first, Lahti is thus seen as a regional ‘center’, which enables Cheek to start his rap career. When Cheek moves to Helsinki, Lahti becomes *marginal* for him, geographically, socially and culturally. It has been noted in terms of authenticity in hip hop that one’s *roots* are always highlighted and emphasized (e.g. Forman 2002; McLeod 1999): Cheek is no exception here either. He also brings out, highlights and acknowledges that his ‘roots’ are in Lahti. What he does not specifically address here (nor do I ask about it) is that his two current hype men, Brädi and TS, are also from Lahti and that they have grown up there together. Thus, his posse has also had great significance during the times he spent in Lahti (and both of these rappers still perform and collaborate with Cheek).¹⁶⁸ This is also an important aspect of authenticity construction, one’s affiliations in the rap scene and how the posse also makes a place ‘a center’ at least in the (sub)cultural sense. All in all, this extract is an example of both Cheek’s trajectory from ‘the margins’ to ‘a center’ and his current position, in a ‘center’ within a ‘center’, i.e. as a ‘leading’ rap artist of the mainstream (i.e. who he ‘is’ beyond this specific context; Bamberg 1997).

Cheek also deals with this complex trajectory and current position in a (previously mentioned) song of his entitled “Kaikki hyvin” (‘All good’) (2009).

jos ei muuten kulu tarpeeks, otan parit parkkisakot
harmittaako? naah! rahaa kaupunkikin tarvii kato
kyl mä sponssaan, vaik en pidä siitä mitä nään
en saanut tunnustusta, siksi muutin uuteen pitäjään
lahti sai jäädä taa, hei kiitos kaikest tuest siellä
mä tuun käymään taas kun kerkeen, jos mut tunnet vielä
terveiset töölöstä, mul on hyvä olla taällä
ja se on pysyvää, kun apinat mun olkapäällä

if I don’t spend enough otherwise, I take parking fines
does it annoy you? naah! the city needs money, too
I’ll sponsor them, although I don’t like what I see
I didn’t get recognition, hence I moved to a new parish
I left lahti behind, hey thanks for all the support there
I’ll come visit you when I got time, if you still know me
greetings from töölö, I’m doing good here
and that’s permanent, like the apes on my shoulder

In this extract, Cheek describes his move from Lahti to Helsinki – he did not get recognition there and thus wanted to move to a new place. He still thanks Lahti for all the support there (in a similar way to the interview) and says he will

¹⁶⁸ In addition to them being the hype men of Cheek’s gigs (Brädi also performs solo), the group also always makes a ‘posse song’ at the end of each year, entitled “EPMT”, i.e. “Ei pahalla mut tahallaan” (‘No offense, but on purpose’), which summarizes their experiences of that year.

come and visit, if people there still recognize him. He then describes his life in Töölö area, where everything is good. He intends to stay there ('that's permanent'), like the tattoos of the apes¹⁶⁹ on his shoulder. As a 'leading', central, figure in Finnish rap scene, which Cheek aims at and claims to be, it is, in a way, necessary live in Helsinki, in order to be taken seriously and in order to have access to various distinguished scenes, places, fans and resources, such as good and appreciated gig places, music studios, VIP parties and other 'elitist' sites. In these lyrics and in the interview extract, the main theme is Cheek's narrative of a problematic and ambiguous relationship with home. Here, we get a sense of leaving a place, a center (which is in the margins compared to the new center), a feeling of dislocation and of him finding a new place, a center.

Extract 2: Pyhimys: I'm already in the center

The second extract is from the second interview I had with Pyhimys (May 29, 2012, in a sushi bar in Helsinki). Here, I analyze the way Pyhimys talks about his trajectory, his path in different parts of Helsinki and the way he describes the places currently meaningful to him. I aim to show how Pyhimys' trajectory includes dealing with the center in many ways. Before this extract we had been talking about his studies at the University of Helsinki, as well as the specific topic of my PhD. Here, we are talking about his origins and places in Helsinki.

- Elina [...] piti kysyy tosta. Helsingistä
 [[...] I was supposed to ask about that. Helsinki]
- Pyhimys joo
 [yea]
- Elina koska. muilla. näillä. teillä kolmella tai siis muilla kahella. Stepalla ja Cheekillä
 [cos. these. others. you three or the other two. Stepa and Cheek]
- Pyhimys joo
 [yea]
- Elina nii niil on kuitenkin tapahtunu jonkinlainen muutto
 [so they've like had to do some kind of move]
- Pyhimys joo. joo
 [yea. yea]
- Elina Suomen sisällä. et ku on eri keskuksia Suomessa ja sit ne muuttaa sieltä erinäisten syiden takia
 [within Finland. cos there's like different centers in Finland and then they move from where they are for differ-rent reasons]
- Pyhimys joo
 [yea]
- Elina mutta niinku sul on Helsinki. tää referenssih. (naurahtaen) piste
 [but like you've got Helsinki. this reference. (laughing) point]
- Pyhimys mä oon. mä oon jo siel minne kaikki muuttaa
 [I am. I already am where everyone else is moving]
- Elina (naurahtaen) niih

¹⁶⁹ The tattoos describe the famous *three wise monkeys*, of Japanese-origin, which index "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" as a mantra, which exhorts people to act in a good and responsible way in life, both in thoughts and deeds (e.g. Smith 1993).

Pyhimys [(laughing) yeah]
mä oon siel
[I am there]

At the beginning, I explain that the two other artists in my study, Cheek and Stepa have (had to) move(d) within Finland to a new place. I then suggest (or offer him the position), quite literally in fact, that Helsinki is his reference point. He affirms this by saying: “I am. I already am where everyone else is moving”. This indicates that he is of course well aware of the more general tendency, particularly amongst the youth in Finland, to move south, to educate themselves (further) or to search for work possibilities. In the topography of Finland, Helsinki is the absolute center. In fact, this is so evident that Pyhimys does not even seem to feel the need to elaborate on his statement or to speculate on people’s (or Cheek’s) reasons for moving to Helsinki. Unlike Cheek, Pyhimys lives and always has lived in Helsinki – a point to which we will return later, in extract 14 (“Cheek has to be from somewhere else”). Here, then, we can see an index of Pyhimys’ geographically central position and his relatively stable trajectory. In this extract, Pyhimys also engages in the socio-cultural (perhaps also somewhat ideological) discourse of the *Helsinki-centeredness* of Finland. Our conversation continues:

Elina mut tota sitte Helsingin sisällä. ni mitkä on niinku sun sellasia. paikkoja. /tai keskuksia.. Malminkartano?/
[but then like within Helsinki. so what are like your. places. /or centers.. Malminkartano?/]

Pyhimys /on. on. ne on aika selkeet./ Malminkartano on ihan selkee se niinku
[yea. yea. those are pretty clear./ Malminkartano is very clear like]

Elina lapsuus?
[childhood?]

Pyhimys nii tai ei ees iha lapsuus mä oon muuttanu sinne vast kymmenevuotiaana. mut siis. alle kymmenevuotiaana toisaalta. se. elinpiiri on nii paljo viel pienempi
[yea or not exactly childhood I moved there only when I was ten. but like. on the other hand if you’re less than ten then. that. living area is still a lot smaller]

Elina mm
[mm]

Pyhimys ja sillo se on koulu kauppa päiväkoti sellane leikkiuistotyypine. mut sit Maltsu oli ensimmäinen sellane mis oli niinku sen koko Maltsun kokone. et soli niinku sellanen. mein kylä
[and then it’s like school grocery store daycare like playground kinda. but then Maltsu was like the first that was like a whole place. so it was like. our village]

Elina eiks Heikki oo sielt ajoilta?
[isn’t Heikki from those times?]

Pyhimys Heikki on just sieltä et Heikki on itse asias just se. tavallaan ku me muutettiin Maltsuun mä olin kymmenen.. mun sisko meni ekalle. just sillan ja Heikki tuli sen luokalle

[that's exactly where Heikki is from so Heikki is actually like. in a way when we moved to Maltso I was ten... my sister went to first grade. just then and Heikki came into her class]

...

Pyhimys [...] soli tavallaan tosi sellanen niinku selkee. Malminkartano o-. onks sul mitää hajuu minkälaine paikka se on niinku? son niinku sillei jännä et siit ei niinku mitään sellast läpikulkuu. et siit menee juna..
[it was kinda really clear like. Malminkartano i- do you have any idea what kinda place it is like? it's like funny cos there's no way through it. so a train goes from there..]

...

Pyhimys [...] soli tosi idyllinen paikka ku me muutetiin sinne ja sit kymmenes vuodes siit tuli niinku sellanen. tosi ongelmalähiö ja tosi niinku et. ei ollu mitää. rajoi nuorilla ja... sillee... se oli. sit siit. ((naurahtaa)) mä en osaa oikeestaa Malminkartanost muut sanoo
[... it was really an idyllic place when we moved there and then in ten years it became like. a real problem neighborhood and really like. there were no limits for the youth and... like... it was all. then. ((gives a laugh)) I can't really say anything more about Malminkartano]

Elina joo
[yea]

Pyhimys se on niin tyypillinen lähiö et moni asia jää varmaan sanomatta just sen takii et mä pidän niit itsestänselvyytenä. /mut se on niinku se/
[it's such a typical neighborhood that many things are left unsaid just because I take them for granted. /but that's like/]

Elina /mut se oli niinku/ sellanen rauhallinen ja?
[/but it was like/ peaceful and?]

Pyhimys se oli aluks /rauhallinen/
[it was in the beginning /peaceful/]

Elina /ja suojaisa]
[/and safe/]

Pyhimys ja sellai suojaisa mut toisaalt. siit myös tuli sellai. niinku. et sit se myös tarhas ne. kaikki ku ne lapset kasvo teineiks nii sit ne oli samas paikassa ja
[and like safe but on the other hand. it also became. like. so then it also fenced them. all in when the kids grew into teenagers they were in the same place and]

Elina joo
[yea]

Pyhimys ja tavallaan niinku. joukos tyhmyys tiivistyy ja siit tuli niinku ongelmallisempi ku moni muu. lähiöissä niinku. (xxx) nuorison kasvaminen
[and like. stupidity concentrates in a crowd and it became like more problematic than many other. neighborhoods like. (xxx) youth growing up]

Elina okei
[okey]

Pyhimys et noli kaikki samaan aikaan tavallaan teinei.. mut se on niinku ehdottomasti se. sellanen keskeinen ja sit oikeestaa muut on. sit sellasii niinku. Helsingin yleisosia. mitkä on niinku kaikille. ei nyt kaikille mut. suurimmalle osalle tärkeitä et...

[so they were like all teenagers at the same time.. but that's like definitely the. the kind of central and then actually others are. then like. general areas of Helsinki. which are like for all. well not for all but. for most people important so...]

After the initial framing of Helsinki as Pyhimys' reference point, I make an inquiry about places that are possibly important for him *in* Helsinki. Because of my previous knowledge (and positioning vis-à-vis Finnish hip hop culture), I (am able to) ask whether *Malminkartano* (a north-west neighborhood in Helsinki) is such a place. Pyhimys confirms this: it was a significant place for him to grow up in after the age of ten and it is also the place where he got to know Heikki Kuula (whom I mention first, again, based on my previous knowledge), his colleague-to-be, because he was in the same class as Pyhimys' sister. Thereby, like Lahti and Cheek, Malminkartano functions as a 'center' (within a center) for Pyhimys' childhood as well as his first encounter with his future posse member Heikki Kuula. Therefore, it also has importance for him in terms of his future career. I knew the name Malminkartano beforehand mainly because the name of this place (or its shortened version 'Maltsu') is mentioned in many of his songs, such as Teflon Brothers' "Malminkartanon PETO".¹⁷⁰

Pyhimys characterizes Malminkartano as, initially, a fairly quiet neighborhood, or at least up till the point when the generation of Pyhimys became teenagers – that is when the area turned into a 'troubled' neighborhood (but still relatively 'peaceful', compared to many US contexts or 'hoods'). Here, too, we see a *subjective* description and characterization of (a space transformed into) a place, a center. What is also intriguing in this extract that Pyhimys acts or, positions himself (cf. Bamberg 1997), as an urban Helsinki advisor to me, the outsider, who does not know anything about Malminkartano beforehand (except from the songs). He also acknowledges this in the interview by, first of all, asking if I have "any idea what Malminkartano is like?" and, secondly, admits that because he is such an insider and because it is "such a typical neighborhood", he might not mention some things because they are so obvious to him. To me, however, 'a typical neighborhood' does not mean anything as such, because I did not spend my childhood in an urban environment, let alone in a Helsinki neighborhood. In a way, then, this extract constructs Pyhimys in the Finnish topography as a particularly *urban* rap artist, who has knowledge and experience of the 'good' and 'bad' aspects of neighborhood(s) in Helsinki.

- Elina mut mikä on niinku siulle seuraava sellanen kiinnityskohta?
[but what is like for you the next connection point?]
- Pyhimys no varmaan kyl on ihan toi Kallio kyl
[well yea I guess it's like that Kallio]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Pyhimys et mis mei toimisto on
[where our office is]
- Elina sois ((tapaaminen)) just ollu tänää siellä. eiks ois?
[it ((the meeting)) would've been there today. right?]

¹⁷⁰ Heikki Kuula is one of the three rappers in Teflon Brothers. The name *PETO* refers to the local sports team. Literally, it means *the beast* (of Malminkartano), but it in actual fact, it is a shortened version of *PeliToverit* – PlayMates. The song is, supposedly, according to the lyrics, always played after a winning match.

- Pyhimys joo. Kallio on. siis Helsingis on muutenki oikeestaa. sellaset kolme niinku sellast. seki on mun mielest poikkeee Helsinki siinä et. muist Suomen kaupungeist siinä et ei oo vaan se yks keskusta mis on kaikki vaan tää on niinku... @financial and. commercial center@ ((brittienglantilainen ääntäminen))
[yea. Kallio is. so Helsinki in general has actually. like three like. that's also why I think Helsinki is different than. other Finnish cities that it doesn't have only one center which has everything but this's like... @financial and. commercial center@ ((British English pronunciation))]
- Elina (naurua)
[(laughter)]
- Pyhimys ja sitte. Punavuori on selkee sellanen niinkun. sellanen niinku trendikeskus. sellanen niinku ihan selkee sellanen niinkun. ku sä meet sinne niin. son vähän sellai Tukholma ja
[and then. Punavuori is a clear like. like a trend-setting center. like a really clear like. when you go there. it's a bit like Stockholm and]
- Elina okei
[okey]
- Pyhimys baarit on sellasii tietynlaisii. ei oo ketjuja
[bars are of a certain type. there's no chains]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Pyhimys vaan kaikki on jotain pieniä ja. ja superfoodmyymälöitä ja
[but everything's small. and. and super food stores and]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Pyhimys ja se on niinkun. tietynlainen. ja se ei taas oo ollu ikin mua lähellä
[and it's like. certain kinda. and it has never been close to me]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys se on mun mielest ollu aina vähän sellast. keinotekosta ja. teeskentele- teeskentelyä. ja. mä en yleensäkkää. pidä hirveesti tota.. jotenki semmosest.. elitismistä ja sellasesta niinku. ittensä kohottamisesta tai sellasest nenä pystys olemisesta
[in my opinion it's always been a bit like. fake and. pretendi-pretense. and. in general I don't. like that a lot.. somehow like.. elitism and the kind like. elevating yourself or being stuck-up]
- Elina mm
[mm]

In this extract, he tells us how he thinks of Kallio (one of the central neighborhoods in Helsinki, see section 3.2.2) as *one* of the centers in Helsinki. In Pyhimys' trajectory, the next anchoring point after Malminkartano is Kallio, which actually became a significant point of reference for him. Their record company is also situated in Kallio, which indexes a center for professional music-making. Another center is the very center, i.e. *the business and commercial center*, which, interestingly, he literally describes as such in an animated, flattering tone of voice, in a British English accent, thereby indexing the international business character (and significance?) of this center and also his own alienation and dis-identification with reference to this place. The third

center within Helsinki is, in his opinion, Punavuori (a south-west neighborhood in Helsinki), which he labels as a posh area – something comparable to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. Because, to him, it is a ‘fake’, or pretentious place and has associations with ‘elitism’, it is also a center with which he strongly dis-identifies: “it’s never been close to me”. Pyhimys, thus, *marginalizes* these two centers (in the center), in his own topography of Helsinki. The extract shows Pyhimys’ subjective sense of these particular places and he also *positions* (cf. Bamberg 1997) himself vis-à-vis these centers, by both alignment and dis-alignment.

- Pyhimys ja siihen toimii taas sit hyvin toi. se kolmas keskusta eli mitä. mitä mä lasken et on kolmas keskusta on Kallio.. ja se on taas sit sellanen niinkun. rentoh. (naurahtaen). keskittymä
[and for that works pretty well that. that third center or what. what I count as the third center is Kallio.. and it in turn is like. relaxed. (gives a laugh) locus]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys et siel on niinku ne baarit ja.. ja ne tota.. halvat pizzeriat ja
[so there are like those bars and... and those like.. cheap pizzerias and]
- Elina ja se mihin sie niinku. sulaudut. tai
[and that is where you like. blend in. or]
- Pyhimys nii siis son sellanen sit taas toisaalta son sit se kansainvälisin osa Helsinkii ja
[yea it’s like on the other hand it’s then the most international part of Helsinki and]
(the phone rings and I say it’s OK for him to pick it up but he does not want to)
- Elina asut sie myös Kalliossa?
[do you also live in Kallio?]
- Pyhimys e:n. en asu. et mä asun Arabianrannas mut se ei oo oikeestaan sillei. mä oon asunu Länsi-Pasilassa. Arabianrannassa. Kallios vähä aikaa. sit muutin Pihlajanmäkee
[no. no I don’t. so I live in Arabianranta but it’s not actually like. I’ve lived in West Pasila. Arabianranta. Kallio for a while. then moved to Pihlajanmäki.]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Pyhimys et ne on niinku kaikki sellasii. paikkoi mis voi asuu mut. esimerkiks just toi Arabianranta ni.. siin on hirveen vaikee tuntee sellast kotiseutu. son vähän semmonen ohikulkupaikka. ja sellanen kapee. kapee kaistale vaa (haukottelee).. enemmänä son niinku vähä et. Kalliost vähä eteepäi sit aina tulee siihe Kallioo ja sit on taas
[so they’re all like the kinda. places where you can live but. for example that Arabianranta so.. it’s really hard to feel any localness. it’s a bit of a passing through place. and like a narrow. a narrow strip only (yawns).. it’s more like. a bit further from Kallio and then you always come to Kallio and then you’re again]
- Elina nii just
[yea exactly]
- Pyhimys takas siinä
[back there]

Pyhimys then clearly contrasts the third center, Punavuori, with Kallio, which is, for him, a relaxed locus of cheap pizzerias and bars, and, interestingly enough, the most international part of Helsinki. What he actually means by this does not become clear in the course of this extract (or the interview), but he may be referring to its (im)migrant population and shop owners. This is *the* center which he identifies with the most. He tells us that he does not actually even live in Kallio, but in a near-by Arabianranta for which he does not seem to have any affection or love but it is simply “a passing through place” and thus a convenient place to live in, right next, and leading, to Kallio. Kallio, then, becomes the center of his life, both in terms of its way of life (‘relaxed’, ‘international’) and values, such as equality (not ‘elitist’) and ‘real’ (not ‘pretentious’), thereby indirectly contrasting it with Punavuori.

The main theme in this extract is Pyhimys’ position and a trajectory within a center – which, in his case, is Helsinki, where he has lived (and worked) all his life. Here, we get one idea of who Pyhimys *is*, beyond the specific context and content (cf. Bamberg 1997). Over the course of his trajectory, we see identification with – and authenticity construction with regard to – several centers. The first reference point for Pyhimys was Malminkartano, where he grew up and got to know Heikki Kuula, one of his best friends and colleagues. This is where his roots are and where the first ‘foundation’ was laid in terms of future (rap) career. Later, Kallio becomes an important center for which he feels great solidarity. In addition to the lifestyle, it is also a music (business) center for him, because it is where he wanted to establish his record company. This is perhaps no coincidence, since Kallio is known as a bohemian, arty kind of place (as discussed in section 3.2.2). In this extract, then, we also witness the notion of center as dynamic: it is not just one thing, but rather, and quite often, several things. We also notice traces of fractality here: how the dynamics of the center-periphery of the national scale-level (Helsinki vs the rest of the country) recurs on the local scale-level of Helsinki itself (Kallio vs the rest of Helsinki).

Extract 3: Stepa: The laid-back Laplander was once recognized in Helsinki

The third extract is from the first interview I had with Stepa¹⁷¹ (April 1, 2010 in a restaurant in Jyväskylä). In this extract, I analyze the way Stepa describes an anecdote, a fan encounter in Helsinki. Through it, I want to show how he situates himself in the topography of Finland – the example is very illustrative of centers and margins in his life. Before this extract, we had talked about various rap posses in Finland, and Stepa and Are had told me that rap circles, in general, are very small in Finland and that one can even sometimes recognize (familiar) faces in the audience during gigs.

Elina (naurua) tunnistetaaks teit kadulla. tuleeks kukaan ikinä niinku joku. nuorempi fani tai joku muu. ikinä niinku?

¹⁷¹ In this particular interview, Are, Stepa’s rap colleague and collaborator from Jyväskylä, was also present and thus was, naturally, part of the discussion. His presence, then, also affected how the discussion developed as I had two people answering my questions. Stepa’s role, as a consequence, was not that salient.

- [(laughter) do people recognize you on the streets. does anyone ever come like anyone. a younger fan or someone. ever like?]
- Are Jyväskylässä mutta ei muualla
[in Jyväskylä but nowhere else]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Stepa nii jätkällä on Jyväskylässä
[yea you have in Jyväskylä]
- Are kyllä täällä
[yea here]
- Elina Jyväskylä iha hallussa
[Jyväskylä totally under control]
- Stepa nii
[yea]
- Are kyllä tää on ku niin kauan on täällä asunu. aina siis
[yea this's cos I've lived here for so long. always that is]
- Elina nii
[yea]
- Stepa e-e:ipä ne. oikeestaan itelläki vaan tuolla Lapin alueella silleen tunnistetaan.
kyllä mulle. minut kerran
[n-no: they don't. actually I have only there in the Lapland area people like recognize me. yes to me. I was once]
- Elina niinku Sodankylässä /vai Torniossaki/
[like in Sodankylä /or also in Tornio/]
- Stepa /nii nii ja Torniossa/ ja oikeestaan Rovaniemellä tavallaan. ku on jotenki. edustanu Lappia nii sitte kai ne siitä tunnistaa. mutta tuota.. kerran minut tunnistettii Helsingissä
[/yea yea and in Tornio/ and actually in Rovaniemi kinda. cos I've somehow. represented Lapland so I guess they then recognize. but er... once I was recognized in Helsinki]
- Elina (naurua) jes
[(laughter) yes]
- Stepa vittu olin ostamassa jotaki metrolippua enkä osannu ostaa ja sitte se että. hei ooks sie Stepa? ooonon auta meikää ostaa tää lippu mie en ossaa yhtää
[fuck I was buying some metro ticket and I couldn't buy it and then he was like. hey are you Stepa? yeayea help me to buy this ticket I can't do it at all]
- Elina (naurua) siis ei kukaa lipunmyyjä vaa joku
[(laughter) so not a booking clerk but someone]
- Stepa eiei ku joku jätkä tuli siihe vieree. mie olin iha hukassa
[nono some guy came up next to me. I was so lost]
- Elina (naurua) Helsinki suurkaupunki
[(laughter) Helsinki the big city]
- Stepa niih
[yeah]

First, I ask Are and Stepa if they are ever recognized on the streets by people, or by (younger) fans. Are says he is naturally recognized in Jyväskylä since he has lived there all his life. Stepa says he is recognized in the Lapland area, in general. After his mention of Lapland, I then clarify if, by it, he means Sodankylä or also Tornio. He affirms both of these but also mentions Rovaniemi. This place is taken to be the center of Lapland in many ways:

economically, educationally and culturally (cf. sections 2.2 and 3.2.3). Here, Stepa literally describes himself as ‘representing’ a particular area, Lapland, something which is highly characteristic of rap music and hip hop culture (e.g. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003). In this extract, we can see Stepa’s trajectory from the purely local to the (at least) regional: it is not only in his local municipality that people recognize him but also more generally in Lapland. Thus, in addition to Sodankylä as ‘a center’ (and a home) for him, Lapland also more generally functions in this central role in his life and his trajectory.

After this, Stepa interestingly creates a contrast between the context and situation in the Lapland area and that of Helsinki, the capital. He tells us a small story of how he was *once* (a word often associated with ‘story announcement’; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008: 387 – and here uttered twice) recognized in Helsinki. He was not able to buy a metro ticket there and a guy recognized him and eventually ended up helping him to buy it as he did not have a clue how to use the machine. Here, he also uses the dialectal word for ‘I’, ‘mie’, which can be considered indexical of his (‘peripheral’) background and roots, far away from the Helsinki metropolitan area. It is important to note here that the only metro in Finland is in Helsinki, which further enhances the fact that Helsinki is the absolute center of Finland (cf. section 2.2 on the topography of Finland). Thus, this event also evokes images of a certain outsider position: a peasant in the big city, a Laplander in the metropolis. Here, in terms of positioning within the story (cf. Bamberg 1997), we can see Stepa as a (recognizable) rap artist, but also as an outsider and as one who is ‘rescued’; we can see the stranger in the story as an insider (most likely a local person, living in Helsinki) and a helper, but also as a fan (or at least a Finnish rap follower). We can also connect the event to the (ideological) socio-cultural discourse of *Helsinki-centeredness* but from an *outsider* perspective. What is also important in this extract is that, at this particular moment, I am able to align myself with Stepa (that him and I are alike in this respect; cf. Bamberg 1997) (verbally by saying: “Helsinki suurkaupunki” – ‘Helsinki the big city’), since I do not come from Helsinki and am not (very) familiar with the city, either, and thus am an outsider, too. The bigger picture, the theme, we see here is that of centers and margins. A (geographically and perhaps also culturally) marginal rapper enters the primary center of Finland where he can walk the streets mostly incognito. In this center, big city practices, such as the mundane act of buying a metro ticket, are unfamiliar to him – he does not know how to operate there, he is ‘completely lost’ (“mie olin iha hukassa”). The ticket episode thus essentially defines his ‘outsiderness’, the fact that Helsinki is not ‘his’ place – i.e. who Stepa is in this respect (cf. Bamberg 1997).

In the same interview, he also comments on how his rap colleague Are would never be able to live in Lapland, because he hates the cold. Before this extract, we had talked about what they intend to do in the future and Are had (half-jokingly) mentioned that there is always the possibility of working as a teacher in Lapland.

- Stepa et sinä kestäis kuitenkin sitä. talvea siellä
[you wouldn't be able to hand it. the winter there]
- Are en nii. en kestä
[that's right. I wouldn't]
- Stepa sie oot kuitenkin aika. kesän lapsi
[you're pretty much. a summer's child]
- Are oon mää. nimi on Pyry ja syntyny tammikuussa
[yea I am. my name's Pyry (('Blizzard')) and I was born in January]
- Elina ((naurua))
[(laughter)]
- Are vihaa talvee
[hates winter]
- Elina (naurua)
[/((laughter))/]
- Stepa (naurua)
[/((laughter))/]
[...]
- Elina onks tota. pohjosen tai Lapin ihmiset sit jotenki niinku erilaisia koska niiden pitää kestää se pitkä talvi ((nauraen)) ja kylmä talvi?
[are they like. the northern or people from Lapland then somehow different because they have to endure the long winter ((laughing)) and cold winter?]
- Stepa no
[well]
- Elina tai siis. tuleeks siin sellane niinku et joku tietty mentaliteetti siellä niinku?
[or like. do they develop kinda like some particular mentality like there?]
- Stepa o:n siellä tietty. son aika huoleton se paikka sillee. tai ihmiset et et ei nyt en tiä mi-mikä se talven osuus siinä on mutta jos vertaat jotaki lappilaista ja suomenruottalaista ni. ei ne liitot. avioliitot toimi keskenään
[ye:a there is. it's a pretty carefree place like. or people so so now I don't know wh-what's the role of the winter is there but if you compare some Laplander and a Finland-Swede so. those unions won't. marriages won't work between them]
- Elina ((naurua))
[((laughter))]
- Stepa ku suomenruottalainen haluaa et näinnäinäin ja nytnyt. ja me ollaan vähä sillee et sinne päin sillo ku jaksaa
[cos the Finland-Swede wants like thisthisthis and nownownow. and we're a bit like something like this when we feel up to it]
- Elina eli vähä niinku laid-back ((nauraen))
[so kinda like laid-back((laughing))]
- Stepa mm nimenomaa
[mm exactly]

Here, we can see how Stepa constructs himself as a *Laplander*, by putting Lapland and its cold winter 'in the center', thereby marginalizing his 'southern' rap colleague Are. He also constructs and positions (cf. Bamberg 1997) Are as *the Other* here, who, as not being from Lapland, could never handle the long, harsh winter there. Are, in fact, confirms this and mentions the irony of his given name ('Pyry' - 'Blizzard') and his hatred of the winter. After the shared laughter at this remark, I move on to ask how Stepa would then characterize Laplanders and their mentality, particularly in relation to the winter. He is not

certain whether the winter, in particular, affects the people in Lapland. But, in his opinion, Lapland is a carefree place, in general. He then gives me an (imaginary?) example of marriages between Laplanders and Finland-Swedes and suggests that these could never work because of the different nature of these people. Whereas Finland-Swedes are strict and precise, Laplanders are carefree and easy-going. Finally, I suggest one more adjective to describe them, 'laid-back', and Stepa agrees with me. Here, Stepa constructs (and positions) himself again as a Laplander, using plural pronoun "me ollaan" ('we are'), differentiating himself from Are and me, who are not. He also seems to take pride in their nature: being 'laid-back' is a positive attribute for him.¹⁷² In this, he also 'others' Finland-Swedes by characterizing them as too strict on many (everyday) matters.

In my second interview with Stepa, I tried to ask directly about what being (from) Lapland and Laplander means. At first, this proved futile, an example of how one often cannot 'get at' certain things by asking about them directly: "[s]ome social research seems incredibly to assume that what there is to find out can be found out by asking" (Hymes 1981: 84). Before this extract, we had talked about how he became involved in the scene in the first place and his collaboration with Joku Roti (see also extract 6 below).

- Elina [...] nii no sit. vielä siitä Lapista et mitä se niinku ku siul on kuitenkin aika selkeesti kuulee niinku et sie oot Lapista ni.. pystyt sie yhtään kertoo et mitä se niinku merkitsee siulle?
 [[...] so then. still on Lapland so what does it like because you have pretty clearly you hear like that you're from Lapland so.. can you at all tell me what it like means to you?]
- Stepa ai Lappi?
 [oh Lapland?]
- Elina nii
 [yea]
- Stepa no.. ni tää tää on meikält on kysytty tää monesti mut se on vaikee sanoa tavallaan ku aina
 [well... yea this this has been asked of me several times but it's hard to say kinda because always]
- Elina /muistelen et jossai haastattelus siult kysyttiin tätä/
 [/I remember that you were asked about this in some interview/]
- Stepa /asunu siellä.. nii. siel on aina./asunu niin ei sitä oikein osaa. osaa sillei ver-
 verrata muuhun.. paikkakuntaan. silleen mutta. e:n minä oikeen tiiä tuota onko siellä hirveesti eroja että. samalla lailla se. homma toimii siellä ku täällä ja. ja:.. mutta ehkä siinä on jotain menttaliiteettihommia joka on opittu jostain. pienenä
 [/lived there... yea. I've always./ lived there so you can't really. really like com-compare to other.. place. like but. I: don't really know if there's any big differences that. things happen. the same way there than here. and. and...]

¹⁷² In his song "Pikkukylä" ('Small village'), Stepa also acknowledges this attitude: "se ei oo enempää eikä vahempää/se on sodankylän laidback-elämää" ('it's nothing more, nothing less / it's the laidback life in Sodankylä').

- but maybe there's some mentality stuff there that you've learned from somewhere. as a kid
- Elina mm. minkälaine on lappilainen mentaliteetti?
[mm. what is the Lapland mentality like?]
- Stepa £no: se on semmone aika rento ja ei tarvi hättäillä että£. mutta kuitenkin on semmonen tavallaan tietty moraalii että hommat hoi-hoietaan ja. on semmone ja se on meikäst tosi niinku eh-
[£we:ll it's like pretty relaxed and you don't have to rush things that£. but there's still the kind of moral attitude that you take care of thi-things and. there's the kind and that to me is really per-]
- Elina näkyyks se myös siussa jotenki?
[does it also show in you somehow?]
- Stepa joojoojoo että tuota kyllä meikä niinku sanois ehkä ykkös. niinku asiaksi että jos haluaa tehdä räppiä ni hommaa semmosen tietyn moraalii. että
[yeayeayea so that I'd say perhaps like a number one. like thing that if you wanna do rap so you have to adopt like certain morals. that]
- Elina et sen pitää olla aitoo?
[that it needs to be real?]
- Stepa nii nii että tiäkkö
[yea yea that you know]
- Elina vai mitä sie tarkoitat tol moraalii?
[or what did you mean by the morals?]
- Stepa tai tai siis sillei niinku tavallaa et jos sie teet räppiä ni et. ei ei puhu tavallaan että tekee räppiä vaan tekee oikeasti sitä ja meikä soittelee koko ajan ja niinku pietän. esimerkiks et me ollaan torstaina menossa.. tekemään. öö. Joda ja Jontin ja Aren kans Helsinkiin biisiä ni koko ajan me ollaan soiteltu tai meikä on soittanu ja piettäny tyypejä ajan tasalla
[or or so like kinda that if you do rap then you don't. don't don't talk kinda like that you do rap but that you really do it and I call all the time and like keep. for example that on Thursday we're going.. to make. mm. with Joda and Jontti and Are to Helsinki to make a song so we've all the time called or I have called and kept the guys up to date]
- Elina joo joo
[yea yea]
- Stepa tavallaan semmonen moraalii että tiäkkö että hommat
[so the kind of morals that you know that the job]
- Elina työmoraali?
[work morals?]
- Stepa niinii että se nii et se homma toteutuu sitte et se ei jää puheen tasolle
[yeayea so that the thing comes true then so that it won't stay on the level of talk]

Here, then, I suggest an identity category for Stepa (and position him) as someone who comes from Lapland, as it becomes obvious when listening to both him and his music. He then tells me that it is often difficult for him to answer a question about the significance of Lapland. At first, he suggests that in the end, we are all the same, whether we come from Lapland or elsewhere. After some silence and hesitation, he wonders whether there might be some things to do with the mentality of Laplanders that are learnt in childhood. After my clarifying question, he then elaborates on this and argues that Laplanders are quite easy-going and relaxed (as was already suggested by him in the

previous extract, though not in the same interview). They are also, however, hard-working and keep to their word. When I ask how this shows in Stepa himself, he tells me that it relates to the rap world in the sense that people do not just talk about doing rap, but actually rap. He also shares a small story with me about how *he* has been the one who keeps in contact with his rap colleagues, when they have arranged a trip to Helsinki (to make a joint song) – that things get actually done – thus positioning himself as one who is efficient unlike (the) other artists (cf. Bamberg 1997). Here, Stepa constructs ‘being a Laplander’ in more ways than one. On the one hand, he connects it to being an easy-going person, but at the same time, these ‘laid-back’ people take care of things and get them done in an orderly manner. They have a good work ethic. Being a Laplander obviously has significance for him and he is proud to be one, it is his ‘emotional’ center – and this place is also significantly linked to his authenticity construction. What is also interesting in this example is how Helsinki shows up here as *a musical (business) center*, where he travels, from the periphery, to make joint rap songs with his rap colleagues (both Joda(rok) and Jontti live in Helsinki, while Are is from Jyväskylä).

If we dwell further on Stepa’s Lapland background, we can, for instance see how he characterizes Lapland and its people in his song entitled “Kaikki hyvin” (‘All good’) (2010): “Lappilaisuus on mulla aina messissä, ku määrittelen lappilaiset uhanalaiseksi” (‘Being from Lapland is always with me, as I define Laplanders as endangered’). In the same song, he raps: “Sodankylä on mulle niinku mekka” (‘Sodankylä is like a mecca to me’). With the first line, he hints at Laplanders being on the outskirts, in the margins, but nevertheless defines himself as such and, thus, it is always with him. Here we see that he has a very personal and emotional center. Sodankylä, in particular, is an important place for him, as it is captured by the iconic word ‘mecca’, i.e. a holy place of pilgrimage, thus very much *a center* in essence.

As regards Tornio (his then location), it came up briefly in our third interview. For example, he mentioned having recorded (part of) his album in Tornio, in the home studio of a rap colleague of his. An interesting comparison can be made here between Tornio and Helsinki (and, for example, Kallio) in the sense that this studio thus enables Stepa also to make music more locally, in the ‘periphery’. In addition to Tornio being an educational center (where he studied to become a community pedagogue; see extract 9 below), it is also *a musical center* of a kind: a quiet place which enables him to work on and record his albums. The quietness also became clear at another point in the same interview when he mentioned that he needs to think about the themes and topics for a new album for a long time and let things develop in peace and quiet. He ironically commented on how “there’s not *that much* going on in Tornio that you could make an album every six months”.

Stepa’s trajectory from Sodankylä to Tornio thus includes a move southwards, from a local center towards a regional center (and recently, even more towards south to Oulu, but had not happened at the time of the interviews). Unlike Cheek, he does not share any ‘turning one’s back’ stories

about Sodankylä. Nowadays, he is appreciated and well-known in Sodankylä (as was evident in the “Made in Sodankylä” song), but feels discomfort about his popularity and place and role there, in the changed Lapland environment. Overall in this extract, we can see that being a Laplander and from Sodankylä (and studying in Tornio) all have multiple meanings for Stepa (who he *is*, beyond these specific extracts; cf. Bamberg 1997). Despite their location in the (cultural, economic) margins and in the periphery from the point of view of the south, they have *subjective* meanings for Stepa, for whom they also function as center(s) in their own right. Once again, we witness the multifaceted nature of ‘center’ and ‘margins’, testifying to the fact that these issues need to be explored rather than assumed.

5.3.2 Positions in the centers and margins

Extracts 4–6 all deal with the artists’ various positions in the Finnish hip hop scene, both in the margins and in center(s) of various kinds, all the while orienting towards different norm centers.

Extract 4: Cheek: I’m the most US rapper in Finland

The fourth extract is from the second interview I had with Cheek (May 29, 2012, in a cafeteria in Helsinki). In this example, I discuss how Cheek characterizes himself as the most American rap artist in Finland. I aim to show how once more he constructs himself as a center. Before this extract, we had talked about his new record company, his own (at the time) recently established Liiga label. This extract starts with me asking him to repeat what he had previously said in the car on the way to the cafeteria (because my recorder had not yet been on at the time).

- Elina [...]
[...]
Cheek joo. joo
 [yea. yea]
Elina Suomessa /mihi sie/
 [in Finland /where do you/]
Cheek /et et/
 [/so so/]
Elina niinku tavallaan. perustat sen? /tai minkä. miten nii?/
 [kinda like. get that from? /or what. how come?]
Cheek /perustan sen. sen siihen/ että.. öö. jengi ihmettelee et mitä sä. jengi. jengi
 niinku ajattelee et mä oon just sellanen jätkä /tai ku mitä/
 [/I base it. it on that/ that... mm. people wonder what you. people. people
 like think that I’m exactly the kinda guy /or like what/]
Elina /ku mitä niis/
 [/like in those/]
Cheek mitä mä räppään. ja mä oon aina sanonu et niihän mä oonkin siis et en mä
 räppää mitään mitä mä en tarkota.. mutta en mä. en mä myöskään.. puhu niit
 asioit tällei tälläses keskustelussa. ihmisten kanssa. mitä mä puhun siel
 levyllä.

- [what I rap. and I've always said that yes I am so I don't rap anything that I don't mean.. but I don't. I don't then.. talk about those things like this in this kinda conversation. with people. what I talk there on the album.]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek ja sit jengi ei. ihmettelee et miks mä räppään niinku tollasii juttui mitä mä räppään.. mä se- miks se asenne on toi ni.. mä oon miettiny sitä et jos joku muu ois. kuunnellu jenkkiräppii sen. yli viistoist vuotta. ni tajuis tosi paljon paremmin et mistä täs hommas. mi-mi-mistä tää homma on niinku lähteny. minkä takii. koska mun esikuvat on Jenkeis. mä en mä en oo niinku varttunu kuunnellen suomiräppii
[and then people don't. they wonder why I rap those kinda things what I rap.. I th- why is the attitude like that so.. I've been thinking about it that if someone else had. listened to US rap that. more than fifteen years. so they'd get it much better what this thing. wh-wh-where this thing has like started. why. because my role models are in the US. I haven't I haven't like grown up listening to Finnish rap]
- Elina mm mm
[mm mm]
- Cheek ja mu-mul. se räppi mitä mä oon. digailu ja mikä mist mä oon hakenu ne kaikki vaikutteet. ennen ku mä ees tein sitä. ni oli sellai niinkun ((iPhone - tekstiviestääni)) punchlainikama.. niinku jenkki.räppi.. sitähän se. ei mul ollu mitään muuta.. si-si-siellä ne
[and I-I. the rap that I have. digged and what where I've gotten all of those influences. before I even did it. so that was kinda like ((iPhone text message sound)) punch line stuff.. like US. rap.. that's what it. I didn't have anything else.. th-th there they]
- Elina nii aika vaikee siin vaihees Suomes viel olikaa
[and at that time it was pretty difficult in Finland]
- Cheek nii
[yea]
- Elina koska se oli nii pienissä piireissä ja /underground/
[because it was in such small circles and /underground/]
- Cheek /siellä./ siellä niinku. se on täysin niinku.. punchlaini. kamaa. se. jenkkiräppi. jaja niinku. tai täysin ja täysin mutta
[/there./ there like. it's completely like.. punchline. stuff. that. US rap. andand like. or completely and completely but]

Here, I ask how Cheek justifies his claim of being the most 'American' rapper in Finland. At first, he explains to me that people often think that he is the kind of guy that appears in his music. He says that he really is (i.e. he never raps about anything he does not really mean), but to talk on albums, through his music, and to talk with people in normal conversations are two different contexts (and, thereby, possibly also two different positioning levels: first, in the lyrics, and second, in this 'normal conversation', i.e. interview situation with me; cf. Bamberg 1997). After this, Cheek moves on to the particular topic of *US rap music*. He argues that if people had listened to US rap for as long as he has (more than fifteen years), they would better understand his style and his rationale. He then elaborates on the topic by telling me that his role models and musical influences have always come from the US, particularly from the *punch*

*line style*¹⁷³ – and not from the Finnish tradition, because he never listened to it, when growing up. He then clearly constructs the US rap (and particularly the punch line rap) as a (musical) center here, at least when compared to the Finnish one, which then effectively becomes the margin in his view. It is interesting here that he does not characterize Finnish rap in any way, not even when I elaborate on it by saying that, at that time, the Finnish scene was very small and underground. The discussion continues:

- Elina mut entäs sitte. koska sielläki on nii paljon erilaista. genreä ja artistia että
[but how about. cos also there you have so many different. genres and artists that]
- Cheek noh. niih. mut sit mä taas /kuuntelen/
[well. yea. but then again /I listen/]
- Elina /tai ainaki/erilaisia /historioita/
[/or at least/ different /histories/]
- Cheek /kyl /onhan niit. onhan niit. mutta. ja on tosiaanki siis mä oon miettiny.
moon tota. tota niinku asiaa sillei kelannu. et mistä se esimerkiks se ajatus siit
niinku poliittisest kantaaottavuudest ja tiedostamisest yhteiskunnan
ongelmista. ku monil on se ajatus et sitähän se jenkkiräppi on. nii /joo okei/
[/yes/ there are. there are. but. and there are really so I've been wondering.
I've been. like thought through that thing. so for example where does the
idea of that political stand-taking and consciousness of societal problems. cos
many people have the idea that that's what US rap is. so /yea okey/]
- Elina /no son se/ yks totuus sitte
[well it's/ one truth then]
- Cheek se on se on se yks yks puoli. son mä mietin et se on varmaan.. (xxx) varmaa
niinku Public Enemy ja se sellanen niinku ysärin alun. kama. missä ollaan
oltu hirveesti niinku valitettu tollasist asioista mut sitte taas myös niinku
vanhempaa kamaa. tai just sitä mä oon ottanu esimerkiks Run-D.M.C:n
Sucker MC's tai jotain tollast niinku puncline-kamaa
[it is it is it's one one aspect. it's I'm thinking that it's probably... (xxx)
probably like Public Enemy and that that kinda like early nineties. stuff.
where you've been like complained about stuff like that a lot but then also
like older stuff. or like what I have taken as an example Run-D.M.C.'s Sucker
MC's or some punch line stuff like that]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Cheek niinku niinku ja kasarikamaa kans et et. niinku mitä hittoo et et jos jos sä
sanot että tää ei oo niinku. sitte niinku räpin syvin olemus ni kuuntele Run-
D.M.C.:t vaikka
[like like and eighties stuff also that that. like what the heck so so if if you say
that this isn't like. like the rap's deepest substance so listen to Run-D.M.C.
for example]
- Elina mm
[mm]

¹⁷³ A 'punch line' refers to the verbal skills, to the verbal 'punches' in music (or in jokes) that are made and used to impress the audience by their cleverness and suitability (see also Nieminen 2003).

- Cheek ja jos jonku mielest se ei oo niinku räppii. räpeint räppii nii sit se on mun mielest tosi outoo et et siihen sieltä se niinku kumpuu. tapa. öö. kärjistää ja. jehuilla ja. kertoo olevansa parempi kuin se toinen tyyppi
[and if someone thinks that's not like rap. the rapest rap so then I think it's really weird that that there that's where it comes from. a way. mm. to aggravate and. to boast and. tell you're better than the other guy]
- Elina niinpä
[indeed]
- Cheek ihan sielt niinku.. koko hommast. jaja mä oon pääasias kuunnellu niinku nykiräppii
[all the way like.. the whole thing. andand I have mostly listened to U- New York rap]
- Elina nii
[yea]
- Cheek se se on se mist mä oon eniten digannu. si-siel viel enemmän niinku.. ei oo ei koko ajan niinku itketä niin paljon tai sellai. ja tota.. niin sieltä kumpuaa se minkä takii mä. räp.pään näin. ja ja pidän tätä niinku räpei- räpeimpänä räppinä
[it it's what I've digged the most. th-there's even more like.. there's no they don't like cry all the time so much or like. and like... so it comes from there the reason why I. ra.p like this. and and think of this as the rappe- the rapest rap]

Here, I argue that US rap has many genres, styles as well as histories, and Cheek confirms this. He then starts wondering why (Finnish) people have the idea that US rap is *all* about stand-taking and being (politically and socially) conscious because, in his opinion, it is only *one* aspect of it. Here, he then marginalizes this genre in his own subjective rap world – it is something he strongly dis-identifies with, perhaps because he does not feel a connection to their agenda. By way of example, Cheek then contrasts *Public Enemy* (known for their politically and socially conscious lyrics in support of African Americans' interests in the US; e.g. Price 2006), who 'complain' about various issues, with Run-D.M.C., who make 'punch line rap' and who are "known as the most popular and perhaps the first hard-core groups of the golden age [i.e. during the 1980s] of Hip Hop" (Price 2006: 182). In his opinion, their style is the 'rapest rap' – because they aggravate, boast with their skills and tell how they are better than 'the other guy'. He then specifies that *New York rap* (although, interestingly, both *Public Enemy* and *Run-D.M.C.* are from there) is what he listens to and loves the most. He is not interested in 'crying' (i.e. complaining and whining) in his songs and hence punch line is the rapest rap for him and it also characterizes his own style of rapping. Thus, the punch line 'stuff' becomes his musical and (sub)cultural *center* of inspiration and example.

In this example, Cheek constructs himself in *an expert position*, through numerous references to and knowledge of American rap music. He argues here that he considers himself the most 'American' rapper in Finland – a center in his own right (i.e. his 'identity claim' beyond the here-and-now of this context; cf. Bamberg 1997). There is an overlap here with the 'Best and the rest' theme of the following section in that by making himself a center, Cheek also hints at

being ‘the best’ in Finland because he knows about the US rap scene and its internal, genre differences and has been listening to that rap for almost two decades, but also because, most significantly, his music is influenced by the rapest rap of all. We can also see his trajectory here: he is an old fan of US rap music: he was initially inspired by this kind of music already before he had started making music himself. Thus, the theme here is that Cheek’s authenticity is constructed through the legitimization of himself as a center in the Finnish hip hop scene, through the references to other, global centers of rap music, US and New York rap and the rap group Run-D.M.C., in particular. In doing this, he leaves the politically-oriented (US) rap music (itself interested in the rights of those in the margins) in the margins – he is not interested in ‘crying’ about things. He then also constructs a center within a center: in general, he orients towards US rap music as the ‘center’ for his (early) career, but within this, he particularly draws on the New York tradition and constructs it as an even more specific center. Here, again, we witness fractality: centers within centers as well as margins within centers.

Extract 5: Pyhimys: I’m so UG to every direction

The fifth extract is from the first interview I had with Pyhimys (September 11, 2009, in a restaurant in Jyväskylä). Here, I analyze the way in which Pyhimys positions himself within the Finnish hip hop scene and I aim to show how Pyhimys’ characterization of himself points to centers, both in time and space. Before this extract, we had talked about his position in the field (at his own initiation) and how he had mentioned a Finnish rapper called *Aste* (‘Level’, ‘Grade’) in a negative way in a song¹⁷⁴ and then went to explain about it to him at a festival. He also told me that all the artists in the Finnish hip hop scene know each other, at least on the ‘character’ level.

- Elina mut onks Suomes niinku mitään sellasia varsinaisia vastakkainasetteluja sellasii ihan hulluja niinku?
[but are there in Finland like any actual juxtapositions like really crazy like?]
- Pyhimys no siis
[well]
- Elina erimielisyyksiä tai eri leireihin jakautumisia ja?
[disagreements or divisions into separate camps and?]
- Pyhimys no.. ei ehkä sellasia
[well.. maybe not that]
- Elina eikä tarvi ruveta mitään insidejuttuja mut siis mie vaan mietin et
[and you don’t have to tell me any inside stuff but I was just wondering that]
- Pyhimys joojoojoo ei mä vaan yritän niinku miettiä miten mä muotoilisin tän koska on niinku kuitenkin sellasii.. ihan selkeitä ja tosi lapsellisii-
[yeayeayea no I’m just like trying to think how to put this because there are like nevertheless kinda... really clear and really childish-]
- Elina ja jos on ni onks ne maantieteellisesti /jotenki jakautunu/?
[and if there are then are they geographically /somehow divided/?]

¹⁷⁴ The song in question is Steen1 feat. *Michael J. Fux* (Pyhimys’ alter ego): “Astetta parempi” (literally: ‘A level better’, but here also: ‘Better than Aste’).

- Pyhimys /ei sellasii/ ei oo missään nimes enää et. suomiräpin alkuaikoina oli niinku tota Tampere Helsinki juttuu ja tälläst mut se on ihan niinku muuttunu kokonaan et maantieteellisest muuttunu siihen et on vaan niinku se on polarisoitunu se kenttä.. ja sanotaan et mä oon niin keskellä. varmaan ku mahollista sillee niinku et et ja mä oon aina periaattees pyrkiny myös ja mä oon jollain ihan ekoil mixtepeil sanonut et mä oon nii uugee joka suuntaan ettei oo ketään keskemällä
 [/nono those kinda/ there's absolutely not anymore like. in the earlier days of Finnish rap there was like that Tampere Helsinki thing and stuff but it's like changed completely so geographically it has changed like so it has just polarized the field... and let's say that I am so in the middle. than is possible so like and I have always basically also tried and I have on some very first mix tapes said that I am so UG [underground] in every direction that there's no-one more in the center]
- Elina okei
 [okey]
- Pyhimys ja mä yritän pitää siit vielä kiinni mä voin olla Cheekin levyllä ja sit mä voin olla jollain ihan tosi niinku jonku uugeetyypin levyllä ja ilman et siit tulee sitä ko- ristiriitaa.. mut sit ku tääl reunas on Julma-Henri ja tääl reunas on Cheek ni ei ne ei nii-
 [and I'm still trying to hold on to that I can be on Cheek's album and then I can be on some like really like UG dude's album and without it becoming a co- contradiction... but then when at this end you have Julma-Henri and at this end you have Cheek so they won't the-]
- Elina ne ei kohtaa sit ollenkaan ((naurua)) sun mielestä
 [they won't meet at all ((laughter)) in your opinion]
- Pyhimys no siis.. kun kun esimerkiks tän vuoden Paipissa ne kohtas ni nii kyl siin niinku tuli.. fyysinen.. riita
 [well like... when when for example in this year's Pipe they met so so that like became.. a physical.. fight]

Here, I first ask whether there are any big, actual disagreements and dis-alignments in the scene, thereby creating a kind of context for (talk about) separate camps and contradictions. Thus, what follows in the extract, i.e. his self-construction as an artist might also be interpreted as a reaction to this initial framing by me. At first, he hesitatingly denies the existence of disagreements. I then ask whether possible disagreements are geographical and he firmly denies this and elaborates that in the early years of Finnish hip hop this was the case, particularly between Helsinki and Tampere (a 'secondary' center in the scene, and in Finland, as we already saw in section 2.2). This, however, does not characterize the present situation any longer and nowadays he sees the scene as more complex and polarized. Here, we can first interpret the significance of time – the trajectory of Finnish hip hop, the development from mainly two centers (Helsinki and Tampere) to new centers (and scenes) both within those two cities as well as locally and regionally across the country (although this is not elaborated by him in this extract).

Pyhimys then makes a significant position statement as he argues that he is "so in the middle" and, already on his very first mix tapes, he claimed to be "so U(nder) G(round) in every direction", thus, positioning himself *in the middle*

of all the other rappers in Finland (cf. Bamberg 1997). We can also see here that being in the *very* center of the Finnish hip hop scene is part of his trajectory: he claimed to be in the center already earlier and he is still 'there'. His trajectory within the Finnish hip hop scene can be interpreted as one of an experienced and knowledgeable all-around artist who is self-confident about his role and place. It might also be speculated here that, since he is from and in the center, everywhere he goes from there in turn becomes a bit 'central', and he can thus never really be in the very margins. What is also noticeable in this 'UG' definition is its *vertical* axis (in addition to the horizontal one), one which is 'below' the mainstream but nevertheless highly central and significant.

He further emphasizes this position by arguing that he could feature on Cheek's album and, likewise, on some underground rapper's album – he sees no contradiction there. Pyhimys then gives an example of how the Finnish scene is polarized, with Julma-Henri at one end and Cheek at the other – and how their meeting up during the Pipefest hip hop festival resulted in a physical confrontation between the two posses. In this extract, then, the main theme and act of positioning (cf. Bamberg 1997) is Pyhimys constructing himself as a center of the Finnish hip hop scene, and of its artists, whereas Cheek might be seen as a center in relation to the US-oriented rap style and as a center of money-making, success, fans, etc. (cf. also extract 10 below). In relation (and in opposition?) to the 'mainstream center', Pyhimys can be seen as constructing himself as an 'alternative center' here, as one who can convincingly move between the two opposites. The center is thus also a very *fluid* one and by no means fixed. This is particularly informative about the subjective 'rap worlds' that each rapper has as well as the (relative) centers and margins within them.

This extract can be seen as a sign of Pyhimys' *multidimensionality*: he is open to all directions and does not want to categorize himself under any particular genre, whereas he positions others in categories: as 'UG' or 'commercial' at the two ends of the spectrum. This seems to be a very conscious choice, a statement of a sort, on his part. Here, we can also see the ambivalence of the term 'UG' – when he previously characterized himself as "UG (in every direction)" it is, curiously enough, not the same 'UG' associated with Julma-Henri (at the other end of the spectrum) – the specific distinction between these does not, however, become clear here. This kind of ambivalence is important for him (and his authenticity construction) because he seems to want to hold on to his multifacetedness: he does not want to be just 'one thing' and 'easily interpretable' – it is part of his artistry. Also, in this example, we can see the overlap between the two analytical sections. This extract reflects the topic of 'the best and the rest', too, in that it has to do with music, styles and genres – and his position in the center is also an argument about his (artistic) skills – he is *that* central, *that* good. However, in essence, Pyhimys here explains his position in the center of the scene but does not hint at being the best in that scene. This is the rationale behind the choice of including the extract in this particular analytical section.

Pyhimys' position can also be seen in another anecdote (in the same interview) in which he describes shooting a video for the Teflon Brothers song "Hikoilen ku raiskaaja" ('I sweat like a rapist'), which featured a young man surfing and stalking people (women) on the internet and who had, on the wall in his room, a *Fintelligens* (the 'pioneering' Finnish rap group) poster.

- Pyhimys no totta kai kuvattii. ja sit matskuu oli mont tuntii.. mut sit me otettiin se ja sit totta kai leikkausvaihees oli sillei et no miten ne ottaa tän? ne on herkimät tyypit kuitenkin niinku Cheekki ja Fintelligens ne on tosi herkät niiden om- omista niit ei saa mainita missään ja.. tälle mut mä oon Pyhimys mä oo- £mä voin tehdä aina kaikkee ja selittää jälkeen päin£ (nauraa)
[well of course we shot. and then we had several hours of material.. but then we took it and then of course in the editing phase like we were like how are they gonna take this? they are the most sensitive dudes like Cheek and Fintelligens they are really sensitive about their ow-own you can't mention them anywhere and.. like this but I'm Pyhimys I a- £I can always do all sorts of stuff and explain afterwards£ (laughs)]
- Elina (nauraa)
[(laughter)]
- Pyhimys mul on sellane erikois. rooli et tavallaan mä oon siinä vähä mä oon vähä sellai koskematon mä en ikin osaa kuvitella et joku tulis antaa mulle mitään niinku kuritusta tai mitään et
[I have a kind of special. role so like I'm kinda a bit like I'm a bit like untouchable I can never imagine anyone coming to give me any punishment or anything that]
- Elina eikä oo tullu ikinä?
[and no one ever has?]
- Pyhimys e:i siis et kyl mä niinku jotenki tiedän oman paikkani aika hyvin.. ja sillee niinku et. mä oon kuitenkin neki tunnen jollai taval aika pitkält aikaa ja ne tietää tasan tarkkaan niinku et.. et mihin asti mä voin vähän vittuilla
[no: so I mean I kinda somehow know my own place pretty well.. and so like. I have like I have known them in some way for a long time and they know exactly that like.. up to what limit I can fuck around with them a bit]
- Elina okei
[okey]

Here, Pyhimys explains how they wondered in the editing phase of the video how *Fintelligens* would react to the fact that there is a poster of them on the wall of this creepy guy's room. He then adds that *Fintelligens* and *Cheek* are amongst the most sensitive people in the scene, whose names cannot be mentioned in any random context. His 'solution' to the problem (which he explains smiling) is that he is, after all, Pyhimys, so he can therefore do whatever he wants and explain his actions afterwards. He positions himself via his 'special role', that of the 'untouchable', in the center.

This extract is not only about his position, but also about his trajectory: he has been around a long time (long enough) and he knows the other people in the scene from way back. He explicitly states that he "knows his place pretty well" (i.e. that of the 'untouchable' center). Thus, he knows his status and position in the scene, and can behave provocatively up to a certain point,

without anybody really losing their temper with him. This is also evidence of the respect and solidarity he enjoys with the other rappers. He can stretch and test the limits of his own position – it is, again, a very mobile position, but also one that is established, in the (mobile) center. Thus, here we can see how Pyhimys’ authenticity is constructed most notably through experience and his position in the (self-defined and unfixed) ‘center’.

Extract 6: Stepa: from a fan to a Joku Roti member

The sixth extract is from the second interview I had with Stepa (November 8, 2010 in a restaurant in Jyväskylä). Here, we can clearly see a narrative – his trajectory from a fan to an active fan and, furthermore, to a collaborator and a colleague and part of the Joku Roti posse (whose members originally come from Lapland, but are nowadays mostly situated in the Tampere area; as was explained in section 2.2.2). I aim to show the reader how Stepa discursively constructs himself (and others) in these different positions, both in the margins and towards a center. What precedes this particular extract is our discussion on which Finnish rap artist(s) he likes and listens to and how he himself would characterize or categorize his music. He mentioned liking the music of, for example, Tulenkantajat, some of whose members later on formed the Joku Roti posse.

- Elina [...] okei.. joo.. no mite se Joku Roti Mafia mite se tota.. mite sie pää-pääsit siihen mukaan tai jouduit tai halusit tai miten se yhteistyö. ku siehän niinku [[...] okei.. yea.. so how did that Joku Roti Mafia how did it.. how did you get to be part of that or ended up or wanted or how did that collaboration. because you]
- Stepa nii nii
[yea yea]
- Elina selkeesti kuulut siihen
[clearly belong to that]
- Stepa joo joo
[yea yea]
- Elina ryhmään ni
[group so]
- Stepa no se jostaki.. mistähän se lähti.. meikä kävi Hanen ja Sopan keikoilla ja sit [well somehow.. how did it start... I was at Hane’s and Soppa’s gigs and then]
- Elina kuuntelee vai ihan mukana?
[listening or actually with them?]
- Stepa joo. joo kuuntelemassa ja sitte toi
[yea. yea listening and then that]
- Elina niinku jossai siel. pohjosessa?
[like somewhere there. in the north?]
- Stepa niih nii sitte tuota.. ne oli kuullu jostaki. joku oli sanonu niille että se Stepa on ihan paskaa musiikkia ei kannate kuunnella ((nauraen))
[yea yea and then.. they had heard from somewhere. someone had told them that Stepa is shitty music not worth listening to ((laughing))]
- Elina kukah? ((nauraen))
[who? ((laughing))]

- Stepa £:n minä e:n minä tiä. e:n tiä£.. että. jotaki tämmöstä ja sitte tuota me järkättiin aikoinaan ne keikalle Sodankylään ja sit kävin Rovaniemellä kattoon keikkaa ja sitte t- puo:lituttujen tuttujen kautta tutustu niihin ja sitte tuli se Lappi itsenäiseksi kokoelma jossa pyyettiin kaikkia räppäreitä ja.. se. se vähän niinku. meikä löi ehkä itteni läpi sillä.. jollaki tasolla niitten korvissa
[£I: don't I: don't know do::n't know£...that. so something like this and then back then we organized a gig for them in Sodankylä and then I went to Rovaniemi to watch a gig and then through acq-se:mi-acquaintances I got to know them and then came that Independence for Lapland collection for which they asked all the rappers and.... that. that sort of like. I kinda made a breakthrough with that... on some level in their ears]
- Elina jes /mikä biisi sul oli?/
[yea / what song did you have?/]
- Stepa /mut se oli/ se: oli Näin on
[/but it was/ i:t was Näin on]
- Elina okei
[okey]
- Stepa ja se oli kyllä semmonen biisi johon meikä niinku ties et nyt. nyt meikän pitää panostaa että jos mie haluan tästä jotaki tehdä
[and that was the kinda song which I knew that now. now I gotta invest in this if I want to make something out of this]
- Elina nii just
[exactly]
- Stepa niiniinii se
[sososo that]
- Elina pitää tsempata
[you gotta work on it]
- Stepa nii nii. mutta kyllä meikällä on nytte aina ollu se että. tiäkkö. et on nyt on pakko tehdä aina parempaa ja parempaa
[yea yea. but now I've always had that. you know. that now I gotta just do it better and better]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Stepa muuten siinä ei ois. ei sais enää kiksejä
[otherwise it wouldn't have. you wouldn't get kicks anymore]
- Elina nii ja eihä siinä kehity jos aattelee et nooh tehään vaan tällästä
[yea and you won't develop if you think that let's just make something]
- Stepa nii nii
[yea yea]

I was initially curious about Stepa's relations with the Joku Roti posse and asked about his history – how he became part of them in the first place. Here, I already frame the discussion in a certain way and suggest, or impose, a role for him as part of Joku Roti: “cos you clearly belong to that”. Stepa affirms this. He does not seem to have developed a ‘ready-made answer’ (to journalists and the like), since he hesitates and wonders a bit before he actually starts relating what happened in the past.

Here, we can see how he positions himself as a listener and a fan (and a novice) vis-à-vis the two more experienced rappers (cf. Bamberg 1997), Hane and Soppa (Hannibal and Soppa – a duo which was part of Tulenkantajat and,

later, Joku Roti). Later on, he became an active fan, who organized gigs for Hane and Soppa in Sodankylä, his home village. Through some (semi-)acquaintances he was then introduced to them. After this, he was soon asked to join other rap artists from Lapland on a collection album entitled: “Lappi itsenäiseksi!” (“Independence for Lapland!”) (2006). Stepa realized that he needed to take the challenge seriously – this was a decisive moment for Stepa, who sees that he made a breakthrough in their eyes with his song “Näin on” (“That’s right”). Later on, he understood that the challenge is constant – one always needs to improve one’s music and make it better and better. Here, Stepa constructs (and literally organizes) Sodankylä as a local center where the Rovaniemi rappers came to perform. Rovaniemi is then described as another, musical, subcultural and collegial center, on a more regional level of Lapland, as this is where the Lapland rappers meet and come together, to make joint albums. Sodankylä could never be larger musical and posse center of this kind due to its small size. In fact, I have only once heard Stepa mention another, younger rapper from Sodankylä – these two together do not make a posse, let alone a scene. The extract continues:

- Elina niinku samaa tasoo koko aja. no mite. minkälaisina. ootteks te niinku kavereita ja. vai onks ne niinku vieläki jotain esikuvia vai? niinku sillee just siin Joku Roti Mafiassa et
[like the same level all the time. so how. what kind of. are you like friends and. or are they still some role models or? like in that Joku Roti Mafia specifically?]
- Stepa no. no.
[well. well]
- Elina oot sie edelleen sellai juniorijäsen siin porukassa vai?
[are you still like a junior member in that group or?]
- Stepa o:han meikä. iältäni vielä. juniori mut et niinku. no se on vähä kaikenlaista sekaasi
[ye:a I am. in terms of my age. a junior but so like. well it’s a bit of everything mixed]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Stepa mutta kyllähä me niinku kavereita ollaa niinku lähtökohtasesti mutta.. edellee meikä fiilistelee Tulenkantajia ja Hanen ja Soppa musiikkia ja. ja:.. mut en mie tiä. mie oon vaan siunattu että pääsee olemaan mukana ja tekemään et
[but yes like we are friends like to begin with but... still I dig the music of Tulenkantajat and Hane and Soppa and. and... but I don’t know. I’m just blessed to be able to be part of and to do stuff so]
- Elina nii nii. just joo joo
[yea yea. exactly yea yea]

When I ask Stepa more specifically about the current situation and his relations with Joku Roti, he tells me that he is still (in the position of) a novice in the group in terms of his age, but that they are first and foremost friends, although he (still) admires the music made by Tulenkantajat, Hane and Soppa. The Lapland rap scene was at the time thus a major musical center both for Stepa

and other rappers of the area. Although Stepa does not address it here, their style was particularly known for their ‘gangsta funk’ elements: i.e. musical elements such as synthesizers and deep bass (Stepa, personal communication) but also their (ironic) ‘gangsta’ themes, topics and references (see also Strand 2007 for an MA thesis on the local and masculine identity of Tulenkantajat). Thus, although it is not explicated and elaborated on here, a major influence (i.e. a musical center) on the local Rollo (nickname for Rovaniemi) or Lapland style was this particular *West Coast gangsta funk*, G-funk, style (which is exemplified in some of the oeuvre of, for instance the US rappers *Nate Dogg*, *Snoop Dogg* and *Warren G*). Quite aptly, Tulenkantajat also have a song titled “Rollofunk”. The Lapland rap pioneers combined this easy-going and laid-back musical style with their own local Peräpohjola dialect, which made them also nationally known (cf. Mikkonen 2004; Paleface 2011). Thus, drawing on this particular musical style, they made also their own music central in this respect. What sets them apart is their dialect, which is marginal in the Finnish context or at least from the southern perspective of the centers of Helsinki and Tampere. They are also geographically marginal, as they are (or were) in ‘remote’ Lapland.

What concludes our discussion on this topic is his remark: “... but I don’t know. I’m just blessed to be able to be part of and to do stuff so”. Stepa often uses this term ‘siunattu’ (‘blessed’) in the interviews and in other conversations that I have had with him. Here, we can see a connection to a certain kind of socio-cultural (and religious) ‘thankfulness’ discourse prevalent in some US hip hop (and in society in general): “I’m just blessed to be here / to do this or that”. Partly, it relates to how some rap artists have ‘made it’ from ‘rags to riches’ and now feel they have been blessed (by God) because they have achieved so much. Stepa’s comment can also be interpreted as ‘apparent modesty’, a discourse typical for artists in general, which emphasizes not their skills or achievements but the (external) luck and being blessed. This also relates to Bamberg’s (1997: 337) positioning levels in the sense that Stepa, when talking to me, positions himself as having been lucky and blessed to be where he is now – and ‘instructs’ me to interpret his small stories this way. Thus, the main theme we can see in this extract is his development, his trajectory, from a fan to a legitimate Joku Roti member (despite his age), in the regional Lapland context and center, in which ‘making it to Joku Roti’ is (or was) as big as it gets.

This kind of ‘from novice to a collaborator to a member’ trajectory can also be seen in (at least) two other small anecdotes that Stepa related in the same interview I had with him. The first has to do with Amoc, Edorf and other Ivalo¹⁷⁵ rappers.

Elina	tunnet sie sitä((Amoc)) jotenki? [do you know him ((Amoc)) somehow?
Stepa	<u>joo</u> joo

¹⁷⁵ Ivalo, the center of Inari, a municipality in Lapland, can be considered a local center in Lapland.

- Elina [yea yea]
tai oot sie ollu yhteyksissä?
[or have you been in contact?]
- Stepa joo siis. ehkä niitten jätkien kautta niin tämä. meikän räppi. sai sitte semmosen. että neki oli yksiä esikuvia silloin nuorena että. seki oli siistiä ku sitte ne soitti ne oli ryyppäämässä Sodankylässä joskus ja soitti että. jos meikällä olis mikkejä ja. mikserreitä että mennää tekemään räppiä ja sitte se. vähän niinku innosti sitte ku pääsi niitten kanssa. ku meikä oli tosi. tosi nuori [yea so. maybe through those dudes this. my rap. then kinda got. so they were also like role models when I was young and. it was cool when they called they were drinking in Sodankylä once and called me and. if I have mikes and. mixers so we could go and make rap and then it. kinda like encouraged me when I was able to go with them. when I was really. really young]
- Elina okei. joo
[okey. yea]

Here, we can see how, when Stepa was ‘really really young’, he was initially in the role and position of a ‘helper’ of the other, more experienced Lapland rappers: he arranged mikes and mixers for them in Sodankylä (which shows that he was already partly involved in music-making at the time) and, in return, these older rappers invited the young Stepa to make music with them. Thus, they helped Stepa, a more marginal rapper, on his trajectory towards a (regional) center. Nowadays, he is ‘one of them’ and frequently associates (and collaborates) with them.

The second anecdote involves Solonen, a rapper (originally) from Kokkola, Western Finland, whom Stepa asked for an autograph when he was younger and with whom he currently collaborates.

- Stepa nii. nii nii tuota kävin siltä pyytää joskus nimmarin ja nyt meikä saa sen kans niinku. tai et me soitellaan ja muuta ni se on iha. sillee en mie sitä sillee ota et wau wau. ja siistiä ((naurahten))
[yea. yea yea so I went to ask for his autograph once and now like I can be with him. or that we call each other and stuff so it’s like. so like I’m not taking it like wow wow. and cool ((gives a laughter))]
- Elina ((nauraa))
[[((laughs))]]
- Stepa mutta sillee. jos sitä alkaa ajattelemaan nii. nii on se aika siistiä
[but like. if you start thinking about it. so it is pretty cool]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Stepa tai sillee jos mie mietin itseäni sillo kakstoistavuotiaana /ja mietin nyt/
[or like if I think about myself when I was twelve /and think now/]
- Elina /sillonko sie/ sen nimmarin sait?
[/is that when you/ got the autograph?]
- Stepa nii nii. nii nii. ni en minä uskonu tämmöse. tämmöse et nyt mie pääsen sit jauhamaan niitten kanssa ja. juttelemaan. räpistä.
[yea yea. yea yea. so I didn’t believe in this. this that now I get to go on and on with them and. talk. about rap]

Here, we can, once again, see Stepa's career development: initially, at the age of 12, he was in the position of one who asked for autographs from more experienced rappers and admired them. Now, he gets to talk about rap with them and to collaborate with them, on equal terms. The main theme of 'from a fan to a member' – and the (longitudinal) process of authenticity construction as an artist – is clearly illustrated in all of these anecdotes and in Stepa's trajectory from the margins into 'a center', at least in the Lapland rap scene. As Wenger (1998: 100–101) argues, a trajectory most often begins with peripheral participation, which is "an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice", as we also clearly saw in Stepa's case, with the joint Lapland album. A trajectory thus develops from *a novice member* (of a younger generation) to *a potential member*, and later on, to *a full member* (ibid.). The full member category (i.e. a subcultural insider) can be seen, for example, in that Stepa now collaborates with the artists he used to admire from afar.

5.3.3 'Extra-curricular' activities

Finally, extracts 7–9 characterize 'extra-curricular' activities of various kinds, which the artists have in addition to (but still relating to) rap and hip hop.

Extract 7: Cheek as a 'rags-to-riches' lecturer at a business school

The seventh extract consists of an e-mail from Cheek (to me), supported by his lyrics. Here, I analyze the way in which he is constructed as a center of expertise by others. Cheek was asked to give a guest lecture at *Lappeenranta University of Technology* (LUT), on a course entitled "Liiketoiminnan perusteet" ('The basics of business') in October 2010. When I asked how he ended up lecturing there, he replied:

Olin proffan mielestä sopivin mies puhumaan omalla yrittämisellä menestymisestä, intohimosta ja voittamisesta. Kävin vetäsemässä luennon viikko sitten ja hyvää palautetta tuli. Toi ceissi poiki lisää vastaavanlaista hommaa, jota teen kyllä mielelläni. Nyt oon menossa Mikkelin Nuorkauppakamarille ja SOK:n¹⁷⁶ koulutuspäiville tai vastaaville puhumaan." (November 3, 2010)

[According to the prof, I was the most suitable man to talk about succeeding, passion and winning as regards self-employed entrepreneurship. I went to give the lecture a week ago and got good feedback on it. That case spawned more similar action, which I'm happy to do. Now I'm going to give a talk at the Junior Chamber of Commerce in Mikkelin and in an in-service training session for SOK or the like'.]

Here, we can see Cheek's representation of how his success story has been recognized and acknowledged by others, in this case a university professor, who thought that Cheek would be a good 'embodiment' of the notions of (commercial) success and winning. Although he studied business at the polytechnic himself (he has a BBA in it), he is now in a position to give lectures at a university level. The university 'case' was not the only one of its kind but,

¹⁷⁶ SOK (Suomen Osuuskauppojen Keskuskunta) engages nationally in, for instance, supermarket, gas station, department store and agricultural business and trade.

since then, Cheek has actually been asked to lecture in other 'top-notch' business places as well. All in all, he gladly engages with this kind of work. A note on the website (LUT) advertised the lecture as follows:

Yippee-ki-yay!!! LUT 27.10. klo 12-14 "Kymppisali" (2310) liekeissä. Luento vrittämisestä, intohimosta ja voittamisesta. Vieraana elävä esimerkki, Suomen kuumin rap-artisti ja "Maanteiden kingi" Cheek

[‘Yippee-ki-yay!!! LUT 27.10. at 12-2pm “Lecture hall ten” (2310) on fire. A lecture about trying/entrepreneurship, passion and winning. As a guest, a living example, the hottest rap artist in Finland and “King of the road” Cheek]

The note begins with the (modified) title of Cheek’s song “Jippikayjei” (‘Yippeekiyay’) (2010). The lecture is thus actually advertised in a ‘festive’ kind of way, not in the stereotypical, plain and matter-of-fact fashion, as they use expressions such as ‘on fire’ and ‘the hottest artist’. Of course, it is not coincidence that Cheek has been asked to give a lecture on the course “The Basics of Business” – since he could well be characterized as a self-employed entrepreneur. In addition, LUT has probably wanted to hire someone who is currently a ‘hot’ name both in society and in the business world. In both of these examples, then, we can see how Cheek is *positioned* as an expert and a role model, and the audience as listeners and learners and, possibly, also fans (cf. Bamberg 1997). Cheek actually mentions another ‘lecturing’ anecdote in the “Jippikayjei” song:

ja mä en suostu tupeloimaan	and I'm not ruining this
siks proffat pyys kaupparkeeseen	that's why the profs asked me to lecture
luennoimaan	at the school of business
ryysyistä rikkauksiin, elävä esimerkki	from rags to riches, a living example
2012 keväällä presidentti	2012 in the spring a president
tai mitä ikinä	or whatever
kaikki on mahdollista niin kauan kun	anything is possible as long as you
riittää kipinä	got spark

He raps about how the professors had asked him to give a lecture at *Kaupparkeakoulu* (School of Business, Helsinki) because “he’s not ruining” anything – he is a prime example of success. There is a global cultural reference here to the ‘rags to riches’ discourse (e.g. Wyllie 1966), (stereo)typical of US rap, and how he himself is a living example of such a success story (see also the analysis on Cheek’s “Orjantappuraa” song in section 4.3). By this he means that he, too, has risen from being a poor nobody into making a name for himself and being one of the most successful artists in Finland, not only in the rap scene but in the music scene in general. There is also a national political reference here to the 2012 presidential elections. After these lines, he laughs heartily and says “tai mitä ikinä” (‘or whatever’) and hints that basically anything is possible – thus, even becoming the president of Finland – as long as one works hard and has will and energy.

After his debut album (in 2001), Cheek had to decide whether he would, in fact, apply to the School of Business in Helsinki or make a second album (as

an author's edition) and study, instead, in the local polytechnic in Lahti. Because of the amount of work it would have required, Cheek decided to give up the School of Business idea, and focus, instead, on his music career while doing his studies at the polytechnic. (Rytönen 2013.) Later on, Cheek describes how he felt about this: "Kaiken voiteli se, kun olin 2011 alkuvuodesta luennoimassa Kauppakorkeakoulussa menestymisestä. Ympyrä sulkeutui, ja täysi auditorio oli kuuntelemassa millaisen tien olin itse valinnut." ('It all became worthwhile when in the early 2011 I was giving a lecture in the School of Business about succeeding. It came full circle and a full auditorium listened to what kind of a road I had chosen myself'). (ibid.). This anecdote nicely exemplifies his trajectory, from the margins in Lahti (with no record deal) to a (business) center in his own right, as one who people look up to and listen to.

The main theme in this extract is Cheek as the center of business knowledge and entrepreneurship – his 'identity claim' beyond the content and context here (cf. Bamberg 1997). This is, in fact, both other- and self-constructed in that others appreciate him and his talents highly but also he himself continually makes himself known (through lyrics, interviews and appearances) as a hard-working man and as someone who succeeds. We can also see here how his 'central' position in popular culture in Finland is 'transportable' to other fields such as business economics. Centrality – and authenticity – in one domain appears to trigger acceptance in other centers as well. This extract is also highly informative about the *ideologies* Cheek embraces: those of business, diligence and economic success. What is set aside, in the margins, is the more 'traditional' view of authenticity, i.e. "l'art pour l'art", according to which the reason for music-making is the music itself and not even aiming at (commercial) success (Moore 2002: 211). This extract bears similarities with extract 9 (with Stepa) below, although in a different field or area – in both of them, the rap artist acts as an expert, a center for the surrounding people.

Extract 8: Pyhimys as a versatile self-made man

The eighth extract is from the first interview I had with Pyhimys (September 11, 2009, in a restaurant in Jyväskylä). Here, I analyze how Pyhimys constructs himself as a man of many talents and interests. I aim to show how, consequently, he is both self- and other-constructed as a center in various fields and as someone with a great potential for cross-scalar mobility (from more local centers to national ones). What precedes this particular extract is our discussion about where and how he started his rapping and who his role models were. He then tells me how he thinks that (in rap music) one first needs to do the (stereotypical) 'woman' song, the 'drinking' song and 'I am the best' song – after which one can or needs to expand one's view, for example, by making a drinking song from a particular angle. An artist can never make the same stuff twice. Here, he elaborates on this issue.

Pyhimys mut sitä kautta. on tullu sitte se että. kun on oikeestaan se on mun mielestä niinku tärkein asia minkä mä oon huomannu on se että pitää olla se näkemys siitä oikeestaan kaikesta mitä tähän liittyy..

- [but through that. has also come that. cos actually it is in my view the most important thing what I've noticed is that you need to have a vision of actually everything that relates to this..]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys nii no siis en mä tiedä pitää olla mut jos on ni se on hyvä et niinku et minkä takii tekee asioita? mi-mikä on tää kenttä ketä tätä kuuntelee? ja mihin tän pitäs mennä? ja kaikkii tälläsii asioita ja sitä kautta mä oon sitte. saanu töitä jotka liittyy tähän eli mä oon niinku Helsingin nuorisoasiainkeskuksella
[well yea I don't know if you have to have it but if you do then that's good so like so why do you do things? wh-what is this field who listens to this? and where should this go? and all these kinda things and through that I've then. gotten some work that have to do with this so I'm like at the youth department of the city of Helsinki]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Pyhimys esimerkiks järjestän nyt sellasta Beats and Sounds. räppi.kisaa
[for example organizing this Beats and Sounds. rap. contest]
- Elina okei
[okey]
- Pyhimys joka on niinku periaattees valtakunnallinen mä oon niinku vastaava tuottaja siinä ja sit mä oon tuottanu yhen levyn semmoselle nuorelle tyypille joka oli niinku huostanotettuna ja sit se tuli Helsinkiin ja sitte tota se halus kertoo niist asioist se oli sille niinku sellanen.. ei nyt terapiaa mut semmonen niinku helpottava juttu ja
[which is like basically nationwide I'm like the executive producer there and then I've produced one album for this young person who had been taken into custody and then s/he came to Helsinki and then like wanted to tell about those things it was for her/him like kinda.. not like a therapy but like that sort of a relief thing and]
- Elina nii just
[yes right]
- Pyhimys se on nyt menestyny kans sillei niinku siihen nähden aika hyvin.. ja tollasii pi- juttuja ja sit mul on tuo oma levy-yhtiö
[s/he's like succeeded pretty well given the situation.. and that kind of sm-things and then I have that my own record company]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys mikä kans on oikeestaan tuottaa aika paljon kaikkii hommia ja sit nyt me ollaan perustettu sit ton Monspin kanssa meiän levy-yhtiö ja se levy-yhtiö ni ollaan perustettu sellast keikkamyntisysteemiä
[which is also kinda produces pretty much all sorts of work and then now we've established with that Monsp our record company and that record company so we've established a kind of gig sales system]
- Elina okei
[okey]
- Pyhimys et seki taas et aina ku tulee joku niinku mieleen et tää asia vois olla toisin ni sit rupee miettii et no miten sen vois tehdä niin että tavallaan se aika minkä käyttää sen muuttumiseen ni maksais ittensä takas.. ni sit vaa yhtäkkii huomaa et hommii on helvetisti
[so that too so whenever you think of something that this thing could be differently so then you start wondering so how you could do it so that in a

- way the time you use to change it would then pay itself back.. so then suddenly you just realize that you have shitloads to do
- Elina ((naurahtaen)) aika laajalt toi kuulostaa niinku toi sun kenttä mitä kaikkee sä teet
 [((gives a laughter)) that sounds pretty extensive that field of what all sorts of stuff you do]
- Pyhimys no niin siis kyl mä pyrin pyrin niinku ite mahdollisimman yritän niinku aina ajatella et elämä on nii lyhyt et jos vähänki lipsahtaa siihen et al- alkaa tekee jotain yht asiaa ni sit jää nii paljon muita niinku näkökulmiä tavallaan näkemättä et se... mä en tiä se jotenki.. mun mielest vaan niinku. on paljon helpompi tehdä sitä juttuu jos ymmärtää myös niit puitteit tavallaan siinä
 [well yea I mean I try I try as much as possible I always try to think that life is so short that if even a bit it starts to go there that you sta- start doing only one thing so then you miss out on so many other like viewpoints so that... I don't know somehow.. I just think. it's much easier to do the thing if you also understand the terms of reference there]

Here, Pyhimys emphasizes that one needs to have a (larger) *vision* of the whole scene: why does one do (certain) things? Who listens to the music? Where is the scene going? He then elaborates on what kind of work he has received through (t)his extensive knowledge and vision: the executive producer of a rap competition as well as producing a 'therapeutical' album for a marginalized youngster. In this small story, Pyhimys positions himself as a helper, one with experience and the young boy as a troubled teenager, who nevertheless slowly gets his voice heard and gains empowerment (cf. Bamberg 1997). In addition, Pyhimys owns his own (Yellowmic) record company and, together with Monsp Records, they have established a gig sales company (called Ramin Väilitys). Since (it had not yet happened at the time of the interview), he has also set up Katin Tavara, an online hip hop store and t-shirt print house. As a consequence of all of this, he is extremely busy but still keeps on planning new 'stuff' to do. In his opinion, life is too short to focus only on one thing. In conclusion, he argues that it helps (in the hip hop or music scene) if one also knows about the surrounding aspects, the terms of reference regarding one's work.

As can be seen in and through this extract, Pyhimys is a versatile 'doer' - a producer, a record company owner (an entrepreneur), an organizer of 'everything'. He seems to emphasize his *mobility* as well: he does not stay in one spot but is in perpetual movement. Through this action and knowledge, he gains an all-encompassing picture of the whole scene. He emphasizes the importance of *versatility* and *vision*: he has a broad understanding of the scene and its actors as well as the rationale behind various actions. Nowadays, he can also make use of this vision in his new job (since October 2013) as a production manager at Johanna Kustannus, where he is responsible for finding and signing new artists.¹⁷⁷ This can be seen as an example of both his trajectory and position in that he has been around for a number of years and his current position as a kind of a 'visionary' of the Finnish hip hop scene is the result of this

¹⁷⁷ One of these is *Kasmir*, an r'n'b/pop singer, who published his debut single in spring 2014.

multifaceted work. There is some common ground here with the previous extract of Cheek in the sense that both of them have been in the scene for a long time and worked and continue to work hard for their success, whatever it may be in each case. They are thus both centers, but in different respects: whereas for Cheek, it is in particular the business and the economic aspect and mainstream success which makes him central, for Pyhimys it is both the business aspect (through his numerous companies and associations) but also his versatility in the scene, including some community work for people in need. Here, we can also clearly see how these two rappers construct their authenticity in various ways, and in relation to various centers.

Another extract from the same interview highlights Pyhimys' 'entrepreneurial' attitude from a past perspective. When I asked him how and where he started to rap in the first place, he looked back on his childhood and youth in the following way:

- Elina niin niin joo. miten sie sit niinku aikoinaa.. millä millon ja miten ja miks sie oot aloittanu tän räppäämisen?
[yea yea. so how did you back then... with what when and how and why did you start this rapping?]
- Pyhimys no siis kyl nyt niinku jälkeen päin on helppo tosi helppo sanoo et on aina ollu joku tarve.. ensinnäki ilmasta itteensä.. ja toiseks tehä jotain sellast juttuu mihin liittyis kaikki erilaisii osa-alueita.. niinku et esimerkkin.. esimerkkinä voi ottaa niinku et mitä me ollaan Heikin kans tehty aikasemmi et mei- nyt monet aattelee sillee et Heikki on vaan joku niinku mun kaveri tai joku sillee et me ollaan nyt vaan ruvettu tekee jotai sellai musaa mut sillei meil on ollu tää levy-yhtiö kymmenen vuotta sitä ennen meil oli skeittitiimi bommausjengi. kilju. firma
[so like now like afterwards it's easy really easy to say that I've always had some sort of need.. to first of all express myself... and second of all to do the kind of thing which would include all kinda different areas.. like for example... like an example could be like what we've done with Heikki earlier so we- now many people think that Heikki is just like a friend of mine or like someone with whom we've only now began like making music but like we've had this record company for ten years and before that we had a skating team a bomb gang. a hooch. company]
- Elina (naurua)
[(laughter)]
- Pyhimys ää.. ja viel joku muuki niis oli aina kaikis jotain sellasta.. et me aina haluttiin organisoida meil oli mein kiljufirmalla oli nettisivut ja mainonta ja me oltiin mä muistan vaan et me oltiin rehtorin puhuttelus sellai et ette te voi niinku oikeesti mainostaa koulun seinällä kiljufirmaa
[mm... and something else too they always had something like... that we always wanted to organize our hooch company had a website and advertising and we were I remember that we were reprimanded by the principal like you really can't like advertise your hooch company on the wall in a school]
- Elina (naurua)
[(laughter)]

Pyhimys argues that it is now easy for him to look, interpret and reflect on his own self and life *backwards* (i.e. form a coherent life story, a trajectory): he has always had a certain need to express himself and do things that involve multiple areas. He also incorporates his rap colleague Heikki Kuula into the story in that they have had joint businesses (in addition to the current record company) since childhood: a skating team, a graffiti ('bomb') gang and, interestingly, also a hooch ('kilju' refers to home-made liquor) company. The simple mentioning of a hooch company makes me immediately burst into laughter because the idea seems absurd. Also, Pyhimys' purpose here might have been to *entertain* me, his audience, in addition to the referential and informative function of the small story (cf. Bamberg 1997: 341). In all of these ventures, Pyhimys and his friend wanted to organize various activities. For example, the hooch company had its own website and they advertised the company, even on a school notice board, something which they were then asked to explain to the principal. In the hooch story, Pyhimys and Heikki are clearly *positioned* as rule breakers (but not being sorry about it) and the rector, of course, as one who polices the norms of the school (cf. Bamberg 1997). All of these (small stories) suggest very transgressive acts (the hooch company the most, but also the graffiti gang), whether at school or at their free-time – disobeying the authorities and doing what they please. Looking back on his trajectory, we can already see in Pyhimys' childhood how he has combined and developed different aspects and businesses – and how he seems to have been of an *entrepreneurial character* already from a young age.¹⁷⁸

In these extracts, we saw how Pyhimys is both self- and other-constructed as a center in various fields, such as music production and the record company business. What we thus witness here is an entrepreneurial and mobile attitude, in that respect similar to Cheek. In the case of Pyhimys, however, this role and position is much more versatile and in a different 'location' in the scene. Particularly in the first extract, he also constructed himself as a gateway to centers for other people (in a way, a 'center across centers'), when young rap kids could make their first album with his help. In some respects, this is then similar to the case of Stepa (extract 6), whereby older rap colleagues helped him to enter the scene as a novice member. In general, Pyhimys aims at accomplishing many things and activities and his skills and knowledge are also appreciated by others – this is what makes him a (subcultural) center. The main theme is thus that of Pyhimys a versatile 'doer' and a multifaceted center – this is who Pyhimys is, beyond the content and the interview situation (cf. Bamberg 1997). Although (some of) Pyhimys' actions may not be widely seen, read or heard in the mainstream music or hip hop scene, he is very much appreciated in the more 'underground' parts of the scene. Thus, he is a very central figure in the 'margins', if one can even call them that. Pyhimys' centrality – and

¹⁷⁸ Later on, Pyhimys commented on how it was Heikki Kuula and himself, in particular, who did not 'fit' into the normal hierarchy – and thus wanted to create their own 'pond' in which they could pretend to be the 'big fish'. And often, they also got other people to join this 'alternative' line.

authenticity – is thus, again, not one-dimensional, but it tends to combine and draw on centers of both commerce and that of ‘solidarity’ in the community, the last of which leads us to the next Stepa extract.

Extract 9: Stepa as an educator and youth worker

The ninth extract (the last one of the section) is from the third interview I had with Stepa (October 17, 2012, in a restaurant Jyväskylä). In this example, I show how Stepa has been made into a local ‘center’ for the youth, through his music-making. What precedes this particular extract is our discussion over the places for doing rap in Finland. In connection with this, he then also mentions knowing a young guy who makes rap music in Tornio.

- Stepa [...] mutta tuota. Torniossa on kans. joku jätkä otti yhteyttä. ja sit meikä kävi kahvilla ja me oltiin siinä. musa. musalevy. sillee ja jotaki
[... but like. in Tornio there’s also. some guy contacted me. and then I went for coffee with him and we were there. music. music album. like that and something]
- Elina okei
[okey]
- Stepa ja nyt ne. pyys meikää johoki piittää jotaki räppiluentoa ja mul ei oo mitään hajua mitä mie meen sanomaa mutta. ne on jotaki nuoria räppäreitä. joku nuorisotoimen juttu
[and now they. asked me somewhere to give some rap lecture and I have no idea what I will say but. they’re some young rappers. some youth work thing]
- Elina okei. no vähä siistiä
[okey. well that’s pretty cool]
- Stepa sit ne halus että meikä tulee vähä kattomaan niitten perään ja selittää jotaki
[then they wanted me to come and look after them and explain something]
- Elina oliko se siis jo vai? /se tulee?/
[was it already or?/ it will be?]
- Stepa /e:i se on./ ens viikolla
[/no: it’s./ next week]
- Elina okei
[okey]
- Stepa joo
[yea]
- Elina noni. /hienoo/
[okey. /great/]
- Stepa /se o/ vähä. joo. joo. mutta. mitä meikä sanoo niille?
[/it’s/ a bit. yea. yea. but. what will I say to them?]
- Elina en minä tiiäh ((naurahtaan))
[I don’t know ((gives a laughter))]
- Stepa niih niih ((naurahtaan))
[yeah yeah ((gives a laughter))]
- Elina sullahan sitä kokemusta on ((nauraen))
[you’re the one with the experience ((gives a laughter))]
- Stepa nii siis kyllä musiikista voi.. siis musiikin tekeminen on tosi helppoa. mutta musiikin tekemisen kertominen on ehkä. vähän vaikeeta

- [I mean you can about music.. so making music is really easy. but telling about making music is maybe. a bit difficult]
- Elina no varmaa jotain sun omasta polusta
[well I guess something about your own path]
- Stepa niih
[yeah]
- Elina en mie tiiä
[I don't know]
- Stepa jotaki tuommosta
[something like that]
- Elina miten olen päätynyt tähän tilanteeseen?
[how I have ended up in this situation?]
- Stepa niih
[yeah]
- Elina ehkä
[maybe]
- Stepa jotaki. toivottavasti siellä on joitaki räppijätikiä nii /mut aina/
[something. hopefully there'll be some rap dudes there so /but always/]
- Elina /no eiköhä/ siel oo
[well I'm sure/ there will be]
- Stepa nii. ol-olkoot mitä vaan mut kyl meikä aina
[yea. le-let them be whoever but I always]
- Elina tai mimmejä
[or chicks]
- Stepa niin tai mimmejä. toivottavasti ois räppimimmejä. se ois viel. siistimpää
[yea or chicks. hopefully some rap chicks. that would be. even cooler]
- Elina mm. voi vitsi sellast odotellessa
[mm. if only waiting for that to happen]
- Stepa niinpä
[indeed]

Stepa had coffee with this young rapper and, as a consequence, got an invitation to give a lecture on rap to youth in Tornio. At first, he claims he has nothing to say to these young rappers. I try to encourage him by saying that it is 'cool' and 'great' (that they invited him). He then admits that it is but still wonders what to say to them. I then put him into the focus, laughingly saying that I do not know and that *he* is the one with experience about these rap things. He explains to me that making music is easy for him but talking about it (to people) is completely different. I then suggest that maybe he should just say something about his own path, his own trajectory thus far. He then partly confirms this by saying "something like that". Last, he moves the focus of the conversation onto the (anticipated) audience and hopes that there will be some "rap dudes" in the audience. I confirm this initially, but then suggest to him that there could also be "rap chicks" in the audience, thus revealing my 'inner feminist attitude' and position (cf. Bamberg 1997) to him in a small fashion. Stepa acknowledges my point: "that would be even cooler". After this, I express longing for this kind of situation in the Finnish hip hop scene and he confirms this.

In this extract, we can see Stepa in the position of an educator (and a more experienced rapper) – this is the main theme. The youth work agency in Tornio actually asked him to give a lecture on rap to young people, or young rappers, who are here positioned as novices or fans (cf. Bamberg 1997). Although he is somewhat unsure of the contents of the lecture, he nevertheless seems genuinely happy about the opportunity to tell young people about his music-making and his path. Clearly then, through his music, Stepa has earned the position and the status of a ‘center’ for youth – at least on the very local, Tornio scale-level – through his music-making and hard work. Thus, although more broadly-speaking, on the national scale-level he might not be in the mainstream and in any ‘center’ in this sense, his local activities and ‘fame’ certainly move him from the margins into being a center for the local youth in his own right. This educational theme can also be seen in the following anecdote Stepa shared with me in the same interview:

- Stepa [...] semmone. yheksäntoistavuotias jätkä
[[...] like. a nineteen-year-old guy]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Stepa joka: on ollu perhekotikierteessä ja. tämmösessä ollu ja en tiä. en muista mistä me tava-tavattiin mutta nyt meikä on käyny sen luona ja.. mä oon ollu vähä esimerkkinä sille sillee
[who: has been in a family home spiral and. been in this kinda thing and I don’t know. I don’t remember where we met but now I’ve been visiting him and.. I’ve been a bit of an example for him]
- Elina noniii
[alright]
- Stepa jotenki ollu..
[in a way..]
- Elina ja jotenki ihan sopii siis sellai. en nyt sanois ettet henk koht välitä siit ihmisest mut et siun työnkuvaanki tolle tavallaa
[and somehow it really fits like. I’m not saying that you don’t personally care about him but like also your job description is like]
- Stepa nii nii joo siis sitä kautta se tunnisti meikä ensin ja
[yea yea so he recognized us first through that]
- Elina okei joo
[okey yea]
- Stepa sitte tuota. ja kyl se me- tai sillee.. jotenki huomaa että. on tullu ikää nii sitte. on vähä..
[and then. and he did u- or like.. somehow you notice that. when you grow older. you’re a bit..]
- Elina välittää eri tavalla? vai?
[you care differently? or?]
- Stepa nii nii.. että se: huomaa vaan itseensä sillee että ku mie olin yheksäntoistavuotiaaks asti puhunu vaan vittu pilvenpoltosta koko ilta
[yea yea.. so you: kinda notice yourself like when I had only talked about pot smoking every night till I was nineteen]
- Elina nii just
[exactly]
- Stepa niin niin sitte jotenki. on siistiä päästä sen kans jauhaa oikeista asioista

- Elina [yea so somehow. it's cool to get to talk about real stuff with him]
 niinii et se on päässy nyt sit vähä elämänsyrjään kiinni
 [yea so he's kinda gotten a hold of life now a bit]
- Stepa nii. nii
 [yea. yea]
- Elina se tyyppi. okei. no toihan on aika siistiä
 [that guy. okey. but that's kinda cool]
- Stepa nyt sil oli koulu. koulu niinku paikka sil oli. joku ongelma siinä ja sit meikä et
 @he:i. käyhä se koulu@
 [now he had school. school like a placement he had. some trouble there and I
 was like @he:y. pass that school@]
- Elina ((naurua))
 [((laughter))]

Stepa tells me how he has recently met a young guy who has had troubles in his life and whom he has started visiting regularly. He also relates how he has been (and wanted to be) *an example* to this young guy, who is here positioned as a youngster in need of help (cf. Bamberg 1997). I then comment on how it also goes well with his 'job description', meaning his youth work studies. I am not sure whether Stepa then understood this as relating to his studies or to his rap career but he says that the guy had recognized them (it does not become clear who he means here) 'through that'. He then looks back on his own youth when he was 19 and all he did was to talk about marijuana. With this young guy, however, he has had a chance to talk about 'real stuff'. The last thing he mentions about their interaction is that the guy had had some school placement issues and that he had encouraged and also 'reprimanded' him a bit to pass the school properly. He does this in an animated voice, that of a more '*convincing adult*', but also with a twinkle in his eye, which is why I laugh. This voice (and position) is that of an advisor, of a more experienced person. Here, Stepa may also want to present himself to me in a 'serious' fashion in that he is also interested in educating himself (and others) (cf. Bamberg 1997).

Here we can thus see that Stepa has acted like a proper youth worker for this younger guy – by talking about life with him, by helping him in his issues and by encouraging him to get an education. This is his position (and, one could also say, 'an identity claim'; cf. Bamberg 1997) and, again, it puts him into the center of the young people's lives. Here we can also see how he actually tries to pull this young guy from the educational and social *margins* back into the center of society. Several scholars (e.g. Alim 2009b; Ibrahim 2009; Sarkar 2009) have, in fact, emphasized and highlighted hip hop's *educational* aspects and possibilities in their research. For example, Alim (2009b: 219) has argued for *critical hip hop language pedagogies* (CHHLPs) (in the US context) which "emerge with the aim of not just teaching language, but to inspire pedagogies that make explicit the link between language, power and social process".

In Stepa's case, however, the educational issue arises from a slightly different angle. It is actually Stepa's job, or possible future job, to care for and look after young people. Here, it is not (necessarily) a question of language as such, but empowerment and one's position in the world are certainly at stake

here. We can also see a connection with the previous extract (8) with Pyhimys: both of them have, in fact, helped young people in need, through (encouraging) discussions with them, and through the production and publication of an album. There are also some differences between these cases: whereas Stepa was asked to give a local lecture to rap youth, Pyhimys was hired to be the executive producer of a nation-wide event. Thus, they are both central, but on different scales. There is also a connection with Cheek's extract (7) above, in the sense that both of them have been asked to lecture about the things they know and have experienced. *Different ideologies* are, however, at play here: whereas for Cheek, the point of reference is hard work and business life, for Stepa it is a more humane one, related to education and youth.

Conclusions: multiple centers and margins

Extracts 1–3 tell us mainly about geographical margins and centers within Finland. Here, each of the artists described their trajectory thus far: their origins and their current, significant 'centers'. Roots are significant in hip hop – they are continuously emphasized, both in the lyrics and in the interviews (e.g. Forman 2002). In fact, the typical assumption and argument about authenticity in this context is that "[i]f hip hop artists are perceived as distancing themselves from their roots, they are considered a sell-out" (McLeod 1999: 143). Here, we saw how each of the artists acknowledged the significance of his roots for his later career. Cheek described his complex relationship with Lahti, which is a story of both appreciation and abandonment. He described how he was first rejected, which caused him in turn to reject and leave Lahti. By moving to Töölö, Helsinki, he 'upscaled' himself and moved on in his trajectory. The previous regional, musical and subcultural center of Lahti was switched for *the* center in the Finnish music scene, Helsinki, which has created all kinds of affordances for the development of Cheek's career. Cheek's story also relates somewhat to Stepa's "Made in Sodankylä" (section 4.5), where he explicitly describes his reasons for 'leaving' Sodankylä. Whereas Stepa 'had to' move away from there to do his studies, Cheek was able to study in Lahti. Here, we can see how Lahti also functioned as an educational center for Cheek, but Stepa did not have a similar opportunity in Sodankylä, adding to the marginality of the place in this respect.

Pyhimys' trajectory is one of moving *within* a center. His first reference point was Malminkartano, which provides him with his roots and initial 'posse' formation. As an adult, he identifies strongly with Kallio, which becomes his business, musical and subcultural center, a place which is highly different from Cheek's 'posh' and 'middle-class' Töölö, in the local, subjective topography of Helsinki. Finally, Stepa has made a few steps towards south as part of his trajectory. His local center, Sodankylä, was switched for Tornio, a more regional center, which provided him with study and musical opportunities. Stepa's main reference point continues to be Lapland, as he is recognized and acknowledged there as 'one of their own'. Whereas Cheek constructs his authenticity with reference to Helsinki (and Töölö) and Pyhimys to Helsinki and Kallio, for Stepa

the coordinates are to be found within Lapland. The 'metro ticket' anecdote is highly indexical of his outsider position in Helsinki; he is from the periphery and hence in this center, in the margins. It is important to note here, once more, the organization of Finland as a country (and as an ideological topography) and how Helsinki-centered it is. If one wants to be at the very center of things, have access to all the various affordances – economic, (sub)cultural and educational ones – in the same place, one needs to move south.

Extracts 4–6 describe the artists' positions in Finnish hip hop, both in the margins and in the centers. These positions attest to the polycentric nature of the rappers' construction of authenticity. Cheek ascribed himself as the most US rapper in Finland – and hence in the very center of the scene. It is the New York rap scene, in particular, and its norms of 'punch line' rap that he orients towards. In this, he marginalizes the more societally and politically oriented hip hop genre(s). Pyhimys, in turn, is central in other respects: through his versatility and mobility he is 'UG in every direction', and hence authentic in various ways. It seems an impossible task to pin him down into any pre-existing categories. He is a mobile center in himself, but it is something he has achieved and established through long experience in the scene. In fact, the experience is something that unites Cheek and Pyhimys: both have worked long and hard to be where they are now. Stepa, on the other hand, shows us a trajectory from a novice to a 'full member', from the margins to a regional center in Lapland, with its Joku Roti posse, which originally acquired their 'norms' from the (West Coast) g-funk style. This, again, demonstrates different norm centers (in the US) from those of Cheek.

Finally, extracts 7–9 characterize some 'extra-curricular' activities the artists have in addition to the rapping itself and in which all of them are 'centers' in their own ways. Although these extracts do not (necessarily) deal with their rap-related jobs directly, they nevertheless include traces of each of their polycentric hip hop worlds: their ideologies, norms and values. Furthermore, these activities are 'in line' with the construction of authenticity of each artist: it is a non-random process in each case. Both Cheek and Stepa have been asked to give a lecture on their rap careers. But what they index is something completely different from one another. Whereas for Cheek, the 'center' he orients towards is that of success and wealth through hard work and entrepreneurial attitude; for Stepa, the main values seem to relate to youth education through his somewhat modest example and care for and the well-being of the community, of which he himself is part. It is not the economic aspect of his (rap) work, which drives and motivates him. Pyhimys is, once again, and quite unsurprisingly, in the middle with his authenticity construction. In and through his work, he seems to combine these two 'centers': he orients to both the business aspects and the communal aspects of the hip hop scene. Overall, it is interesting how the surrounding environment *recognizes* and *acknowledges* a certain kind of expertise and talent in each of these artists.

In general, the capacity to do crossing, so to speak, is one of the main, defining features of hip hop. Thus, all of these artists speak from a position but

that position itself is shifting all the time and has already shifted several times during their trajectories, as was apparent in several of these extracts. In the next section, I look at value judgments in Finnish hip hop, how the artists see their positions *vis-à-vis* each other, and their explicit accounts of (their) authenticity.

5.4 The best and the rest

In the previous section, we discussed issues of various centers and margins (and peripheries) *vis-à-vis* authenticity construction: the artists' (im)mobility, their trajectories and positions, their (dis)identification processes and their relation to other people and other rappers. In this section, the aim is to investigate the quality debates in Finnish hip hop: what is 'good' and 'real' ('authentic') rap music (and what is not) and how the issues discussed in 5.3 such as centers and margins, transfer into (judgments about) their own and others' music. Here, the artists relate stories about their music and that of others – and how they compare (and compete) as artists; and what music means to them. I will then, where relevant, make comparisons out of these comparisons. Lastly, the artists also explicitly describe how they see 'authenticity' in hip hop culture and in their own life and work.

Rivalry and (verbal) competitiveness have traditionally been the central ingredients in hip hop culture and in rap music, in particular. This is partly due to the African American oral tradition, (e.g. Rose 1994; Immonen 2004) in which, going back some hundreds of years, the slaves on the plantations had to compete with words, show their verbal wittiness and cleverness, because they could never abuse their 'massahs' physically, nor directly in words. Thus, verbal 'combat', 'rivalry' and 'cleverness' became *their* way to deal with their issues and to survive – and to pass on information to the next generations. In rap, verbal duels and feuds have been part of the constellation ever since the block parties on the streets of the Bronx (e.g. Chang 2005). Battles, or freestyle battles, are a contest between two or more rap artists who compete or 'battle' with each other by improvising lyrics. Their aim is to 'dis(s)' (disrespect) their opponent via cleverer lyrics and wordplay. Battles are a significant part of hip hop culture (for an analysis of e.g. co-construction of whiteness in a rap battle, see Cutler 2009). 'Beefs', in turn, refer to serious controversies in which rappers degrade and challenge each other in many semiotic ways – examples of these are the general East Coast vs West Coast rivalry in the US, during the 1990s (see section 4.4) and the early 21st century Nas vs Jay Z controversy over the supremacy of New York (e.g. Price 2006).

This tradition of rivalry can also be seen in (some) Finnish rap. Paleface (2011: 21) has argued that this has to do with self-respect: every rapper thinks he is better than the other guy. This is what causes hip hop to move forward and rap lyrics to evolve (*ibid.*) In addition to lyrics, the most prevalent arena for showing one's skills, one can also detect rivalry and ((in)direct) references to other rappers or genres in artist interviews, in various online activities by artists

and in media coverage about hip hop. As previously mentioned, a Finnish rap championship competition (with both solo performances and battles) has been organized annually since 2000 and winners include the previously mentioned Redrama, Ruudolf and Are, Stepa's hype man. Although verbal rivalry is 'there', as underlying all rap music, some rap artists could not (or claim not to) care less about the rivalry and never take a stand on this issue, either in their lyrics or elsewhere.

Finally, the section has to do with polycentricity, in a very significant way. Whether the artists, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, directly address it or not, they all have different criteria for discriminating between 'good' and 'bad' rap. This can be seen in the kind of genre they represent, the kind of role models they have and admire – and the kind of lyrics they make and what they appreciate in them. To some extent, this was apparent in the previous analysis on lyrics. Rap music (and hip hop culture) is filled with different centers of norms for these three artists – and they each construct their authenticity in various ways by orienting to these centers. In the analysis, I focus on the narratives (small stories, trajectories as well as sociocultural and political discourses) that relate to the theme of debates over quality (I will deal with the 'how' question, i.e. how they told these stories to me, where necessary in expounding the theme).

5.4.1 The 'best' genres and positions – and the 'rest'

Extracts 10–12 deal with the artists' positions and the genres they represent in the scene, along with their characterizations and evaluations of these.

Extract 10: Cheek: Headliner status

The first extract is from the second interview I had with Cheek (May 29, 2012, in a cafeteria in Helsinki). Here, I analyze the way Cheek discursively constructs himself as a top-line artist as part of his trajectory and position. I aim to show how this headliner position involves evaluation of many kinds. Before this extract I had just mentioned that all the themes I had planned for the interview were now dealt with. Initially, we were supposed to meet (for the interview) already earlier in May in Jyväskylä in connection with his gig, but this gig was rescheduled. When we discussed this, it triggered Cheek to complement Jyväskylä as a gig town and we moved on to discuss other good gig towns.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| Elina | okei. hm. mut Jyväskylä aukee?
[okey. hm. but Jyväskylä is good?] |
| Cheek | joo Jyväskylä ja Turku ja oha Helsingki iha hyvä. Oulu. on iha hirveesti
hyvii siis
[yea Jyväskylä and Turku and Helsinki is pretty good too. Oulu. there are so
many good ones] |
| Elina | missä sie kaikist mieluiten oot keikalla?
[so where do you prefer to have gigs?] |
| Cheek | öm...
[mm...] |
| Elina | tai minkälaises tilantees /et onks se?/ |

- Cheek [or in what kind of situation /so is it?/]
/fii-fi- festareilla/
[/fee-fe- at festivals/]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Cheek et mua harmittaa oikein niinku.. harmittaa tai harmittaa. että meiän. juhannuksen Himos. on nii huonoo aikaa. koska. taas päästään tähän niinku
[so I'm really upset cos.. or upset and upset. that our. the midsummer at Himos. is at such a lousy time. because. and again we get here like]
- Elina siis niinku
[so like]
- Cheek perimmäisiin syihin. miks tät hommaa tehään et. niinii.. sen fiiliksen takii oikeestaa /aika paljon/
[the ultimate reasons. why do this thing so. like.. for that feeling actually/pretty much/]

Initially, Cheek also compliments Turku, Helsinki and Oulu in addition to Jyväskylä. It is interesting here that he does not highlight his current home city, and *the* center of Finnish hip hop, in any way but rather explains that “there are so many good ones”. Thus, from a performing artist’s point of view, other cities can also be meaningful in the overall topography of hip hop Finland, if not by the number of artists (originating there), then at least in terms of audiences and fans. After this, I ask where he prefers to perform (or in what kinds of situations). His response is festivals, elaborating (below) that he always gets the greatest emotional rush from the biggest festival gigs. In fact, this is amongst the most *fundamental* reasons why he does music in the first place. Here we can see a really different motivation for music-making between Cheek and Stepa (see extract 12 below). Both of them get a great feeling from making the music, but for Cheek it comes particularly during the (big) festival gigs. Here, he already starts communicating his frustration at the time assigned for his performance in the *Midsummer festival* at Himos. This continues below:

- Elina siis se kellonaika on huono?
[so the time is bad?]
- Cheek joo joo
[yea yea]
- Elina /liian aikasi/
[/too early/]
- Cheek /me ollaan aina oltu/ siel tosi hyvään aikaan silleen tyyliin niinku. perkele... juhannusaattona kello ykstoista tai. jotai. illalla. ni nyt me olla joskus vittu. puol viis tai jotai. mä en tiedä mist meit rankastaa mut me ollaan /aina kuitenki/
[/we've always been/ there at a really good time like. damn it... on a midsummer eve at 11pm or. something. and so now we're like fucking. half past four or something. I don't know what we're being punished for but we've /always like/]
- Elina /voi ei/
[/oh no/]
- Cheek /rokattu se aina ihan nätisti se homma/
[/always rocked it pretty nicely the event/]

- Elina /ja ne on ihan lyöty lukkoo sit jo?
[/and the times are all set already?/]
- Cheek joo. joo. et et just tollasii niinku. vuoden niit eventtei mitä sä venaat eniten mist sä niinku oot saanu aina sen niinku älyttömän fiiliksen nii. sit se harmittaa et jos jos... me ollaanki jo noi aikasi. miettii et ollanks me jotenki se se
[yea. yea. so so like yea those kinda. like the events of the year which you wait for the most where you've always gotten the best feelings so. so that annoys me if if... we're already that early. you think that have we somehow it it]
- Elina oot sie sit kattonu ketä sinne on laitettu sit niille primetimeille?
[have you then checked who they've put at those primetimes?]
- Cheek oon. oon mä kattonu
[yea. yea I have]
- Elina ketä siel sit oli?
[so who were they?]
- Cheek en mä muista. en mä. toi oli. ohan noi niinku.. tietyl tapaahan toi niinku esiintymisjärjestyshän on sellai niinku nokkimisjärjestys aina
[I can't remember. I don't. that was. but they are like.. in a way that order of performing is like a pecking order always]
- Elina mm
[mm]

Here, we can see more precisely that Cheek is irritated by the fact that he is performing at 4.30 pm in a Midsummer festival and not any later. He also wonders here what they (he and his posse) have done to deserve this treatment, because, according to him, they have “always rocked it pretty nicely” (i.e. been ‘the best’) in the earlier years. Here, he can also be seen as seeking understanding from his audience, from me, for this ‘sad’ event (cf. Bamberg 1997). For him, the midsummer festival is always one of the most central events of the year. It seems that, according to Cheek, the earlier one performs in a festival, the more *marginal* that place (and hence, also the artist) is, even if the physical place itself is the *main* stage. He clearly states this view when he claims that the performance order at festivals is ‘a pecking order’ between the artists. In this extract, there is a striking contrast to an anecdote Stepa told me in the third interview I had with him. He described how, when Are and him perform together (in the same place) with the two other Finnish MCs Solonen and Kosola, they always compete over who gets to go *first* because they admire the other act so much that they want to ‘give’ them headliner status. They often decide the performance order with the rock-paper-scissors game. Whereas for Cheek, it seems to be all about competition and showing off to the others who rules, thus being in a superior position vis-à-vis other rappers (which of course characterizes the stereotypical hip hop culture), for Stepa (and Are) it is about collegiality and mutual respect. They genuinely feel that the other rap acts are *that* good and want them to have the leading role (and Solonen and Kosola, vice versa, want Stepa and Are to have headliner status). Below, Cheek continues expressing his frustration:

- Cheek et sen takii mua ottaa. ennen mua otti viel enemmän päähä. jotkut asiat mut nykyää mä niinku. nykyään mä. mua ei ota nii paljo päähän tollaset asiat ku ennen koska mä oon niinku itsevarmempi sen kans et kuka mä oon et mä /voin. mä voisin. mä voisin hei-/
[so that's why I'm. earlier I was even more pissed off. at some things. but nowadays I'm like. nowadays I. I don't get pissed off that much by those kinda things like before because I'm like more self-confident with who I am so /I can. I could. I could thr-/]
- Elina /se ei oo siit riippuvaine/
[/it doesn't depend on/]
- Cheek hiphopfestari jos mun täytyy ni mä voisin esiintyy siel vaikka ekana tokana tai kolmantena
[a hip hop festival if I have to then I could perform there like first second or third]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek koska e-ei mul oo mitää niinku kysymystkää siitä. että että näyttääks siltä et mä oon niinkun. et mä en oo headlaineri
[cos I d-don't don't have like any doubt about. um um whether it looks like I am like. that I am not a headliner]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek tai siis se et. et et. et sillon ku se sun headlaineristatus. ei oo varma
[or like that when. um um um. um when your headliner status. is not certain]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek nii sillon sua vituttaa enemmän. tollaset et että mihin aikaan sä oot laitettu mut siin vaihees ku sä tiedät että. et sä oot joka tapaukses se. niin sillon se ei /haittaa/
[so then you're more pissed off. by those things um um at what time you've been put but at that point when you know that. that you're that anyway. so then it doesn't /matter/]
- Elina /ajasta riippu/matta
[/despite/ the time]
- Cheek nii. nii
[yea. yea]
- Elina millos Paipissa? onks sul /se jo. selvillä?/
[what time in Pipe? do you /already. know?/]
- Cheek /en mä tiedä/ ei mul oo mitää hajuu
[/I don't know/ I don't have a clue]
- Elina okei
[okey]
- Cheek et siel on sitte. paitsi sit tietyl tapaa ((iPhone-äänimerkki)) sit sit samal laillahan samaan aikaanhan sulla niinku se. sesit jos su-sut laitetaa joka festariin johonki huonoon aikaan ni sit ta- täytyy taas kattoo peilii ja miettii et et oonks mä nyt sittenkää se headlaineri ((nauradus)) et miks mä oon /joka paikas/
[so there it's like. except in a way ((iPhone alert sound)) then then in the same way at the same time you like. then if yo-you're put in every festival at some bad time so then ag- you need to look in the mirror and think that that am I really the headliner ((laughter)) so why am I /in every place/]
- Elina /£mite tää on näi menny?£/

- Cheek [/\£how did it happen like this?£/]
 nii just. niinku aa-al-alkupäivästä.. mut joo.. mut mut noi on kyl niit ilma
 muuta isot festarikeikat nii niist saa ne. isoimmat fiilikset.. meitsin on pakko
 lähtee
 [yea exactly. so like mor-early in the day.. but yea.. but but those are
 definitely the biggest festival gigs so you get the. most powerful feelings
 from them.... I gotta go now]

This extract as a whole is a telling example of Cheek's position, or at least how he himself sees it – the main theme being that he is *the undeniable headliner* in the Finnish hip hop scene. This can also be seen as Cheek's identity claim beyond this local context (cf. Bamberg 1997). Thus, his authenticity (construction) revolves around being (in) *the center*.¹⁷⁹ Reflecting on 'a past sense of self' (cf. Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008: 383), Cheek tells me that these kinds of schedule issues bothered and irritated him a great deal more *in the past*. Nowadays, he is more self-confident about who he is: if he had to, he could perform early on in the festival, because he is *that* certain of his status as a headliner. Here, we can see a small *trajectory* of his professional as well as personal development: earlier, he was unsure about his status and position in the scene (and, thus, had to 'look up' because he was not yet quite at the 'top') but, with experience and success, he has become more and more self-confident and certain that nothing can shake his status and position (not even performing at 4.30 pm at a Midsummer festival). All in all, then, he cares about the competitive aspect in hip hop and, in part, it can be seen as the force that drives him (see Paleface's comment above). We can see that he observes issues such as performance times and orders. When he is 'high up' at the pecking order, he necessarily needs to look horizontally or below him, because there is no one above him to look at. This interview extract is, again, one that partly overlaps with the issues discussed in the previous section, as the question here also relates to 'centers' and 'margins'. Cheek aims to be in the *center* of festivals, at central times, instead of amongst the starting acts of the day, in a very marginal slot.¹⁸⁰

Nevertheless, it seems that Cheek is aware of the *temporary* nature of his high-up, VIP position in the Finnish hip hop scene, and more generally, in the popular culture and entertainment scene. For example, in the lyrics of "Mä en nää rakkautta" ('I don't see love') (2010), he raps to us:

¹⁷⁹ Cheek explicitly expresses his *uniqueness* in a song entitled: "Liian viilee" ('Too cool') (2012): "Monta kertaa se pitää teille todistaa / et oon se yks ja ainoo, en yks monista / yhtä omistautuvaa en montaa tääl nää / se sama mitä rakastaa, sekottaa tän pään" ('How many times do I have to prove it to you / that I'm the one and only, not one out of many / I don't see many here who are as dedicated / the thing that you love, also messes up this head').

¹⁸⁰ Also Pyhimys (personal communication) indicated irritation at the early (and consequent) performance times of both Ruger Hauer and Lika-Aki (i.e. Pyhimys) & Perhosveitsi-Heikki (i.e. Heikki Kuula) at Pipefest in 2012. However, even when the artists themselves are not happy with performing very early on (or first) in the schedule, the issue can also be seen as a strategy by the organizers, who want to get the audience into the festival area as early as possible, by offering 'hooks' (i.e. popular acts) early on in the schedule.

<p>nyt oon taällä, hyvin onnekas ja siunattu ollu tarve näyttää, niinkun oisin koulukiusattu ajauduin keskelle tekotissei, tekohymyjä mut tää vip status - turha luulla et se on pysyvä nyt ne haluu sut juhlimaan ja näyttää naamaa ovet on auki ja firman piikkii käyttää saadaan mut yhtä nopee, kun ne ovet aukee ne sulkeutuu puhelimet on kii, kun kortin aika umpeutuu</p>	<p>now I'm here, very fortunate and blessed I've had a need to show, like I was bullied at school I ended up in the middle of fake boobs, fake smiles but this vip status – pointless to think it's permanent now they want you to party and show your face the doors are open and they're paying for it all but as quickly as those doors open, they close the phones are off, when the credit card expires</p>
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He seems happy to have 'made it' in the Finnish hip hop scene. Interestingly, Cheek (cf. extract 6 with Stepa) also uses the concept 'blessed' here, a notion that relates to the sociocultural discourse of hip hop. Nowadays, he can enjoy life in the VIP circles (with its 'fake' elements). However, it is clear for him that the VIP status will not last forever and that the luxurious life is bound to end at some point. This then gives us the image that his position is by no means fixed and that success with its benefits is likely in the end to be only temporary. Being a highly successful mainstream artist, these issues and problems with success and fame are a frequent theme in Cheek's lyrics and also in his interviews.

Extract 11: Pyhimys: Mainstream aspirations and rock traditions

The eleventh extract is from the first interview I had with Pyhimys (September 11, 2009, in a restaurant in Jyväskylä). Here, I analyze the way in which Pyhimys characterizes his own trajectory and position as regards music-making. I seek to show how this includes negotiation within and about the boundaries between the margins and the mainstream of rap music as well as the rock tradition. Before this extract, we had discussed what the Finnish rap scene looks like at the moment (in 2009), what it was earlier and what it could be in the future. Pyhimys argued that the scene is very fragmented: there is no *one* scene that one, as a rapper, can do work for. This fragmentariness shows in how the artists' albums are reviewed in different forums, media and magazines and the fact that they also have different gig venues.

Elina	[...] et sekin on just mielenkiinnost Jyväskylässäki et miten <u>jotaki</u> lähetään kuuntelee <u>Lutakkoo</u> [[...] so that's also interesting in Jyväskylä like how you go and see <u>some</u> artists in <u>Lutakko</u>]
Pyhimys	nii [yea]
Elina	ja jotaki lähetää toho <u>Gigglingsii</u> tai sit Nightii et se on niinku [and some you go to that <u>Gigglings</u> or then Night so it's like]
Pyhimys	niinii. nii on [yeayea. yes it is]
Elina	ja sit just se et siel on ihan erilainen <u>yleisö</u> tai ainakin mitä päällisin puolin näkee ja pystyy siit päättelee [and then also that there's a really different <u>audience</u> or at least from what you see on the outside and are able to conclude from that]
Pyhimys	nii [yea]

- Elina ja sit just sellai et miten ihmiset pukeutuu ja miten ne on siel keikal se on se on ihan erilaista
[and then like how people dress and how they are on the gig it's it's really different]
- Pyhimys ni-i. nii ja se on niinku periaattees just se että... siit on vaikee just sellai ennustaa et mitä siit tulee tapahtuu koska jos se pirstaloituu viel enemmän ni pienessä maassa marginaalimusiikin marginaalitekijä ku sä teet marginaalimusiikin marginaalilaitaa
[yup. yea and it's like basically just that... it's really hard to like predict what will happen because if it becomes even more fragmented so then in a small country a marginal artist of marginal music when you make the marginal end of marginal music]
- Elina nii-i
[yup]
- Pyhimys ni siin vaihees se. ei niinku se ei välttämättä hirveen pitkään oo kannattavaa tosiaan.. et. mun niinku tä- tää on tosi vaikee sanoo tavote koska tää on niinku enemmän semi vaan haave
[so at that point it's. not like it's not necessarily profitable for long.. that. my like th-this is really hard to say an aim because this's more like only a semi dream]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys tai sellai mut sillee niinku et mihin mä pyrin jollain tasolla on se että. ei se että mä muuttaisin mun musiikkia millään tavalla mainstriimimmäks
[or so but like where I aim at some level is that. not that I would make my music in any way more mainstream]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Pyhimys vaan se että siit musiikista mitä mä teen jollain tavalla tulis mainstriimimpää. et jollain tavalla se.. mä uskon et sillä vois olla tälläne tiätsä tilaus niissä ihmisissä jotka niinku jollain tavalla ymmärtää sen urbaanin. moderniuden ja sen tän hetken jutun mikä siihen tulee siihen /ilmasutapaan/
[but rather that the kinda music I make would somehow become more mainstream. so somehow that.. I believe that it could you know serve those people who like somehow understand urban. modernity and the thing at the moment as regards /the way of expression/]
- Elina /mm mm/
[/mm mm/]
- Pyhimys mut sit jollain tavalla ymmärtäis myös sen nimenomaan sen perinteen mikä tulee sielt suomirokista ja sieltä. et tavallaan. et se ei oo lastenmusaa ja se ei oo kädet ilmaan musaa ja se niinku.. vaan päinvastoin se ois istumakonserttimusaa joskus.. ja sanat on tärkeemmät ja.. sellane. joku tavallaan vähän uus juttu
[but then somehow would understand also that particularly that tradition that comes from Finnish rock and there. so kinda. that it's not children's music and it's not wave your hands in the air music and it like.. but just the opposite it would be sitting down concert music sometimes.. and lyrics are more important and.. that kinda. some kinda a bit new thing]
- Elina mm. mut sit kuitenkin tavallaan myös sitä vanhaa
[mm. but then yet something old too]
- Pyhimys nii nii
[yea yea]

- Elina sellai et se kytkeytyy myös niinku johonki suomalaiseen /perinteeseen/
[so that it also connects with like some Finnish /tradition/]
- Pyhimys /no mut siis joo../ joojoo mut kyl aina kaikkes uudes on jotain niinku pakko
olla jotain vanhaa
[/but well yea.. /yeayea but always in everything new you like need to have
something old]
- Elina niinii
[yeayea]
- Pyhimys mut se just et se ois siin mieles uus juttu et se niinku.. niinku mä sanoin tää
on haave mut tota se jollain tavalla niinku ihmiset näkis sen uudella tavalla
ne aattelis vaan et okei tää ehkä käyttää niinku tätä räppiä ilmasukeinona
mut tää ei oo räppiä vaan tää on jotain musiikkia missä niinku se sanoma on
kuitenki.. en tiiä. jossain siel olemassa
[but that just that it would be a new thing in that sense that like.. like I said
this's a dream but like somehow people would see it in a new way they
would think like okei this guy like maybe uses this rap as a means of
expression but this's not rap this's just some music in which like the message
is somewhere... I don't know. exists somewhere there]

At the beginning of this extract, I explain how I have noticed that different rap artists attract different kinds of audiences to their gigs, as can be seen for instance in the way they dress and behave during a gig. The artists also perform in different places, and I use Jyväskylä gig venues here as examples. After this, Pyhimys returns to the earlier topic and speculates that if the scene becomes even more fragmented than at present then it would become difficult to manage in the 'margins of the margins', in a small country like Finland. What we see here, first of all, is that the Finnish context is highly different from the US, for example, due to its small size. This comment also suggests that the margins themselves are not fixed or stable – there are also margins within margins. Some margins are closer to the 'centers', whereas the other end of the spectrum is the furthest it gets from the point of view of the centers – the very *marginal margins*. Pyhimys is not directly addressing himself (as being in such a position) when he says this but we can, perhaps, read it this way as we move on in the story. Namely, he affirms that his (semi-)dream is not that he would change his own music in a more mainstream direction but that the kind of music he himself makes would become more mainstream. Thus, he in a way reveals to us that he does not consider his music at the moment to be mainstream in any way. Here, we can see both Pyhimys' (then) current position in the margins (and not in the mainstream), and a *possible* future trajectory into the mainstream. However, we can also witness self-confidence here on his part: he aims at (or hopes) not to change his musical style ("not that I would change my music"), but rather *the very musical center*.

Pyhimys then elaborates that he thinks that there could nowadays be a demand (for music like this) among people who understand 'urban modernity' and also the tradition of Finnish rock music – i.e. not music for children and not a 'wave your hands' kind of music. Here it is interesting to point to our earlier conversation in which he mentioned that his music is *not* 'wave your hands' kind of music – although the audience might think so and act like it, just

because, for instance, Cheek (and many others) tells the audience to 'wave their hands in the air'. It is then this kind of music Pyhimys marginalizes and devalues in his own rap world. *His* kind of music would be of the 'sitting down in a concert' type where the lyrics, the contents, matter. This new, urban kind of music would indeed be something new, according to him – this is what he appreciates and aligns himself with. It is, in fact, very rare to see 'sitting down' rap concerts or gigs, since (grand) movements and gestures are a (stereo)typical part of (performing) the music. Pyhimys thus aims at *bending and blurring the boundaries* (of genres) here, also with his reference to the Finnish rock tradition, and how (urban, modern) Finnish rap is also a *continuation* of that local storytelling tradition (cf. Pennycook & Mitchell 2009). What is also interesting in this respect is that, in the same interview, Pyhimys mentions that he, in fact, feels more akin to the Finnish rock genre and, for example, with the rock/schlager/jazz artist *M.A. Numminen* than with Cheek or Elastinen (of *Fintelligens*). This is because he does not think he makes 'catchy' or 'danceable' music (and the two rappers mentioned here do).

In this extract, we can see that his position is one of *urbanity* – not of the provinces and the countryside (something uniting him and Cheek) – as he suggests that his 'new' kind of music would appeal particularly to urban and modern people (like himself). After Pyhimys' remark about this new kind of music, I add that this would in fact also entail something old and traditional. Pyhimys confirms this but argues further how in everything new there is always also something old. In continuing to explain about this new kind of music, he repeats the word 'dream': he hopes people could and would understand music in a new way. Here, rap could work (only) as *a means of expression* for oneself, not as a type of music and it would then just be *some* new music. Thus, the act of rapping and the kind of rhyming and skills associated with it could be used to a background of for instance jazz. In a later e-mail exchange with him, he emphasized how rap, for him, is "another way to sing", which does not imply expectations of its contents, for example about 'being a gangsta' or about mannerisms, such as 'yo yo'. Here, then, we witness a moving *away* from the stereotypical notions of rap, and establishing his own criteria for good rap, or even good music, in general – as well as for authenticity.

The theme of this extract is Pyhimys narrating a position in between genres and categories – i.e. who he 'is' beyond this specific extract (cf. Bamberg 1997) – this is also the (mobile) locus through which he constructs his authenticity. It seems that it is not necessary for him to be and become known necessarily as a rap artist, or as a representative of the rap genre, but, rather, rap is (only) a means of expression to him, and can be inserted into any kind of music. In addition, Pyhimys looks to the 'mainstream' direction and aspires to go there, but is unwilling to make musical compromises in getting there – in that sense, then, he seems fine where he is, in the more 'underground', marginal section of the rap scene, where rappers do not get much air play or recognition in the mainstream media. One way to look at this would also be from the point of view of Pyhimys' several rap projects: Pyhimys as a solo artist has not 'made

it' to the mainstream but, with Teflon Brothers, he has. Thus, without having to compromise his solo music, he has nevertheless managed to move (more) towards the 'center' via the style of the 'party group' Teflon Brothers. His other group Ruger Hauer, however, has wanted to stay firmly in the underground and outside mainstream attention. Based on this extract, we could also say that, in relation to rock (or other music genres), Pyhimys, in fact, creates *one more center* by referring to non-hip hop mainstream music – and perhaps, for him, it is even more central to make it there, rather than in just hip hop.

Later on, Pyhimys (personal communication) commented to me that he has realized that reaching *the* center is not possible for him, due to the *topics* he wants to rap about, which do not interest the majority of Finnish people. Thus, it is important to keep in mind *who* one is talking to, when rapping, i.e. one's *own* kind of audience. In fact, in "Paranoid #1" (2011), Pyhimys raps: "hittibiisin voi tehdä ihan kuka vaan / mun musamaku on vaan teille epäkelponen" ('anyone can make a hit / my music taste just doesn't appeal to you') – thereby indicating that his music (taste) is not of the mainstream, or for the masses. Furthermore, in "Paranoid 7" (2011), he raps: "Suomes myy räppi joka on median hyväksymää / enemmän tiukkoja sixpackkei ku tiukkoja laineja" (in Finland, rap approved by the media sells / more tight six packs than tight lines'), which indicates (and critiques) that the norms of 'the media' (and the mainstream) are different from his own and that the outer appearance of the rappers tends to matter more than the actual content of the music. Similarly to the interview extract, then, Pyhimys does not see his position as in the mainstream center, but *outside* it. (Of course, we need to keep in mind that these songs are characterized by Pyhimys' use of various characters (and voices) and that they are not necessarily and straightforwardly his own, autobiographical thoughts.) Here, we can also see how one's *genre* and *audience* matter in terms of authenticity construction – they need to be 'in line' with the 'whole artistic complex' (although the audience perspective is not discussed in detail here but remains something for future research).

Extract 12: Stepa: Having fun with other rappers more important than money

The twelfth extract is from the third interview I had with Stepa (October 17, 2012, in a restaurant in Jyväskylä). Here, I analyze the way Stepa describes his music-making in relation to various activities. I aim to show how he constructs a place for himself (and his music) in the margins of money-making (and fame and success). What precedes this extract is a discussion on how his first two albums compare to the newest one (published April 2014) and whether the latter is more mature. Stepa told me that perhaps some of the songs are, in fact, more mature but argued, laughing, that he has taken 'a turn back' ('takapakkia').

Stepa mutta. emmie tiiä. nyt se on vähä vaikeaa sanoo kyllä ku meikä kuunteli sen levyn nytte tuos. niinii
[but. I don't know. now it's a bit hard to say cos when I now listened to the album. soso]

- Elina nii ton uusimman?
[so the newest one?]
- Stepa nii. e:mmie välttämättä kirjota yhtään läppää mitä mie oon. no tai £allekirjota enää mitä mie oon siellä räpänyttä että e:n tiiä en tiiä£..
[yea. I: don't necessarily write any stuff that I have. well or £sign anymore what I have rapped there so that I: don't know don't know£..]
- Elina £joo£
[£yea£]
- Stepa mutta tuota
[but then]
- Elina mutta neki on tilanteisia hetkiä niinku et tavallaa
[but they're also situational moments so like in a way]
- Stepa nii. ja siis ku me. nii. ku ei tällä sillee. huomattiin että ei tällä niinku sillee..
varmasti tuu. hulluna rahaa tekemään koskaan tai
[yea. and so like we. yea. cos you can't with this. we noticed that with this you can't like.. for sure make. you will never make a crazy amount of money or]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Stepa sillee. tai voihan tällä tehä mutta niinku. tai sillee.. että ehkä tärkeämpi vaa et.
mennää studiolle ja pietetään hauskaa
[like. or you can but like. or like.. that maybe it's just more important that. you go to the studio and have a good time]
- Elina mm mm
[mm mm]
- Stepa ja pompitaa hypittää ja £sillee. hassutellaa.£
[and jump around and £like... be funny.£]
- Elina £niif£
[£yea£]
- Stepa että se on niinku.. se on paljon tärkeempää entä sit se että. että tulee niitä.
radiosoittoja ja keikkoja ja meikä tykkää tästä levystä ku tässä. ei oo semmost
selvää radio. biisiä tavallaan että. ekalla levyllä oli Vapaapäivä ja Naiset ja
toisella levyllä Lastenlaulu ja. tässä ei oo oikein semmosta tiäkkö varmaa että
[that that's like.. that's a lot more important than that. that you get. air plays
and gigs and I like this album because here. there's no clear radio. song in a
way that. on the first album there was Vapaapäivä and Naiset and on the
second album Lastenlaulu and. here there's no kind of you know definite
that]

In the first lines of this extract Stepa says that he does not necessarily agree with what he said and wrote on his latest album any longer. There is an interesting difference here between him and Cheek, who always makes sure that the lyrics match his real life, they are 'true' and he stands behind them. For example, during our second interview, actually before the recorder was on, Cheek told me that he 'had to' buy a Maserati because it featured on one of his videos, entitled "Pyrkiny vähentää" ("Tried to cut down"). Perhaps we can also see Stepa's comment here as indexing the (making of the) albums as a 'synchronic' moment: the contents deal with his (then) current emotions and thoughts. In addition, he does not seem to take the possibility that these thoughts do not exactly match those of the present particularly seriously. After this remark,

Stepa then moves on to make a claim about money and success: Stepa says that he has realized (or, actually, 'we', in the passive voice: 'huomattiin' – thus possibly referring to his closest rap colleagues) that it is not very likely that he/they will make a great deal of money with their rap music. He thus concludes that maybe it is more important to simply have fun in the studio with one's rap colleagues than to get air plays and gigs – i.e. make money. This can also be seen as his motivation to make music. It is this kind of rap attitude he aligns with – and also wants to share with me, in this interview situation.

A more general position that Stepa might thus be seen as occupying here is in the margins of money-making (cf. Bamberg 1997). What is also noticeable here is that he is not there alone (because *they* have noticed that one cannot make much money with this), but rather together with his like-minded rap colleagues. Stepa often performs at Finnish hip hop festivals (such as Pipefest and Blockfest) and tours Finland, doing several gigs in different towns but he is usually never the main act at any festival nor do his gigs attract significantly large audiences. His songs are not very often played on the radio. The three songs he mentions in the interview, "Vapaapäivä" ('A day off'), "Naiset" ('Women') and "Lastenlaulu" ('Kids' song') have, however, gotten air play. Stepa also comments on how he is, in fact, happy that on his forthcoming album there is no clear 'radio hit' song or material. This also indexes that he really does not seem to mind about whether he gets air play and a radio hit or not. It is not something he worries about. We might also wonder whether reasoning like this, on Stepa's behalf, might be part of his more general underground and subcultural attitude (see e.g. Moore 2002) of the type: "I never wanted to make it anyway – I just want to have fun with my homies." Here, we can also see some similarity as well as a contrast with Pyhimys (extract 11): neither of them are in the mainstream as regards record sales or attracting large audiences, but whereas Pyhimys aspires to 'make it', but without changing or compromising his style, Stepa claims not even to be aiming at this. This kind of 'not in the center (of the money-making)' position can also be seen in (at least) one other small anecdote that Stepa related in the first interview I had with him.

- Stepa mutta ei jaksa kyllä keikkailla hirveän monta vuotta
[but I do:n't feel like touring for many more years]
- Elina siltäks tuntuu?
[is that how you feel?]
- Stepa joo.. jotenki käy. muita ihmisiä mie-miellyttämässä toisella puolen
Suomea ni.. ei se nii
[yea.. somehow you go. pl-pleasing other people across Finland so.. it's not that]
- Elina eiks siin tuu sit miellytettyy yhtään itteensä?
[don't you also please yourself at all in that?]
- Stepa hä?
[huh?]
- Elina et eiks siin tuu miellytettyy sit myös itteensä siin?
[so are you not pleasing yourself also in that?]

- Stepa tulee tulee mutta sillä lailla. jotenki se on nii.. jotenki se on nii outoo tai tavallaa että et se ei oo se. ainakaan omassa omalla kohalla semmonen musiikin tai semmonen tarve joka minun pitäis tyydyttää että käydä keikoilla että mie eniten tykkään siitä ite et ku mie teen sen biisin ja nauhotan sen ja oon kavereitten kanssa sillei jossaki vääntämässä sitä ni se on niinku
[yea yea but like that. somehow it's so.. somehow it's so weird or somehow that that it's not it. at least in my in my own case that kinda music or that kinda need that I would have to satisfy by going to gigs so what I love the most is when I make the song and record it and I'm somewhere hanging out with friends and working on it so that's like]
- Elina niinii
[yeayea]
- Stepa paljon parempaa mitä keikka voi ikinä olla
[much better than a gig could ever be]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Stepa meikästä
[to me]

Here, Stepa comments on how he does not feel like touring for much longer. In fact, he does not seem to like 'pleasing others' across Finland – for him, it is not 'a need' he needs to fulfill. What is most important for him in music-making is the actual music-making, writing songs and recording them. It is, again, the *communal* aspect which he also emphasizes here: hanging out with rap colleagues and making songs together with them. This extract, then, reaffirms the feelings he related in the extract dealt with above. In addition, this extract contrasts quite heavily with extract 10 above, where Cheek specifically highlighted being 'out there' on the road and doing big festival gigs. Perhaps this 'drive', then, is something that makes Cheek so successful. Stepa, on the other hand, enjoys other aspects of rap life.

The main theme in both of these extracts then seems to be Stepa as an 'underground', communal rap artist – his 'identity claim' beyond the specific contents here (cf. Bamberg 1997). He is content with his career in the 'margins' of money-making and fame. In addition, it seems that Stepa values the communality aspect of hip hop culture, hanging out and making music with other rappers, more than success in the mainstream. Being amongst 'the rest' (using the analogy of the section title) does not seem to matter to Stepa, because to him in his own world, different things matter; the center (of attention) is his own life, his own music and colleagues, not (material) success or attracting large audiences. It is via these coordinates in the hip hop culture that he constructs his authenticity.

5.4.2 Artists vis-à-vis each other

Here, my aim is to show how the artists (individually) see themselves in relation to the other two rap artists in the present study. My intention or aim is *not* to create a rift between them or start a dispute (between them or in the scene in general) – but rather to explore the various ways one can position oneself

(and others) in a cultural environment, in this case Finnish hip hop, in relation to genres, experience and centers and margins of various kinds – and ways of constructing authenticity, in general.¹⁸¹

Extract 13: Cheek vis-à-vis Pyhimys and Stepa

This extract is from the first interview I had with Cheek (March 16, 2011, in a night club in Jyväskylä). Here, I analyze the way in which Cheek characterizes himself in relation to the two other artists in my study, Pyhimys and Stepa. The aim is to show how Cheek, thus, constructs himself as norm-providing center and ‘amongst the best’. Before this extract, I had told him that I had recently narrowed the number of artists down to three and I then (ad hoc) decide to tell him who the other two artists in my study are, namely Pyhimys and Stepa. He immediately compliments this choice; in his opinion, the three are really different – and thus the narrowing down was successful. He thus positions me as a researcher who has made a good choice of research subjects (cf. Bamberg 1997). I then feel the need to elaborate on the reasons behind my choice: geography, experience in the scene and the genre/style/record company that each of them represent.

- Cheek just nii just nii hyvä hyvä hyvin rajattu koska niinku toi tos on niinku ihan selkeet erilaiset tyylit et niinku Pyhimyski on hyvä se se se niinku [...] Pyhimyshän on niinku hyvä ja
[exactly yea exactly yea good good well limited cos like that there you have like really distinctive different styles so like Pyhimys is good too he he he like [...] Pyhimys is like good and]
- Elina (xx)
[(xx)]
- Cheek ja son son taitava son taitava tekijä mut Stepa ni ei osaa mitää
[and he’s he’s a skillful he’s a skillful artist but Stepa can’t do anything]
- Elina okeih?
[okeyh?]
- Cheek niinku ei mitään ei mitään se on lepposa sen se osaa ehkä olla lepposa se mitä monet digaa
[like nothing nothing he’s easy-going that’s what he maybe can do be easy-going which is what many people dig]
- Elina nii
[yea]
- Cheek mut jos puhutaa niinku lyyrisest taidosta ni ni niin on todella alkeellinen ja ja flow on todella alkeellinen niinku todella alkeellinen flow ja ja semmonen et mä voisin verrata sitä niinku semmoseen just mitä ite teki joku kymmenen vuot sitte ja sit kuitenkin jengi haippaa sit ihan vitusti säkin varmasti digaat siit /koska sä oot valinnu sen/
[but if we talk about lyrical skill then then then a really elementary and and the flow is really elementary like really elementary flow and and something that I could compare to what I did like ten years ago and yet people

¹⁸¹ It is important to note here also that any representation and interpretation of another’s words is likely to cause alienation. However, since it is an analysis we are talking about here, and not, for instance, an interview in a tabloid, the analyst’s voice must also be heard.

- nevertheless fucking hype him and you too must dig him / cos you've chosen him/]
- Elina /kyl ja kyl mie totta kai/ niinku kaikista eri tavalla ja
[yes and of course I / like all of you in a different way and]
- Cheek niinii
[yeayea]
- Elina et siis sellai et eikä / täs nyt oo tarkotuskaa/
[so like that and /the purpose is not to/]
- Cheek /mut et jos puhutaan niinku lyyrisestä/
[/but if we're talking about like lyrical/]
- Elina tehdä faninäkökulmaa ((naurua))
[do a fan perspective ((laughter))]
- Cheek ei ei ei tietenkää ei tietenkää ja mä mä arvaan et sä digaat mut niinku mitä mä haluun sanoo ni et sen miten minä nään näitten vuosien jälkee ni niin Pyhimys se se se miettii sil on monimutka- sil on vaike- se-sen jutut on vaikeit kirjottaa
[no no of course not of course not and I I get it that you dig but like what I want to say like how I see it after these years is that Pyhimys he he he thinks he has complica- he's got diffi- hi-his stuff is difficult to write]
- Elina mm ja tulkita
[mm and to interpret]
- Cheek ne ne ne on vaikeita kirjottaa ja tulkita ja sen on täytyny käyttää päätään kun se tekee niitä
[they they they are hard to read and to interpret and he has had to use his head when making them]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Cheek vaikka mä en jaksa just ruveta tulkitsemaa niitä ni mä tiedän sen verran siitä et se on vaikeeta ja se on tehny niit ajan kans
[and even if I don't have the energy to start interpreting them I know that much that it's difficult and he's spent time on them]
- Elina mm niinpä
[mm indeed]

In this interview extract, then, I do not ask him directly what he thinks of the two other artists but he himself then starts to characterize Stepa and Pyhimys. Cheek sees Stepa as a really elementary rapper who "cannot do anything" except maybe be 'easy-going' (or 'convivial') (interestingly, the 'laid-back' self-characterization also came out in extract 3 when Stepa and I discussed Laplanders). He sees Stepa's lyrical *skills* and flow as very basic and something that he did "ten years ago". Here, he constructs himself in the *position* of an expert and an experienced rapper in the field and Stepa as a novice, who does not (yet) fulfill (his) (technical) requirements of being a talented and skillful rapper (cf. Bamberg 1997). Interestingly, Cheek seems to construct here some kind of a measuring instrument, a benchmark: a certain level (and sophistication) of 'skill' in writing lyrics. Given this, he almost wonders how people (including me, the researcher) can nevertheless 'dig' Stepa's music. Here, then, Cheek positions me as a fan of Stepa (cf. Bamberg 1997). At this point I emphasize that I like all of their music, but in different ways and that the

point of my work is not to construct a fan's view as such, thus positioning myself (also) as a researcher (cf. Jenkins 1992, 2006).

Pyhimys, in turn, is someone who Cheek assesses (and appreciates) as a good and skillful rapper who carefully thinks about his lyrics and makes them complicated – it is challenging both to write and to read them. As Cheek puts it, “he has had to use his head” when making them. He admits that he does not feel up to interpreting the lyrics but compliments Pyhimys on the fact that he has spent time and effort on them. The fact that he does not want to start interpreting them speaks of his musical taste and style – it is not something he is interested in. Here, we can clearly see how Cheek distinguishes in genre from Pyhimys. Thus in terms of *positioning*, Cheek positions Pyhimys as both a skillful and cryptic artist – and himself as someone who is not part of that genre (and thinking) (cf. Bamberg 1997). Perhaps we can also see partial alignment with Pyhimys because of their long experience in the scene (and their now shared Helsinki background) – which may also be why Cheek appreciates him.

This image Cheek has of Pyhimys fits in well with what he said about Monsp Records who make *cryptic* music that is not easy to interpret. Earlier in our discussion we had already briefly touched upon these two other artists, mainly through their record companies, when Cheek gave his assessment of Monsp Records (Pyhimys) and Joku Roti Records (Stepa) vis-à-vis Rähinä Records, the label he represented at the time. I had first asked what kinds of styles and genres the Finnish rap scene consists of, in his opinion. He argued that one can easily distinguish between the stuff that Rähinä and, for example, Monsp does – the difference being that Rähinä's music is easy-listening and radio-friendly, whereas Monsp makes ‘cryptic’ music. Noticing how he characterized Monsp, I was then interested in what he would say about Joku Roti (Stepa's affiliation). This label he characterized (and positioned) as easy-going and not (technically) challenging enough. Here, we can see a characterization of ‘posse norms’ – what, according to him, is emblematic of the other posses and their styles, what of his own. The ‘best’ category for him is an easy-listening and radio-friendly (i.e. ‘mainstream’) kind of music; this is the kind he strongly identifies with and in relation to which he constructs his authenticity. The ‘rest’ category consists of a style that is either too cryptic or technically weak. Below, he emphasizes their own view on making rap music.

- Cheek [...] nyt mun mielest on kiva et sä niinku puhut mun kans tästä koska koska koska ohan tää mulleki semmoi sydämen asia mä toivosin et jengi yymmärtäis paremmin sitä mitä me tehään ja eikä eikä kaikki ne jotka digaa Stepasta oo sillee et @vittu tää on kyrpä jätkä@ et et ymmärtäkää nyt sitte kuitenkin ne niinku se.. se nimenomaan se niinku taitotaso tai näin
[[...] now I think it's nice that you like talk with me about it cos cos cos this's a matter close to my heart too I'd hope that people would understand better what we do and so then not not all of those who dig Stepa are like @fuck this shitty dude@ so so understand in the end those that like.. so particularly like the skill level or so
- Elina okei
 [okey]

On a more general level, Cheek says that he hopes that the audience would better understand what exactly “they (i.e. his posse) do” and the skill level they possess (and the one Stepa possesses), instead of criticizing him as ‘a shitty dude’ for holding this opinion (a sentence he articulates using an ‘irritated fan’s’ voice). All in all, he describes it here as “a matter close to his heart” – to spread the word of how he (and they) see and understand rap and hip hop.¹⁸² In this respect, he is appreciative of the fact that he can talk to me about the matter. Here, he possibly positions me as a researcher, who can ‘distribute’ and make known his views on these matters (cf. Bamberg 1997).

Cheek seems to construct an expert position here, via his articulations of strongly ‘technical’ rap jargon, via his evaluations of others but also via references to his experience (“something I did ten years ago”, “after all these years”) – all of these describe his trajectory in the Finnish hip hop scene. This is who Cheek ‘is’ “above and beyond the here-and-now” (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008: 380). The benchmark becomes clear here: according to Cheek, Stepa now (at the time of the interview) is on a level that he himself attained a decade ago, something which could even be characterized as an evolutionary-developmental line. In sum, this extract is an excellent example of how different criteria for good and authentic hip hop clash and of how they, *highly subjectively* (and this sometimes includes their closest rap colleagues), develop tools for discussing quality differences. For some rappers, it is about the technical aspects and the *multi-rhyming*¹⁸³; for others it might be more about the easy-going feeling and melody; and yet for others, about lyrics that demand ‘more’ from the author and the reader. Here, Cheek certainly seems to present himself as *the center of norms* for good rap music, i.e. technically well-functioning rhymes. Furthermore, one can see a slight contrast here with Pyhimys, who emphasized lyrics and their content (“sanat on tärkeemmät” – ‘the lyrics are more important’) in extract 11, and Cheek, for whom technique and multi-rhyming are crucial. The main theme of this extract is thus Cheek as a multi-rhyming, technically skillful and experienced artist - one who can (afford to) make value judgments about rap artists, styles and genres and one who definitely classifies himself as amongst the best, if not *the* best, in a (stereo)typical hip hop fashion. All of this contributes to how he constructs himself as authentic in Finnish hip hop culture.

Extract 14: Pyhimys vis-à-vis Cheek and Stepa

This extract is from the second interview I had with Pyhimys (May 29, 2012, at a restaurant in Helsinki). Here, I analyze how Pyhimys characterizes Cheek and Stepa, but also himself in relation to these two other rap artists. The aim here is to show how Pyhimys, again, positions himself as the one in the center. Before this extract, Pyhimys had asked me who the other artists in the study were,

¹⁸² In our interviews, Cheek often emphasized *their own*, technical style and vision of making rap music. He was also content that he could share his views in the Finnish hip hop book by Paleface (2011), where he analyzed his own, old and new, lyrics.

¹⁸³ Cheek particularly emphasized multi-rhyming several times in the same interview as part of his own posse’s skills and requirements.

since the last time we had spoken about the matter was during an early stage of my PhD research, when I had not yet finally decided on the matter. Here, I tell him that in addition to him, also Cheek and Stepa are in the study.

- Elina mut sinä. Cheek ja. Stepa
[but you. Cheek and. Stepa]
- Pyhimys ja?
[and?]
- Elina te kolme. miul oli jossain vaiheessa niinku ajatus et ois voinu niinku kuus.
viis tyyppiä
[you three. at some point I had like a thought that it could be like six. five
guys]
- Pyhimys joo
[yea]
- Elina sit aika nopeesti mie tajusin et se on ihan liian paljo. et jos haluu tehdä sellaset.
niinku. tavallaa. syvemmät analyysit ja. kirjottaa enemmän niist tyypeistä
[then pretty quickly I realized that it's way too many. that if you want to do
like. kinda. deeper analysis and. write more about those people]
- Pyhimys joo
[yea]
- Elina sit se jäis aika pintaraapasuks jos ois vaan niinku. jos ois enemmän tyypeji
[then it would only be scratching the surface if I only had like. if I had more
people]
- Pyhimys joo. no mut noi valinnat on tosi sillee hyvät. hyvät koska me ollaan kaikki
aika erilaisii sillee et
[yea. well but those decisions are like really good. good cos we're all pretty
different so like]
- Elina no sepä siin oliko taustalla
[well that was the reason for it]
- Pyhimys niinii. nii se varmaa mut sillee niinku et tavallaa. sä oot joutunu tai en mä. mä
en tiedä mil perusteel sä oot tehny sen valinnan mut mä kuvittelen et sä oot
tehny sil musiikin kautta
[yeayea. yes I'm sure but so like kinda. you've had to or I don't. I don't know
what was the reason for this choice but I imagine that you've done it through
music]
[...]
- Pyhimys joo mut sillei et niinku. et musiikin perusteella tottakai ollaan tosi erilaisia..
mut sit viel niinku... arvomaailmalt jotenki
[yea but so like. like based on music we're of course really different.. but then
also like... our values somehow]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys et. hassuinta on ehkä se et must välil tuntuu et mä oon lähempänä Cheekin
arvomaailmaa ku Stepan arvomaailmaa et
[that. the funniest thing is maybe that I sometimes feel that I'm closer to
Cheek's values than to Stepa's values that]
- Elina minkälaisiks sie sit kuvittelet niitten arvomaailmat?
[how do you imagine their values to be then?]
- Pyhimys e- niin tai siis en /ehkä niinku/
[n- yea or like I don't /maybe like/]
- Elina /((naurahtaa))/

- Pyhimys (((laughs)))
 pelkästään. ei kuvittelun perusteella vaan niinku.. keskinäisten keskustelujen
 ja kohtaamisten perusteella et
 [only. not based on imaginings but like.. mutual conversations and meetings]
- Elina
 eli sie oot kuitenkin kohdannu kuitenkin molemmat jossai?
 [so you have met them both of them somewhere?]
- Pyhimys
oon ja /oon/
 [yea I have and /I have/]
- Elina
 /vuosien/ saatossa
 [/over/ the years]
- Pyhimys
 useampia. useita kertoja ja seurannu molempien uraa niinku alusta asti että.
 molemmat on ollu niinku sillee.. mutta tosiaan niinku... varmaan ite ajattelis
 musiikin perusteella et on.. paljon etäämpänä Cheekistä ja sen niinku tyy-
 tyylisestä ajattelusta mutta.. mut sitte taas niinku.. mä kyl jollain taval
ymmärrän sellast viihdetaitelijan. sellast sitä kaupallist ajattelu myöskin
 [several. several times and I've followed both of their careers like from the
 beginning. both of them have been like.. but really like.. I guess based on
 music you would think that you're.. much further from Cheek and that kin-
 kinda thinking but.. but then again like.. I do somehow understand that
 kinda entertainer. that kinda commercial thinking too]
- Elina
 mm
 [mm]

When I tell Pyhimys about the two other artists, he then immediately compliments me on this choice, affirming that it is a good one, since they are all different from one another (which is a similar reaction to that of Cheek in the previous extract). First of all, he sees differences in their music (and assumes that this was my reason, or one of the reasons, for choosing them). In addition to it, however, he sees that the three of them are different in terms of their *values*. He then adds that, funnily enough (“hassuinta on” – ‘the funniest thing is’), he sees his values as bearing more *similarity* to those of Cheek than those of Stepa. After his remark, I want to know what he imagines their values to be and he sharply negates that he does not imagine anything – but rather knows, based on years of following their careers (since the beginning) and talking to them on several occasions.

After this, he gets back to the rationale behind the similarities in values. Based on music (alone), one might think that his and Cheek’s values differ quite significantly, Pyhimys elaborates. However, he argues that he also understands the commercial thinking of an entertainer (i.e. that of Cheek), and how it does not necessarily prevent thinking on other levels as well (see the continuation of the extract below). He does not mention these other levels, but this can be interpreted as referring to artistic and musical levels, i.e. that thinking ‘commercially’ *does not prevent* (also) focusing on the art itself. This could thus be interpreted as Pyhimys understanding Cheek and his career, too. Here, we see how Pyhimys positions Cheek *both* as distant from and similar to himself – both identification and dis-identification take place here (cf. Bamberg 1997).

- Pyhimys ja sellasta niinku et se ei välttämättä sulje pois sitä ajatteluu muil tasoilla ja sit taas Stepal on mun mielest siin omassa maailmassaan. aika niinku tiukat noi käsitykset jotenki. vaiks se on sellane lepponen. tyyppi
[and that kinda that it doesn't necessarily exclude thinking on other levels and then again I think Stepa has in his own world. like pretty strict conceptions somehow. although he is kinda easy-going. type]
- Elina nii
[yea]
- Pyhimys nii se lepposuus on aika tälläst niinku. fundamentaalista et sit niinku tuntuu et jos me mennään siit lepposuuden alueelt pois ni sit niinku ollaan heti epämukavuusalueella
[so the easy-goingness is like kinda this. fundamental that it feels like if we're going outside the easy-going area so then we're like immediately in an uncomfort zone]
- Elina okeih ((naurahtaa))
[okeyh ((gives a laughter))]
- Pyhimys tai emmä tiiä. tää on vähä. tyly analyysi mut silleen että... et joo
[or I don't know. this's a bit. harsh analysis but like... so yea]
- Elina millä alueella se. siis se. nii. se on lepposta. et se on se sen alue?
[in which area he. so he. yea. like it's easy-going. so that's his area?]
- Pyhimys se se on se on. mut se on mun mielest.. se niinku se lepposuus ei oo mun mielest suoranainen viittaus arvoihin mun arvomaailmasta
[it is it is it is. but in my opinion it's.. it's like I think the easy-goingness is not a direct reference to values from my world of values]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys mut jotenki niinku mun mielest se niinku heijastelee niit sellasia niinku hitauden. ja sellasia. no ehkä. ehkä /siin on enemmän/
[but somehow like I think it like reflects those kinda like slowness. and like. well maybe /it has more/]
- Elina /joutilaisuuden?/
[/idleness?/]
- Pyhimys ehkä jotain tälläst ja sit taas niinku kuitenkin me ollaan Jaren kaa kaupungin hektisiä. ihmisiä ja jotenki
[maybe something like this and then again like me and Jare we are both urban hectic. people and somehow]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys käsitellään sitä aikaa niinku paljon enemmän. sellasena muuttuvana. asiana. kun taas sitte. ja sit muutenki ollaan niinku progressiivisempia
[deal with time like much more. as a changing. thing. when again. and then also otherwise are like more progressive]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Pyhimys niinku aja- just nimeonmaa ajatusmaailmalta
[like thi- exactly like our ways of thinking]
- Elina joo
[yea]
- Pyhimys ku sit taas niinku Stepa on mun mielest.. kuitenkin jollai taval tosi vahva konservatiivi ja ja. se on niinku sillee hassuu. et koska mun mielest konservatiivinen. oli se sit minkäläinen.. oli se positio niinku mikä tahansa.. niin se on aina mun mielest. mun on vaikee. mä oon nii progressiivinen. mun

- on vaikee ymmärtää sitä miks pitäis niinkun.. säilyt- tottakaih pitääh niinku ((naurahtaen)).. hyvät asiat pitää aina säilyttää
 [cos then again I think Stepa is.. still somehow really a strong conservative and and. it's funny like that. cos I think a conservative. be it of any kind.. whatever the position.. so I think it's always. to me it's difficult. I'm so progressive. to me it's difficult to understand why we should like.. kee- well of course we need to keep ((in laughing)).. the good things we must always keep]
- Elina nii
 [yea]
- Pyhimys kun tavallaan /mä ajattelin/
 [cos like /I was thinking/]
- Elina /mutta minkä suhteen se on/ sun mielest sit konservatiivinen?
 [/but in terms of what is he/] conservative then you think?
- Pyhimys no siis. ei minkään /tietyn asian/
 [well like. not any /particular thing/]
- Elina okei /mut sit ylipäätänsä/
 [okey / but like in general/]
- Pyhimys mut mä aattelin niinku. ajattelen niinku ihmistyyppinä
 [but I was thinking like. thinking like as a human type]

Similarly to Cheek, also Pyhimys classifies Stepa as easy-going. But Pyhimys adds to this that he thinks Stepa, nevertheless, has categorical views and conceptions. Stepa holds on to his own stuff quite conservatively and his 'laid-back attitude' is 'fundamental' in essence. Anything beyond this is outside his comfort zone, Pyhimys argues, but admits that the review is pretty harsh, perhaps because I laugh a bit after his initial characterizations. When I ask Pyhimys more specifically what this 'easy-goingness' relates to, he tells me that it is not a direct reference to values but rather it reflects slowness and perhaps also idleness. Pyhimys then contrasts this with himself and Cheek who are both 'hectic city people' – thus creating a distinction between the urban (position) and the rural (position). The urban thus indexes the center and the rural the margins and the periphery. Both Cheek and Pyhimys treat time as a changing concept and are more 'progressive' in terms of ways of thinking. Stepa, on the other hand, occupies a conservative position in this scenario. When I ask for a clarification of this, Pyhimys explains that it is with regard to no specific issue – but that Stepa, as a human type, seems to him conservative.

Here we can see how Pyhimys characterizes and positions himself vis-à-vis the other two rappers both in terms of music and values: whereas his music (in terms of style and genre) can be seen as more resembling that of Stepa, his ('commercial') values bear a stronger resemblance to those of Cheek (cf. Bamberg 1997). Hence, he is once again not at either end or extreme, but rather combining elements from the two ends and situating himself *in the middle*, which is also a locus for his authenticity construction. Pyhimys' remarks about how he has followed their career is yet another indication of how 'in tune' he is with the scene and its (past and current) events as well as of his long-term experience. He has the scene 'under control', so to speak. Another interesting characterization that comes about here is that of urban vs non-urban / rural.

Also in this ‘dichotomy’ Pyhimys aligns with Cheek: they are hectic and changing city people, whereas Stepa is an easy-going, laid-back but conservative person who stays, more or less, the same. The rural or provincial aspect is not mentioned here directly but it is hinted at through juxtaposition. By ‘progressive’ Pyhimys may here refer to the fact that he, or they, orient to change and new things – they do not stick to the same old routines and styles.

In the extract below, we can see how, later on, Pyhimys comes back to the issue of defining himself in relation to Cheek and Stepa. Before this, I had asked him what differentiates him from the other rappers in Finland and he said that he cannot find a single thing that would be true in all cases, in the sense: “I am the only one who does x”. He rather answered to me by comparing for example Monsp and Rähinä styles and posses (cf. the previous extract where Cheek assessed Monsp). He sees their (Monsp’s) lyrics as more complex and as *not* a mirror of themselves. Just before this extract, I confirm this in Pyhimys’ case: I tell him how I see his lyrics as multifaceted and how they do not have a single, unified image along the lines of “I am Mikko from Maltsu (Malminkartano)”.¹⁸⁴ Here, then, Pyhimys himself initiates (or continues) the characterization of Cheek and Stepa:

- Pyhimys [...] joo ja sit jos mä rupeen miettii ihan selkeesti just noit kahta muuta tyyppiä. nii vaik ne on tosi erilaisia
 [[...] yea and then if I start thinking specifically about just those two other guys. then even if they are really different]
- Elina aa-a
 [aha]
- Pyhimys ni molemmil niil on kuitenkin just se /imago/
 [so both of them nevertheless have the/image/]
- Elina /on se/ tarina nii
 [/have the/ story yea]
- Pyhimys niil on se tarina mut se on silti se imago mikä mitä siin hirveesti. et Stepalla on se. se semmonen. no kiltin pojan ja sellanen niinku /sympaattisen/
 [they have the story but it’s still the image what what emphatically. um Stepa has that. that kinda. well a good boy and kinda like /sympathetic/]
- Elina /lepposa/
 [/easy-going/]
- Pyhimys lepposa. imago ja sitte Jarella on taas sit sellanen piinkova. niinkun. niin kova itseluottamus että voi tehdä vaik tosi paskan biisin ja sanoo et tää on paras biisih ((naurahtaen)) £et jotenki niinku£
 [easy-going. image and then Jare has like kinda flinty. like. such strong self-confidence that he can make like a really shitty song and say that this is the best song ((gives a laughter)) £so somehow like£]
- Elina £aa-a£
 [£aha£]
- Pyhimys siin Jares on jotain sellasta. et se se ei vois olla Helsingistä.. et sen pitää olla vähän niinku. mun mielest jostai muualta. sen pitää olla /vähän/
 [there’s something in Jare. that he he could not be from Helsinki.. that he needs to be a bit like. I think from somewhere else. he needs to be /a bit/]

¹⁸⁴ Although, interestingly, Pyhimys does have a song by this name.

- Elina /aijaa/
[oh yea/]
- Pyhimys sellai altavastaaja. sen pitää oikeest olla sellane et. mua ei kiinnosta vittuikaa
vaik tää on junttimusaa
[like an underdog. he really needs to be like. I don't give a fuck if this is juntti
music]

Pyhimys sees that both of them have a clear image (and he positions them accordingly; cf. Bamberg 1997): Stepa is a 'good boy', likeable and easy-going; Cheek (whom Pyhimys here refers to by his first name, Jare, reflecting their collegial relationship) is flinty, an overtly self-confident artist who can make a 'shitty' song and still claim it to be the best song (ever). He also adds that there is something in Cheek that suggests that he "could not be from Helsinki" – he 'has to' be from somewhere else, an underdog of sorts. According to Pyhimys, Cheek 'needs to' be the kind of a person who does not (fucking) care that his music is 'juntti music'.¹⁸⁵ Here, then, Pyhimys constructs for himself an (already) central (mainly geographically) (see extract 2) position because he has always lived in Helsinki – whereas Cheek is someone who comes to Helsinki from outside, as an underdog. Cheek thus tries to achieve central status by having moved to a center. Thus, they both contend (and claim) for a 'central' status and location, but they do this in very different ways and in different genres and arenas, as we have seen in several instances.

Even a bit later on in our discussion, Pyhimys comes back to the topic (of the two other artists) and tells me how both Cheek and Stepa seem to confirm and repeat (some) *already-existing values* – and, thus, to belong in certain 'boxes', in an unsurprising way. He then contrasts them with his own posse.

- Pyhimys [...] mut meit. meit ei voi laittaa sen takii mihinkää lokeroon koska me tahallaan niinku
[[...] but us. that's why you can't put us into any box because we on purpose
like]
- Elina £hämätää?£
[£confuse?£]
- Pyhimys ni tai ei ees hämätä vaan se että et me niinkun oikeesti. meille se levy ei ole
peili
[yea or not even confuse but it that that we like really. for us the album is not
a mirror]
- Elina nii
[yea]
- Pyhimys eikä se oo minä
[and it's not me]
- Elina aa-a
[aha]
- Pyhimys vaan se on ta- se on mun tekemä teos
[rather it's a- it's a piece of art made by me]

¹⁸⁵ 'Juntti' (directly untranslatable to English, at least in the meaning evoked in this context) can be seen as referring to vulgar, uncivilized, uneducated masses, whether urban or rural.

After this, Pyhimys argues that neither he nor his posse can be put into *any* kind of box. For him and them, an album is not a reflection, a mirror of himself / themselves but a piece of art, a composition made by him / them.¹⁸⁶ *Predictability*, then, becomes Cheek's and Stepa's denominator: they are easily labelled and categorized (as particular kinds of artists and as belonging to a certain genre). Here, too, Pyhimys avoids any sort of categories and extends this ambiguity, or versatility, to his posse at Yellowmic (or even in a more narrow sense, to Heikki Kuula and him).¹⁸⁷ In a way, then, he rises *above* the whole discussion of who and what is 'real' and 'authentic' – by arguing that 'box thinking' does not apply to himself: he is and thinks outside the (hip hop) box.

Interestingly, Pyhimys explicitly mentions both Cheek and Stepa on his "Paranoid" album.¹⁸⁸ In "Paranoid #5", Pyhimys raps: "porttiteoria, spliffist tykitykseen, tai cheekist pyhimykseen" ('gate theory, from spliff to injecting, or from cheek to pyhimys'), thereby indicating a 'trajectory' from 'milder' drugs, such as a marijuana joint (and, extendedly, from Cheek's music/genre) to 'hard core', 'proper' drugs (and Pyhimys' music/genre). This can be seen as an instance of how someone enters Finnish rap music via Cheek (and his 'easy' music), and later also finds Pyhimys' ('more advanced') music. Hence, there is a small element of Pyhimys' 'bestness' here. In "Paranoid #9", there is a line: "Ai vittu Stepa on ihana? Mä voisin olla sen isä!" ('So Stepa is fucking lovely? I could be his dad!'). The sentence referring to Stepa comes *as a shout* from the background, so it is not actually rapped by Pyhimys himself, whereas the second sentence is. The song is about a (fictional?) violent character, who tries to 'tie down' his (young) girlfriend and prevent her from going anywhere. The male protagonist is somewhat older than his companion or Stepa, and acts frustrated, (as) if the woman fancies the younger Stepa (or anyone else, for that matter). This envy is ambiguous and not directly related to Pyhimys himself. Thus, within this fictional story, Pyhimys (via the main character) can be seen as making an implicit commentary on the status of Stepa as a novice (in the 'real' Finnish hip hop scene), adored by (young) women.

Overall, the main theme of this extract is Pyhimys' uncategorizability – and how *this* makes him an authentic artist, on his *own terms*. He is mobile – and wherever he goes, he takes his 'central' location with him. In a way, Pyhimys seems to avoid the whole 'bestness' categorization, at least directly, and he does not want to negotiate or suggest 'bestness' in the interviews (and not in the lyrics either – or, if he does so, he does it ironically or via various voices). He seems to want to retain his freedom (of expression? of artistry?) and a certain dimension of vagueness. In the end, vagueness becomes 'his thing' – in a way,

¹⁸⁶ Interestingly (and 'logically'), Pyhimys raps in "Paranoid #7": "mä teen musaa, ei musa mua" ('I make music, music doesn't make me'), referring to how music does not define or categorize him.

¹⁸⁷ Pyhimys (personal communication), in fact, commented to me how 'nobody' (i.e. no other rap artist) in Finland uses the personal pronoun 'I' ('minä') as *freely* (i.e. as unpredictably) as Heikki Kuula and himself.

¹⁸⁸ Neither Cheek nor Stepa do this on their albums. Therefore, I cannot make any such remarks with reference to them.

his bestness. The fact that he cannot (or does not want to) be categorized, or 'figured out', is part of his own construction of authenticity in the scene. Being able to make music, or art, on his own terms, is highly important to him. Pyhimys thus never hints at being the best, but it is very implicit: he would never want to be 'easy-going' and 'slow' – but rather progressive; and he would never want to be 'overtly self-confident' – but rather give a mixed impression of and through his art. It seems that through his multi-facetedness, his (self-reported) uncategorizability, he constructs himself as a highly complex character – this is his 'bestness', not in the traditional, stereotypical 'dissing' sense but in a more vague way.

Extract 15: Stepa vis-à-vis Cheek and Pyhimys

This extract consists of elements from the third interview I had with Stepa (October 17, 2012, in a restaurant in Jyväskylä) as well as later, e-mail clarifications and additions (September 22, 2013) to this interview. Here, I analyze how Stepa characterizes both Cheek and Pyhimys and their genre and style. The aim here is to show how he sees himself and his position in relation to these two, more experienced rappers. Before this (first) extract, we had talked about what makes Stepa different from the other Finnish rappers – his unique life. Here, I bring out how Pyhimys does not necessarily (and straightforwardly) use his 'own' persona as such in his lyrics but brings up the issues via different characters and their voices.

- Elina tietty ku mainitsit et on jotain eri hahmoja
[of course when you mentioned that there are different characters]
- Stepa joo. joo
[yea. yea]
- Elina et niinku niitten kanssa. Pyhimys tekee aika usein sellai must tuntuu et. et se ei niinku missää niis lyriikois oo niinku iha välttämät se änäs oma itsensä
[so like with them. Pyhimys quite often does it like I feel like that. that he isn't like in any of those lyrics like necessarily like the so-called self]
- Stepa nii. nii
[yea. yea]
- Elina ehkä niis iha alku. album- tai ekois albumeis mutta
[maybe in those early. album- or first albums but]
- Stepa sil on meikästä hyvä. ku meikä on miettiny ku mul on välissä tullu se:mmosta saarnaavaa paatosta. sillee. että tavallaan että se on aina vähä vaivaannuttavaa ehkä kuunnella ku puhuu että sinä sitä. sinä sitä
[I think he has good. cos I've been thinking that I've sometimes produced li:ke preaching pathos. like. so kinda that it's always a bit embarrassing to maybe listen when you talk like you this. you that]
- Elina mm
[mm]
- Stepa ja tavallaan puhuu niinku si-sinulle siinä biisissä
[and kinda talk like to y-you in that song]
- Elina niinii
[yeayea]
- Stepa ja meikästä tuota Pyhimyksellä on täysin samanlaista tai ei nyt täysin samanlaista mutta sillä on kans semmosta saarnaamista ja paatosta se. mut se

- osaa jotenki.. sit ku se sanoo sen sinä nii se jotenki saa sen kuulostaa että se puhuis tavallaa ittestään
 [and I think that Pyhimys has completely the same or not completely the same but he also has that kind of preaching and pathos he. but he can somehow.. when he says that you so he somehow makes it sound like he's kinda talking about himself]
- Elina niinii
 [yeayea]
- Stepa tavallaa.
 [kinda.]
- Elina eikä osottelevasti?
 [and not pointing his finger?]
- Stepa nii. ei osottelevasti että se on niinku...
 [yea. not like pointing his finger so that's like...]
- Elina okei
 [okey]

My suggestion in the interview situation then leads Stepa to evaluate Pyhimys (cf. Bamberg 1997). Stepa thinks that his own music is sometimes characterized by 'preaching pathos' – and aimed directly at 'you', the listener, almost to the extent that it becomes embarrassing. While Stepa sees Pyhimys also as 'preaching', he sees that Pyhimys does it in a way that rather makes the listener think that the artist is talking about *himself*, and not 'you', 'the listener' in an accusing kind of way. Interestingly, Pyhimys (May 29, 2012) mentioned 'preaching' or 'ranting' also in his own interview (unaware of Stepa's interview or the issues discussed there). He explained how it is strange for them (his posse) to imagine preaching any 'truths' to an audience – by telling that something is "absolutely like this". Their aim is not to preach but rather to paint a picture of a given phenomenon or an issue. Here, we can see how skillfully Stepa then has read Pyhimys' lyrics and his intentions. We can also see here how he looks up to Pyhimys and gives him as an example of how someone else (another rapper) can do something better than him, music-wise. Pyhimys is here constructed and positioned as a kind of a model for a particular way of rapping, as an experienced expert (cf. Bamberg 1997).

In the second interview with Stepa, he characterized Cheek in passing. Instead of giving that account here, I will instead refer to a later e-mail discussion on the matter.¹⁸⁹

Ei Cheek ole ehkä minun kuppi teetä, mutta se antaa yhtä hyvän kuvan yhteiskunnasta kuin Pyhimys, Julma-Henri, Laineen Kasperri tai kuka muukin. Cheekin biisit ei ehkä ole mulle se mitä minä musiikiltani haen, sillä minä elän enemmän Hannibalin tai Jodarokin maalaamissa maailmoissa. Se ei kuitenkaan tarkoita, että se olisi jotenkin huonompaa tai epäaidompaa. Jotenkin musiikkia tulisi ymmärtää myös muiden kuin biittien tai riimien kautta. Jotku ei tykkää Hannibalia ja Soppaa tai vaikka OG Ikosta kun ne on niin gangstoja tai niiden asenne on erillainen. Nuo kolme viimeksi mainittua on elänyt syrjäytymisvaarassa ja ehkä siksi niiden musiikki kuulostaa eriltä. Tai siltä se niiden musa kuulostaa, että elämä on ollut jollain tavalla rankempaa. Ja räppi lähti pienten ihmiset ja alaluokan meiningistä, joten siksi kai sitä hakee omalta musiikilta tiettyjä juttuja ku ite kokee elävänsä

¹⁸⁹ This is done by request of Stepa.

alaluokassa. Kyllä minä kuitenkin kolleegana arvostan Cheekiä. Ei tämä räppi aina niin helppoa ole.

[‘Cheek is maybe not my cup of tea, but he gives an equally good image of society as Pyhimys, Julma-Henri, Laineen Kasperri or anyone else. Cheek’s songs may not be what I look for in music, because I live more in the worlds painted by Hannibal and Jodarok. It doesn’t however mean that it would be somehow worse or more inauthentic. Somehow music should be understood also through other things than beats and rhymes. Some don’t like Hannibal and Soppa or for example OG Ikonen cos they’re so gangsta or their attitude is different. Those three previously mentioned have lived close to marginalization and maybe that’s why their music sounds so different. Or their music sounds like their lives have been rougher in some way. And rap started off from the underprivileged people and lower class, so I guess that’s why you look for certain stuff in your own music cos you feel you’re living in a lower class yourself. But I do appreciate Cheek as a colleague. This rap ain’t always that easy.’]

Cheek is not to Stepa’s liking but he, nevertheless, argues that Cheek’s music reflects (Finnish) society in as much as any other rappers’. Instead of Cheek’s music, he would rather listen to Hannibal or Jodarok (the first of which is originally from the rap group Tulenkantajat in Rovaniemi and nowadays lives and raps in Tampere as a solo artist; and the second one is from the rap group Kemmuru, originally from Joensuu but nowadays in Helsinki). Nevertheless, Stepa wants to emphasize that this does not mean that Cheek’s music is somehow ‘worse’ or ‘more inauthentic’. By exemplifying the ‘rough’ and ‘marginalized’ life of Hannibal, Soppa and *OG Ikonen* (an ‘underground’ rapper from Helsinki, originally from Kuopio), Stepa reminds us that rap initially started out as a thing of ‘underprivileged people’, of ‘the lower class’, and explains that he himself also feels part of ‘the lower class’, i.e. the margins. Despite their genre differences, Stepa appreciates and acknowledges Cheek as an artist who paints a picture of (his own view of) society (cf. Bamberg 1997).

Here, one can clearly see that Stepa wants to present himself as very loyal to the whole scene, despite its internal divisions and fragmentariness. He sees something good in every artist (including Pyhimys and Cheek) and appreciates artists from their own viewpoints, despite the fact that his own genre, style and rap ideologies differ from those of Cheek, in particular. He does not want to engage in ‘dissing’ others or boasting about himself, at the expense of others, which are of course very stereotypical rap acts. The main theme throughout these extracts is that of Stepa as a benevolent novice, who admires and respects other rappers and their styles (i.e. who he ‘is’ beyond this particular extract; cf. Bamberg 1997) – it is in and through this position that he constructs his authenticity. He does not want to be or make himself part of rap competitiveness or rivalry in any way. Rather, he prefers to remain in the margins. His ‘silence’ is indexical of his position in the field, but it can also be a strategic (junior) choice in that he sees it as a wise choice not to start elaborating on his opinions about older, more experienced rappers, who, despite their different locations and positions, are nevertheless part of the same Finnish hip hop scene.

5.4.3 Authenticity reflections

Finally, extracts 16–18 all deal with what the artists themselves actually say about authenticity, when I asked them about it directly. I did this after our face-to-face discussions, via e-mails. Initially, I had thought of not asking directly about authenticity because (rap) artists usually tend to avoid (or downplay) talking about issues of authenticity (as it has become an over-used term and a cliché) and thus I considered that it would not give me many valuable insights. Later on, I decided that it would be interesting and useful, in the end, to compare how they construct authenticity and how they talk about it. Thus, there is a difference here between these and all the other extracts in that the previous ones have all concerned how I, as a researcher, interpret them ‘doing’ and ‘constructing’ authenticity in various ways (and I have also been a part of the co-constructed narratives). Here, the focus is on what the artists actually say about it. I do not see their answers as necessarily ‘the absolute truth’ about authenticity, but they comprise (their) representations of authenticity to me. McLeod (1999: 138), in his interviews with some US rappers, also ‘confronted’ the artists directly about authenticity asking, for example, “What does the phrase ‘keepin’ it real’ mean to you?” and “What makes someone real in hip-hop?”. Here, I am interested in what authenticity means to these three rap artists and how they conceptualize it, in general, in rap music and in hip hop culture.¹⁹⁰ Second, the aim is to see how they see authenticity *personally*, in their own lives, thereby gaining a slightly more nuanced view on it.

Extract 16: Cheek on authenticity

Here, I examine how Cheek sees the concept of authenticity, both generally in hip hop and in his own life.

Elina: aitous/autenttisuus-käsite? miten näet/koet sen hiphopissa? ja omalla kohdallas?
(July 5, 2012)

Cheek: Aitous ja autenttisuus on erityisen tärkeää nimenomaan hiphop musiikin kuuntelijoille. Se johtuu siitä että tää on musaa, joka kumpuaa alunperin kadulta. Myös siitä, että puhemusa personoituu vahvasti sen esittäjään. Jos räppäri sanoo jotain sen on oltava aitoa omista kokemuksista kumpuavaa ja itse kirjoitettua tekstiä. Tällä genrellä on tosi omistautuneita ja perehtyneitä kuuntelijoita, joille on tärkeää digaila kamaa joka ei ole valtavirtaa. Sitä aitoa juttua, jota jokainen radion kuuntelija ei hypetä. Se jollain tavalla kuuluu tällaisten alakulttuurien digailuun ja on mun mielestä ihan ymmärrettävää, mutta ei avarakatseista eikä nimenomaan kovin AITOA käytöstä.

Mullekin aitous ja autenttisuus on tärkeitä. Koskaan ei saa tehdä sellasta musaa, jota ei pysty allekirjoittamaan ja jonka takana ei pysty ylpeänä seisomaan. Bisnespuolellakaan en o tehnyt isoistakaan rahoista koskaa sellasia valintoja, jotka ei o tuntunu itsestä hyvältä. Tärkeintä on siis olla aito itselleen. Mä oon myös aina

¹⁹⁰ Retrospectively thinking, it would have been more useful (and to the point) to ask about authenticity in relation to *Finnish* hip hop and rap, not to hip hop and rap, in general. This way, we might have been able to tap into (more specific) questions on language and culture.

pitäny kovaa kiinni siitä, että kaikki mitä mä sanon on totta ja aitoo. Mottona: "Sitä elää mitä spittaa ja spittaa mitä elää".
(July 6, 2012)

[Elina: the concept of being real / authenticity? how do you see/understand it in general in hiphop? and personally?

Cheek: Being real and authenticity is particularly important specifically for the listeners of hip hop music. It's because this's music that originates from the street. And also because talk music is strongly identified with the performer. If a rapper says something it has to be real text, originating from your own experiences and self-written. This genre has really dedicated and clued-up listeners who find it important to dig stuff that's not mainstream. That real stuff that not every radio listener hypes. Somehow it belongs to digging subcultures like this and I think it's quite understandable, but not broadminded and definitely not really AUTHENTIC behavior.

To me, too, being real and authenticity are important. You should never do the kind of music that you can't sign and behind which you cannot proudly stand. Business-wise I've never made choices that haven't felt good to me, even for big money. So the most important thing is to be true to yourself. I've also always held hard to the principle that everything I say is true and authentic. As a motto: "You live what you spit, and spit what you live".]

Cheek sees being real and authenticity as primarily important for the hip hop audience and fans, because this music arises from the streets and is strongly identified with its performer, who has to write his / her own lyrics about real-life experiences. In Cheek's opinion, dedicated fans do not want to 'dig' mainstream music, but rather something 'real', i.e. something underground (cf. Bamberg 1997). Despite understanding this line of thinking, Cheek does not consider it very open-minded or 'authentic'. This *audience-ascribed* type of authenticity is discussed for example by Moore (2002: 210). Interestingly, Cheek is the only one of the three (artists in the present study) who (in his answer) elaborately discusses the hip hop aspect and expectations in that culture, by almost 'climbing' into hip hop as a habitus. He does this from a *central* position in which he basically claims how being in the mainstream is not 'wrong' – despite everything, one can be 'authentic' and true to oneself there, too.

Aside from an audience-thing, Cheek considers authenticity and being real important for himself, too. By this he means that one should never 'sell out' and make music against one's wishes. Interestingly, here he makes a reference to business and denies having made any decisions for (even a large amount of) money. This is something he is often accused of and, in fact, we already saw this (in section 4.3) in "Orjantappuraa", where the prosecutor claims that it is the record company that decides what kind of music Cheek makes. Cheek denies this and argues that it is he himself who makes the decisions about his music ("aina tehny mit haluun, enkä mitä mult pyydetään" – 'always done what I've wanted, and not what I've been asked to'). These two examples (from different data sets) make it clear how Cheek, indeed, constructs a *coherent* artistic image, which runs through everything he does in the field.

According to Cheek, the most important thing is to *stay true to oneself*. This is one of the most recurring phrases related to authenticity. In his research,

McLeod (1999: 140) has included this as one of the six dimensions of (rap) authenticity construction, namely the *social-psychological dimension*, whereby ‘staying true to yourself’ forms one end of the continuum and ‘following mass trends’ the other. In Cheek’s rap world, everything he says needs to be true and authentic. He even brings up a slogan of his in this answer (“sitä elää mitä spittaa ja spittaa mitä elää” – ‘you live what you spit and spit what you live’) – one which he also makes use of in his “Orjantappuraa” song. Thus, the lyrics are a reflection of his life and he lives according to the lyrics (cf. Shusterman 2005: 61). Cheek also addresses ‘being real’ in an explicit way, as in the song “Timantit on ikuisia” (‘Diamonds are forever’) (2013) (the title is a popular cultural reference to a *James Bond* movie by the same name).¹⁹¹

Tää ei tuu poistuun täältä koskaan	This will never leave this place
Timantit on ikuisia	Diamonds are forever
Ja mä lupaan pysyy aitona ja aina rokkaa koska	And I promise to stay real and always rock cos
Timantit on ikuisia	Diamonds are forever

He promises to stay real ‘forever’ – as he compares himself to diamonds, which are, indeed, eternal. The song, in general, is about his position in the Finnish hip hop scene, which is one of *an exception*: his lifestyle is extremely successful, wealthy and ‘on the edge’, comparable to that of James Bond. Thus, perhaps living in the center (and ‘high up’) is something which also makes him ‘*marginal*’ in a way, because no one else is quite where he is: he has no point of comparison, no one else feels things the way he does and no one else has ‘similar’ (i.e. exceptional, luxury) experiences.

Extract 17: Pyhimys on authenticity

Here, I will analyze the ways in which Pyhimys sees authenticity in hip hop culture in general and in relation to his own life and career.

Elina: aitous/autenttisuus-käsite? miten näet/koet sen hiphopissa? ja omalla kohdalla?
(July 5, 2012)

Pyhimys: Aitoudesta vähän jo tuolla mainitsinkin, että en pidä sen korostamisesta siinä mielessä, että olisi olemassa jotkut kriteerit "aidolle hiphopille", ja sitten jollain testillä voitaisiin todeta onko joku aitoa vai ei. Aitous on toki tärkeää, mutta siinä mielessä että on aidosti oma itsensä. Tämä ei päde vain hiphoppiin, vaan myös ihan normaaliin elämään ja vaikka sen rinnalla olevaan internetminään. Arvostan sitä, että ilman tarpeetonta itsekorostusta, voi esittää omat näkemyksensä ja seistä niiden takana. Paradoksaalisesti omalla kohdallani aitous on monesti sitä, että sanoitusten välillä on keskenäisiä ristiriitaisuuksia, koska koen, että ihminen on yksi suuri ristiriita tunteineen/vaistoineen ja toisaalta kulttuureineen/moraaleineen. Monelle se on epäaitouden merkki, että ei pidä jääräpäisesti kiinni jostain näkemyksestä, vaan pystyy samaistumaan joissakin asioissa molempiin näkökantoihin, ja jää pysyvästi "toisaalta ja taas toisaalta" - tilaan.
(July 7, 2012)

¹⁹¹ ‘Aitous’ (‘being real’) was also explicitly referred to in the song “Viihdyttäjät” (‘Entertainer’) (2009), whereby he claims that their (Liiga’s) music is “so real”.

[Elina: the concept of being real / authenticity? how do you see/understand it in general in hiphop? and personally?]

Pyhimys: Like I already mentioned about authenticity, I don't like emphasizing it in the sense that there would be certain criteria for "authentic hip hop" and then, with some test, you could state whether something is real or not. Being real is important, for sure, but in the sense that you are really yourself. This doesn't apply just to hip hop but to normal life, too, and to the internet self alongside it. I appreciate the fact that you can, without unnecessary self-highlighting, state your views and stand behind them. Paradoxically, in my own case, being real/authenticity often has to do with contradictions in my lyrics because I feel that a human being is one big contradiction with his/her feelings/instincts and, on the other hand, with his/her cultures/morals. For many, it's a sign of not being real/inauthenticity that you don't stubbornly hold on to some view but that you can relate to both views in some issues and forever stay in a "on the one hand and on the other hand" state.]

Pyhimys does not like to emphasize authenticity or being real – he avoids (and rebuts) any *criteria* or *measurements* of 'authentic' hip hop (cf. Bucholtz & Hall 2004b: 498, who also argue against pre-existing criteria). In another sense, in the 'being real to yourself' meaning, authenticity *is* important but not only in hip hop but in life in general (both off- and online). Pyhimys emphasizes the importance of being able to express oneself clearly and firmly, but without any additional self-emphasis. As regards his own life, he sees that his lyrics are often *paradoxical*: they are in conflict with one another. This is because Pyhimys sees the human being as conflictual whole – between inner feelings and instincts, and culture(s) and moral(s). Pyhimys understands this paradoxality, i.e. when one does not have a clear, unified opinion on matters but can identify with several points of view, to index 'inauthenticity' to many people. This answer effectively captures Pyhimys' attitude, values and message. Both his music and he himself are uncategorizable – they present several viewpoints and he sees absolutely no harm in contradictions. He exudes ambiguity and feels perfectly comfortable with it. Thus, he *marginalizes* the pre-defined and simplistic 'on-off' view of authenticity (discussed earlier in section 2.3.1).

Several years ago, Pyhimys directly addressed 'authenticity' issues in a song entitled "Mikko Maltsusta" ('Mikko from Maltsu/Malminkartano') (2007).

Ainoo tapa olla aito, on epäaito
aidosti minä ois räppikytille laitonta
Aitopäälle, maitopoika ilman tanssimuovei
tuli tänne heikoille jäille

The only way to be real is to be unreal
the real me would be illegal for the rap cops
For the real heads, a milk boy without dance moves
came here on thin ice

Here, Pyhimys questions the whole notion of 'authenticity' in hip hop. If Pyhimys presented himself as the person who he really is, it would be 'illegal' (i.e. inauthentic) for the 'rap cops' and 'real heads', i.e. those rap artists and fans who emphasize the stereotypical (and absolutist) notions of authenticity in hip hop. Mikko from Maltsu is a 'milk boy' (i.e. 'white') who does not have the proper dance moves, those of a 'real' b-boy. Thus, in this extract he sees himself as 'unreal' because he does not meet these (stereotypical) norms – but, listening to the whole song, reveals that he is not unhappy with this position, because he can always 'switch the genre'. It seems that this paradoxical thinking and

ambiguous relationship with rap and hip hop has characterized his artistic trajectory from the beginning.

Extract 18: Stepa on authenticity

Finally, I explore what Stepa makes of authenticity, both in the hip hop culture in general and in his own life and artistry.

Elina: aitous/autenttisuus-käsite? miten näet/koet sen hiphopissa? ja omalla kohdallasi?
(July 5, 2012)

Stepa: Aitous on nykypäivän aihe musiikkifoorumeille ja Youtube-komenttiosioon. Ei sen kummempaa minun mielestä. Aitous on kai omana itsenä olemista jos sitä haluaa pyöritellä. Tuskin kukaan tekee epäaitoa musiikkia eli sellaista jota ei halua. Ne yleensä jää pöytälaatikkoon jos ne ei kuulosta hyvältä. Mulla on oma musiikkimaku ja periaatteet omaan musiikintekoon, mutta niin on onneksi muillakin. En minä (tai muutkaan) ole oikeasti se sama jätkä lavalla, kun tässä ja nyt kirjoittaessa vastausta sulle bokserit jalassa ja kahvikuppi kädessä. Se on vain räppiä ja räpit pitää vain räpätä. Antaa ihmisten Youtubessa miettiä mikä sinä olet miehiäs.
(July 6, 2012)

[Elina: the concept of being real / authenticity? how do you see/understand it in general in hip-hop? and personally?

Stepa: Authenticity is today's topic for music forums and Youtube's comment section. That's all there's to it, I think. Authenticity is, I guess, being your own self, if you want to turn it over. I don't think anyone does inauthentic music or the kind you don't want to do. Usually they stay in your desk drawer if they don't sound good. I have my own music taste and principles regarding my own music making, but luckily, so do others. I am not (nor are others) really the same guy who's on stage when I'm replying to you here and now, wearing my boxers and with a cup of coffee in my hand. It's just rap and you need to rap the raps. (I) let the people on Youtube think what sort of a man I really am / you really are.]

Here, Stepa discusses authenticity as mainly a fan's or audience's business: what the *audience* reads in us, similarly to Cheek in extract 16 (and which Moore 2002 discusses as audience-ascribed authenticity). In this, he particularly mentions internet discussion forums and YouTube (twice), which shows that he is familiar with today's fan activities on the web, where many people discuss and evaluate the artists they like (or not). In general, it does not seem to be an issue he himself worries much about or thinks about actively. Rather, Stepa's attitude towards it is laid-back and non-serious, or at least that is the image he appears to want to convey to me via his email. Stepa's answer also points towards modesty: he does not want to highlight himself in any way and does not consider himself that important in this respect. Thus, he leaves himself in the margins and, in a way, offers his music to people – and then people construct meaning elsewhere. Stepa refers to authenticity as 'being your own self', perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly, as it is the most stereotypical definition of 'keepin' it real' (e.g. McLeod 1999), – and making music that one really wants to do, according to one's taste and principles, again quite similarly to Cheek in extract 16 above. Interestingly, he also seems to draw a *distinction* between the (positions of) 'ordinary' Stepa who drinks his morning coffee in his boxers

while replying to emails from a researcher and the 'artist' Stepa who is on stage 'rapping the rap' (cf. Bamberg 1997). It is the artist Stepa who then becomes evaluated on YouTube by people.

Stepa does not directly use the word 'authentic' or 'real' in his lyrics. However, he describes his everyday life in many of his songs, although sometimes in an exaggerated, ironic gangsta kind of way. This can be seen for example in his song "MC" (2008), which is a (self-)ironic story of becoming a rapper and of his 'gangsta' life in Lapland. He describes his 'strengths': how he is, simultaneously, *the Frank Sinatra of Sodankylä* and *the Scarface of the province of Lapland*; his (alleged) transgressions: speeding away from the police and his weaknesses: he is a diabetic and poor (a prevalent theme in his discography). In the song, the 'real' Stepa is revealed for example in the lines:

ja veikkaan ettet ennen oo	and I guess you've never
nähny näin tiukkaa diabeetikkoo	seen such a tight diabetic
jo kauan sitte ekat sanani sanailin	already a long time ago, I rhymed my first words
ja tulen sieltä missä aita on matalin	and I come from where the fence is at its lowest

By looking at the lyrics of the song as a narrative, we can see how Stepa tells an autobiographical and ironic boasting-type story of himself as a specifically Finnish rapper. At the same time, his story also relates to the larger hip hop story through several 'global' references and discourses. (See Westinen 2010.) Stepa's authenticity views make a distinction between the 'real' and the 'artist' person – by this distinction he perhaps wants to disengage himself from the whole issue of authenticity in hip hop, as "it's just rap". In this, we also see a similarity with Cheek (extract 4), who emphasized how he does not explain issues or talk the same way on stage and in 'real life'.

Conclusions: subjectivity, value judgments and positions

Extracts 10–12 exemplified the artists' (relative) positions in the Finnish hip hop scene and their 'representative' genres – and how each of them constructs their authenticity with(in) these benchmarks. Cheek shared with us an anecdote on headliner status at festivals. In this, he clearly oriented towards a 'pecking order' and 'bestness' talk, the stereotypical rivalry aspect of hip hop. Of these three artists, it is Cheek, in particular, who engages in this kind of competitiveness the most. Discourses of *success* are apparent in his lyrics and interviews. Pyhimys, in turn, presented himself as in the 'margins' as compared to the mainstream. He also discussed mainstream aspirations but was not willing to compromise his music style in the process – rather, the 'center' would need to change and come closer to him, not the other way around. He also wanted to blur the lines between genres and found similarities, and a center of a kind, in the Finnish rock genre. Stepa's position is also in the margins of mainstream success (and money-making) – but this position is one he is comfortable with. He emphasized the collegiality of the hip hop culture and the making of music for its own sake. In sum, we saw here how they all work and

construct their authenticity within different normative frameworks; they each see the rap world differently and orient to it in various ways.

In extracts 13–15 the artists characterized each other (*vis-à-vis* themselves). First, Cheek constructed himself as an authorial center, who sees Stepa as a laid-back elementary novice who does not meet his (rap) requirements and norms. He appreciates Pyhimys' elaborate lyrics but sees them as too cryptic to interpret. Pyhimys, in turn, constructed Stepa as, again, laid-back but also as someone with strict borders in this 'laid-backness'. Despite their music and genre being quite different, Pyhimys sees more similarities with Cheek because of their urban origins and progressiveness in their music (and way of thinking). Pyhimys himself remains 'outside' of any straightforward categorizations. Finally, Stepa gives fairly meagre accounts of the two. He appreciates both Pyhimys and Cheek as artists, although the genre of the latter, in particular, is not what he values in music. In this, he constructs himself as a novice through silence and a certain loyalty to the scene. In all of these accounts, these characterizations were either 'relational' (i.e. in relation to other people) or 'categorical' (i.e. ascribed to a particular category) (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 15). For instance, Cheek clearly categorized Stepa's and Pyhimys' music into 'boxes' (which is what Stepa also did in terms of Cheek's music) and Pyhimys evaluated Cheek in terms of their relationship to one another: how he, too, is a progressive city rapper.

Lastly, extracts 16–18 dealt with direct authenticity responses and evaluations. All three seem to *detach* themselves from the (stereotypical) notion of authenticity, probably because it has been overtly emphasized in the hip hop culture and has already become a cliché of a kind. Interestingly, when McLeod (1999: 139) interviewed *DJ Muggs* (of the US rap group Cypress Hill), the DJ "dismissed the use of the phrase 'keepin' it real' in what seemed to me an irritated manner, claiming it was a trendy, 'flavor of the month' term". In these interviews, but also in my other observations, I have noticed a similar kind of irritation.

The artists seem to assign authenticity to someone else, like their audience. Thus, perhaps when a researcher directly asks about it, they refer to it as being audience appraisal. Interestingly, *all three of them* have a more or less clear idea of who they are in relation to an audience: they know who 'dig' them and where to perform (or not), if they want to be seen as 'authentic'. Thus, once again, we are dealing with audience-ascribed authenticity (e.g. Moore 2002), as the rappers do not locate authenticity purely in themselves. This is where polycentricity also comes in. The artists occupy three entirely different voices and positions, but *aim for the same thing*: each of them perhaps wants to be recognized by an audience (a specific audience, *their* audience) as being real. However, their different locations and positions within the polycentric system of Finnish hip hop imply access to very different resources and strategies of deployment in doing this authenticity, as we have seen throughout this chapter.

On the whole, all of them still *do* authenticity, each in their own way, resorting to various norms and resources. All three emphasize, in one way or

the other, 'being true to yourself' – but, by now, we know that this is an 'ecological' thing: it is very different for Cheek than for Stepa and Pyhimys and vice versa. Thus, there is *no one set of criteria for authenticity* because all three enter the scene from entirely different directions and with different means and instruments. Authenticity thus becomes an *unstable* thing and, for each of the three, it points to different things: different norms, values and configurations of features. All three artists provide a kind of a micro-sociology in their answers – even if these are relatively blunt and rhetorical in all three cases. They nevertheless do that and they do it in an unsurprising way: it is no wonder to us by now that Cheek emphasizes certain values, Pyhimys others and Stepa yet others. In all the interview data, we can see the dynamics of *mutual positioning* (i.e. the 'other' understanding of scale in this study): at least implicitly, in their meta-talk on rap, the artists make observations about their own position in relation to those of others (within the scene). Thus, even if they do not directly mention it, we can clearly see how they are very aware of the *fractal* structure within Finland and the Finnish hip hop scene: how the dynamics of centers–margins is very active on very many scale-levels, (scopes of understandability). The extracts also showed us how quality debates are a crucial aspect of authenticity construction in this polycentric, scalar and fractal scene.

5.5 Conclusions and theoretical reflections

The aim in this chapter was to characterize and analyze Finnish hip hop as fractal and polycentric. To do this, I analyzed the rappers' interviews with a few key themes in mind: first, I was interested in the centers and margins in the artists' lives and their trajectories and positions within the Finnish hip hop scene – and how this contributes to their constructions of authenticity. Second, I explored the issues of music, its quality and judgments, how the artists characterize themselves but also each other. Finally, I explored how they explicitly characterize authenticity. Before recapitulating the findings of the analysis as well as discussing them on a more general level, I will briefly make some remarks on the results of earlier research on authenticity in hip hop (also in the margins and periphery).

Earlier research

As we have seen here, authenticity is achieved *discursively in performance* and it should never be seen as pre-existing (in any speaker or individual) (cf. Coupland 2003). Pennycook (2007b) has argued for 'local horizons of significance' when dealing with hip hop authenticity. What should be remembered, however, is that there can be (and often are) several, competing 'horizons of significance', as we have seen throughout this study, particularly in chapter 5. Bennett (2000: 150) has also emphasized "the differing local factors" and a "different range of social and aesthetic criteria" which contribute to the various, distinctive constructions of authenticity (in the context of Frankfurt am

Main). Bennett (*ibid.*) has also acknowledged how the context, whether urban or regional, makes a crucial difference here. What is noticeable on the basis of my research is that, on each occasion, there are *various* scales and centers of norms at play, and hence research on authenticity should always take this messiness into account. Of particular importance is what matters on the *local*, and perhaps even more importantly, on the personal, *subjective* level (this is discussed below).

Earlier research on artists from the ‘periphery’ or ‘margins’ has yielded some interesting observations (also about these notions themselves). Hip hop culture and rap music are not solely urban phenomena; some artists construct their authenticity also in relation to the ‘periphery’. The previously mentioned Amoc (from Sámiland, Sápmi, in Northern Finland), raps in the endangered Inari Sámi language while drawing on ‘globally’ recognizable (‘authentic’) hip hop topics and features. From the global perspective and also from the point of view of Helsinki, he is highly peripheral. His marginality is another issue. Despite his language being marginal in the Finnish and Sámiland context (it only has about 300 speakers), he has won several awards and is a well-known figure, not least because of his efforts of trying to regenerate his mother tongue. (Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010.) Here, we can see how *hip hop enables new affordances* for ‘small’ languages such as Inari Sámi to perform local and global meanings in a highly innovative, new genre (Blommaert 2010: 77–78). Amoc also tours Sámiland (which covers from northern Norway in the west to northern Russia in the east) extensively: thus, from this point of view he is a *central* figure there (Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010).

Wang (2012) has investigated the rural Enshi, a geographically and culturally remote and peripheral area in China. Its dialect is very local and has no official status there. A rapper called Liangliang makes use of the local Enshi dialect by creating new innovative mixtures of the local and translocal, as he blends it with the standard Putonghua as well as English, and thus resists and challenges ‘ready-made’ (and stereotypical) classifications of ‘authenticity’, ‘identity and ‘language’ (*ibid.*). Roth-Gordon (2009) has explored the Brazilian hip hop context with its *favelas* (shanty towns). She stresses how the local rappers consider themselves as *marginalized*, not marginal. Politically conscious Brazilian rappers remind their (peripheral) audience and empower themselves as well as their audience by asserting: “Nós somos marginalizados, mas não somos marginais” (“We are marginalized, but we are not marginals”) (Roth-Gordon 2009: 66). By this, they “highlight the institutional causes of violence and suffering in their communities” (*ibid.*).

In addition, Brunstad, Røyneland and Opsahl (2010) have explored the language use and topics of the Norwegian rap group *Side Brok*, the most prominent performers of ‘rural rap’, who use the local dialect in their lyrics and speak of local concerns, sometimes in an exaggerated, parodic way. The researchers highlight that the distinction between the ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ is often also a *blurred* one, particularly in an age of globalization, with increasing technological affordances. What these studies show, in my opinion, is that

'margins' and 'peripheries' are not a single unified concept, but rather multiple (see below for more discussion on this in relation to this study). They also reveal that margins are not (always and necessarily) the 'victim' of globalization processes, but rather that they (can) have power, too. For example, subordinated and marginal(ized) groups can choose *which* (trans)cultural elements ("transmitted to them by a dominant or a metropolitan culture") they make use of and *how* they invent new 'stuff' from these (Pratt 1992: 6; Pennycook 2007a).

These peripheral and/or marginal contexts and scenes might be characterized, in Osumare's (2007: 15) terms, as '*connective marginalities*', which refers to an "overarching theoretical frame for understanding youth associations at the grassroots level of global hip-hop". Globally, then, the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, *banlieue* of Paris, *townships* of South Africa and the *barrios* of Cuba are all connected and empowered through hip hop (Alim 2009a: 16). For youth, hip hop resonates across the globe and across diverging social and geographical landscapes mainly through *culture*, *class*, *historical oppression* and *youth rebellion*. It is through these linkages that youth find 'common ground' across their (nation) states and 'languages'. (Osumare 2007: 15.) Although the local contexts differ significantly across these marginalities (for example, in the Finnish context, there are no ghettos and we have not experienced historical oppression to the same extent as in, for instance, South Africa), there is still a *shared sense* of beat, culture and belonging.

An additional remark is (again) to be made here about the widespread stereotypical assumption of 'authenticity' and 'commercialism' as the opposite of each other, both in research and in general, everyday discussions on the topic (see e.g. McLeod 1999; Moore 2002). In particular, the 'party rap' genre has been an influential aspect of the culture since its beginning, and hence can be considered very 'authentic' to begin with (this is also what Cheek emphasized in extract 4). Yet, with its 'dance-oriented beats' and 'optimistic tones', it is often associated with 'selling out', i.e. with 'commercialism', because it attracts audiences outside 'subcultural' hip hop circles (cf. Krims 2000: 55–56). This particular genre is filled with such contradictory dynamics – hence its reception tends to depend on the audience and their varying viewpoints. In line with Solomon (2005) and Forman (2002), I argue that authenticity should not be seen (pre-emptively) as "diametrically opposed to commercialism" (Solomon 2005: 17) in a simplified and stereotypical manner. Such a view is "theoretically problematic" (ibid.), as it *reduces* the actual complexity of 'reality'. This does not, however, deny the fact that from the perspectives of the cultural members themselves this line of thinking is meaningful and valid in their own experience (Negus 1997: 48).

Summing up the narratives of Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa

In the data extracts from these three artists' narratives analyzed in this chapter, we see that the artists bundle everything together: the stories of their own trajectories with the stories of their perceived position(s) in the field and also

the quality of their work, and that of others. Thus, concentrating on narratives, whether large or small, whether self- or researcher-constructed, allows us to see this complexity, instead of 'forcing' the data into rigid subcategories. In relating these narratives, the artists also perform a lot of *reading backwards*: they look back from the present moment and restructure a kind of mythical history of themselves. By mythical, I refer to a 'storied' image which is created, constructed and imagined, afterwards. The artists create a 'coherent' story – parts of which may be truthful, and parts of which may be slightly exaggerated. In the process, they *narrativize* their identities and craft narratives (out of various 'action sequences' in their lives) that fit their present situation: how they want to present themselves to their audiences (which, of course, I am very much part of) (e.g. García Landa 2008: 429). This also ties in with the *positioning* done in the narratives (or, often, 'small stories') or in their reporting (cf. Bamberg 1997; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008). The artists position themselves and others in various ways and roles in the stories as well as in relation to myself, their audience. Through these narratives, they also construct themselves as certain kinds of personae and artists, beyond the immediate context of the here and now. Thus, an analysis of positioning enabled observations on the micro level, on the 'interactional' level and on a more macro level, about their various 'identity claims'.

All in all, Finnish hip hop (and *all* of hip hop, undoubtedly), in which the artists construct their authenticity, can be seen as a *polycentric* environment: these three artists' unique trajectories can be seen in terms of where they come from and where they are headed, and how their music has changed on this path and how, in this trajectory, they occupy, construct and reflect different, particular positions (where am I now? why am I here? how do I think about my music or that of others?) in semiotized TimeSpace (i.e. scales): before – after, center – margin/periphery, above – below, or ahead – behind. All of this can be seen in both the lyrics (chapter 4) and in the interviews (chapter 5). In addition to being unique, the artists' trajectories also simultaneously showed elements of (im)mobility. Their similarities did not preclude difference and vice versa.

Section 5.3 on the 'Centers and margins' consisted of narratives of mobility, mostly in the geographical sense, but also in terms of role changes and personal development in the artists' trajectories – and how all of this ties in with and affects their authenticity construction in various ways. Cheek narrated a trajectory of a complex relationship with his home and origins and finding a new 'center'; Pyhimys described his position and trajectory as in the middle of the Finnish hip hop scene as well as geographically in the center, i.e. in Helsinki; Stepa related his Lapland position through a small anecdote of a country boy in the metropolis as well as his trajectory from a Joku Roti fan to a member. In addition to their rap life, they also engage in work that relates to this primary interest. For Cheek, this was lectures at schools of business, where he could share his ideas and experiences about his entrepreneurial trajectory and current success. Pyhimys, in turn, combined an entrepreneurial attitude with a more collegial, community aspect. In general, he can be seen as a

multifaceted visionary of the hip hop scene. Stepa, then, was at the 'other end' of the spectrum, with his small-scale lectures and everyday community work. All of these examples also indexed their (subjective) norms, values and ideologies, which contribute to their construction of authenticity. In addition, we saw fractality at play here: the dynamics of centers and margins recurring on all scale-levels, which are often highly subjective.

Section 5.4 'The best and the rest' discussed quality debates and judgments about music: genres, mainstream vs underground, technique vs contents, motivation to make music, and so forth – as well as explicitly engaging in authenticity discussions. Cheek discussed his headliner status at big music festivals as well as his music; Pyhimys spoke about his mainstream aspirations and emphasized the lyrical content and the affiliation with the rock genre; finally, Stepa gave priority to the company of his colleagues over money and air play. It was clear that in many of these cases, the question was also about centers and margins, though not in the geographical sense but more 'within the scene' kind of sense. In their characterizations of each other they also revealed traces of their own positions in the scene (expert vs novice, and progressive vs conservative, for instance) – as well as within the ideological topography of Finland. Whereas the two more experienced rappers, Cheek and Pyhimys, extensively elaborated on their opinions and judgments, Stepa's relative silence was indexical of his 'junior' status in the field. Finally, in their authenticity accounts all three emphasized, more or less, two things. That (stereo)typically, authenticity in hip hop is in the eyes of the beholder. For them, it is often an audience-ascription which they themselves claim not to care about. In addition, they all emphasized the traditional 'staying true to yourself' mantra: what this means in terms of each of their rap lives (and their norms), however, is entirely subjective.

Unfixedness and subjectivity of the centers, margins and peripheries

As already hinted at above, the concepts of 'centers', 'margins' and 'periphery' are all unfixed, non-unified and negotiable, also in the context of the Finnish hip hop culture. In fact, there are often *several* centers, which are not fixed, but rather shifting. There are also several margins, and these too are fluid. In addition, there can also be centers and margins within centers, and centers and margins in margins. In examining all of these, we need a nuanced view, i.e. we need to explore *how* exactly these are central, marginal or peripheral: geographically, economically, culturally, and/or musically (genre), and *for whom*. In addition, the division and boundary between the margins or periphery and center(s) is no longer necessarily sharp and clear (see also Brunstad et al. 2010): it is not fixed, but constantly (re)negotiated. Furthermore, 'margins', and 'marginal' people, can be highly mobile and self-determined. They can construct their relationships to center(s) in various ways, by both alignment and dis-alignment. In their multilayeredness, 'margins' can also be highly creative in what they do – and thus also powerful and empowered. (Cf. Autti 2006.)

'Centers', 'margins' and 'peripheries' are polycentric in nature: several norms exist there and are oriented towards. In practically all of these extracts, we saw hybrid elements and resources. But (as previously explained) this 'hybridity' always has its order and centers of norms – it is not the case that anything goes. Being a Finnish rapper can be and mean a variety of things, depending on the artist and his (or her) position and trajectory. The 'umbrella term' covers extensive polycentricity in that being 'a Finnish rapper', despite some common ground (as exemplified in chapter 4), entails a *great variety* of resources, norms, values and ideologies. All of this is crucial for our gaining a 'complete' picture of the Finnish hip hop scene (cf. Huang 2010: 117–118 on polycentricity in London Chinatown).

In this study, I then view authenticity as also *polycentric* – it is constructed through the processes of belonging and distinguishing, identification and dis-identification. We can see this in the interviews, when for example Stepa (extract 6) highlights the role of the Joku Roti posse in his career and in his life. He is 'blessed' to be part of and belong to this group. When the rappers want to make themselves unique, they highlight the differences between themselves and others. This was seen for example when Cheek (extract 13) characterized Stepa and his rapping as 'novice-like' (in relation to himself) and Pyhimys 'too difficult to understand'. The processes of belonging and distinguishing project several, often overlapping, scale-levels, such as local, regional, national and global – and (their) translocal connectedness.

There are a range of centers of normativity that the artists orient towards in their construction of authenticity, such as the artist himself and his posse, global and local role models, and the (abstract) mainstream or underground. In fact, some of these groupings of people could be characterized as *micro-hegemonies* (Blommaert & Varis forthcoming), which "[provide] a certain type of order, a complex order composed of different niches of ordered behavior and discourses about behavior". These 'specific sets of norms' contribute (and affect) to the construction of identities (ibid.), and hence, also, authenticities.

Cheek identifies nationally with his own artistic image and his Liiga posse. The mainstream (i.e., commercialism, selling gold, making radio-friendly music) is what he orients towards both nationally and globally. Cheek wants to *distinguish* himself locally from what all the other rappers do: their technique, style, genre and topics. He also wants to distinguish himself from others through *fame* – through greater success and ambitions than the other local or national rappers. As a result of this, Cheek constructs an image of himself as an individual and original hip hop artist who has *expertise* and *symbolic power* to define good and bad rapping/rappers and, in general, to evaluate the Finnish hip hop scene. In all of this centrality, there is, however, also a hint of marginality: because no other rapper has been quite as successful, he is 'at the top' alone, and no one can effectively understand his 'special' and 'peculiar' life.¹⁹²

¹⁹² In a recent song "Kuka muu muka" ('Who else') (2013) he raps that he is "yksin edellä aikaa" ('alone ahead of his time') and flies "täysin omilla leveillä"

Pyhimys, then, *blurs the boundaries* of genres. In his own words, he is in the middle of the Finnish hip hop scene. His centrality is however, different from Cheek's as he does not place himself in *a* center, but rather sketches mobility in which he is always kind of central. He could collaborate with the more mainstream rappers but also with the more underground ones – i.e. with both 'extremes'. In terms of his rap collectives, he is in the center of margins with Ruger Hauer, whereas with Teflon Brothers he is heading towards the mainstream, but in an ironic style, making use of the clichés of the mainstream, such as the commercial attitude and product placements on music videos. He distinguishes himself from others through the blurriness and the messiness, through a refusal to be categorized and through his multiple roles and positions in the hip hop scene. He also makes Kallio, his center within Helsinki, highly significant for his current career.

Finally, Stepa tries to stay outside the 'big (mainstream) circles' of Finnish hip hop. He also specifically claims to *not even care* about the business aspects of the scene (such as air play and gigs) but rather focuses on local, small-scale actions, collegial aspects and making music for the sake of music. He identifies very strongly with Lapland and Joku Roti and he distinguishes himself from others perhaps with his overtly laid-back attitude. Stepa is in the center of the margins, too, in that he is asked to perform on festivals and in gigs. He has a number of fans, mostly in the Lapland area but also elsewhere in Finland. His albums are positively reviewed. Thus, his 'marginality' is not as clear-cut as one might initially assume, and his newest record deal with Monsp Records is yet another indication of this, and also a new career move (towards *a* center).

Related to 'centers' in hip hop scenes, then, an interesting observation about Japanese 'third' era hip hop is made by Condry (2006: 82), who argues that "[a]longside the widening diversity within the hip-hop scene, we also see the disappearance of any orientation toward a center" and how "[d]iversity without a center became the order of the day". Rather than seeing *no* centers in the current, diversified Finnish hip hop, we can, in fact, see (and testify on the basis of the analysis in this chapter) *several centers* – the centers are different for different artists in different contexts. As we saw here, how the three artists themselves understand as well as negotiate the centers and margins (within the Finnish hip hop scene) differs a lot from one another. Whereas for Cheek, the center may be that of the mainstream success, for Pyhimys it may be the collaboration with and appreciation from his rap colleagues. These rap artists thus draw on, follow and exemplify different rap ideologies – some of which have been there from the beginning of their rap careers. Whereas Cheek can be seen as making use of the *party rap* genre but also the *punch line* tradition, Pyhimys, as a solo artist, focuses more on the *message rap* genre and combines party rap (at least music-wise) with his Teflon Brothers project. Stepa too can be seen as representing these two genres in his music: there are party/fun raps in

(completely on his own levels'). While bragging is a significant part of rap music, in general, in Cheek's case his uniqueness and success is 'real', a 'fact' to which both his album sales and gigs testify.

his discography, but also songs which have 'a message' of a social, political or cultural nature. As is often misunderstood, rap music has not been *only* about 'message rap' since its beginning, but has also *always* had a 'party' rap aspect (e.g. Hebdige 1987: 136; Krims 2000: 55–56; Forman 2002: 217; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002: 8; Nieminen 2003: 187).

Fractality

A highly interesting observation in this study is the element of fractality. In addition to authenticity construction being scalar and polycentric, fractality also plays a role in this. Thus, while we can recognize the global hip hop beat and format, and the Finnish scene within this, the picture is much more nuanced. Namely, within the Finnish scene, all sorts of new fractalities are played out, and these are often at the heart of what these rappers do. In terms of center-margin dynamics this phenomenon becomes a really fascinating thing.

Pyhimys, in fact, specifically addressed the issue of fractality in our second interview. He argued that, in Finland, Helsinki is the only place where several hip hop cultures can co-exist (which is, by the way, why he can effectively call himself 'progressive', see extract 14, as Helsinki is a gold mine of music resources, which makes innovation there easy). In his opinion, the various cultures do not even have to approve of each other or be in conflict – they can simply not care about each other at all. As an example he relates that even if Cheek has a record release party on a particular night (and in a particular place), it does not prevent Pyhimys or their group from having a party elsewhere – because they have such different audiences. A similar finding has also been reported by Bennett (2000: 145) who, in his comparison of the Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and Tyne (United Kingdom) hip hop scenes, concluded that

even within the same city or region, hip hop scenes can be crossed by competing knowledges and sensibilities, which, although working out of the same nexus of local experience, generate a multiplicity of musicalised and stylised solutions to the often problematic issue of place and identity.

Also in the Finnish case, there is 'a multiplicity' of artists, genres, styles and knowledges, which all address the topography of Finland in various ways, often also within one city.

In this line of thinking, then, 'scales' are not to be thought of as absolute, a priori givens but as *fractal* and as relation to *experience*. They are fractal in the sense that authenticity and center-margins dynamics are constructed on various (recurring) scale-levels which relate to one another – they do not exist in isolation but rather are embedded in one another in various ways (cf. Mamadouh et al. 2004). The subjectivity of the scales refers to how the artists in this study construct different meanings for 'center', 'margins' and 'periphery', and are exemplified in their semiotic behavior in various ways (cf. Brenner 2001). Thus, if we think about fractality in the context of Finnish hip hop, we see that the fractioning of spaces is an experiential thing: for example, Pyhimys' subjective view on his local scale 'results' in him arguing that, according to him,

“Cheek could not be (originally) from Helsinki”. He himself, however, need not worry about not being central, as his mobility (and multifacetedness) ensures that even the margins then become at least a bit more central just by him being there. Although Bennett (2000) did not use the notions of scales, fractality or subjectivity in his research on various local hip hop scenes, he nevertheless concluded that versions of hip hop culture and authenticity construction are “underpinned by a stock of distinctive local knowledges” (Bennett 2000: 164). I would add here that these ‘local knowledges’ are highly subjective in nature.

A further, important note on scales is yet to be made here. As mentioned in the introductory sections of each analytical chapter, the notion of scale carries a different meaning in each analysis. Whereas in chapter 4, ‘scale’ referred to a scope of understandability and to specific indexical orders which ‘point to’ certain frames, here in chapter 5, in another discursive hip hop sphere, the framing referred to *the artists’ relative positionings* vis-à-vis other artists, genres and places in the scene. In the interviews, the artists were able to make (indexical) *meta-commentaries* about, ‘mobilize’ and (re)deploy the material they ‘reveal’ in their lyrics, in general (a discussion on this follows in the concluding chapter).

Interestingly, the patterns we encountered here in chapter 5 are in some ways similar to those discussed by Silverstein (1985).¹⁹³ In his paper, he examined a conversation between two students recently enrolled at the *University of Chicago* (but not previously acquainted). While his paper focuses on the theoretical and methodological issues of ethnopoetic analysis, the material he presents closely resembles that treated here: the two students elaborately refer to places such as *Iowa*, *Loyola University* and *Georgetown*, and Silverstein shows how the dense *ideological-topographical indexicalities* of these places create a system of indexical attribution in talking about entirely different issues. While the talk itself is not about these places, the indexical order *invoked* by these places contributes to the construction of meanings regarding other subjects. These second-level meanings are again *scalar*: the degree of presupposability of, for instance, Georgetown University as a place where academic quality is taken for granted is higher than that of, for instance, Loyola University. Mentioning Georgetown University can consequently become (more presupposable as) an argument for being well prepared for the standards of the University of Chicago (i.e. being a brighter student) than if one mentions the University of Iowa. Thus, the similarity here is in how the rappers are able to draw on the indexicalities (and indexical orders) invoked by their own (and others’) places within the ‘ideological topography of Finland’, for instance in their categorizations of each other and the kind of music they do.

We started the study by thinking about hip hop authenticity: What is it? How to define it? Who is (not) authentic and why? Who gets to decide it? Admittedly, in this chapter, we do not gain a single clear idea of authenticity but (at least) three competing (yet co-existing) ones, three ways to ‘make’

¹⁹³ This paragraph draws on the joint paper by Blommaert, Westinen & Leppänen (2014).

authenticity. The artists are *all very real* and that is the whole point. It is in the way they see themselves in relation to a wider whole: Cheek is real in a very different way from Stepa and Pyhimys – and (yet) all three authenticities and artists can elegantly co-exist. No one of them ‘ruins’ the whole picture, but rather each complements it. They all construct *fractal* authenticity in which they motivate their own authenticity with respect to scales and to where they are both in their own lives as well as in a kind of contra-distinction in relation to other Finnish rappers and the broader Finnish rap scene.

There is thus no unambiguous notion of authenticity; instead authenticity is self-constructed: this can be seen in both the lyrics and the interviews. In that sense, their lyrics, extracts from which I have tried to incorporate in this chapter, are also important here since it is not only what they say (in the interviews) but how they situate (those) discourses, norms and ideologies into (or, alternatively, from) their lyrics. I see my study as a study on the fractality of the (Finnish) hip hop scene: at the level of global structure of centers and peripheries, there is relative ‘stability’. The moment we delve into the scales themselves, however, we begin to see complexity: Helsinki, for example, is highly different and complex for each of these artists. Were I to look further, at, for example, eastern Helsinki, the dynamics of centers and margins would probably recur on that scale-level as well. Each of the artists presents a very dynamic, negotiated position which is never stable but rather always in flux. Stepa moved physically away from Sodankylä to Tornio and thence to Oulu but also, socially, from novice to accepted member to a frequent featuring artist on other rappers’ albums. Pyhimys moved within Helsinki but also took up new challenges and roles in the scene (and new scenes). Cheek ‘upscaled’ himself from Lahti to Töölö and, due to his popularity, now has the whole Finnish music scene as his playground, in addition to just rap. One might then call the Finnish hip hop scene and its members a ‘*focused but diverse*’ group (Blommaert & Varis 2013: 9) – a highly diverse group of people, who share ‘enough’ of a focus (i.e. Finnish hip hop) to create a scale-level of recognizability as Finnish hip hop. Nevertheless, their diversity generated fractality and quality judgments about ‘good’ and ‘bad’ hip hop and ‘centrality’ and ‘marginality’ (and ‘peripherality’).

To summarize, two things are central here as regards findings: fractality and subjectivity. In chapter 4, we saw one scale-level, that of Finnish hip hop, being projected and constructed and the three rappers being real and authentic in various ways with respect to that scale-level. This is also where polycentricity comes in: the artists draw on different resources and norms in constructing and projecting the same scale-level. Although polycentricity was not the focus in chapter 4, it was already hinted at there. Within this scale-level, then, we have now seen how the artists themselves break it down and occupy several positions in relation to centers and margins and in relation to other rappers (and genres) in their authenticity construction. Consequently, we can have margins within a center and centers within a margin. The artists are mobile and (to a certain extent) they move around the scene. The analysis in chapter 5

produced a much more nuanced picture of authenticity. Now, we have a more 'complete' picture of the artists, the scene and authenticity construction. And we begin to understand how Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa are highly different, and yet able to project the same scale-level and work within a recognizably similar genre unit of popular culture. In the next, and final, chapter of the study I discuss the key findings on both a specific and a general level, along with their implications and recommendations future research.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study I have addressed the question of the construction of authenticity in Finnish hip hop from the perspective of linguistic and discursive resources and repertoires, scales and polycentricity. In doing this, I have drawn on the sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2010; Pennycook 2007a), discourse studies and Hymesian (1996) ethnography. The data comprise rap lyrics, interviews and ethnographic observations of three Finnish rap artists: Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa. I chose to study the artists' construction of authenticity (and not, for instance, that of the fans') as I see them in a highly visible, and thus crucial, position in the Finnish hip hop culture and as (potential) role models, with respect to their language, discourse and other semiotic performance.¹⁹⁴

Authenticity, or 'keepin' it real', is a mantra one frequently encounters in connection with (research on) rap music and hip hop culture (see e.g. Pennycook 2007a, 2007b; McLeod 1999; Morgan 2005; Greal 2008; Cutler 2009; Fraley 2009; Lee 2010; Wang 2012). In fact, rap music is often viewed as *embodying* authenticity (Huq 2006: 113). In general, authenticity relates to being true to oneself and one's origins. Thus far, authenticity has often been understood in a pre-existing, categorical, on-off way and as building on various dichotomies, such as 'black'-'white', 'commercial'-'alternative'/'underground' (see e.g. McLeod 1999). This understanding was nuanced and elaborated on in the present study (as we will see below). The scarcity of earlier research on the topic (most notably in the Finnish, sociolinguistic context) is one of the main rationales for the present study as well as the categorical view on authenticity that has been taken in much earlier hip hop research.

In this concluding chapter, I will first evaluate the present study in terms of its theoretical and methodological choices (section 6.1). I will then discuss the key findings of the study (section 6.2), after which I will suggest some

¹⁹⁴ Of course, it would have also been possible to combine these two aspects - but perhaps not within the scope of one PhD study; this interesting scenario remains for future research.

implications its findings have with respect to the Finnish hip hop context, in particular, and hip hop culture, in general (section 6.3). I will then elaborate on possible future topics of research on Finnish hip hop (section 6.4). Last, I will make some concluding remarks about the study.

6.1 Evaluation of the study

This study has drawn on a particular combination of theoretical and methodological approaches, viewpoints and concepts. Here, I will first reflect on these choices and then discuss some aspects of this research that could have been done differently.

As we have seen, this research effort was conducted, theoretically and methodologically, within the framework of the sociolinguistics of globalization, but it also drew on discourse studies and ethnography. For its particular purposes, this framework, along with its concepts, worked particularly well, as we saw both in the analysis and in the findings. This complex methodology was not planned from the outset. Rather, it can be described as an ‘emergent’ framework, one ‘acquired’ during the study, due (in turn) to the emergence of huge complexities regarding ‘authenticity’. The combination of these three approaches enabled me to look at the phenomenon of Finnish hip hop from many angles related to language, discourse, culture and society, and by combining the very micro level of utterances in rap lyrics and interviews with the macro level of societal and cultural discourses and phenomena. The analytical concepts, used in chapters 4 (resources, repertoire, scale) and 5 (polycentricity, centers, margins, periphery), proved to be useful ones in describing the construction of authenticity not only in terms of the kind of language and discourse the rappers draw on, but also in terms of the scopes of understandability the rappers project, the (meta-)positionings they take and the norms they orient towards. My study is pioneering in its effort and contributes to the *sociolinguistic*, *discourse analytic* and *ethnographic* study of Finnish hip hop, research on which has been scarce.

With respect to my research aims, to confine myself to examining rap lyrics only seemed rather one-sided; therefore, engaging the creators of those lyrics, the artists, themselves in the study (as in hiphopography, see e.g. Spady 1991; Alim 2009a) was seen as important. The data became more versatile with interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, and it enabled me to gain a ‘fuller’ picture of the scene and the artists’ trajectories and positions. I believe this worked well, as I was able to build a more multifaceted image of the construction of authenticity. It also showed how the interviews were by no means mere ‘secondary’ or additional data (which are used to simply ‘explain’ the contents of the lyrics, as is often done in research on popular culture and music) – but rather significant in their own right. The plurality of the data sets also allowed me, in the end, to conceptualize the notion of ‘scale’ in a complex and dynamic way – and differently in chapters 4 and 5 (more about this below).

Looking back on what I could have done differently in the analysis, a couple of issues, in particular, deserve mention here. First, Bakhtin's (1981, 1984) concepts of *heteroglossia*, *voice* and *polyphony* were made use of in some of the analysis, particularly in the case of "Bättre folk", but not elaborated on or more extensively theorized. In future research, they could have further explanatory potential in the analysis of both the lyrics and the interviews with the rap artists in that, through them, I would gain a more nuanced view of the resources, roles, positions and possibly ideologies at play in Finnish rap music (see also Hymes 1996, particularly on 'voice', as well as Blommaert 2008a, 2008b; Lähteenmäki 2010; Van der Aa 2012; Copp Jinkerson 2012; Leppänen 2011; Leppänen & Häkkinen 2012 for recent sociolinguistic and/or ethnographic research on voice and linguistic heteroglossia).

The notion of *language(s)* discussed in the present study, as also in recent sociolinguistic research (e.g. Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen et al. 2011; Pennycook 2010; Blommaert 2010), presents some challenges. Although theoretically and methodologically, it is fairly unproblematic to discuss features, resources and the like, in actual practice, when performing an analysis we still 'need' to conceptualize 'languages' (in one way or the other) and perhaps also mark them in the data (for example in the lyrics) to make the data more understandable to the (foreign) readers, so that the 'hybridity' of the (various) texts becomes 'visible'. Language(s) is also a concept that rap artists themselves understand and use – it is an 'emic' term (see also Kytölä 2013 for a discussion on this in the case of football discussion forums). Hence, although as a researcher I may have discarded the notion of separate languages, 'lay' people, such as the artists, still see their language use from the viewpoint of separate and separable languages and not as resources. As Blommaert (2010: 173) reminds us, we need to pay attention to the fact that: "a totalized, modern concept of language is very much part of post-modern realities".

It might have been worthwhile to examine a *wider variety* of resources, such as music, clothing and posture/movement, which contribute to the construction of authenticity in the case of these three Finnish rappers. I fully realize that language is only *one* aspect of the semiotic world of hip hop culture (cf. Pennycook 2007a: 49). However, the role of music, the actual musical bits and pieces of rap songs, as well as other semiotic resources, was 'diminished' in favor of language and discourse, as these were seen as more focal issues, mainly due to the research tradition, sociolinguistics, that I represent (see also e.g. Jousmäki forthcoming on the discussion of similar focal questions with Christian heavy metal lyrics and the role of music).¹⁹⁵ All of this is *not* to say that I do not consider the musical aspect important in rap music, quite the contrary, it is a significant part of the message and the meaning – and the musical aspects can indeed be quite different (from one another) in various rap

¹⁹⁵ It should be noted here, however, that recent sociolinguistic research has started to emphasize the importance of a multimodal perspective in research, in addition to (only) language (see e.g. Varis & Wang 2011; Leppänen & Häkkinen 2012; Leppänen et al. 2014).

genres. Moreover music, in general, gives meaning to and frames the lyrics performed (Frith 1996a). It was not, however, possible, within the scope of this study, to also undertake an extensive analysis of the musical aspect of the songs – and, was, anyway, not as relevant to my research interests and questions (revolving around language and discourse as well as scales and centers of norms). However, I have tried to characterize the music of each artist in their introductory sections (section 3.2). In addition, whenever relevant to the analysis itself, I have commented on the musical aspects of the song (such as the jazz and humppa in “Bättre folk”).

As far as the methodological choices made in this study are concerned, an important point is the *selection* of my research subjects: I confined my analysis to three relatively well-known artists (some more than others) who have been ‘around’ for a number of years already and who are considered to be (an established) part of the scene, i.e. recording and performing artists. I chose these artists because they differ from one another in important and interesting respects: for example, with respect to the genre(s) they represent, as well as their motives, geographical locations and experience in the field.

Here, it must also be acknowledged that ‘behind’ these artists, there are hundreds of other rap artists. People do rap and hip hop in almost every corner of Finland nowadays and vary widely in reputation and in the scope of their work. Exploring and analyzing more artists (and more genres and styles) was not, however, within the scope or interest of this research. This was because my aim was to conduct a detailed and thorough analysis of a few artists and show their trajectories and positions in a meticulous way. Hence, what I have provided here ought to be read as an instance, as an illustration of a more general scene which is, of course, infinitely richer, more diverse and dynamic than an analysis of only three Finnish rappers could ever ‘reveal’. The analysis of these three cases may, nevertheless, give us an idea of the *possible positions* in the scene and the fundamental processes that are at play – most notably, fractality within fractality (a discussion on this follows shortly). The analysis of these three artists is thus suggested to show a model of research that can possibly be replicated by looking at other (rap) artists.

In connection with the (chosen) artists, I would also like to add a small note about *ethnographic monitoring* (EM). This program, originally created by Hymes in *Language in Education: Ethnolinguistic Essays* (1980), is about “creating opportunities to give an equal weight to people’s voice[s]” (Van der Aa 2012: 40). Hymes (1980: 105) saw ethnography (“of all forms of scientific knowledge”) as “the least likely to produce a world in which experts control knowledge at the expense of those who are studied”. In EM, therefore, the analyses and texts should be brought back to the “original interlocutors, if only to do full justice to the co-constructed epistemology, the epistemic solidarity, created by the ethnographic process” (Van der Aa 2012: 108). This line of thinking aims at “mak[ing] knowledge demographic”, and [...] fully shar[ing] findings and representations of particular ways of speaking *with the people that spoke first*” (ibid., emphasis added).

Although I fully acknowledge that it would have been highly interesting to use ethnographic monitoring more *systematically* and *extensively* in my study, for research-economic reasons this was ultimately not possible. Engaging *partly* with such a view and approach, however, enabled me to make the knowledge and the insights that I gained in the course of this research ‘known’ to the artists themselves – it made the research setting more equal and the knowledge more democratic (i.e. not constructed and made use of solely in academia). Had I been able to use EM in a more extensive way, by incorporating the artists’ knowledge and feedback more, the issues of authenticity might have been treated (more) collaboratively and thus the artists’ voices been more legitimized in the process and its result’ (cf. Van der Aa 2012).

I wanted, however, to give each artist a chance to read through their ‘own parts’ in this manuscript before finalizing it. These parts included their characterizations in chapter 3, the lyrical analysis in chapter 4 and the extracts from their interviews and analysis of these in chapter 5. In my view, then, this is *partial* ethnographic monitoring, since no proper discussions with the artists took place over the analysis and no ‘joint’ conclusions were arrived at. A practical concern here is that I have also wanted to make sure that, for example, the information that I disseminate about them in chapter 3 is accurate. I also feel that they have a right to see what I have written about them. I would also like to think of this as an ethical solution and as a gesture of recognition: I felt a need to make (my) knowledge democratic and give at least something ‘back’ to the artists themselves, as I would not have been able to undertake this research on my own. I believe that it has been a genuine collaborative effort (cf. Hymes et al. 1981: 10–11; Hymes 1980). I hope that, in the process, I have also offered them a sense of empowerment and meaningfulness and that this is only the start of “a continuing mutual inquiry” (Hymes et al. 1981: 10).

For instance Androutsopoulos (2009) has argued for a *more encompassing research agenda* on hip hop’s cultural practices. In addition to the traditional focus on rap lyrics, it is important to also look at the two other ‘spheres’: *media discourse* and *discourse amongst fans and activists* (both on- and offline). Admittedly, this study did not explore the audience perspective and uptake in Finnish hip hop (nor did it specifically address the media – although various media texts served as ‘background knowledge’, as was discussed in section 3.3). In addition to the (somewhat obvious) research-economic reasons, the motivation for this choice was the overriding interest in what *the artists* do and think. As this is amongst the first academic studies on Finnish hip hop (from a sociolinguistic perspective), the aim was to start the exploration from the most ‘notable’ and visible cultural workers in the scene, i.e. the artists. I would argue that we need to hear their voices first, in both in their lyrics and interviews. In the future, I would be very interested in exploring the scene from the fan perspective. For instance, looking at what authenticity means for those who engage with the music and performances of these artists merits investigation.

It is also important to point out here that while my study has not looked at (the rap) audience (or dialogue) as such, my perspective (and process of

analysis) has been dialogical (cf. Blommaert 2005: 33). In the analysis of the lyrics, I (already) inscribed its dialogical dimension (i.e. that production is only one aspect of rap music), in view of (possible) *uptake*. The artists constructed meaning ready for uptake: they selected resources which they believe will be understood as indexing this or that. The analysis showed the preparedness of the text(s) for uptake. In addition, in the interview data, I enquire about the uptake (of the fans, of other rappers) and also myself produce uptake of the things that the artists share with me. In the end, what the artists are doing in both their lyrics and interviews, is *trying to make sense to an audience*.

Finally, in this kind of qualitative research, it is not the representativity of the results that is the issue, but their *validity* and (potential) *generalizability*. As Blommaert (2008a: 12, emphasis added) argues (drawing on Hymes (1986 [1972])), in relation to a case study, a specific “conceptual apparatus” is crafted and made use of “so as to allow comparison and *generalization across cases*”. Thus, the findings of an ethnographic study are generalizable (to an extent) to other, ‘similar’ cases, even if they are not representative (see also e.g. Duff 2006; Rampton 2006; Räisänen 2013). Generalizations that link my case study to others across the globe revolve around language, discourse, scales and polycentricity. As many other scholars (e.g. Pennycook 2007a, 2007b; Higgins 2009; Cutler 2009; Lee 2010) have suggested, various linguistic and discursive resources play a key role in the construction of authenticity in hip hop. In addition, as Varis and Wang (2011) have suggested, authenticity can also be seen as constructed on several scale-levels and in relation to various centers of norms.

Validity, in turn, deals with how truthful an account of the phenomena investigated and the results gained a study presents as well as whether the research actually ‘measures’ what it was supposed to ‘measure’ (Silverman 2009). Issues of validity deal with, for example, using appropriate methods and connecting one’s own research to existing research and theory (ibid.). I believe the theoretical-methodological path chosen here has been the most valid and efficient way to capture the construction of authenticity language- and discourse-wise. In more concrete terms, a sociolinguistic, discourse analytic and ethnographic study on Finnish hip hop cannot claim to describe *the* authenticity of (Finnish) rap artists. Neither can it claim to characterize *the* language of hip hop, in general, or even *the* language of Finnish hip hop, in particular (see Kytölä 2013 about sociolinguistics of football). There are, of course, common factors concerning both ‘language’ and ‘authenticity’ for all rappers, but the image we get is by no means a unified one, but rather one of diversity.

The validity of this research also arises from its ethnographic foundation: from my knowledge, experience and observation on Finnish hip hop culture, which I have been able to draw on in this study. This creates ‘ecological’ validity (i.e. myself as part of the ‘eco system’ of my research subjects and my field of research) that pervades everything: the way in which I was able to approach the artists, the questions I was able to ask them and the level of trust I have established with them. I have also aimed to make my knowledge, and the

research process in which I have gained and used it, known to the readers (e.g. Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009: 168). In addition, I have used *multiple data* to examine the phenomenon I am interested in and I have also reviewed significant literature in this field of research (cf. Silverman 2009). In light of the above, the results of this study can, thus, be seen as valid.

6.2 Recapitulation of the results

This study set out to explore the construction of authenticity in the context of Finnish hip hop by interviewing three Finnish rap artists – Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa – exemplifying different rap genres, positions and geographical locations in the Finnish scene and exploring their lyrics. In so doing, I have drawn on and made use of my ethnographic knowledge of the scene, in general, and, having observed them over a period of four years, of these three artists in particular. This ethnographic knowledge has helped me to contextualize and understand the positions and trajectories of these artists – and their authenticity construction in general. The *key research question* of this study was:

How do these three Finnish rap artists construct their authenticity?

In order to answer this larger question, smaller, analytical questions guided the analysis both in chapter 4, in which I analyzed three sets of lyrics, and in chapter 5, in which I analyzed extracts from my interviews with the three rappers.

1. How do the artists construct their authenticity through
 - a) linguistic resources and repertoires?
 - b) discursive resources and repertoires?
 - c) What kinds of functions do these resources and repertoires have?

By functions here, I referred to, for instance, personal ones, i.e. how their resources and repertoires can be seen to index them as specific kinds of artists, as well as social ones, i.e. indexing a shared social, cultural and historical context, as well as their specific kind of shared hip hop knowledge and communality. The second and third analytical questions were:

2. How do the artists draw on scales in their construction of authenticity?
3. How do the artists orient to different centers of norms (polycentricity) in their construction of authenticity?

In order to answer research questions 1 and 2, I conducted a detailed analysis of the linguistic and discursive features and of the scales projected in the lyrics of songs by Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa. Their *linguistic resources* were shown to be

similar in the ways in which they drew on vernacular Finnish. Vernacular Finnish was, in fact, the most often used resource in all of the lyrics data, which is not in itself surprising as it is the most widespread ‘way of speaking’ in Finland, particularly amongst youth (e.g. Mielikäinen 2010). All three artists also used standard Finnish, although they did so in varying degrees and to varying purposes in their songs (and discography, in general).

Using bits and pieces of various kinds of Englishes, whether ‘standard’ (usually American), ‘spoken vernacular’, African American Vernacular English (or ‘hip hop English’) or ‘Finnishized’ (in terms of orthography and syntax), was also a feature shared by these artists. In general, on the basis of all the lyrics data in the data pool (not only the three songs), Cheek and Stepa seem to use more (hip hop-affiliated) ‘English’ resources in their lyrics than Pyhimys, whose lyrics seem to rely more on various types of Finnish. This might have to do with the genre and style he represents, as he does not identify with the rap genre alone, and also with his experience, as he has already ‘done’ the stereotypical rap songs of women and drinking in his early career (an issue he discussed in the first interview). A further crucial point to remember here is the simultaneity of local and translocal identifications – even while making meaning through (African American Vernacular) English, the local aspect of language use is present and it never ‘stops’. In fact, the use of English usage adds to the Finnishness and authentic local voice – English, in its various forms, is yet another *additional layer* (used) to ‘do Finnishness’ (cf. Pennycook 2010; Blommaert 2010). In fact, often we can only understand the English bits in (all of) the songs, if we understand the Finnish (and the Swedish) parts. This is an important counter-argument against one-on-one views on ‘languages’ and ‘communities’: (the use of) English does not (automatically) *de-localize* raps, but, on the contrary, is part of a repertoire that signals *locality* as a hip hop tradition. (This ‘new’ and interesting point should also be developed further in future research.)

Pyhimys was the only one of the three who used (Finland) Swedish, the other national language in Finland, in addition to Finnish in his song.¹⁹⁶ The reason for this was that Swedish was a useful means for him to index the particular historical topic (and discourse) of Finland under Swedish rule and the ensuing, current state-level ‘bilingualism’, via the perspective and narrative of a Finland-Swede. In this connection, it is also important to point out the *historicity* of resources: ‘Swedish’ in Finnish society is an ‘old’ resource, while English is relatively ‘new’ and nowadays has all kinds of local and global functions and meanings, particularly for youth (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2008; Leppänen et al. 2011). Thus, what differentiates the artists’ linguistic repertoires (in addition to Pyhimys’ Swedish) is mainly their local dialect or slang, which all have an entirely different ‘local’ flavor and ‘indexical value’ (vis-à-vis each other). All in all, these resources point towards the artists’ positions in the scene and society: Stepa’s resources, the Peräpohjola dialect, and Pyhimys’ and

¹⁹⁶ In his song “I don’t give a fuck”, Stepa uses one Swedish word ‘ingen ting’ (sic) (instead of the ‘correct’ form *ingenting*) (see section 2.2.3).

Cheek's metropolitan Helsinki slang anchor them in different positions vis-à-vis the margins, periphery and the center.

However, the artists' linguistic resources and repertoire can only be explored *in combination* with discursive resources. Therefore, the second sub-question (RQ 1.b) dealt with the discursive resources (and the emerging repertoire constituted by these) the rappers made use of in the songs: narratives, discourses, topics, speech act patterns (i.e. genre-typical verbal actions) and cultural references (cf. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002 on topics, speech act patterns and cultural references). In constructing his authenticity in and through "Orjantappuraa", Cheek made use of the 'global' discourses of success and authenticity vs mainstream as well as the biblical 'Messiah' discourse. He enacted the topics of self-presentation, contemplation and scene critique and performed the speech acts of boasting and self-referential speech as well as made several global, mostly biblical references and self-references. In "Bättre folk", Pyhimys drew on national discourses of the history between Sweden and Finland and the 'elitist' Finland-Swedes as well as the (more global) discourse of 'social equality'. The topics dealt with in the song included the 'self'-presentation of an 'inauthentic' Finland-Swede, and social critique in the context of the stereotypical categorization of Finland-Swedes. The speech acts performed in the song were those of (national) time-place references, self-referential speech as well as audience-directed speech. The song's cultural references were related to both national (for instance, the iconic 'Jussi' reference to a resilient Finnish man) and hip hop cultural (for instance, the Swedish-speaking rapper Redrama, i.e. Lasse Mellberg) 'messages', which localized the context specifically to Finland. All of these resources indexed Pyhimys as a nationally knowledgeable and authentic rap artist. In "Made in Sodankylä", the discourses which Stepa evoked were those of (national) North vs South, (local and national) remote districts, nostalgia for home and anti-fame/-success. The topics discussed in the song included self-presentation, contemplation (of his own past and present thoughts and feelings) and (local and national) social critique. The speech acts of self-referential speech and place references were also made use by him. The cultural references he made in the song were mainly to local and national objects, people and phenomena (for instance, national politicians and 'local' beer). Drawing on these specific resources, Stepa constructed his authenticity as mainly a local rap artist.

All in all, then, the resources and repertoires used in the songs emerged more or less from the artists' own life worlds. All of them mobilized specific local, national and global knowledge in the construction of meanings and authenticity in the lyrics. However, whereas Cheek's and Stepa's narratives are autobiographical, Pyhimys makes use of a persona, the Robban character, in his song. On the whole, such fictionalization is typical for his discography and might be seen as an indication that he does not want to emphasize himself too much. Instead, he discusses and deals with various topics from several perspectives and using multiple voices (more about this below in the context of the interviews). Through these batteries of resources, their repertoires, the

artists all constructed authenticity in their own, (partly) unique ways. Because their ascriptions to authenticity relied on different ways of mobilizing (their) resources, no one of them can essentially be seen as more real or authentic than the others. The repertoires, of course, share some characteristics mainly because they all deal with Finland in one way or another (see the point about 'scale-level' below), but, at the same time, the differences between them reveal traces of their *locations*, *positions* and *mobility* in the scene. Thus, in addition to an analysis of the linguistic and discursive resources in the lyrics, one more analytical concept was needed in order to get a 'fuller' picture of authenticity construction.

Therefore, I also analyzed the various scale-levels (RQ 2), the various meaning-making TimeSpaces, which were projected in the songs and which organized the complex indexical patterns in discourse. In general, chapter 4 looked at Finnish hip hop as oriented towards one scale-level, as a scope of understandability, and a community in and one part of the global hip hop nation. *Within* this, however, various scale-levels were projected. In "Orjantappuraa", Cheek projected a *global* scale and meanings as an authentic, global(ized) messiah of Finnish rap. This autobiographical song effectively comprised numerous (sell-out) accusations that he has received during the past few years of (mainstream) success. Here, Cheek's authenticity was explicitly and literally at stake because he was being accused of being fake, inauthentic. Cheek's authenticity here consisted of (global) mainstream rap genre and style, for instance the 'exaggerated', biblical similes, the attitude of boasting and hard work – all in all, taking pride in being successful.

The song "Bättre folk" by Pyhimys presented him as the voice of a *national* minority and a rap educator. His authenticity, in this case, revolved around his ability to use multiple personae and voices in addressing societal (and political) issues. Here, authenticity had a 'twist', in that authenticity did not derive from the song being autobiographical. There was no one-to-one relationship between Pyhimys and the character depicted in the song. Pyhimys himself is not a Finland-Swede but he was voicing Robban, the protagonist of the song, who is. Another 'twist' related to authenticity could be seen in the fact that Robban is not a (stereo)typical, 'authentic' Finland-Swede as he does not live a wealthy and successful life – but is poor and marginalized. Pyhimys' authenticity was also constructed around the power of complex 'small stories' and around his sociocultural and -historical knowledge as a Finnish rap artist, who also wants to share this knowledge with others.

In "Made in Sodankylä", Stepa acted as the (autobiographical and) *local* voice of the margins and the periphery. He represented local authenticity in a variety of ways, both linguistically and discursively – and by (proleptically) indexing local 'frames' for uptake. He challenged the conception of hip hop culture (and rap music) as solely an urban product and phenomenon by incorporating and emphasizing the peripheral areas with their problems and issues into the Finnish hip hop scene. His authenticity was not one of being in the mainstream but rather in the (commercial) margins – and also in the

periphery in the national context, as opposed to the two other artists in this study.

All in all, in each song, we can thus see scale as *a resource*. Within the Finnish scale-level, these rap artists projected various scales in their lyrics and, often, there were no clear boundaries between the scales and they moved, mixed and overlapped, as it is possible for one resource to index various scales simultaneously (as it is also a matter of uptake). The artists can move and be mobile and project scales as resources but, simultaneously, that mobility is not unlimited – they are also partly ‘fixed’ on those scales (this has to do with the issues of polycentricity, as we will see below). For example, it *might* be difficult for Cheek any longer to become extremely local (after his extensive nation-wide success) or for Stepa to become an overtly globally oriented artist. Admittedly, there *have* been cases of ‘marginal’ artists, such as the Inari Sámi rapper Amoc, becoming ‘globally’ known – perhaps even *because* of their marginal or peripheral background (see Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010). Sometimes, the very exoticness of ‘world music’ can give it the potential to be popular globally. In general, we saw here that a person’s repertoire also consists of various scales and positions, not only of linguistic and discursive resources. It is *all of this material* that the rappers can then mobilize in their rapping (and also in their ‘meta-speech’ of rapping).

A further note on scales remains to be made here.¹⁹⁷ As mentioned in the introductory sections of each analytical chapter (as well as already discussed above), the notion of scale was of a different type in each analysis. Whereas in chapter 4, ‘scale’ referred to a scope of understandability, in chapter 5, the meaning of scale was related to the artists’ *relative positionings* vis-à-vis other artists and genres within the scene. Thus, we saw how the distinctions that organized the scope of understandability could be ‘re-tuned’, so to speak, in such a way that it marked different meanings in different domains. Hence, the ‘by-product’ of the work reported in this study is that we can see how *already ordered indexicalities* (in the lyrics) can themselves become *elements of another order* (in the interviews); how semiotic output (a finished meaning product) can become input (raw meaning material) in other semiotic processes; how semiotic effects can become conditions for other effects. Rather than an *either-or* script of analysis in which scalarity is located either in the lyrics or in the interviews, or of a cumulative one in which scalar effects occur in both, we get a *sequential* and *hierarchical* outcome, in which one type of sociocultural activity – the production of rap lyrics – generates a register of scalar semiotic resources, which proves to produce *another level* of scalarity in another type of discursive, sociocultural activity: *meta-commentary* by the rappers on their work, status and positions and those of others (which is where we turn next, to discuss the results of chapter 5).

As should have become apparent already, engaging only with lyrics in the construction of authenticity was not enough to gain a ‘complete’ picture. Therefore, in order to further nuance and diversify the process of the construction of authenticity, I also interviewed the artists. In the interviews, I

¹⁹⁷ This paragraph draws on Blommaert, Westinen & Leppänen (2014).

dealt with issues of polycentricity (RQ 3): what kinds of (various types of) centers of norms, whether other people, 'institutions' or abstract entities, the artists orient towards (or not). As became clear throughout the section 5.3, the artists 'have' or orient towards all kinds of centers, margins and peripheries as part of their authenticity construction. The artists have various origins (homes as 'centers') as part of their trajectories, something which is absolutely crucial in hip hop (see e.g. Forman 2002). Since, they have found new 'anchoring points', new 'centers' which are in many ways more 'central' (than their previous ones): educationally, socially, culturally and economically.

All three rappers positioned themselves in various ways within the Finnish hip hop scene: whether in the commercial and mainstream center (Cheek), in the highly mobile, undetermined and self-sufficient 'underground' center (Pyhimys) or in the margins-turned-to-regional center and novice-turned-to-full member (Stepa). Overall, their orientations showed highly different norm centers and ideologies from one another. These could also be seen in their 'extra-curricular activities'. Cheek turned to the business world, success and hard work, whereas Stepa engaged in educational and communal activities. Quite unsurprisingly, Pyhimys was again in the middle (as before: not quite marginal, but not mainstream either), *combining* elements from both of these norm centers and values. It was also significant how the surrounding environment recognizes and acknowledges the specific kind of expertise in each of these artists and acts accordingly. In general, the capacity to do crossing, so to speak, is one of the main, defining features of hip hop. Thus, all of these artists speak from a position but the position itself is shifting all the time and has shifted already several times during their trajectories, as could be seen in several of these extracts.

In section 5.4, the emphasis was on the (self- and other-constructed) evaluations within the scene, which point towards all kinds of centers in their own ways. Whereas for Cheek, it was important to 'lead' the scene and be successful (and competitive) while doing so, the other two had different orientations. Pyhimys situated himself in the self-sufficient margins (*vis-à-vis* mainstream) and wanted to transform the center, but not compromise his own music, which draws on multiple genres. For Stepa, his position was also in the margins of money-making and success, and he oriented towards his rap colleagues and the music itself. In general, all three worked and functioned in *different normative frameworks* in their construction of authenticity as Finnish rappers.

They also evaluated their positions and artistic work *vis-à-vis* others. Cheek constructed himself as a center in his own right who could evaluate the work of others based on his own norms and ideologies; Pyhimys stayed clear of any straightforward self-categorizations but saw similarities between himself and Cheek more so than with Stepa because of their central, urban location and progressive thinking. Stepa, as a novice, avoided controversies and showed respect for his elder colleagues (despite genre differences). As regards their specific authenticity 'answers', they all seemed to want to avoid the topic. They

also assigned it to the audience more than on themselves. All three, nevertheless, emphasized ‘staying true to yourself’ – which of course means different things for them because of their positions in the scene. Thus, authenticity was constructed through the practices of both belonging and distinguishing (both dis/identification), through orienting towards some centers of norms, while rebutting others. We could also see how polycentricity is the outcome of scales in that different norms occur (and recur) on different scale-levels.

Artists vis-à-vis the results

I also want to elaborate on what exactly the results (of the lyrics and the interviews) suggest from the point of view of the artists themselves. While unique (both ‘to begin with’ and in the light of my findings) in that they each have their own, individual trajectories and positions in the Finnish hip hop scene, the artists nevertheless share something too. On the other hand, their similarity does not preclude their difference, either. They all have their own ‘rap bubbles’, their rap worlds and ideologies – and each of these have different centers and margins.¹⁹⁸

A lot of things *connect* these rappers. In fact, to a large extent their resources, repertoires and scales are similar. They are all recognizably hip hop and rap – the genre defines this. In a way, they could be characterized (as previously mentioned) as a ‘*focused* but *diverse*’ group (Blommaert & Varis 2013), which shares a nationality, ‘language’, gender and interest in hip hop. In addition, as Pyhimys mentioned in our second interview, what, in his opinion, unites all three of them is that they are “all part of the same generation” – and this, to an extent, affects their thinking and world view, which is bound to be different from that of their parents’ (‘rock’) generation, for example. In addition, it became very clear to me in the course of this study that all three rappers share a ‘posse’ state of mind or thinking in almost everything they do. Each ‘defends his own’ (some more than others) and ‘represents his own’, whether it is Liiga, Rähinä, Töölö in the case of Cheek; Monsp, Yellowmic, Kallio in the case of Pyhimys and Joku Roti, Lapland and Sodankylä/Tornio/Oulu in the case of Stepa. Of course, this kind of ‘representing’ and collegial thinking is very much at the core of hip hop in general (see e.g. Forman 2002). What connects in particular Cheek and Pyhimys is that nowadays they both emphasize the role of music (culture) (Pyhimys also the whole *art scene*), in general, much more than just rap and hip hop, in particular. Thus, the framework, within which they (appear to) operate and/or orient towards, is larger than that of Finnish rap music alone.

What, then, *distinguishes* these three rappers are (somewhat obviously) their subjective experiences – which is what makes them unique. The thinking

¹⁹⁸ In fact, Cheek explicitly referred to his ‘bubble’ in his song: “Älä pyydä mitään” (‘Don’t ask for anything’) (2013): “Mun todellisuus on erilainen kun sulla, mun kanssa samaan kuplaan on perin vaikeee sun tulla” (‘My reality is different from yours, it’s impossibly difficult for you to come into the same bubble with me’).

presented above, the idea of ‘focused but *diverse*’ groups (Blommaert & Varis 2013) refers here to the fact that although they share some foci of interest, they are nevertheless diverse and unique individuals. Stepa, in fact, told me in our third interview that “it is maybe the life that I live and the lives others live, i.e. what happens to each of us” what makes all of the artists different and unique. ‘*Genreing*’ in hip hop is not a new phenomenon – various genres have existed in hip hop ever since its beginning, but the scene is nowadays even more fragmented (as was particularly echoed by Pyhimys in our first interview). It is often (wrongly) assumed that only certain (sub)genres bespeak authenticity. What I have tried to demonstrate here is that such a pre-existing and categorical notion of authenticity (e.g. McLeod 1999) should not be the starting point of our analysis – that commercial and authentic do not necessarily (always) exclude each other (e.g. Forman 2002).

First of all, Cheek represents a definite mainstream center in Finnish hip hop – this is the locus for his authenticity construction. Both his lyrics and interviews can be seen as a shift from collectivism to individualism in the sense that the issues he deals with are mostly autobiographical. Hip hop has always reflected these two sides: it is of course one’s autobiography but it is often also about a particular community and society (e.g. Pennycook 2007a; Forman 2002). We could extend Cheek’s rationale (behind everything he does) as one that reflects the present era of ego-centered individuals, in which identification with success, glory and wealth are the key issues. The ‘bling bling’ culture of hip hop is an outcome of originally poor young African Americans ‘making it’ and becoming successful, thus wanting to show their wealth to the world around them, with expensive cars, jewelry and other material things (see e.g. Chang 2005). Here, we can of course see larger schemes such as hedonism and consumption culture, common in (some parts of) the Western world and way of living. The issue of money and wealth indeed distinguishes Cheek from the two others in this study. Not only does he rap about it or relate to it in many of his songs (such as in “Kaikki hyvin”, ‘All good’) but he also exudes wealth in and through his behavior: owning a penthouse in a ‘good’ neighborhood and several luxury cars as well as wearing designer clothes. His (reported) multi-rhyming and technical ability also set him apart from Pyhimys and Stepa, or at least he is very vocal about it: he emphasizes it often and is passionate about the matter. Alim (2003b: 73) has, in fact, referred to this kind of multilevel rhyming as a ‘multirhyme matrix’, which consists of assonance (repetition of vowel sounds), alliteration (repetition of particular sounds, for example of consonants) and internal and end rhymes. For Cheek, the issue of (multi-)rhyming takes priority over contents of the lyrics. His role models (have) all come from the US rap scene, particularly from the New York rap scene, Jay Z being his biggest influence and ‘role model’, particularly in the ‘business’ sense (although this particular example, which he told me in the first interview, was not used in this study). For him, the ‘punch line’ kind of rap is ‘the rappest rap’ of all and he is the self-acclaimed ‘most US rapper’ in Finland.

Cheek's (excessive) self-confidence and self-praise also separates him from the two others. This is also what connects him, again, to the US rap scene, along with the previously mentioned issue of money, in that 'bragging' is a significant (and stereotypical) part of being a rap artist. This attitude does not, however, seem to sit well with (the *stereotypical*) Finnish mentality and culture, where, for example, athletes often behave modestly in interviews before a competition: "I'll do my best and let's see where it takes me."¹⁹⁹ In fact, this issue may be at the heart of Cheek's success and on the other hand, at the heart of the hatred and scorn expressed towards him. While some people admire Cheek's attitude and perhaps 'long for' and are proud of such self-confident role models, others are put off by him and his actions. (This would also be an interesting topic for further research, particularly in view of the contradictions and stereotypes it involves.)

The most 'conflicting' character in this study by far is Pyhimys, who does not want to be pinned down in any way - this is also what makes him stand apart from the two other rappers in this study. He wants to make music (or, art) in his own, unique way and on his own terms and not even necessarily as a rap artist. He was also the only one of the three artists who explicitly claimed that music is not a mirror of himself but something much more complicated. In his 'authenticity answer', he also argued how he sees people in general as complex and contradictory, not easily figured out and categorical. This kind of thinking is also reflected in his music. This versatility can be seen both in his music (his solo and group projects) content-wise and in the multiple personae (and aliases) he assumes in his lyrics. He is also in several roles in the music business: a rap artist, a producer, a song writer, a CEO (of a record company), production manager (of another record company) as well as a gig organizer. Despite these 'big' roles, he never brags about or addresses the issues of ('high-up') positions, money-making or success in a self-absorbed way, except perhaps ironically in some of the Teflon Brothers songs.

In terms of technical skills versus content, for Pyhimys the latter seems to matter more. He is interested in the texts and the stories in the lyrics. One of his role models is the versatile and contradictory US rapper Eminem, himself known for various aliases and personalities - a connecting point between these two (this was not dealt with in the examples either, but it is something Pyhimys has told me on other occasions). In Finland, his role models do not come from within the rap genre. He looks back on the Finnish music (and entertainment) scene more broadly and identifies with such artists as M.A. Numminen (a

¹⁹⁹ One might also speculate that this is a more general, (stereotypical) pan-Scandinavian mentality. The *Law of Jante* (*Janteloven*) was a concept coined by the Danish-Norwegian author *Aksel Sandemose* in his book *En flyktning krysser sitt spor* ('A fugitive crosses his tracks') (1933), describing life in a small village in Denmark. In the ten rules of the law, individual success and achievement is deemed inappropriate. Nowadays, the concept is used to characterize a mentality whereby individuality and 'making it' are discouraged and envied, particularly in Denmark and Sweden but also in other Nordic countries. (Sandemose 1985 [1933]; Scott 2013.)

singer and a multi-talent) and *Pirkka-Pekka Petelius* (an actor, a singer, a screenwriter) as his idols in terms of making *versatile* art.

What makes Stepa unique in this piece of study is that he is challenging the dominant pattern of hip hop culture as an urban phenomenon, its traditionally most natural environment. Through his music and lyrics, as well as the interview extracts, he incorporates peripheral areas into the Finnish hip hop scene. Social problems and issues, topics of the 'conscious' rap style, are often associated with the 'ghettos' or 'poor' neighborhoods of the (inner)city (most notably in the US and also in France), not those of the peripheral and/or rural areas. In this respect, there might be (some) similarities between Stepa and the Enshi dialect rapper in China (Wang 2012) in terms of bringing the periphery onto the world map of hip hop. As Finland is an extremely sparsely populated country, it might even create a 'social demand' for such a peripheral perspective. While more and more (young) people are moving to the south, many also remain in the north and east. Stepa voices their concerns.

Stepa's role models also come from the US: he is particularly fond of the rap group De La Soul, known for their jazz or alternative style rap and extensive use of sampling. In fact, Stepa dedicated his album "Made in Sodankylä" to this particular rap group. His other musical influences come from the world of (gangsta) funk, soul and sometimes even country music (although the last was not dealt with here; Stepa has mentioned liking country music to me several times). Success and money are frequent topics in Stepa's discography, but in an opposite way to Cheek. In songs such as "Viimeiset dollarit" ('The last dollars') and "I don't give a fuck", he discusses the continuous *lack* of money in his life and how he tries to cope, nevertheless. In fact, both "Made in Sodankylä" and extract 12 (collegial music-making instead of touring) show his 'anti-success' and 'anti-money-making' attitude - which makes his rap world (and its norms) completely different from that of Cheek. For Stepa, story-telling takes priority over technique - it is the content that matters for him. This is one of the most significant differences between him and Cheek. Pyhimys stands in between these two extremes in this respect, too.

All the artists showcased *authentic self-expressions*, their autobiographies (some more directly than others). They all told stories of their lives, they were all real, in this sense - even in the case of Pyhimys, via his multiple personae, he remains present in the 'background' of all the narratives, influencing what is said and how, and perhaps indicating traces of himself in the process. In exploring rappers in Newcastle and Frankfurt, Bennett (2000: 161-162) argued that they see "hip hop's value as an authentic mode of expression to be primarily rooted in the power it gives them as individuals to comment upon the nature of their own day to day experiences". This experiential aspect can also be seen in the Finnish context, most notably in the cases of Cheek and Stepa - albeit in different ways. In addition to themselves, the rap of these artists also tells about the society they live in and experience, which explains why the theory and analysis also took this into account.

6.3 Contributions and implications

On the basis of the analysis done and results achieved in chapters 4 and 5, we can now draw both specific and general conclusions as well as discuss the contributions and implications of this study. Contributions, which relate more *specifically* to the Finnish hip hop scene (and society), will be discussed first.

As for the implications for the broader social community or (Finnish) society (in relation to, for instance, globalization processes, language (ideological) debates and center-periphery dynamics), we can see that hip hop has an ability and possibility to give a *voice* to and *empower* the (marginalized) youth and young adults. Nowadays, many young (Finnish) people are increasingly interested in the cultural practices of hip hop and rap music and they find relevant topics and meaning-making in them. Often, they also start composing lyrics (as well as beats and samples, dance choreographies, graffitis) themselves, through which they can express themselves and learn to deal with various issues in their lives. Thus, they gain empowerment, emancipation and some control of their own lives. In fact, several rap (and breakdance and graffiti) projects and workshops have been conducted in Finland in the past couple of years, for example *Rap-kulttuurisilta* ('Rap cultural bridge'; see Turunen 2007), *Bass Camp* (which, for example, Pyhimys and Paleface have been involved in) and *Funk On* (for graffiti workshops). And, as we saw in this study, the senior rap artists have also guided and helped several 'junior' members to find their own path and voice not only in the scene, but in society, in general.

Secondly, often in the media coverage (e.g. Mattila et al. 2014) and in everyday discussions about Finnish hip hop, the artists, their authenticity and the scene in general are seen in simplified, dichotomous and categorical terms. What I have shown in and throughout this work is, however, that the 'artistic' image is *much more complex and nuanced* than traditionally thought. The artists are not necessarily 'fixed' in one spot and position in the scene but they can be and often are mobile throughout their trajectory (and also from one album to the next in their discography). I have also shown here (in a nuanced way) that Finnish hip hop culture itself is a *multifaceted, dynamic and living cultural complex* - one which cannot be pinned down and one which is constantly changing and moving in new directions. Thus, it is an unstable, polycentric and dynamic system, but that does not mean it is entirely 'random' or 'unfixed': it still has a relatively enduring structure.

All three rap artists studied here have unique trajectories and positions. These positions are partly fixed and partly mobile: it is mobility which has brought all of them 'here', where they are currently located in the topography of Finnish hip hop. They have shown movement from the periphery and margins to various kinds of centers as well as movement within the centers of a center. Thus, another important insight, which might seem almost self-evident is that *their location in a particular polycentric system*, i.e. the place where they are,

the position they occupy, strongly influences ‘everything’ they do. Stepa from Sodankylä mobilizes his peripheral and marginal position (and his local dialect) in order to make meaning and engage in discourses of center vs margins in his music (and other walks of life, too), while Cheek in Helsinki does all kinds of other things (such as massive ice hockey arena gigs and constantly travels to luxurious destinations abroad) and emanates a very central position both in his music: how he himself performs rap and in his meta-speech: what he says about rap and hip hop. Pyhimys, in turn, occupies a very self-sufficient central role in the underground and shows elements of mobility in everything he does: in his multiple roles in the scene. He is not to be categorized under any specific label except ‘multifaceted’ and ‘mobile’.

All of this basically shows that there is a *non-random* connection between a position in a polycentric system and cultural production, an understanding that motivated the use of polycentricity in this study. That polycentricity is a useful concept is demonstrated by the fact that the artists themselves incorporated their location within a polycentric system in almost everything they do. This shows even in the difficulties that they face: this, too, has to do with the movement across these different centers. For example in “Made in Sodankylä”, Stepa articulated a position, a desired versus real position in a polycentric system: he would have liked to stay in Sodankylä, but due to lack of educational and other possibilities (‘centers’) there, this had become impossible. If we considered these three rap artists as on the same ‘level’, thinking away their location within a polycentric system, we would not be able to explain all that is present in the lyrics and in the interview transcripts. Thus, making use of *ethnographic knowledge* has been a very significant part of this study – particularly in figuring out the nature of the polycentricity in question. All in all, this is a very important ‘local’ kind of result. In sum, it motivates, practically and analytically, the use of the notion of *polycentricity*.

This also holds true for the notion of *scale*. It is by defining the effects of scale, i.e. the real, lived experiences of scale, of different localities and positions expressed in the lyrics that we can begin to be able to explain what we mean by scale. Thus, we can see that the notion of scale has also been a very useful one in the analysis of authenticity. Up till now, scale has largely been used as a (*loose*) *metaphor* for imagining the world. For example Blommaert (2010) has never quite used it as an analytic notion, while in hip hop studies, in general, it is often only a spatial metaphor (for an exception, see Varis & Wang 2011; Wang 2012). Thus, one of the contributions of this study is that it has shown scale to be a highly useful *analytical* concept, one which helps to concretize the analysis and to define what kinds of various scales can be projected in the construction of authenticity. This study is thus amongst the first to actually make ‘scale’ a concrete (but *not* fixed) thing, highly relevant, in and through an empirical analysis. First, we observed the construction of the scale-level of the country, (hip hop) Finland in the sense that all the meaningful diacritics are organized around this particular scale-level: the artists speak from within Finland (from various positions and contexts, but nevertheless), to Finland (to their audiences)

and on Finland (mainly about 'Finnish' issues). Thus, all of this is only completely understandable to a Finnish person, to the extent that we have 'access' to that scale-level. Second, we observed how they all, despite the same scale-level, have their own rap worlds within which they operate. They all projected various scales, i.e. *scopes of understandability*, through their resources. Thus, we have scales within scales and while the 'common' scale-level is more or less clear, the lower scale-levels are often very mobile and we can easily shift in relation to them (e.g. from Sodankylä to Lapland or from Helsinki to Kallio). The notion of scale was highly useful in describing the *non-unified nature* of the (lyrics) data – they are structured in a way that has to do with 'scope' and it is in order to bring out *a sensitivity for that dimension of scope* that I have used the notion of scales.

As already pointed out, in chapter 5 (on the interview data), then, the concept of 'scale' was understood differently: as relating to the artists' relative positionings vis-à-vis other artists and genres in the scene. Here, we saw how particular types of resources (identified in chapter 4) are actually being redeployed in a different discursive layer of the hip hop culture and in an entirely different setting (where there is an interlocutor). I can extend a more *general*, methodological point here.²⁰⁰ I could never have found the layered, sequential and hierarchical structure of scalarity if I had restricted my study to only one set of data and one method of analysis – a detailed discourse analysis of rap lyrics, for instance. It was when I realized that the interview data – originally anticipated to be simply 'secondary' data supporting and complementing the analysis of the lyrics – offered a very different range of issues and displayed very different scalar phenomena, related to but relatively autonomous from those detected in the lyrics, that I began to see the *complexity* of the meaning potential generated by scalar frames.

I could not have detected on the basis of the lyrics alone the ways in which differences in the scope of understandability of specific discursive features contributes (on the meta-level) to the *construction and projection of identification(s)*, of *evaluative judgments of others' character and work* and of the *relative positionings of the rappers* within a particular horizon of popular culture. In addition, had I based my analysis on the lyrics alone, I would have considered the ideological-topographical frames 'primary' indexical materials rather than the 'second-order' materials they now *also* proved to be, and I would have failed to spot the very significant differences in the indexical ordering that went on in *both* activities.

This is of course a strong argument in favor of avoiding 'uni-directional' or 'mono-methodological' analyses when addressing the complexities of sociolinguistic globalization phenomena. In my case, while I was aware that hip hop, as a case in point of globalized popular culture, demanded attention to scales and scalar meaning effects, I initially had a rather simple idea of scales as 'content organizers' (local, national, global, etc.) of hip hop lyrics. These lyrical content organizers, however, quickly showed tendencies to become '*contents*' to

²⁰⁰ The following three paragraphs draw on Blommaert, Westinen & Leppänen (2014).

be '*organized*' again, and in a different way, in the interviews. It was, thus, the *plurality* of the data sets and approaches to them that enabled me to see scalarity itself as *a complex and dynamic system* that defies simple and static images of 'local' versus 'global'.

In section 2.3.2, I initially proposed a *more nuanced, alternative, view of authenticity* and here, at the end, I see that it worked. What I proposed was a view that is based not on stereotypical categorizations and dichotomies (of race, language, genre, etc.), but on various intertwining scales and polycentricity. This means that we are now working with an entirely different notion of authenticity. The insights gained reveal a completely different view of authenticity, one which is much more nuanced, unstable, multiple, conflictual and not pre-defined, not essentialized and not categorical as is the case of 'traditional' view of authenticity in hip hop (e.g. McLeod 1999). We can see that it is not in *one* thing, for example it is not in the language they make use of, not in the cultural references that they make, but, rather, it is in *everything* that (these three) rappers do and in the way everything is brought into a scale-relationship with the various center(s). Although it might seem chaotic at first, authenticity (at least in hip hop) is organized around the *fluid logics of scales and centers of norms*. Throughout the study, we are not necessarily talking only about Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, but the *relative positions* that these rap artists are able to take and develop vis-à-vis each other in the (Finnish) hip hop scene. Thus, the results might be seen as somewhat general, too, which is where we turn next.

In terms of the other, more *general* findings of this study, we can see, first of all, that the same distinctions that occur at one, higher scale-level also occur at another, lower scale-level. This is what I call *fractality*. The dynamics of centers-within-centers and centers-within-margins can clearly be seen in the world of hip hop in that whereas Finland (and Finnish hip hop) is a margin in the global hip hop nation, within this margin, there is a center, or centers, and a margin, or margins, and, within these, yet other centers and margins.²⁰¹ Thus, within one scale-level of Finnish hip hop (chapter 4), we are able to see new kinds of dynamics: new scales and centers of norms (chapter 5). This fractality was particularly observable in the interviews: a great deal of what these artists actually said had to do with fractality: for example, they can move, to some extent, within their scale-level from the center of the margin to the margin of the center. This was most evident in Stepa's case (whose music is not mainstream but popular outside it) and Pyhimys with his Ruger Hauer rap collective (who occupy a very central position in the margins and are not very successful in the mainstream). In sum, within a (local) center, we find exactly the same micro-distinctions than those we see on the global or national level.

²⁰¹ Irvine and Gal (2000: 38) use the term 'fractal recursivity' to refer to "the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level" - something which Blommaert et al. (2005: 202) further elaborate as involving "moves across scales", "from top to bottom, from center to periphery".

Theoretically, we can see here how *globalization processes are themselves fractal* since the globalization ‘force’ that constructs Finnish hip hop as a margin can be thought of as the same ‘force’ that distinguishes the three rappers, in relation to centers and margins, and what makes Stepa marginal as opposed to Cheek (in one line of thinking). It is a heuristics: after looking at what appears to be relative stability, we can then see a level of divergence and instability – and we try to grasp the dynamics between these two processes, between similarity and difference. Often, that similarity is a higher scale similarity, like here, for example, the ‘mother tongue’ of the rappers. But of course this is a more or less abstract feature because in reality the rappers’ repertoires consist of various bits and pieces of ‘language’, and thus they have no concrete, unified ‘mother tongue’. Similarity thus has to do with understandability: Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa ‘make sense’ to each other and they are able to pass judgment on each other on a higher scale-level of hip hop in Finland in which they assume very different positions. As a consequence, they judge down to several scale-levels from within that one scale-level. Within Finnish hip hop, we can see fairly flexible, fractal re-positionings (i.e. re-scalings) and how scale, for the rappers, becomes something they can maneuver within a larger scale-level; for example, they can talk about very local issues related to Töölö, Kallio or Sodankylä (or even more local, down to one street, even) but they can also address the whole nation – and all the time, they move between different centers and margins and peripheries. And in the construction of the(ir) scales, they draw on their own, subjective knowledge of ‘places’. Thus, from this standpoint of (in)stability, each Finnish rapper can be seen as wholly unique, yet simultaneously recognizable as Finnish rap/hip hop.

What we begin to see here is the structure of a ‘flow’ in the sense of Pennycook (2007a: 6), whereby “cultural forms move, change and are reused” as well as appropriated and refashioned in their new contexts. We have global, or rather transcultural (Pennycook 2007a), flows but they ‘stop’ somewhere, they ‘touch down’ and then they (again) become a flow inside a given context and so create an entirely new flow, which is very similar to the bigger flow. Within a national scale-level we find sub-regional and sub-local flows – the fractal process is unending. All in all, this insight gives us a far more nuanced and accurate image not only of hip hop as a globalized cultural phenomenon but also of the construction of hip hop authenticity. This might explain how, locally, people who deviate very strongly from the criteria of authenticity on the global level may still have very strongly developed ideas of local authenticity. What is also significant here is that locality itself is fractal and it can be broken down almost infinitely to smaller and smaller bits. For example, Helsinki is (or can be projected as) a local scale – it is a local thing for the rap artist who performs there, but for those in Sodankylä, it is not a local thing. If they get an invitation to go and perform in Helsinki, it is a sign of major (national) success.

This study reinforces the insight and the message of much recent literature (e.g. Mitchell 2001a; Pennycook 2007a; Omoniyi 2009), but now within the Finnish context: (African) American rap is not *the* issue anymore. As *Afrolution*

Records (though in the context of Nigeria) argue: “Sure we all grew up on US hip hop, we acknowledge that and we are grateful for the opportunities it has created for us but one cannot deny that the true essence of hip hop is ‘keeping it real’” (Omoniyi 2009: 114). While it may still be (partly) true for Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, who each have (had) their role models in the US rap scene, the latest generation of rappers, those still up-and-coming or ‘bubbling under’ have all already ‘grown up with’ Finnish hip hop. For them, it is more about the small, but locally significant scene with its heroes and villains, its own history and its own future – all, more or less, linked very deeply to *Finland*. Thus, in 21st century Finland, it is no longer an ‘issue’ whether white, Finnish males (and females) can and are able to rap. Yes, they can. In fact, as the editor-in-chief of the Finnish music magazine *Rumba* argued: “We now have a whole generation of listeners and actors of rap, many of whom have never digged American hip hop” (Fiilin 2013: 9).

For Pennycook (2010: 85, following Coulmas 2009), “modern, urban interaction” is “the central focus of sociolinguistics”. For that purpose he has, together with Otsuji, coined the term ‘*metrolinguism*’ to replace ‘multilingualism’ – emphasizing (the city) people’s various backgrounds and their playful use of language (Pennycook 2010: 85). But, as Wang et al. (2013: 5) have suggested and argued for, “a ‘complete’ sociolinguistics requires input from every possible environment in the world” and thus the current emphasis within the sociolinguistics of globalization on *urban* (i.e. ‘central’) environments should be ‘balanced’ by studying ‘peripheral’ contexts as well (ibid.). In addition to ‘multilingualism’ being seen as an ‘urban’ phenomenon, so has rap, too, been seen as significantly urban. For instance, according to Auzanneau (2002: 120) rap (in Libreville, Gabon) is a significant part of “the city’s activities” and “works with the city on the form, functions, and values of its languages” (see also e.g. Rose 1994 and Forman 2002 on the particularly urban emphasis of rap and hip hop).

While giving full credit to (the existing research on) urban rap, I argue that this is only *half* the truth. This study has focused on both the urban as well as the rural, peripheral contexts of rap and hip hop. I firmly believe that we should not concentrate solely on the urban, metropolitan perspective, whether we are studying globalization, multilingualism – or hip hop. As Blommaert (2010: 197) reminds us, we need to make “a shift away from a metropolitan perspective on globalization” which emphasizes “the uniformity of such processes” and, instead, focus on “the periphery as the locus from which we need to look at globalization” (see also Wang et al. 2013). Some studies have, in fact, already explored rap music in the not-so-traditional rural areas. For example, the previously discussed Brunstad et al. (2010) (see chapter 5) have looked at the popular and very heterogeneous Norwegian rural rap. In this study, we have indeed seen how globalization processes enter and are negotiated in various local places, both in the ‘centers’ *and* in the ‘periphery’. We should also keep in mind that the distinction between the urban/central and rural/peripheral

spaces is becoming somewhat blurry in the 21st century world, not least because of technological advances and increased mobility.

Here, I have suggested a hypothetical model of cultural practices, of one feature of social life, in particular, in the age of Late Modernity. This cultural structure, a model, could perhaps be used to analyze the social practices of 'similar' globalized youth and music cultures, for example 'reggae' or 'heavy metal', which also have their *center(s)* and *margin(s)* on various, *fractal scale-levels*. Thus far, (sub)cultural research in the Finnish context has often emphasized either the homogenizing tendencies and the (apparent) similarity of members of subcultures (along the lines of the Birmingham school) or the highly individual lifestyles of youth explored by researchers of the 'new ethnographic turn' (Salasuo & Poikolainen 2012). What I suggest here is that perhaps we could look at (sub)cultures from the point of view of *fractal scales* and *both stability* (convergence) and *instability* (divergence): whereas on a higher scale-level, the (sub)culture may, at first, seem unified, on the 'lower' scale-levels, we see individuality and divergence. This might explain the dynamics of (sub)cultures in a more nuanced way. My study has been a case study on the scale-level of (hip hop) Finland, but we might *speculate* whether this kind of a hypothetical model of cultural practices could be made use of and have validity and wider relevance, for example, in the case of United Kingdom, which is, of course, a much more central location globally in terms of popular culture. Thus, I may have done more than just described Finnish hip hop and three rappers – I may have provided a model of (sub)cultural research: how (sub)cultures are structured according the fractality of scales and how the discourses that emerge on the scales should always be explored and not presupposed. And this, of course, also requires *ethnographic knowledge* of the cultures. All of this awaits confirmation in follow-up research. In the following section, then, I will briefly outline possible future directions in the study of Finnish hip hop culture, for which the current study forms a basis, or starting point.

6.4 Future directions in Finnish hip hop research

As pointed out before, Finnish hip hop has not yet been extensively studied. The present study is an effort to fill this gap, at least in sociolinguistically oriented research. As regards possible future prospects for Finnish hip hop research, I would, first of all, be interested in continuing to explore these three artists and co-operate with them. As I have now gained 'access' to these artists and to their worlds and come to know all of them (although in varying degrees), it would seem a waste to leave the research at this juncture. There is much work to be done still and these three rappers have proven to be a rather versatile trio – they are different(ly authentic) in interesting ways. As explained in the previous section, I think it is also important to consider *both* 'urban' and 'rural' (or 'regional') rap in an age of globalization. After all, Finnish hip hop is

not only an urban phenomenon, although its visibility and success is largest in those kinds of contexts.

In line with the research interests in our recent Academy of Finland project on *Language and Superdiversity* (Language and Superdiversity), exploring the *social media activities* (such as their own websites, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and so on) of and around these three artists would be an interesting research task. Because the focus of the present study was only on the artists' offline activities, it would also be intriguing to look into the way they construct authenticity online (see, for example, Peuronen 2011, 2013 on research both on/offline in the context of Christians interested in extreme sports). In this research task, it would be crucial *not* to emphasize their separatedness but rather seek to understand online activities as “[intertwining] with their activities in offline contexts” (Leppänen et al. 2014) and complementing one another, instead of being two separate spheres (see also e.g. Stæhr 2014).

All these three artists have an active presence online – therefore, it would be justified and reasonable to extend research on authenticity construction also to these venues. In addition, Finnish hip hop has not yet been explored online (for a brief analysis of mine on “Mammat riivaa” (“The chicks are harassing us’), a rap music video by Ruudolf and Karri Koira, see Leppänen et al. 2014) and, internationally, research on hip hop online is also scarce (but for the Chinese context, see e.g. Wang 2012; Varis & Wang 2011; and for the German hip hop context, see e.g. Androutsopoulos 2009). In general, social media enable multiple affordances for multimodal meaning-making and interaction (see e.g. Leppänen et al. 2011), but also for authenticity construction. This analysis would, therefore, focus also on (moving) image and audio, in addition to ‘language’ and ‘discourse’. Examining social media would also need to take into account the highly polycentric (and multiscale) nature of the web (see e.g. Varis & Wang 2011; Leppänen et al. 2014). In fact, one such initial effort (of mine) was made in the case of Stepa and his recently set up tumblr blog in which he promotes himself and his music, discusses various (rap) issues with other rap artists and introduces his likings. The preliminary conclusions suggest that Stepa constructs authenticity, both online and offline, through various semiotic resources (including still and moving images and music), (writing and music) genres, scales and centers of norms. The authenticity is not fixed but, rather, he occupies many positions, such as ‘insider’, ‘rap enthusiast’ and ‘educator’ while constructing it (Westinen 2013).

In relation to the previous scheme around social media, I am also interested in following the lives of these three rappers on a more *long-term* basis. Thus far, no longitudinal study has been made on any Finnish rap artists, or the scene, in general (perhaps partly due to the ‘young’ age of the established scene). Bennett (2013) has been one of the first to explore *how people grow old(er) with popular music*. Although his focus has been on ageing (punk) fans, his ideas could also be applied to studying ageing (rap) artists. Thus, I would like to explore Finnish rap artists, perhaps even these three artists, when they reach the age of 40, 50 or even 60. Authenticity construction could be one research strand

here, but I am fully aware that, in the future, their authenticity construction might not relate (only) to hip hop culture, specifically, but perhaps also to the music (or even culture) scene in general. Things will happen to these three people in the future and following their (socio-cultural) biographies would be of great value, as it would enable us to gain more extensive, longitudinal knowledge about their trajectories and positions – as well as movement and change in them.

I would be particularly interested in seeing how their relationship with hip hop and rap continues, changes and regenerates: What will ‘rap’ and ‘hip hop’ mean to them in ten or twenty years’ time? How will they grow old with hip hop culture and rap music? (cf. Bennett 2013.) Themes such as *visual appearance* and *body modification*, *career paths* and *political orientations* and *worldviews* could be looked at (cf. Bennett 2013). This would also allow me to observe and analyze different Finnish hip hop generations and what characterizes each of them. ‘Youth’ culture would have to be redefined in this case, too (cf. e.g. Bennett 2013) – in that the concepts ‘old’ and ‘young’ are not fixed, stable categories and that aging music fans are often considered somehow ‘deviant’ (Bennett 2013). I suspect that, similarly to punk, also rap is something of a *lifetime commitment* perhaps similar to one’s ideological thinking: these lifestyles remain a part of oneself, in one form or another (and possibly in combination with other genres). One illustration of this can be seen in a recent newspaper article (Lumme 2013) in which some of the current rap artists claim that Finnish rap has no (upper) age limit – people in their 40s are still active in the scene. Thus, Finnish rap is not (all) about young people only. But in order to find out what exactly rap and hip hop mean to ageing artists in terms of their (highly individual) biographic trajectories, we would have to engage in (an ethnographic) longitudinal work, which draws on insights from sociolinguistics, cultural studies and sociology.

One such change in the trajectory of Cheek, for example, can already be seen in how he has become a *nation-wide music artist* (not only a rap artist) after performing in the Finnish TV show *Vain elämää*. Through the program, he gained recognition and made himself and his rap genre known and visible to the whole general public. Partly because of the ‘hype’ the series brought with it, his two ice hockey arena gigs in Helsinki (in September 2013) were sold out within a matter of minutes. This is significant because, at the time, no other Finnish rap artist had ever had their own, solo gigs in any ice hockey arena (in Helsinki) – it thus speaks of the popularity Cheek has recently achieved. A couple of months after this, Cheek announced that he would be doing a gig at the *Olympic Stadium* in August 2014. The concert was sold out in a matter of one and a half hours, leading to the announcement of another gig at the Stadium (which was sold out in half an hour). This incredible popularity has brought about both pride (in the fact that a Finnish (rap) artist can sell out the stadium) but also, unsurprisingly, a great deal of ‘hate talk’ and envy. One could speculate that this is because of the relative absence of success (and bragging) discourses in Finland (unlike in the US). As already pointed out above, Finns

are *stereotypically* modest and silent about their success (see e.g. Keltikangas-Järvinen 1996) and the ‘making it from rags to riches’ success stories of (US) rap do not seem to easily fit in the Finnish context. The clash between these two cultures (itself an interesting mix) is probably the reason behind these extreme attitudes. Cheek’s success is yet again an example of fractality: he infuses the scale of Finland with the global reference to ‘mega stars’ and ‘celebrity cultures’. These are entirely new motives of operating as a *music* artist. In fact, he cannot be considered as just a rap artist any longer. In Wenger’s (1998: 155) terms, he might be showcasing an ‘*outbound trajectory*’: Cheek is partly on his way out of (only) the hip hop community and, in the process, “[develops] new relationships, [finds] a different position with respect to a community, and [sees] the world and oneself in new ways”.

Thus, the exclusive ‘stadium music’ status indexes an entirely different scene and (a hierarchical) order than that of (only) hip hop (although his roots remain in Lahti and rap music) – Cheek is clearly in a ‘high’ ranking place on the ‘success continuum’ (cf. Shuker 2008: 61–62). This new kind of success also brings with it an entirely different dynamics between centers and margins as well as scales. For the present, we cannot yet say what exactly this means or know its directions and (potential) impacts. They need to be explored, preferably longitudinally to find out what kinds of re-(/up-)scalings, i.e. dynamics of scale, will happen in the (future) trajectory of this ‘popular cultural object’. What we can say for sure at this point is that hip hop culture is a *living thing*, an *ongoing* sociocultural (and economic) process (not [...] a known stable set of values norms and beliefs; cf. Coupland 2003: 426) and, in this, “cultural belonging is [...] an active, iterative, reconstructive process” (Coupland 2001: 369) – both of which need to be explored ethnographically.

A third possible path for future research includes engaging with rappers with a ‘migrant’ background (born in Finland or not; with one or no ‘native Finnish’ parents), as no research has been done on this topic yet. During the past couple of years, such young people have become active in the Finnish hip hop scene. Of course, this is not an entirely new phenomenon since, for example the (London-born) rapper Raymond Ebanks (of Finnish-Jamaican-heritage) from Bomfunk MC’s was already part of *The Master Brothers* in the late 1980s, and thus, part of the first Finnish hip hop wave (Paleface 2011). What is noticeable and different in the phenomenon in 2014, however, is the (growing) number of artists who have a ‘migrant’ background. Already in 2010, the rap artist Elastinen eagerly awaited rap artists with an (im)migrant background to start performing in Finnish, instead of English (which most of them then used), because it would be ‘most fresh’ like that (Elastinen 2010). In fact, in 2011, three Finnish artists, *Noah Kin* (Norwegian-born, half-Nigerian, half-Finnish), *Gracias* (originally from Democratic Republic of the Congo, or, at the time, Zaire) and *Ekow* (originally from Liberia), became known (and were ‘discovered’ by the media) as the ‘vanguard’ of the (im)migrant-background hip hop. They had all chosen to rap in English for various reasons: their English is fluent, since it is the language they speak at home, and, in addition, the English language also

provides them with a chance to be successful in the international market. (Jansson 2011: 26.) More recently, artists such as *Kevin Tandu* (originally from Congo) and *Musta Barbaari* ('Black Barbarian'; Finnish-born, half-Finnish, half-Tanzanian) have represented (mostly) Finnish language rap. Finland is, in fact, lagging behind in terms of immigrant-background rap (Jansson 2011: 26), since in Finland these rappers are still seen as quite 'exotic', whereas elsewhere in Europe, most notably in France (see e.g. Prévos 2001; Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002, 2003; Hassa 2010) and Germany (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2010a) they have always been an integral part of the local hip hop scenes.

Overall, this recent phenomenon is related, in significant ways, to globalization and localization processes, transcultural flows (Pennycook 2007a) and multilingual and multimodal resources and repertoires. As (also) this piece of research focused on Finnish rappers with no immigrant background, it would be a significant avenue for future research. This phenomenon could also be explored from the point of view of social media, as these venues enable artists to achieve a sudden visibility and popularity. For example, the music video of the song "Salil eka, salil vika" ('First at the gym, last at the gym') by *Musta Barbaari* gained more than 3.3 million views on YouTube (April 29, 2014) within a matter of eight months, while the 'hype' around this rap act has been quite enormous, both on- and offline. *Musta Barbaari* has also sought to combat racism, by, for example, visiting schools, and has engaged in discussions on 'racism' and stereotypes in other ways as well. This artist (amongst others) has thus far proven to be an example of how *multiple voices* can exist in diversifying Finland and how it is possible to be part of Finnish society and its discourses in various ways.²⁰² As Finland has one of the lowest numbers of foreign-origin citizens in Europe (Arter 2010: 499), it would be interesting, in this respect, to study what kind of 'images' (of Finland and its people) and (dis)identifications are constructed via current rap music and hip hop culture and, specifically, by artists with a 'migrant' background.

In this context, *superdiversity* (Vertovec 2007), the diversification of diversity, particularly when viewed sociolinguistically (Blommaert & Rampton 2011; Leppänen & Häkkinen 2012), could also be a key concern: we need to address and explore ambiguity and complexity *as part of* the late modern reality and we cannot make (automatic) assumptions or predictions about people's identity categories (such as 'migrant', 'nationality', 'origins', 'religion', 'language'). Rather, we need to explore them. For example, we cannot take for granted these rappers' (dis)identifications and (dis)alignments, their language use and choices and discourse(s), but we need to investigate them. Such investigations should also, importantly, keep in mind the unstable, dynamic and polycentric nature but also, simultaneously, the relatively enduring structure of sociocultural phenomena, such as hip hop.

²⁰² The rise of the anti-immigrant, populist Perussuomalaiset (The Finns) Party in the 2011 parliamentary elections was accompanied (and made partly possible) by increasingly negative attitudes towards multiculturalism and immigrants. These attitudes have somewhat 'eased' since, but they are, nevertheless, still significantly negative (EVA 2013: 32–36).

6.5 Concluding remarks

In short, this study has structured an alternative theoretical and methodological framework for researching the linguistic, discursive, scalar, polycentric and fractal construction of authenticity in (Finnish) hip hop, and has used lyrics by, interviews with and ethnographic observations on three Finnish rap artists, Cheek, Pyhimys and Stepa, to demonstrate this framework.

The findings suggest a multifaceted and nuanced view on authenticity: one which is constructed via (semiotic practices in) language and discourse, organized on (fractal and subjective) scales and one which orients to several norm-providing centers. In this, I have suggested that we understand scale as a highly dynamic analytical concept since it enables us to describe the positions and movements of the rappers in a very concrete way. Similarly to linguistic and discursive resources, scale (subjective, projected) is also a resource in the artists' individual repertoires. Another important finding related to polycentricity was that the centers, margins and periphery are not 'fixed' categories: instead, they are maneuverable. There are centers and margins within centers and centers and margins within margins.

In sum: in this study, we have witnessed (at least) *three ways of constructing authenticity*. This has to do with fractality, different scales and different centers of norms. In the end, we obtained three different views on Finnish hip hop, three different 'rap bubbles' through which the artists see the scene and Finnish society (and the world, at large). With respect to hip hop in general, my research suggests that what has previously been said about the globality of hip hop and about keeping it real is in need of amendment. As pointed out in chapter 4, hip hop research often highlights the global and (/or) the local aspects of the culture. However, I would argue that hip hop is always and inevitably a blend of different scales, and that these scales should not therefore be seen as suggesting a (pre-defined) dichotomy between the local and the global; instead, they are inseparable and highly interwoven, mixing and blending in a variety of ways. It is precisely this blending of scales, which 'makes sense' as hip hop. While the picture that emerges from my research is a complex one, this complexity is, however, also ordered, through the play of various centers (of norms). Thus, in my study I have drawn a finely nuanced picture of constructions of authenticity in the context of hip hop in Finland. In so doing, I hope that I have done justice to the artists, in particular, and to the scene, in general.

YHTEENVETO

Autenttisuuden diskursiivinen rakentuminen: resurssit, skaalat ja polysentrisyys suomalaisessa hiphop-kulttuurissa

Globalisaatioprosessien ja ylikulttuuristen virtausten (*transcultural flows*) (Pennycook 2007a) mukana nuorisokulttuurit kielenkäyttötapoineen leviävät ympäri maailmaa. Alun perin Yhdysvalloista ja afroamerikkalaisesta suullisesta perinteestä noussut hiphop-kulttuuri on nykyään yksi maailman näkyvimmistä sekä suosituimmista nuoriso- ja musiikkikulttuureista. Hiphop-kulttuuri, joka koostuu rap-musiikista, breakdancesta ja graffiti-taiteesta, on erinomainen esimerkki siitä, miten globaali ja paikallinen kohtaavat, yhdistyvät ja sekoittuvat: se on globaali ilmiö, mutta muoto, ilmaisu ja merkitys syntyvät aina paikallisessa kontekstissa. Hiphop onkin yksi mielenkiintoisimmista globalisaatioprosessien tutkimuskohteista, sillä se toimii monen nuoren identifiaktion ja itseymmärryksen perustana ympäri maailmaa (Alim 2009a). Rap-musiikissa kiel(t)enkäyttö ja sen muokkaaminen on erittäin olennaista, ja se tarjoaa nuorille tärkeän itseilmaisukanavan.

Tämä tutkimus tarkastelee *autenttisuuden* (aitouden) rakentumista suomalaisessa hiphop-kulttuurissa. Erityisesti tutkin sitä, miten kolme suomalaista rap-artistia, *Cheek*, *Pyhimys* ja *Stepa*, rakentavat autenttisuuttaan kielellisten ja diskursiivisten resurssien kautta, heijastaen eri skaala-tasoja ja orientoituen erilaisiin normikeskuksiin. Tutkin autenttisuuden rakentumista sekä artistien lyriikoissa että tekemissani artistihaastatteluissa.

Tutkimukseni on luonteeltaan kuvaileva ja laadullinen, ja sen teoreettis-metodologinen viitekehys rakentuu *globalisaation sosiolingvistiikasta* (Blommaert 2010), *diskurssintutkimuksesta* (Blommaert 2005; Johnstone 2002; Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009) ja *etnografiasta* (Hymes 1996; Blommaert & Dong 2010). Globalisaation sosiolingvistiikka tutkii kielten, diskurssin, ihmisten sekä kulttuurien liikkumista (*mobility*) ja erilaisia virtauksia (*flows*) jälkimodernissa ajassa. Diskurssintutkimuksellinen ote näkyy siinä, että analysoin aineistostani sekä diskurssia (kieltä sosiaalisena toimintana ympäristössään) että diskursseja (konventionaalisia ajattelu- ja puhetapoja) ja sitä, miten niiden kautta rap-artistit rakentavat autenttisuutta sekä hyödyntävät tässä prosessissa aiempia diskursseja ja luovat samalla uusia. Tutkimustani luonnehtii termi *sosiolingvistinen diskurssintutkimus*. Etnografinen orientaatio merkitsee kielen näkemistä sosiaalisena resurssina ja osana ihmisten aktiviteetteja eri konteksteissa. Analysoin mikro-tason tapahtumia, jotka osoittavat makrotason yhteiskunnallisia sekä globaaleja ilmiöitä ja linkittyvät niihin. Etnografia näkyy myös siinä, että artistit ovat osallistuneet tutkimukseeni olennaisella tavalla. Olen myös observoinut näitä rap-artisteja heidän keikoillaan. Lisäksi olen seurannut suomalaista hiphop-kulttuuria ylipäätään, mikä mahdollistaa etnografisen tiedon hyödyntämisen analyysissa.

Resurssit, repertuaari, skaalat ja polysentrisyys ovat analyysikäsitteinä olennaisia globalisaation sosiolingvistiikalle. Abstraktien ja staattisten kielijärjestelmien sijaan rap-artistit käyttävät ja hyödyntävät (kielellisiä) *resursseja*, varsinaisia ja konkreettisia kielen pieniä palasia (Hymes 1996; Blommaert 2010; Jørgensen 2008). Kielellisiin resursseihin luen kiel(t)en eri varieteetit, murteet ja slangin. *Diskursiiviset resurssit* (Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002) viittaavat eri diskursseihin, genreihin, narratiiveihin, aiheisiin, puheakteihin ja kulttuurisiin viittauksiin. *Repertuaari* on yksilön elämän aikana kertynyt ja funktionaalisesti järjestynyt resurssivaranto: resursseja käytetään eri tarkoituksiin eri konteksteissa eri aikoina.

Skaalat (scales) (Blommaert 2010) voidaan puolestaan määritellä ymmärrettävyyden aika-paikka-kehyksinä, -tasoina tai -ulottuvuuksina. Tutkimukseni rap-artistit heijastavat paikallisia (mikrotaso), globaaleja (makrotaso) sekä useita niiden väliin sijoittuvia ja niihin linkittyviä skaalatasoja. *Polysentrisyys* (Blommaert 2010) viittaa puolestaan erilaisiin normikeskuksiin, joihin yksilöt orientoituvat kommunikoidessaan, kuten amerikkalaiseen hiphop-kulttuuriin tai omaan rap-ryhmään eli ns. posseen. Keskeisiä analyysikäsitteitä ovat myös *keskukset*, *marginaali* ja *periferia*, jotka voivat olla esimerkiksi kulttuurisia, taloudellisia tai sosiaalisia. Marginaalit ja keskukset rakentavat ja tarvitsevat toinen toisiaan, vaikka niitä usein pidetäänkin toistensa vastakohtina. Ne elävät myös jatkuvassa muutoksessa. (Helne 2002; Jokinen 2004; Forman 2002.)

Tutkimukseni *aineisto* koostuu näiden kolmen rap-artistin lyriikoista ja haastatteluista sekä heitä koskevista etnografisista huomioista. Nämä artistit ovat valikoituneet tutkimukseni kohteiksi, koska he edustavat suomalaisen hiphopin monimuotoisuutta niin genren, tyylin, aiheiden, maantieteellisen sijainnin kuin kokemuksensakin puolesta. Cheek on kotoisin Lahdesta mutta asuu nykyään Helsingissä. Hän on yksi Suomen menestyneimmistä ja samalla kiistanalaisimmista rap-artisteista. Cheek edustaa pop/klubi-rap-genreä, ja hänen (omaelämäkerralliset) albuminsa ovat suuria kaupallisia menestyksiä nykyään myös rap-yleisön ulkopuolella. Pyhimys on kotoisin Helsingistä, jossa hän edelleen asuu. Hän on yksi suomalaisen hiphop-kulttuurin monipuolisimmista ja kokeneimmista tekijöistä: hän on osa monia rap-ryhmiä, toimii yhden levy-yhtiön toimitusjohtajana ja toisen tuotantopäällikkönä. Hän yhdistelee musiikissaan erilaisia ”ääniä” (tai hahmoja) ja vaikutteita useista genreistä. Stepa on suomalaisen hiphop-kulttuurin nuorempaa sukupolvea. Hän on kotoisin Sodankylästä ja asuu nykyään Oulussa. Hän edustaa suomalaisen hiphopin marginaalia ja periferiaa monessakin merkityksessä. Stepan genre on leppoisa gangsta-funk, jonka kautta hän toisinaan ottaa kantaa myös sosiaalisiin ja poliittisiin asioihin.

Lyriikat ovat osa tutkimustani, sillä ne ovat rap-tutkimustradition perinteisin analyysikohte (mm. Androutsopoulos 2009), muun muassa kielten sekoittumisen ja koodinvaihdon sekä vähemmistöasioiden, lokalisoinnin ja identiteetin kannalta (mm. Omoniyi 2009; Higgins 2009a, 2009b; Androutsopoulos 2010a). Autenttisuuden voidaan katsoa rakentuvan niissä

sekä kielen että diskurssin kautta (mm. Pennycook 2007a, 2007b). Olen valinnut kultakin artistilta kaksi (aineiston valintahetkellä) viimeisintä albumia. Lisäksi haastattelen artisteja, jotta saan heiltä tarkempaa, kulttuurin sisäistä tietoa autenttisuudesta sekä siihen liittyvistä ja sitä rakentavista tarinoista. Artistinäkökulman sisällyttäminen tutkimukseen on olennaista, sillä se antaa äänen itse artisteille (tätä kuvaa myös teoreettis-metodologinen orientaatio *hiphopography*; Alim 2009a). Lisäksi analyysia tukevat ja täydentävät etnografiset kenttämuistiinpanot artistien keikoilta neljän vuoden ajalta.

Aikaisempi tutkimus hiphop-kulttuureista eri puolilla maailmaa (esim. Androutsopoulos & Scholz 2002) on tuonut esiin, että hiphop-kulttuuri on globaalin kulttuurisen mallin paikallista muokkaamista, ilmaisua ja uudelleen kontekstualisointia. Hiphop-kulttuuria voidaan kuitenkin yhtä aikaa pitää myös vanhojen, *jo valmiiksi paikallisten* tarinankerrontaperinteiden jatkumona (Pennycook & Mitchell 2009). Esimerkkejä tästä kaksisuuntaisesta prosessista on muun muassa rap-lyriikoiden kielivalinnoissa sekä diskursseissa, narratiiveissa ja kulttuurisissa viittauksissa. Vaikka hiphop-kulttuurin globaalia leviämistä ja sen paikallisia ilmentymiä on nykyään tutkittu jo suhteellisen laajasti, tutkimustieto Suomen kontekstista on toistaiseksi, ainakin sosiolingvistiikan alalta, vielä puutteellista (ks. Kalliokoski 2006; Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010; Westinen 2007, 2010, 2012). Tutkimukseni onkin tässä mielessä urauurtava, ja se täydentää aiempaa hiphop-tutkimusta autenttisuudesta, kiel(t)enkäytöstä, suomalaisesta hiphop-kulttuurista ja rap-musiikista osana globaalia hiphop-kansaa (*Global Hip Hop Nation*; Alim 2009a).

Autenttisuus (*authenticity, keepin' it real*) on yksi hiphop-kulttuurin tärkeimmistä arvoista ja mantrioista. Sitä rakennetaan monisyisessä suhteessa itseen ja muihin sekä paikallisissa, kansallisissa ja globaaleissa konteksteissa (Pennycook 2007b). Perinteisesti hiphop-autenttisuutta on hahmoteltu kategorioiden ja kahtiajakojen kautta, esimerkiksi suhteessa kieleen, rotuun ja genreen (esim. McLeod 1999; Armstrong 2004; Cutler 2009). Täten sen on usein katsottu olevan *entuudestaan olemassa oleva ominaisuus* yksilössä tai kielessä (vrt. Coupland 2001, 2003). Oma tutkimukseni pyrkii kuitenkin osoittamaan, että autenttisuutta rakennetaan monin eri tavoin diskurssin ja kielen kautta, heijastellen useita eri skaala-tasoja, ei vain paikallista ja globaalia, ja orientoitumalla useisiin eri normikeskuksiin.

Analyysiluvussa 4 tutkin kunkin rap-artistin lyriikoita erikseen. Tarkemman analyysin kohteiksi olen valinnut Cheekin kappaleen "Orjantappuraa", Pyhimyksen kappaleen "Bättre folk" ja Stepan kappaleen "Made in Sodankylä". Näistä kustakin tutkin autenttisuuden rakentumista resurssin, repertuaarin ja skaalan käsitteiden kautta. Tarkastelen myös sitä, miten suomalainen hiphop-kulttuuri muodostaa oman skaalatasonsa: vaikka lyriikat (ja artistit) ovat erilaisia, ne ovat silti ymmärrettävissä ainoastaan suhteessaan suomalaiseen kontekstiin, kieleen, diskurssiin ja sosiokulttuuriseen historiaan.

Orjantappuraa-kappaleessaan Cheek rakentaa itsestään kuvaa suomalaisen hiphopin *globalina* "Messiaana" kielellisesti ja diskursiivisesti. Sekä

kappaleen konteksti eli globaalisti tunnistettava oikeudenkäynti että siinä hyödynnetyt raamatulliset roolit ja viittaukset tekevät kappaleesta "globaalin". Kappale on Cheekin "omaelämäkerta" ja se on sekä historiallinen että nykyaikaan liittyvä, sillä hän vertaa omia kokemuksiaan Jeesuksen kokemuksiin. Jeesus on tässä nähtävissä globaalisti tunnistettavana hahmona ja resurssina, jota Cheek hyödyntää ja muokkaa rakentaakseen itsestään kuvan messiaanisenä hahmona paikallisessa kontekstissa. Kappaleessa tiivistyy hänen valtavrassa menestymisen aikana kohtaamansa (epäaitous)syytökset. Syyttäjän voidaan tässä nähdä "kaiuttavan" kansaa ja "vihaajia". Kappale kokonaisuudessaan on Cheekin puolustuspuheenvuoro, jossa hän hyödyntää useita kielellisiä resursseja: suomen puhekieltä, yleiskieltä, Helsingin alueen slangia sekä osin suomalaistettua englantia, jotka indeksoivat hänen asemaansa Helsingissä, globaalissa ja suomalaisessa nuorisokulttuurissa ja tietyssä rap-genressä. Kappaleessa rakennetaan *menestyksen ja saavuttamisen, uskonnon sekä valtavirta vastaan autenttisuus* -diskursseja. Näitä diskursseja rakennetaan sekä kielellisin että diskursiivisin keinoin, ja ne heijastelevat pääosin globaalia skaalaa mutta linkittyvät myös kansalliseen skaalaan. Orjantappuraa on esimerkki siitä, miten Cheek omassa pop/klubirap-genressään yhdistää kaupallisuuden ja autenttisuuden. Hän muokkaa ja lokalisoi hiphopin globaalia formaattia sekä itsevarmuutta ja näin ollen esimerkkillistää yhtä autenttisuuden tapaa (suomalaisessa) hiphop-kulttuurissa.

Bättre folk -kappaleessaan Pyhimyksen voidaan nähdä rakentavan *kansallista* autenttisuutta sekä kielellisten että diskursiivisten resurssien kautta. Pyhimys kaiuttaa sanomaansa suomenruotsalaisen Robban-hahmon kautta. Hänen hyödyntämänsä kielelliset resurssit (suomen puhekieli, yleiskieli, (suomen)ruotsi ja (suomalaistettu) englantia) ja niiden sekoitukset indeksoivat suomenruotsalaista Robbania ja suomalaista kontekstia. Kappaleessa Pyhimys rakentaa, muokkaa ja ironisoi *historiallista, Suomi Ruotsin vallan alla, suomenruotsalaiset eliittinä- ja hiphop globaalina sosiaalisen tasa-arvon äänenä* -diskursseja. Kappaleessa mennyt ja nykyinen aika asetetaan vastakkain, sillä Robbanin ei voida nähdä edustavan mennyttä "porvaristoa" eikä siitä seurannutta nykyistä "bättre folkia". Robban korostaakin sitä, että menneet kahtiajakoineen tulisi unohtaa. Kappale rakentaa kuvaa "käänteisestä" syrjinnästä Robbanin kautta: myös yhteiskunnan niin sanotut ja oletetut eliittijäsenet eli suomenruotsalaiset kokevat syrjintää ja ennakkoluuloja. Kappaleen kautta Pyhimys rakentuu autenttisenä, kansallisena rap-hahmona ja kouluttajana, ja hänen autenttisuutensa muodostuu näiden kahden "äänen" eli kansallisen historian ja koulutuksen sekä hiphop-kulttuurin kautta. Autenttisuus on myös kappaleen aihe: Robban on epäaito, sillä hän ei vastaa stereotyyppisiä oletuksia (mme) rikkaista, menestyvistä ja kaikin puolin "paremmista" suomenruotsalaisista. Kappaleen nimi Bättre folk on viittaus tähän stereotypiaan, mutta Pyhimys muokkaa ja kontekstualisoi fraasin merkitystä uudelleen niin, että se viittaakin parempaan folkmusiikkiin globaalilla skaalalla. Pyhimys voidaan nähdä jopa sosiolingvistisenä kriitikkona, joka vaatii ihmisten (ja kielten) tasa-arvoa ja tarjoaa kappalettaan

(vasta)kommenttina suomalaisten polarisoituneisiin kieliasenteisiin ja -ideologioihin. Täten suomiräp linkittyy myös muihin, jännittyneisiin kielellisiin tilanteisiin kaksi- tai monikielisisä maissa ja niiden hiphop-kulttuureissa (vrt. Sarkar 2009).

Made in Sodankylä -kappaleessaan, joka on omaelämäkerrallinen ensimmäisen persoonan tarina, Stepa rakentaa ensisijaisesti *paikallista* autenttisuutta. Kielelliset resurssit, suomen puhekieli, yleiskieli ja Peräpohjolan murre, indeksoivat Stepan asemaa nuorena sodankyläläisenä ja suomalaisena rap-artistina. Englanti kappaleen nimessä heijastaa globaalia skaalaa, mutta se on silti ymmärrettävissä ainoastaan paikallisessa kontekstissa ja viittaa paikallisiin asioihin. Kappaleessa Stepa kertoo problemaattisesta ja monisyisestä suhteestaan kotiin ja Lappiin. Lyriikoissa rakentuvat seuraavat diskurssit: *pohjoinen vastaan etelä, syrjäseudut, kotinostalgia* ja *anti-julkisuus/menestys*. Skaalat, joita Stepa heijastaa kappaleessaan resurssien kautta, ovat moninaisia ja toisiinsa linkittyneitä. Tärkeimmäksi ymmärrettävyyden kehikoksi nousee paikallinen skaala. Stepa hyödyntää ja muokkaa kappaleessaan rap-musiikin yhtä globaalia mallia eli tiedostavan rap-musiikin teemoja ja arvoja, mutta samalla hänen voidaan nähdä jatkavan (jo valmiiksi) paikallista tarinankerrontaa (vrt. Pennycook & Mitchell 2009) eli suomalaista poliittista lauluperinnettä (vrt. Kuivas 2003b). Stepa puolestaan erottautuu valtavirran kaupallisesta musiikista, hiphopin stereotyyppisestä ylellisestä elämäntyylistä, menestymisestä ja tienaamisesta. Kaiken kaikkiaan Stepan voidaan nähdä omalla tavallaan muokkaavan ja uudistavan suomirap-genreä. Hän haastaa hiphop-kulttuurin ja rap-musiikin aseman vain urbaanisena ilmiönä ja sisällyttää agendaansa myös periferisten alueiden ja maakuntien ongelmat ja haasteet. Made in Sodankylässä kuullaan syrjäseutujen ääni, ja Stepa toimii näiden alueiden paikallisena puolestapuhujana. Kappaleen kautta voidaan myös problematisoida ”marginaalin” ja ”periferian” käsitteitä, sillä ne tulee ymmärtää monisyisinä ja subjektiivisina.

Luvussa 5 analysoin haastatteluesimerkkejä. Ensimmäisessä alaluvussa *Centers and margins* tutkin, miten artistit rakentavat autenttisuuttaan suhteessa erilaisiin (maantieteellisiin) (normi)keskuksiin ja marginaaleihin, sillä ”paikalla” ja ”tilalla” on suuri merkitys rap-musiikissa ja hiphop-kulttuurissa ympäri maailmaa (Rose 1994; Mitchell 2001; Forman 2002; Bennett 2004; Alim et al. 2009). Lisäksi tutkin heidän polkujaan (*trajectory*), asemaansa (*position*), liikkuvuuttaan ja suhteitaan muihin rap-artisteihin. Analyysissa keskityn erilaisiin narratiiveihin: pieniin tarinoihin (*small stories*; Bamberg 2004; Georgakopoulou 2007), polkuihin, ja sosiokulttuurisiin sekä poliittisiin diskursseihin, jotka linkittyvät keskuksien ja marginaalien teemoihin. Tulokset osoittavat, että juurilla on suuri merkitys rap-artisteille uran rakentamisen kannalta ja autenttisuuden rakentamisen tarinoissa (McLeod 1999; Forman 2002). Kaikki artistit ovat myös siirtyneet polullaan eteenpäin, joko marginaaleista erilaisiin keskuksiin tai keskuksien sisällä, uusiin keskuksiin. Tulokset näyttävät myös, että artistit rakentavat autenttisuuttaan useilla tavoilla eri positioistaan käsin suhteessa eri keskuksiin ja marginaaleihin.

Autenttisuuden polysentrinen eli monikeskuksinen rakentuminen näkyy muun muassa siinä, minkälaisia ja kenen erilaisia genrejä sekä tyyliä he arvostavat ja minkälaisen hiphop-porukan he ovat ympärilleen koonneet osana artistipolkuaan. Artistit rakentavat autenttisuuttaan johdonmukaisesti myös varsinaisen rap-uransa ulkopuolella. Näissäkin aktiviteeteissa heijastuu orientoituminen eri normikeskuksiin sekä niiden ideologioihin ja arvoihin. Myös ympäristö tunnistaa ja tunnustaa erityistä sekä erilaista asiantuntijuutta ja lahjakkuutta kussakin artistissa.

Toisessa alaluvussa *The best and the rest* tutkin rap-artistien esille tuomia erilaisia suomalaisen hiphopin "laatukeskusteluja": mikä on hyvää ja "aitoa" rap-musiikkia ja mikä ei, sekä mikä musiikissa ja sen tekemisessä on tärkeintä. Analysoin, miten artistit vertailevat itseään sekä omaa musiikkiaan toisiin artisteihin ja heidän musiikkiinsa samalla, kun he rakentavat autenttisuuttaan. Polysentrisyys nousee esiin myös tässä alaluvussa, sillä artistien analysoidessa omaa ja toistensa tyyliä sekä musiikkia taustalla vaikuttavat tietyt normit. Kilpailulla ja kilpailuhengellä on aina ollut keskeinen rooli hiphop-kulttuurissa ja rap-musiikissa (vrt. Rose 1994; Immonen 2004; Chang 2005), ja tämä pätee myös suomalaiseen hiphop-kontekstiin (Paleface 2011). Tulokset osoittavat, että artistit rakentavat positioitaan suomalaisessa hiphop-skenessä hyvin erilaisissa genreissä sekä erilaisten normien ja ideologioiden ohjaamana selkeästi osana valtavirtaa, kuten Cheek, monisyisessä ja liikkuvassa keskuksessa, kuten Pyhimys, tai Stepan tapaan omaehtoisessa marginaalissa, suuren kaupallisen menestymisen ulkopuolella. Analyysini näyttää myös, miten artistit identifioituvat tai eivät identifioitu toisiinsa ja miten he löytävät toisistaan niin musiikin kuin henkilökohtaisten ominaisuuksienkin yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroja. Toiset osallistuvat tähän arviointiin enemmän, kun taas toiset vetäytyvät siitä sivummalle. Tulokset osoittavat myös sen, miten autenttisuudesta suoraan kysyttäessä kaikki kolme artistia vetäytyvät sen stereotyyppisestä, kliseisestä ymmärryksestä ja sälyttävät autenttisuuden jonkun muun, esimerkiksi yleisön harteille. He kaikki myös korostavat autenttisuutta "itselleen aitona pysymisenä", mikä merkitsee eri asioita kullekin artistille, heidän positiostaan katsottuna.

Luvussa 6 pohdin lyhyesti tämän tutkimuksen rajoitteita ja puutteita, minkä jälkeen keskityn tulosten ja implikaatioiden selittämiseen. Lopuksi avaen vielä mahdollisia uusia hiphop-kulttuuriin liittyviä tutkimuspolkuja. Autenttisuutta käsitellään usein kategorioiden ja kahtiajakojen kautta niin tutkimuksessa kuin mediassa ja arkipuheessakin (suomalaisesta) hiphop-kulttuurista. Kaiken kaikkiaan tämän tutkimuksen tulokset korostavat kuitenkin autenttisuuden ymmärtämistä *monimuotoisempana* ja *nyansoituneempana* kuin aiemmin on ajateltu. Autenttisuus rakentuu semioottisten resurssien kautta kielessä ja diskurssissa. Sitä rakennetaan heijastellen useita, toistuvia (eli fraktaaleja) ja subjektiivisia skaaloja sekä suhteessa useisiin normeja antaviin keskuksiin. Kukin artisti rakentaa autenttisuuttaan *omilla uniikeilla* mutta myös *jaetuilla* tavoillaan, jotka heijastavat ja samalla rakentavat hänen omaa (osaksi vakinaista, mutta silti liikkuvaa) asemaansa suomalaisen hiphopin *ideologisessa*

topografiassa. Artistit eivät siis välttämättä ole kiinnittyneitä yhteen, tiettyyn paikkaan, vaan osana heidän polkuaan ja elämänkaartaan he liikkuvat paikasta toiseen, esimerkiksi marginaalista keskukseen tai toisin päin. Tutkimukseni osoittaa myös, etteivät ”keskukset”, ”marginaalit” ja ”periferia” ole kiinteitä kategorioita vaan subjektiivisia ja liikuteltavissa olevia. Kukin artisti kokee ne sekä luonnehtii niitä eri tavalla ja omasta positioistaan käsin. Lisäksi keskusten ja marginaalien sisällä on uusia, toistuvia keskuksia ja marginaaleja. Tätä ilmiötä luonnehtii termi *fraktaalisuus*, joka viittaa yhä uudelleen toistuviin kuvioihin ja rakennelmiin. Tutkimukseni osoittaa myös sen, että sekä hiphop-kulttuuria että muita globalisaatioprosesseja tulee tutkia sosiolingvistiikan alalla myös *ei-urbaaneissa* konteksteissa (Blommaert 2010; Wang et al. 2013), vaikka aiempi tutkimus on usein keskittynyt vain kaupunkioloihin (Pennycook 2010; Rose 1994; Forman 2002; Auzanneau 2002).

Tutkimukseni tulokset osoittavat, että hiphop-kulttuurilla ja rap-musiikilla on suuri merkitys suomalaisessa nyky-yhteiskunnassa. Rap antaa nuorille (aikuisille) äänen, jonka kautta he voivat käsitellä niin paikallisia, kansallisia kuin globaalejakin aiheita. Tutkimukseni myös tukee aiempien tutkimusten (esim. Mitchell 2001a; Pennycook 2007a; Omoniyi 2009) näkemystä siitä, ettei hiphop-kulttuuri ole niin sidoksissa afroamerikkalaiseen ”alkuperään” ja malleihin kuin yleensä ajatellaan tai esitetään. Suomalainen hiphop-kulttuuri on täysin uniikki ja monipuolinen ilmiö, jolla on jo oma historiansa, aiheensa ja tekijänsä. Tällä hetkellä näyttääkin siltä, että hiphop-kulttuuri ja rap-musiikki tarjoavat olennaisia keinoja ja tapoja ymmärtää monen suomalaisen nykynuoren ajattelua, arvoja, diskurssia tai diskursseja, kielenkäyttöä ja tyyliä.

Tutkimuksessani olen esittänyt kulttuuristen rakenteiden ja käytänteiden mallin, jota voidaan ehkä käyttää myös muiden samankaltaisten globalisoituneiden nuoriso- ja musiikkikulttuureiden tutkimiseen. Esimerkiksi reggae- tai heavymetal-kulttuureita voitaisiin katsoa fraktaalisten skaalojen ja *yhtäaikaisen* vakauden ja pysyvyyden (*convergence*) ja epävakaisuuden ja vaihtuvuuden (*divergence*) kautta. Ylemmältä skaalalta katsottuna kulttuuri voi ensin ilmentyä yhtenäisenä, mutta alemmalla skaalalla kulttuuri näyttäytyykin eriävänä ja yksilöllisenä. Kulttuuri selittyy tämän dynamiikan kautta.

Kaiken kaikkiaan etnografisen tiedon, useiden aineistojen ja relevanttien teoreettisten lähtökohtien yhdistäminen ja hyödyntäminen mahdollistaa autenttisuuden näkemisen monin eri tavoin. Se ilmentyy ja rakentuu kielellisenä, diskursiivisena, skalaarisena, fraktaalisenä, polysentrisenä, urbaanina ja ei-urbaanina – monisyisenä ja samalla järjestäytyneenä.

DISCOGRAPHY

Artist	Album	Year of publication	Record label
Cheek	<i>JHT</i>	2009	Rähinä Records
	<i>JHT2</i>	2010	Rähinä Records
Pyhimys	<i>Medium</i>	2011	Monsp Records
	<i>Paranoid</i>	2011	Monsp Records
Stepa	<i>MC</i>	2008	Joku Roti Records
	<i>Made in Sodankylä</i>	2010	Joku Roti Records

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APPENDIX 1: Cheek: Orjantappuraa

1.
käsi raamatulla vannon kertovani totuuden
oman näkökannan ja mun oman osuuden
mulla ei oo koskaan ollut mitään salattavaa
joten arvon herra syyttäjä, ei muut kun anna palaa

”Kansa haluu tietää miksi teet noin skeidaa musaa
ei kai moista kuraa tosissansa veivaa kukaan”

Mä teen niin hyvää kamaa kun osaan - mitä sä teet?
päiväpäivältä mun nurkas lisää väkee
tehnyt tätä tosissaan reilut kakstoista vuotta
JHT2 ei tuhannet jonota kassoilla suotta

”sul on itsetunto ongelmia, pidät niitä sisäl
räppäät ainostaan itsestä minä minä minä”

rimmaan itsestäni kun en mä suakaan tunne
mul on tarve päästä mun paineet purkamaan sulle
sitä elää mitä spittaa ja toisinpäin
mulla on vaan tää mun ma[aj]ilma siks mä toimin näin

Ooo-oo-oorjantappuraa
ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo
kivittäkää kietokaa mun päähän orjantappuraa
valtakunnan vihatuin se ei voi olla sattumaa
kannan mun ristini, kuulen ilkeet kielet
via dolorosa mä tuun jäämään sille tielle

2.
”On tainnut kusi nousta hattuun, itserakkaus paistaa läpi
sä painat nokka pystys omakehun haistaa trækil”

Jos et tajuu kukkoiluun, et ymmärrä tät räppihommaa
myönnän et täs asemas on yllättävän nätti olla
mut oon aina pyrkinyt pitää kiviä repussa
etten alkais leijuu tai suotta ikinä kehumään

”Sä osaat räppää ennen painoit kovaa läppää
nyt euron kuvat silmissä, sä oot vaan läppä
miks sä tuhlaat lahjas ja teet musaa rahasta
kaupallista paskaa, jota ei kukaan rakasta”

vedetiin ilmaseksi keikka monii vuosii
ennen kun tää oli muotii, joka itse luotiin
en voinut sillon uskoo et tää kasvais näin suureks
tai et joutuisin koskaan vastaa näin sulle
nyt yht’äkkii mies saa rahaa harrastuksestaan
älä oo kateellinen, mulle tää vastaa unelmaa

”sä teet musaa mitä levylafka käskee tekemään
sekö muka unelmaa, äijä lähe menemään”

kun et tiedä tästä mitään älä pliis päde enempää
tässä taas yks syytös, josta pääsen kädet pesemään
aina tehnyt mit haluun, enkä mitä multa pyydetään
ennakkoluulottomasti miksannu musatyylejä
luonut oman saundin, jota jengi koittaa matkia
mut niin kauan kun mä seison ne ei voi voittaa matsia

1.
with my hand on the bible I swear to tell the truth
my own my point of view and my own part
I’ve never had anything to hide
thus, distinguished mister prosecutor, fire away

”People wanna know why you make such lousy music
surely no one makes that shit for real”

I make as good stuff as I can – what do you do?
day by day, more people in my corner
I’ve done this for real for more than twelve years
JHT2 thousands of people don’t queue for nothing

”you’ve got self-esteem issues, you’re holding it inside
you only rap about yourself, me, me, me”

I rhyme about myself cos I don’t know you
I need to take it out on you
you live what you spit and the other way around
I only got my world, that’s why I do it like this

Thoo-oo-oo-rn
ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo-ooo
stone me, wrap the thorns around my head
the most hated of the nation, it can’t be a coincidence
I’ll carry my cross, I hear the nasty voices
via dolorosa I’ll stay on that road

2.
”I guess the fame has got to you, self-love shines through
you’re stuck-up, you can smell self-praise on the track”

If you don’t get arrogance, you don’t get this rap thing
I admit that it’s pretty nice to be in this position
but I’ve always tried to keep rocks in my backpack
so that I wouldn’t fly or brag for no reason

”You can rap, you used to push tight stuff
now with euros in your eyes, you’re just a joke
why do you waste your talent and make music for money
commercial shit that nobody loves”

we did gigs for free for years
before this was fashion that we created ourselves
I couldn’t believe then that this would grow so big
or that I would ever have to reply to you like this
now all of a sudden a guy gets paid for his hobby
don’t be jealous, this’s like dream to me

”you make music the record label makes you to
so you call that a dream, dude, get out of here”

cos you don’t know anything, please don’t try to show off
one more accusation of which I can wash my hands
always done what I want, not what others ask me to
open-mindedly mixed music styles
created my own sound that other folks are trying to copy
but as long as I’m standing, they can’t win this match

3.
 "kerro mulle onkse nyt sit kaikista upeinta
 kun räpätään vaan dokaamisesta, naisist ja klubeista
 käytät statusas hyväks, scoraat monta naista illassa
 jos se on syy tehdä musaa, niin aitous aika hiljasta"

Huhhei! nyt vähän tarkempaa pohjajuunii
 voisko ton kysymyksen ottaa uusiks?
 kuuntele levyt eka ennen kun väität tollast
 "sitähän se on" taitaa nappipäissään äijä olla

"Kuka sä oikeesti luulet olevasi?
 supersankariko? puhees on suuret todellakin"

Kansa tarvitsee sankarin ja syntipukin
 molemmat viitat mulle ankarimmat syyksi lukis
 superjare, mun on hyvä olla olemassa
 jotta on joku johon jengi voi purkaa ongelmansa

"Kuulostaa rankalt taakalt kannettavaks
 riittääkö sulla mitään takas annettavaks
 et ota kantaa, en kuule yhteiskunta kritiikkiä
 et puhu ikin siit, et puhuttele ihmisiä"

Mul on kaikki hyvin, en mä jaksa itkee mistään
 Emma-patsas on mun hyllyl piste iin pääl
 mut jos haluut, että kritisoin ja otan kantaa
 tän verran voin pillittää ja lokaa antaa
 laskekaa tuloveroo, älkää rankaisko ahkeraa
 viiskyt pinnaa veroi tekee räppäristä katkeran- hahaa!

3.
 "tell me now is it the greatest thing
 to only rap about drinking, women and clubs
 you're using your status to score many women per night
 if that's a reason to make music, you're not keeping it real"

Heigh-ho! a bit more careful background work
 can you ask that question again?
 listen to the records first, before you claim that
 "that's what it is" I guess you're on drugs, man

"Who do you really think you are?
 a super-hero? your talk is big, for sure"

People need a hero and a scapegoat
 the severest would hand me both robes
 super jare, it's good that I exist
 so that folks have someone to spill their troubles to

"Sounds like a tough burden to carry
 is there anything left that you can give back
 you don't take a stand, no criticism against society
 you never talk about it, you don't address people"

I'm all good, I don't want to whine about anything
 the Emma statue on my shelf is like the icing on the cake
 but if you want me to criticize and take a stand
 this much I can cry and throw mud
 reduce income tax, don't punish the hardworking
 paying fifty per cent taxes makes a rapper bitter - hah!

APPENDIX 2: Pyhimys: Bättre folk

Hejsan

Jag är kallas Robban
 mul on Volvo, takaluukussa koppa
 kessuu halv toppa
 jag kan inte stoppa

mul on autossa aina sama CD,
 Lasse Melbergs första EP
 mut en äänestä RKP:T,
 jag är ingen cliché, en säästä huvi-veneeseen
 Lainaa satanen,
 Jag kan inte ringa min folks, jag hatar dem
 lukeeks mun otsassa pappa betalar
 ku toivomus kaivost taas kolikkoja naaraan
 min credit är slut
 mut mä en huolestuta ihmisii niinku noi muut
 kai se riippuu mist sä tuut,
 ja miltä näytät, Uffist kledjut, men ser bra ut
 mun aina uskotaan selviivän,
 selviithän? Nej, En selvinpäin
 mitä sä koet syrjinnän merkitsevän
 koska mä koen sen myös toisinpäin

Bättre Folk, Bättre Folk

Tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille
 tää on vaan parempaa musaa
 Bättre Folk, Bättre Folk
 Tää ei oo paremmille ihmisille
 tää on vaan paremman laatuinen folk

1323 sai Österland itärajan
 Muttei menny Jussi suosiolla taakse vajan
 ja vuosisatojen ajan
 ni var orjat, vi var borgare
 mut miten mun pitäis korjaa se
 kaikki ristiin tääl paneksii
 mut ei pultsarit pummi mult euroo,
 vaan Amexii
 kyl mä näen miten ne yysii
 et jos mul ois 99 problemer
 niin raha ei ois yks niist
 Kansanlauluissa aina sama teema
 oma kulttuuriperimä korkeimpana ihanteena
 jos ei yhteen sulauduta, jää vaan Adam och Eva,
 låt mig leva
 erityiskohteluu en haluu vaik sais
 Jos vaiks menneet kokonaan unohdettais
 ei kai kukaan tästä ääneen valittais
 mut kaikki olis pelkureita jos ne uskaltais

Shout-outs till alla mina vänner från Västra
 Nyland till all the way to the Östra Nyland!

Hello

I am am called Robban
 I got a Volvo, a crate of beer in the trunk
 half a pack of smokes
 I can't stop

I've always got the same CD in my car,
 Lasse Melberg's first EP
 but I don't vote for the SPP,
 I'm no cliché, I'm not saving for a yacht
 Lend me a hundred,
 I can't call my folks, I hate them
 does my forehead say daddy pays
 when I'm picking coins out of the wishing well again
 I'm out of credit
 but I don't worry other people like those others do
 I guess it depends where you come from,
 and how you appear, clothes from Uff, but looks good
 they always think that I'll make it,
 will you? No, not sober
 what do you think discrimination means
 cos I experience it also the other way around

Better folk, Better folk

This isn't for better people
 this's just better music
 Better folk, Better folk,
 This isn't for better people
 this's just folk of better quality

in 1323 Österland got its eastern boarder
 but Jussi didn't go behind the shed voluntarily
 and for centuries
 you were slaves, we were bourgeois
 but how am I supposed to fix it
 everyone's just fucking each other here
 the winos aren't begging a euro from me,
 but Amex
 I can see how they're staring
 like if I had 99 problems
 money wouldn't be one of them
 Folk songs always have the same theme
 our own cultural heritage as the highest ideal
 if we won't assimilate, only Adam and Eve will be left,
 let me live
 I don't want special treatment, even if I could get it
 What if we just forgot all about the past,
 no one would complain about this out loud,
 but everyone would be a coward, if they dared

Shout-outs to all of my friends from Western
 Nyland to all the way to the Eastern Nyland!

APPENDIX 3: Stepa: Made in Sodankylä

Otin sen nuorena aika raskaasti
 ku sodankylä kutsu minua narkiksi/
 mutta ne sanat saatto kasvattaa
 ku edessä tuntuu olevan vain raskaampaa/
 kohdellu naista huonosti, *itteä* huonommin
 enkä tiedä kumpi karma tulee takaisin/
 kohdellu naista myös niinku prinsessaa
 mutte ite niiltä prinssin kohtelua saa/
 silti tytöt hymyilee ja halailee
 ja kyselee et paljon keikoiltani rahaa teen/
 jotku sanoo etten oo niinku ennen olin
 no en niin.. oon aikuistunu jo tovin/
 ja tyypit tulee kättelemään kylällä
 mutta niiden kättelyt ei tunnu kovin hyvältä/
 täällon outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen
 ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen

äänihuulissani huolet soi
 ku kotikyläni se kuolee pois/
 vanhat naamat tulee kesäksi sodankylään
 mut syksyn tullen kaikki lentää taas etelään

opiskelut minut sieltä pois vei
 mut opiskelulle en voinu vaan sanoa ei/
 ja käynti kotona on jääny niin harvaan
 etten tiää koska isän hiuksista tuli noin harmaat/
 Tornioista en sano enempää
 ku et ne vei täältä lapin kullan etelään/
 joten välissä totuuteen havahdun
 Lappi tyhjenee mut silti mitään ei *tapahu*/
 kuulin vasta ylä-aste kaverista
son vasta kaks kaks ja kaks kertaa katkasussa/
 kuka sen ois joskus uskonu tai tienny
 et siltä oltiin pois se oma lapsiki viety/
 eikä lapsen isä ollu kuvioissa enää/
 ku hänki halus vain muissa maailmoissa elää/
 täällä on outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen
 ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen/

Näen sodankylässä ne vanhat sällit
 me kokoonnutaan yhteen ja vedetään känit/
 aamun pikkutunneilla aikaisin
 huomaan ettei se tuonu mitään takaisin/
 filmifestarit rok rokkaa joo
 ei siellä enää leffateatteria oo/
 ja kodin puolesta *mie* taistelen
 ku sieltä saan jouluna aina rakkauden/
 ku täällä se rakkaus saa vain itkemään
 kun taas raha laittaa kaikki hymyilemään/
 ja juttelen siitä minun riimivihkon kanssa
 muttei riimivihko mulle ikinä vastaa/
 siihen suttuiset jäljet jää
 ku mullon pelkkiä kyneleitä siveltimen pääs/
 täällon outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen/
 ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen/

rankaksi menee ku joutuu katseleen
 ku yritykset ottaa allensa askeleet/
 aiva sama mitä nämä vanhaset pättää
 jos ne tulee Lappiin ne vain lomailee täällä/
 ja vähemmän välitän sen ystävästä
ei niillä kiinnostaa muuttotappio Brysselissä/

As a young boy I took it pretty hard
 when sodankylä called me a junkie/
 but those words might have made me stronger
 when there seems to be even tougher times ahead
 treated a woman badly, myself even worse
 and I don't know which karma comes back/
 treated a woman also like a princess
 but I'm not treated like a prince by them/
 still girls are smiling and hugging
 and asking how much money I make with my gigs/
 some say I'm not like I used to be
 well, I'm not.. I've been growing up for a while now/
 and some dudes come shake hands in the village
 but their hand-shakes don't feel that good/
 it's weird to be here and I don't know where to go
 cos my home village has (gone) passed away

my vocal cords are playing worries
 cos my home village it's dying away/
 the old faces come to sodankylä for the summer
 but come fall they all fly south again

studies took me away from there
 but I just couldn't say no to studies/
 and visiting home happens so rarely
 that I don't know when my father's hair got so grey/
 I won't say more about Tornio
 than that they took lapin kulta south from here/
 so sometimes I wake up to the truth
 Lapland is emptying out but still nothing is happening/
 I just heard about a friend I went to junior high with
 she's only twenty-two and twice in rehab/
 who would've believed or known
 that her own kid was taken away from her/
 and that the kid's dad wasn't around anymore/
 cos he also wanted to live in other worlds/
 it's weird to be here and I don't know where to go
 cos my home village has (gone) passed away/

I see the old fellows in sodankylä
 we get together and get drunk/
 in the early hours of the morning
 I notice that it brought nothing back/
 film festivals rock rock yea
 there's no movie theater there anymore/
 and for my home I will fight
 cos there I always get love at Christmas time/
 cos here the love just makes me cry
 whereas money makes everyone smile/
 and I talk about it with my rhyme book
 but the rhyme book never replies to me/
 messy traces will be left
 cos I have only tears at the tip of the (paint)brush/
 it's weird to be here and I don't know where to go/
 cos my home village has (gone) passed away/

it gets tough when you have to watch
 companies take their steps away/
 it's all the same what these vanhanens decide
 if they come to Lapland they only vacation here/
 and even less I care about their friends
 they're not interested in depopulation in Brussels/

en tiää miksi tästä räppini teen
ku ei mitkä lie Hyssälät tuu tätä kuunteleen/
mut menen tunteen mukaan mitä tahansa teen
etten laittais enää asioitani vituilleen
ku asiat on ollu monesti siinä/
ettei korjaukseen anteeksipyyntö riitä/
ja sitte ku ite anteeksipyyntöä oottaa/
huomaa ettei sitä saa koskaan/
täällä on outo olla enkä tiedä mihin meen
ku minun kotikyläni on menny kuoleen/

I don't know why I'm doing my raps about this
cos whoever Hyssäläs won't be listening to this/
but I go with my feeling in whatever I do
so that I wouldn't fuck up my stuff anymore
cos it's often been the case/
that an apology isn't enough to make things right/
and when you're expecting an apology/
you notice you never get it/
it's weird to be here and I don't know where to go
cos my home village has (gone) passed away/

APPENDIX 4: Details of interviews

artist	time	place
Cheek	March 16, 2011	night club, Jyväskylä
	May 29, 2012	cafeteria, Helsinki
Pyhimys	September 11, 2009	restaurant, Jyväskylä
	May 29, 2012	restaurant, Helsinki
Stepa, with Are	April 1, 2010	restaurant, Jyväskylä
Stepa	November 8, 2010	restaurant, Jyväskylä
	October 17, 2012	restaurant, Jyväskylä

APPENDIX 5: Transcription conventions

[start of translation
] end of translation
/ the point of overlap onset
/ the point at which the overlap terminates
- cut-off word
@ animated voice
. a micro pause
.. a pause
... a long pause
: lengthening of the sound
(xxx) unclear speech
£text£ smiling voice
text emphasis
((laughing)) transcriber's notes or comments