Heavy metal subculture:

Metal music festivals and their meanings for visitors

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INTRODUCTION

Music and its cultural importance in social life is a constant focus of research by scholars from various disciplines, such as music studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology and cultural studies. Particular musical styles - especially those that are in opposition to 'mainstream' music - are often associated with the formation of distinct subcultures (see Hebdige, 1979; Williams, 2007, 2010; Hodkinson, 2012; Kahn-Harris, 2007; Moberg, 2011; Bennett, 1999, 2011; etc). Music has proven to be a particularly powerful aspect of meaning-making among people and was identified as a dimension of subcultural activity starting with sociological tradition of Chicago school (Williams, 2007:579) onward and continuing by the proponents of post-subcultural perspective.

The world of heavy metal music is full of controversy due to the fact that there are both many fans of this style and many opponents. As Moberg states, "the view of metal as a subversive, destructive, and potentially dangerous particular cultural and social environment has lived on" (2012:113). However, the aim of this paper is not to support or refute constructive or destructive nature of heavy metal music and its influence on public, but to explore one commonly shared activity of metal music fans that is visiting live concerts and festivals. Metal events are an essential part of the metal subculture as it is stated by the majority of scholars working in this field (see Arnett, 1990; Weinstein, 2000; Kahn-Harris 2007; Purcell 2003; Moberg, 2012, etc.). However, understanding of meanings of such events for visitors is still lacking in the scope of existing literature, while the growing popularity of metal events is proved by a high level of attendance by metal music fans (Pierry, 2013:142) and also by the increasing number of metal events worldwide (e.g. see Concerts-Metal.com).

Therefore, this study aims to examine metal subculture from a qualitative research perspective and seeks to develop an understanding of the music festivals' importance for metal fans and the relation to the construction of subcultural identity.

Scientific objectives and research questions

The primary objective of this research is to explore how and why metal music events in general and festivals in particular are an important aspect of metal music subculture. In order to achieve this, the study aims to determine what the collective activity of metal festivals means for their visitors. Understanding of the meanings may be gained through the understanding of what the motivations and experiences of metal music fans are while attending metal festivals. Furthermore, the research also seeks to examine the role of participation in metal music festivals in shaping the collective identity of metal fans. Next, the research objectives are transformed into one main research question and three research sub-questions.

Research question: What meanings do metal music fans attach to the collective attendance of metal festivals?

Sub-question 1: What are the motivations of metal music fans to repeatedly visit metal music festivals?

Sub-question 2: What are the experiences of metal music fans during visiting metal music festivals?

Sub-question 3: How does participation in metal music festivals shape the collective identity of metal fans?

Prior to the exploration of the metal music festivals' meanings for the metal fans, its theoretical underpinning will be presented in this paper. A review of the contemporary approaches and debates of studying subcultures as well as their significance to the present research will be introduced at first. Subsequently, the notion of collective identity within subcultural studies will be discussed in order to further disclose how metal fans construct their musical and aesthetic experience.

The body of scientific literature on heavy metal music and its community will be presented for several reasons: firstly, to observe the scope and variety of the themes captured in metal studies; secondly, to present the fundamentals of the phenomenon to the reader, and, thirdly, to provide a better understanding of the respondents' narratives in the empirical part of the study.

The methodological chapter will consist of the description and argumentation of the selected research design, the data generation and the data analysis procedures. Besides, the position of the researcher toward the study will be stated.

The findings from the interviews with metal festivals' visitors will be presented and followed by their analysis. Empirical findings will be structured and divided into themes; any generalizations, contradictions or conclusions will be accompanied by extracts from the respondents' narratives. Finally, the findings of the paper will be discussed and evaluated. Additionally, some recommendations for further research will be provided.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. THE NOTIONS OF SUBCULTURE AND IDENTITY

Studies of popular music preferences are typically associated with studies of youth subcultures (see Bennett, 1999, 2011; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Moberg, 2011, Straw, 1991, 2004; Williams 2007, 2011) as some of the most noteworthy youth movements were centered on preferences in music (in McArthur, 2009:58). Subcultural groups have been under the spotlight of scientists for almost a century with attempts to capture and define the essence of that which occurs when like-minded youth join together. Like other popular music cultures, heavy metal "is a contested and controversial marker of both cultural resistance and subcultural conformity, offering a resource that enables individualized identity formation and collective practices" (Kahn-Harris, 2011: 209). Consequently, before approaching heavy metal as music genre and a subcultural formation there is a need to review contemporary approaches to studying subcultures.

The notion of culture and subculture has been heavily discussed in the literature. Different concepts that are intertwined, reinforce or contradict each other are used to understand youth collectivities or subcultural groups. The body of work continues to grow with the overall controversy and debates regarding this issue. Throughout last decades "there was also a constant refinement of its conceptual boundaries" with competing so-called 'post-subcultural' concepts such as counterculture, contraculture, idioculture, scene, social world, tribe and neo-tribe, club-subculture and lifestyle (Williams 2011:12). As Bennett justly states, "this 'post-subcultural turn' sparked an on-going critical dialogue between theorists as to the continuing validity, or not, of subculture as a viable theoretical and analytical framework in youth cultural research" (Bennett, 2011:493). Currently, academics continuously argue which concepts can be recognized as more holistic and explicit ones. Below, a brief overview of main concepts on this subject is given to examine contemporary theoretical background on the topic of group formations.

1.1. CONCEPT OF 'SUBCULTURE'

Subcultural studies emerged out of two distinct sociological traditions: the Chicago school and the Birmingham school in early 20th century. In the development of subcultural theory it is useful to make this distinction between American and British theories of subculture (Blackman, 2005). Early sociological research on youth subcultures in the Chicago school mainly concentrated on deviant aspects of youth behavior and research emphasized ethnic enclaves, youth, criminals, and other peripheral cultural groups, but did not distinguish normative (i.e., cultural) structures from social organization (Williams, 2007). The main aim of researchers was to explain the social and cultural context of deviance without simplifying actions of young people to symptoms of psychological inadequacy (Blackman, 2005).

A different perspective arose at the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham the main goal of which was to explain the emergence of youth subcultures in post-World War II Britain. Here, the subcultural participation was understood not as a form of deviance, but as a form of resistance that reflected larger class struggles (Williams, 2007). Subcultural activity was interpreted as a form of symbolic politics to particular class and cultural experiences (Blackman, 2005:6). The ground-breaking work at the CCCS by Hebdige on young people, style and subculture transformed the field of youth studies (Blackman, 2005:6). Hebdige studied subcultures by observation and examined style as a form of expression and resistance to the class structure. He claims that subcultures select various items from everyday mainstream culture and give those items new meaning by association with the subculture (1979, in McArthur, 2008:59-60).

The 'subcultural approach' proceeds from the structural contradictions in society brought about by class, gender, centre-periphery, national, ethnical relations, etc. and describes positions, responses and tensions in the social culture in the light of power relations (Kozorog, 2013:354). The CCCS approach motivated sociologists of youth culture for decades despite extensive criticism by some scholars during the 1990s and early 2000s (Bennett, 2011). For example Muggleton challenged the CCCS, suggesting that such an approach situated these subcultures in systems of oppression, conflict, and exploitation and studied subcultural style as the text of the study rather than studying the subculturalists themselves. Muggleton sought to reframe the study by talking directly to members of subcultures (2000, in McArthur, 2008:60).

Other critics pointed out that subcultural theory has been used to define and divide homogenous and relatively static groupings (Bennett, 2011), however, overestimated the coherence and fixity of youth groups (Bennett, 1999:605 in Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Likewise, Bennett argues subcultural theory has become a "catch-all" term or "an increasingly 'name only' tag" (2011:496). Or, in other words, it is argued that the term itself has lost its original meaning and is used in increasingly contradictory way.

1.2.   'POST-SUBCULTURAL' CONCEPTS

In the light of dissatisfaction with work carried out "under the banner of subculture" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005:24) and in contrast to the class-based subcultural studies, "post-cultural studies" emerged with the central aim to move away from CCCS subcultural theory and to uncover newer concepts and theories to explain contemporary youth cultural identities (in Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006:127). A body of work emerged which argued that the concept of subculture had become redundant as a conceptual framework (Bennett, 2011:493) and that social categories which has been used such as social class, sexuality and ethnicity are too reductive and universalistic (in Blackman, 2007:12).

The key concepts in post-subcultural theory to consider are the following: the concept of neo-tribe, lifestyle and scene (Bennett, 2011; Blackman, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006; Williams, 2007, 2011). Like subculture, most of these terms have been situated around groups centered on musical preference, however, some groups affiliate and create defined styles around other preferences (McArthur, 2008:58).

Concept of 'tribe' or 'neo-tribe'

Core of the neo-tribal approach is to understand reasons and mechanisms which are bringing young people together in collective affiliations. In this approach the functions of taste, aesthetics and affectivity are seen as the primary drivers for participation in collective youth cultural activities, instead of class, community, race and gender characteristics as postulated by subcultural theory (Bennett, 2011).

Neo-tribalism exists in a way of life that is typically associated with a semistable community and is not bound by the inclusionary-exclusionary definitions offered by subcultural theorists such as Hebdige and Muggleton (McArthur, 2008:60). Instead, theorists of this concept offer fluidity and individual difference and transfer this description on to subculture as a means to demonstrate the existence of diffuse groupings called 'tribes' (in Blackman, 2005:13).

Maffessoli was the first sociologist who used the terms 'tribe' and 'neo-tribe' in scientific context and in his view neo-tribes are very recent social phenomenon of 1990s (Bennett, 1999). In describing the nature of neo-tribal society he observes that "it is less a question of belonging to a gang, a family or a community than of switching from one group to another" (1996:76 in Bennett, 1999:606). Thus, the neo-tribal approach recognizes fluidity, instability and the temporary nature of group affiliation (McArthur, 2008:60).

Concept of 'lifestyle'

The postmodern subcultural theory of neo-tribe is closely linked to theory of 'lifestyle' that highlights personal choice and individualism as key factors in identity formation (in Blackman, 2007). This concept focuses on cultural consumption as a basis for the construction of identities (Bennett, 2011).

A cultural sociologist Chaney defines lifestyles as sets of practices and attitudes that make sense in particular contexts and are "dependent on cultural forms, each is a style, a manner, a way of using certain goods, places and times that is characteristic of a group but is not the totality of their social experience" (1996:4,5). Lifestyles are seen as 'creative projects' which rely on 'displays of consumer competence', while 'ways of life' are 'typically associated with a more or less stable community sharing norms, rituals and patterns of social order' (Chaney, 1996:92,97 in Bennett, 2011).

Proponents of this theory claim that "consumerism allows young people to construct alternative lifestyles through local and global strategies where young people in local settings can use, appropriate and transform cultural commodities for their own authenticity" (in Blackman, 2005:13). According to Bennett, 'lifestyle' does not abandon any consideration of structural issues, but rather allows for the fact that consumerism offers an individual new ways of negotiating such issues (1999:607).

Critics, however, argue that this reference to choice provides an uncritical view of consumerism in spite of the claim that "a fully developed mass society liberates individuals by offering avenues for individual expression through a range of commodities and resources" (Bennett, 1999:607 in Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Some factors such as poverty, addiction, marginalization, disempowerment and others that might limit and constrain such choice are overlooked here (Hesmondhalgh, 2005:25).

Concept of 'scene'

The concept of scene has become widely used in popular music studies and in many cases the term has been presented as a superior alternative to subculture (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). A range of varyingly theorized versions of the concept of scene share a focus on the intimate interconnectedness that exists between all central dimensions of particular popular musical environments (artists, audiences, production, consumption, etc.) without pre-determining their interrelationships (Moberg, 2011:406)

In accordance with Straw, a musical scene is a cultural space in which "a range of musical practices coexist and interact within a variety of processes of differentiation and accord to the widely varying trajectories of change" (1991:373). Scene defines particular clusters of social and cultural activity without specifying the nature of the boundaries. They may be distinguished according to their location, the genre of cultural production which gives them coherence (a musical style), or a loosely defined social activity around which they take shape (Straw, 2004).

Music scenes function as spaces for the coming together of individuals bound not by class or community but by musical taste and related aesthetic sensibilities and characterized by constant evolution and often transient nature (Bennett, 2011:496). Hesmondhalgh notes that the concept of scene provides insights into the formation of aesthetic communities in modern urban life and offers useful insights into the role of place and space in musical production and consumption, however, is an ambiguous concept (2005:28).

1.3.   QUESTION OF IDENTITY

According to Williams, a number of analytic components are significant in the field of subcultural studies, and identity is one of them among other core concepts such as subcultural style, resistance, subcultural space and media, societal reaction, and authenticity (2007:578).

Within the subcultural studies literature the notion of identity do not have fixed meanings and is deployed in multiple and sometimes antagonistic ways (Williams, 2007:587). Researchers at the CCCS paid serious consideration to the expression of subcultural identity and belonging through forms of style and music. They were concerned to locate these expressions in relation to broader social and cultural structures (Gray et al, 2007:3). As subcultures were seen at CCCS as a form of resistance to mass culture, members of subcultures actively engaged with the products and texts of everyday life in the creation of meaning and identity. However, the majority of researches of this approach insisted that class shaped that existence and experience (Gray et al, 2007:4).

The analysis of subcultural content provided by some CCCS representatives (e.g. Cohen, Hebdige) is criticized starting with Clarke for "constructing frozen, idealised caricatures of mods, skinheads and others, inflating homological coherence and excluding elements which fit less neatly" (1981 in Hodkinson, 2012:561). Hodkinson argues that principle of homology, adopted by CCCS representatives, suggests the notion of an essential coherence between content, identity and meaning which often justifies the assumption that the content of music, clothes or other cultural forms holds the key to understanding subcultures (2012:560). Despite this criticism of the homology principle of CCCS researchers, for instance, Wood notices that Hebdige not only illustrates how shared class-based experiences allowed punk subculture to stick together, but also suggests that individual punks may encode the style features of their subjective life experiences into their own variations of punk style (1979 in Wood, 2003:37).

While the concept of 'lifestyle' focuses on the material and consumption-related dimensions of personal and cultural identity, the concept of 'neo-tribe' aims to highlight the fluid and temporal character of modes of modern social and cultural engagement (Moberg, 2011:406). One of the representatives of the 'neo-tribal' approach, Bennett, argues that in late modern society notion of identities is changed, and recently they are 'constructed' rather than 'given', and 'fluid' rather than 'fixed' (1999:599). Post-war consumerism (freedom to pick and choose between an increasing variety of consumer items) offered the increased spending power of the young facilitating and encouraging experimentation with new, self-constructed forms of identity (1999:602). Shields suggests that tribal identities serve to illustrate the temporal nature of collective identities as individuals continually move between different sites of collective expression and 'reconstruct' themselves accordingly (1992:108 in Bennett, 1999:606).

In accordance to McKerron, "the construction of identities is a social practice performed to provide identification with or opposition to the identity of other people during a process of social interaction." (2003:1). Thus, the word 'identification' not only implies a sense of belonging but also describes a process of differentiation (Kruse, 1993:34) as well as implies the issue of individuality in identity formation.

Laclau and Mouffe suggest that social identities are not fixed and each individual occupies multiple social positions at once through identification of race, gender, class, ethnicity, occupation, educational level, tastes and so on (1985, in Kruse, 1993:34). Although an individual's identity as a member of a subculture is at least partially impacted by pre-existing norms, values, beliefs, artifacts, spaces, rituals of given subculture, however, each individual necessarily possesses a unique biography, and, therefore, adopts or identifies with preexisting culture differently (Wood, 2003:38). From this it can be concluded that members of a certain subculture unquestionably possess some similarities but, however, construct unique subcultural identities.

Frith argues that while examining the aesthetics of popular music the main issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs a musical experience and an aesthetic experience that may be understood only taking both - a subjective and a collective identity (1996:109). Thus, although any given subculture is bound globally by a set of cultural commonalities, individual members of the subculture "may differently understand, affiliate with, and internalize the same cultural commonalities, thereby respectively forming at least partially distinct subcultural identities" (Wood, 2003:37), which will be acknowledged in this particular research.

1.4.   SUBCULTURAL STUDIES – APPROACHES FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES

The emergence of the concept of subculture, starting with the body of work at the CCCS, is crucial in understanding of social structure and music collectivity. However, according to some scholars (e.g. Bennett, Hesmondhalgh, Muggleton, Readhead), the applicability of the subcultural theory as a conceptual framework is losing its relevance in the last decades. Still, on the other hand, other theorists (e.g. Blackman, Shildrick & MacDonald) see the concept of subculture an appropriate and useful concept which efficiently reflects contemporary realities. One way or another, it is quite evident that the subcultural concept is incredibly valuable from sociological, cultural and historical perspectives and is widely used as a theoretical tool or background for scientific researches, including the theme of music collectivity.

The relatively novel concepts in the 'post-subcultural turn' were appreciated by some scholars as a new wave in cultural research, but also were extensively criticized by adherents of 'old school'. Particularly, aforementioned post-subcultural concepts were blamed being "naïve and essentially celebratory stance regarding the role of the cultural

industries in shaping the identities and lifestyle of youth" (in Bennett, 2011:493). They were marked being 'fashionable' concepts "posited as replacements for the notion of youth subculture", which, however, "are plagued by difficulties" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005:30).

Proponents of the subcultural concept Shildrick & MacDonald express their concerns regarding the theoretical marginality of questions of class and other structural inequality in the making and meaning of cultural identity and state that post-subculturalists have been "too ready to ignore any potential influence of class background on youth culture" (2006:129). Also they pointed out that the post-subcultural study of youth culture with the stylistic exploits of minority music 'scenes' and 'neo-tribes' is in danger of producing "a distorted and incomplete portrayal of contemporary youth culture" (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006:128).

The notion of subculture has been going through economic, political, social and cultural changes. The emergence of new possibilities (e.g. access to and the use of information and communication technologies, greater possibilities to travel, etc.) may result in the emergence of new behaviour patterns. Thus, elaboration of new subcultural concepts with an attempt to adjust them to contemporary changes seems being an essential step forward, however, considering that it is scarcely feasible to create a 'universal tool' which could be applied to any group formations.

Here it is appropriate to note that the discussed above concepts should not be considered necessarily competing but rather compatible constructs. For instance, Kozorog in his work notes that these concepts "can coexist and complement each other, as they make it possible to approach the same social phenomena from different angles" (2013:354). As he continues, the concepts of subculture, neo-tribe and scene can be used together, since a subcultural response to historical contradictions does not appear as a monolithic group of followers, but rather a dispersed palette of scenes, within which individuals shape their subjectivities, while at the same time performing their 'lifestyles'. However, this also does not mean that every expressive social phenomenon in late modernity should be analyzed using all concepts together (Kozorog, 2013:355). Rather than oppose concepts against one another, scholars might instead focus on the contradictions and boundaries among concepts, recognizing that some youth phenomena may be best understood as subcultural, and others not (Williams, 2007:578).

Taking everything into account I argue that all above-considered concepts may be relevant to the analysis of group formations centered in music preferences. However, the applicability of those concepts in relation to the music-based subcultures is highly dependent on, firstly, a particular style of music and consequent music-related issues (pre-existing norms, values, beliefs, artifacts, spaces, rituals, etc) and, secondly, the exact angle or aspect of the study.

In this particular study one specific activity of metal music subculture is being explored, namely, participation in metal music festivals. As it was already indicated above, the subcultural approach proceeds from the structural contradictions in society brought about by class, gender, centre-periphery, national, ethnical and other relations and describes positions, responses and tensions in the social culture (Kozorog, 2013:354). This approach definitely serves the needs of study at its first steps. There is no doubt that, prior to the analysis of activities of a music-based formation, the nature of a subgroup should be reviewed and discussed. At this stage the 'principle of homology' which is believed to be a pitfall of the subcultural concept (see Bennett, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Hodkinson, 2012) is not considered as such since heavy metal culture is argued to display both "cultural resistance and subcultural conformity, offering a resource that enables individualized identity formation and collective practices" (Kahn-Harris, 2011: 209).

Although the localities of festivals are prescribed, the venues themselves usually don't possess any cultural connotations; mostly large-scale (metal) festivals, to some extent, may be characterized as international since they represent a combination and a great variety of metal music sub-genres and bands from all over the world; moreover, the metal audience is also quite international to a certain extent (such conclusion is reached since a fairly large number of bus tours to the events are organized annually). Because of this fact the concept of scene is not a useful conceptualization for the aims of this particular study since among other factors this concept is strongly concentrated on issues of locality and its settings.

Neo-tribes are associated with a semistable community and are not bound by the inclusionary-exclusionary definitions (McArthur, 2008:60) which contradicts the nature of heavy metal subculture that will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. However, the neo-tribal approach incorporates fluidity and individuality as primary characteristics in collective affiliations which seem an important adjustment in studying festivals that are temporary in nature. In this paper, the individual choice and perception is considered an essential element in the construction of identity within subcultural communalities.

2.1. INTRODUCTION IN HEAVY METAL MUSIC

Heavy metal is a genre of rock music - characterized by a thick, massive sound, highly amplified distortion, extended guitar solos, emphatic beats, and overall loudness, - which is increasingly gaining respect and interest in academic circles (Bayer, 2009 in Pierry, 2013:141). Although sometimes thought as monolithic, heavy metal has always consisted of divergent styles (Hjelm et al, 2011:6). These days, the term "metal" is widely used as a general term for a large number of closely related sub-genres and styles that have developed out of the "heavy metal" rock genre since the late 1960s (Moberg, 2012). A non-exhaustive list of metal sub-genres includes thrash, power metal, death metal, black metal, folk metal, doom metal, and grindcore, but this list is far from being complete. For example, the online resource 'Map of Metal' describes fifty-eight distinct metal sub-genres, and it is likely that this number will continue to grow (Pierry, 2013:142); however, there are debates over the legitimacy of some metal genres, for example nu metal and metalcore, (Hjelm et al, 2011:14) among theorists of music studies, musicians and, therefore, metal music fans.

Here it is important to specify that metal sub-genres should not be confused with metal music scenes, as sometimes musical terms such as 'style', 'genre', 'sub-genre', 'scene' are used differently. The term 'scene' incorporates a notion of the musical or music-associated practices occurring within a particular geographical space (Hesmondhalgh, 2011:29). This term is usually used to describe the connection between a locality, a group of people, and a form or style of music (e.g., 'The Detroit Scene', 'The Seattle Grunge Scene', 'Bay Area Thrash Metal Scene', etc.)(Dunn, 2004:109). While metal scenes are much more diverse than it is often appreciated by outsiders, there remain imbalances of power and hierarchies. For instance, some scenes, particularly in the US and Scandinavia, dominate metal globally, women remain under-represented; 'out' homosexuals are rare; racist attitudes exist (in particular on black metal's right-wing fringe). What binds metal together is a relatively stable canon of artists which are revered, such as Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Metallica, Slayer, etc., and a core of themes and preoccupations that are pursued across metal sub-genres (Hjelm et al, 2011:14).

Hjelm et al. claim that the controversial image of heavy metal is something that metal musicians, fans, and researches often agree upon (2011:7). Controversies over heavy metal are seen as social reactions to perceived deviance: starting with targeting metal music as one of the threatening genres in the 1980s at the national level in the USA, and continuing presently with a censorship by Christian authorities, and political repression and societal stigmatization in Islamic countries (Hjelm, 2011:7,8,13). Many people hold that heavy metal music proves that some parts of youth culture have gone beyond acceptable limits. To many of its detractors – religionists, politicians, and parental groups - heavy metal embodies a shameless attack on the central values of Western civilization (in Weinstein, 2000:3). Anthropologist Dunn in his documentary tries to find

out why metal has been "consistently stereotyped, dismissed and condemned" and his conclusion is that "metal confronts what we would rather ignore, it celebrates what we often deny, it indulges in what we fear the most and that is why metal will always be a culture of outsiders" (2005).

Indeed, metal music can be called one of the controversial styles of music, considering the fact that there are both many fans of this genre, and many opponents. Death, blood, violence, executions, wars and tragedy are predominant themes in metal music. This can be observed in the lyrics of metal bands, their attributes as well as their live performances and shows. Critics argue that this type of music has negative impacts on the health and well-being of people who listen to it, especially on young fans. Defenders counter that metal music is a form of entertainment similar to horror films and does not have harmful consequences (Recours et al, 2009:474).

In broad terms, metal tends to be dominated by a distinctive commitment to 'transgressive' themes (the practice of questioning and breaking taboos and questioning established values) and musicality (Hjelm et al, 2011:6,14). A number of publications claim that "the popularity of heavy metal music with young people has grown dramatically" while "heavy metal promotes violence, suicide, Satanism, and the occult" (Trzcinski, 1992:7). The music style was asserted by some critics to promote a wide variety of undesirable behavior, including drug use, promiscuity, sadomasochism, and even murder and suicide (in Arnett, 1991). Other studies and publications refute such cause-and-effect relationships. For instance, some scholars in accordance to their empirical research, state that "preference for heavy metal music was not directly related to suicidal risk" (Lacourse, 2001:330), "metal music fans have levels of anxiety and depression that are similar to and lower than levels in the general population" (Recours et al, 2009:473) and "it would be a mistake to conclude that heavy metal music causes reckless behaviour" (Arnett, 1991:590).

The authors of the "Encyclopedia of Heavy Metal" suggest that one of the main questions to examine in studying heavy metal is not only what musicians create while playing metal but also how the audience engages with the music and what meanings they create from the music (Phillips & Cogan, 2009:4).

2.2.   FIELD OF METAL STUDIES

Metal is now a mature genre with millions of fans across the globe and considering its appeal to several generations of young people and adults, it should not be surprising that the meaning and functioning of metal is increasingly the subject of academics' interest (Pierry, 2013:145). The notion of a metal studies discipline was never seriously entertained until 2008, when a number of initiatives began to bring metal scholars together, such as the first Heavy Fundamentalisms conference in Salzburg, Austria

(Kahn-Harris, 2011:251). As Kahn-Harris continues, the developing of 'self-consciousness' of metal studies as a field has helped to generate greater scholarly attention to metal, a field of research that had been underexplored. Since metal studies scholars come from many disciplines, it brings interdisciplinary approach to metal music scholarship. However, without some widely accepted vocabulary for identifying the constituent musical features of metal, there is a danger for metal studies to become "a tiny, insulated field that talks to itself, allowing certain theoretical and methodological tendencies to become orthodoxies that are difficult to contest" (2011:252).

The work of Brown provides an interesting analysis of the metal studies bibliography database which covers the period from 1978 to 2010 and includes monographs or booklength single-authored studies, edited themed collections, peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals, and chapters in edited collections (2011:217). In conformity with this data approximately 414 pieces of academic research have been published during above mentioned period, while tracking the pattern by decade demonstrates dramatic rise in the volume of publications from the 2000 period onwards, where total numbers are twice those of the previous decade. More specifically, 56.7% of total publications have been produced in the last decade, 53.6% of which are journal articles (Brown, 2011:218) (*see Figure 1*).

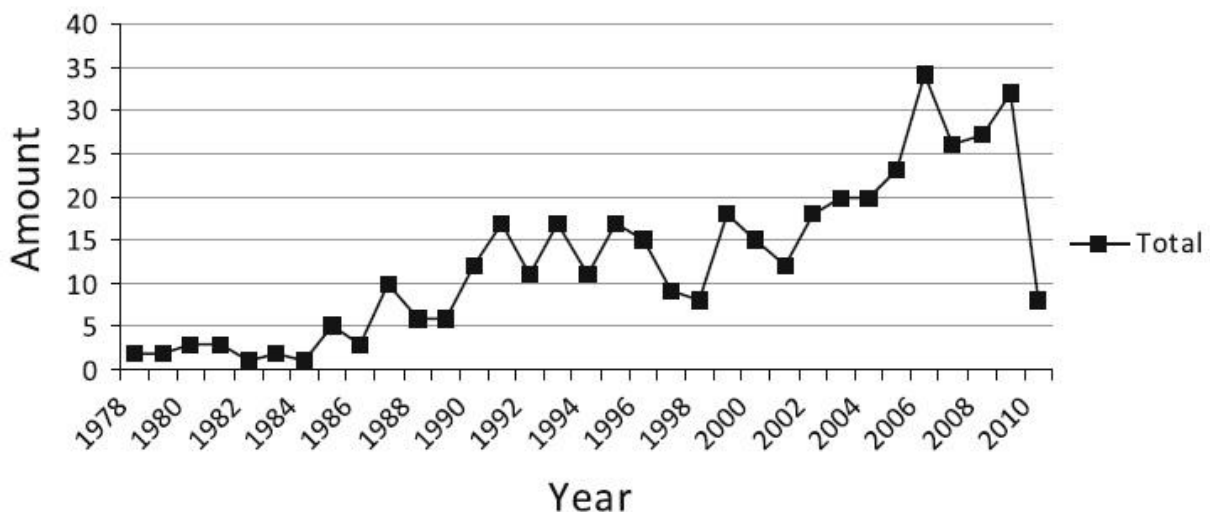**Figure 1. Total publications 1978-2010 on the topic of heavy metal, music and culture (Brown, 2011:218)**

Further, Brown demonstrates interdisciplinary character of the body of work conducted on the topic of metal, particularly, articles published in the area of metal studies are psychology-based (37%), and also presented in sociology (25%), in musicology (19%) and in cultural studies (18%) (2011:219) (*see Figure 2*).
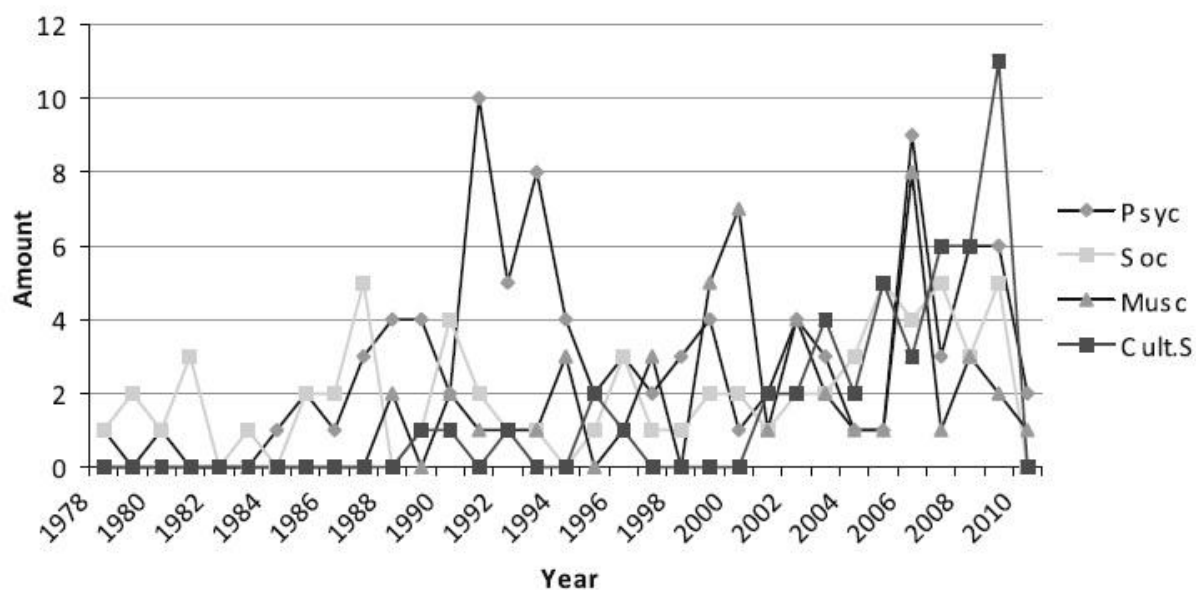
Figure 2. Published articles by discipline 1978-2010 on the topic of heavy metal, music and culture (Brown, 2011:219)

Also noteworthy is the rise in visibility of research publications defined as cultural studies, emerging in the early 2000s but, by the end of the decade, the most productive contributor to academic journals on the subject of metal (Brown, 2011:220).

Social scientific studies of metal music and culture have tended to focus on two distinct aspects of the phenomenon. Firstly, scholars have analyzed the social reactions to metal music - especially in the 'moral panics' genre. Secondly, the creation and reproduction of different metal sub-genres and scenes, has become an increasingly popular approach (Hjelm et al, 2011:5). The work at first published in 1991 by the sociologist Weinstein who specialize in the heavy metal topic and whose research methods are based on intensive participant observation and unstructured interviews, is recognized by many scholars of the field the first serious academic book on heavy metal (Brown, 2011; Kahn-Harris, 2011; Larsson, 2013; Pierry, 2013, etc.) and contains the analysis of metal music subculture from a sociological perspective. Another piece of work, introduced by Walser, uses a more technical perspective on heavy metal music in its analysis of the representation of metal in lyrics and music videos (Larsson, 2013:96). Both, Weinstein and Walser argue for a perspective that is sympathetic to the values of heavy metal fans (Brown, 2011:215).

Later, research has in part concentrated on different forms of extreme metal. While Purcell's thesis on the death metal scene focuses on a certain type of heavy metal, as does Kahn-Harris with his work on extreme metal, both have a clear focus on political views and political engagement (Larsson, 2013:96). Kahn-Harris adapts and develops the concept of scene and sees extreme metal as 'the locus for a huge range of practices, texts, institutions and social phenomena', including the analysis of production and consumption in relation to each other (2000:17 in Hesmondhalgh, 2007:29). He outlines

five main dimensions of scenic structure: infrastructure, stability, relation to other scenes, scenic capital, and production and consumption (2007:100 in Moberg, 2011:409). The anthropologist Dunn produced a documentary "Metal: A Headbanger's Journey" (2005) with the focus on the aspects of metal including the history of metal and its development into multiple sub-genres, as well as gender, race, religion and class (Pierry, 2013:144).

Weinstein argues that "the social dimension of heavy metal is a transaction between the artists, audiences, and mediators that enable the genre to exist" where artists create and perform the music, audiences appreciate the music and make it the basis of a subculture, and mediators bring artists and audience together (2000:8). As she continues, the concert is a special event in which all of the participants in the transaction are brought together in a common context of space and time, producing the closest approximation there is to a community of heavy metal (Weinstein, 2000:9). In the next section Weinstein's analysis of metal music audience as a general description of the core subculture and its members will also be discussed.

Purcell's (2003) primary interest is focused on the one particular (sub) genre of heavy metal – death metal - and its 'elements' (i.e. history of the genre, special music features, death metal bands, death metal audience as a more narrow audience of heavy metal, etc.). Generally speaking, she also sticks to the similar standpoint presented by Weinstein (2000) and says that elements that make death metal scene a lively and functioning force include "the clubs that hold shows, the labels that release the music, the fanzines that cover the scene, and the fans and musicians who both look and act as the part of death metal enthusiasts" (Purcell, 2003:25).

Metal music concerts are integrated into the majority of scholarly texts related to the heavy metal and its culture; visiting metal concerts referred to as an essential attribute, however, mostly the topic is covered from the position of 'how' rather than 'why' (e.g. Krenske & McKay, 2000; Purcell, 2003; Weinstein, 2000), which means that such an activity is mostly covered by scholars in a descriptive way.

Overall, the range of themes rising in the body of metal related scientific papers includes power relations, e.g. class, gender, ethnicity (Weinstein, 2000), negative effects of heavy metal music, i.e. delinquency, reckless behaviour and alienation (in Larsson, 2013:96), "dark" religious and spiritual themes, i.e. pro- and anti-Christian themes, occultism, esotericism, paganism, and Satanism (in Moberg, 2012:114). However, perhaps a greater variety represents by ethnographic or ethnomusicological research, investigating the global spread of metal music culture and its localisation (Brown, 2011: 232).

Despite the undeniable fact of the current growth and development of metal studies discipline, Kahn-Harris, however, expresses some concerns regarding the issue of its scholarly reflection. One of the striking aspects of metal studies, as he notes, is that most

of scholars are engaged in metal at least as fans, and often as more than that, but the study of metal should never become simply a way to defend and justify it. Thereby, the perfectly reasonable desire to ensure that metal and its fans were not demonized and suppressed should never become a desire of metal studies to be metal's defenders (2011:253).

2.3.   HEAVY METAL AUDIENCE

To metal fans, heavy metal is not just a genre of music to listen to, but it is also related to a way of life, one that provides a sense of belonging and meaning (Phillips & Cogan, 2009:6). As it was noted above, the metal audience, like all spatially dispersed modern audiences, has a "distinctive, persisting, and well-delineated core", but "close up one sees a myriad of differences" (Weinstein, 2000:95). In other words, engaging the music from the perspective of one of metal sub-genres is a further form of self-expression in which particular preferences in sub-genre(s) have become a dividing line even to some others in the general metal community (Phillips & Cogan, 2009:6).

Phillips and Cogan also found that a metal band, and members of the subculture, often share the idea that to listen to metal music is to live metal and to live metal is to dress metal, to talk metal, to follow associated metal rituals and to understand the symbols and signs of metal (2009:xxi). Concerts, records, fan magazines, and quite often playing an instrument figure as primary components of metal fans' lives (Walser, 1993:112). The long hair, tattoos, piercing, leather jackets, chains, rivet bracelets, band shirts and band patches often are the visual attributes of heavy metal style, although the appearance features may differ from fans of different sub-genres. Metalheads wear black more than any other color. They intentionally choose dark colors, boots, and metal accessories and often look very unconventional (Purcell, 2003:28, 29).

One of the specific symbols shared by metal public is the hand gesture 'horns', a universal symbol of heavy metal which is also sometimes called the devil sign (Phillips & Cogan, 2009:114). This gesture often complements the arm thrust - usually a sign of appreciation by audience during concerts. The other primary gesture, called 'headbanging', involves a downward thrust of the head with a gentler up thrust (Weinstein, 2000:130).

Heavy metal concerts also usually involve 'moshing' and 'stage-diving'. Moshing is a sort of group dance (often in a circle) that takes place in front of the stage, an area that is also known as the 'mosh pit'. Moshing is sometimes referred to as 'slamming', although there is a subtle difference between them, in that the latter involves particularly forceful body movements (Krenske & McKay, 2000:289). Moshing is mostly a masculine activity which may seem to be more aggressive and less inviting to women, who might find themselves attacked by newcomers who do not understand the respectful attitude that is inherent

in a successful pit (Phillips & Cogan, 2009:167). In stage-diving members of the audience climb up to the stage, touch or imitate the band members for a moment, and dive back into the audience into the arms of 'catchers' (Weinstein, 2000:229). These activities, which often leave the metal fans kicked, bruised and exhausted are read by band members as a form of audience appreciation (Krenske & McKay, 2000:290).

Weinstein states that metal audience is usefully understood in terms of the previously discussed sociological concept of subculture (2000:96). She also discusses the utility of the concept of 'taste culture' - a partial culture which provides values and products for only a part of life, and is defined in terms of shared aesthetic values (Gans, 1974 in Weinstein, 2000:97, 311). However, Weinstein argues that the audience for heavy metal is more than that. In her opinion, the concept of subculture is broader and more useful since it also stresses the activities of the audience, not merely the values of its members, and, therefore, takes into account not only contexts of appreciation, but also context of the creation of a way of life, including a certain style (2000:97). As she concludes, the significant difference between the metal audience and any other narrow audience is that its core is a rather elaborate and long-lived subculture (2000:99).

When metal audience was crystallized in demographics, the stereotypical metal fan was characterized as white, blue-collar, male and youth, what was an accurate external description of the majority of enthusiasts of the genre from the beginning to the mid-1980s (in Weinstein, 2000:98,99). Consequently Weinstein argues that it is more important to understand how the demographics translate into the constitution of a distinctive subculture that coconstitutes the metal genre rather than merely describe the metal audience in terms of its members' positions in the larger social structure (2000:99). So, in accordance to the scholar, masculinity, youthfulness, and, to a lesser extent, "whiteness" are values shared and upheld by the metal audience (2000:102). These proclaimed characteristics will be further discussed one by one.

From male to masculinity. Developing the idea of the antecedent image of typical metal fan Weinstein states that the heavy metal audience in more than just male, the heavy metal subculture highly esteems masculinity (2000:104). She claims that indeed the male chauvinism characterize the metal subculture, however, females who do not flaunt their femininity, that is, who dress in jeans and black T-shirts, and who even more importantly display a love of the music, are often welcomed and treated as equals at such events as concerts. Open hostility of various sorts is displayed toward females who do not conform to the dress and behaviour codes. Weinstein underlines, that the metal subculture is the culture of masculinity, since it is indicated by the distinction made between women who dress and behave according to the masculine code and those who fit feminine stereotypes, but not in accordance to biological differences (2000:105). Although the 'open hostility' towards women who do not follow dress and behaviour codes is highly questionable, the display of love to the 'masculine' metal music which "draws upon many sources of power: mythology, violence, madness, the iconography of

horror" (Walser, 1993:109) is the primary condition of being a metal music fan – man or woman.

Youth. Weinstein also claims that the metal subculture is characterized by the mid adolescent age grouping of its membership. In her opinion, the metal subculture does not fully include those metal fans that are no longer in their teens (2000:106). She assumes that the adults who continue to appreciate metal rarely use the metal media, except for playing their old albums, do not attend many, if any, concerts; do not buy new metal releases or metal magazines, etc. (2000:111). She agrees that heavy metal, "with its deafening volume and proud hostility to cultural and aesthetic niceties, is the primary music of teenage rebellion and something a listener outgrows" (2000:110). Here I argue that at least presently such statements are entirely incorrect. For instance, Moberg who analyses the place of religion in metal music, in his discussion of a black metal's focus on Satanism, argues that black metal musicians and fans themselves at times make their engagement with Satanic and pagan ideas what seem like little more than a way of rebelling against adult society (2012:123).

Furthermore, I assume that the widely used connections of the notions 'subculture' and 'youth' must be reframed in regard to the whole range of existing approaches and concepts within subcultural studies. The analysis and description of subcultures, with minor exceptions, is seen as the analysis of youth, which basically means, that only young people are taken into account. However, when speaking about the metal music subcultural group (while not excluding similar discrepancy regarding other subcultures), it needs to be mentioned that heavy metal may be called a mature (if not an old) subculture which has already existed for about 40 years. Therefore, elementary math allows us to conclude that some metal music fans (as representatives of the metal subculture) may barely belong to the youth age group, while continuing to share music tastes, activities, etc. with younger fans (based on personal observations). A similar standpoint is noted by Hesmondhalgh: "we should no longer see the consumption of music as being primarily a youth phenomenon, as commentators did in the 1960s and 1970s" (2005:33). However, I acknowledge that this statement needs further exploration and research.

Whiteness. In accordance to the same research by Weinstein, the members of the metal subculture are predominantly white, except in countries with nonwhite populations, such as Japan and Brazil. However, as she adds, the cultural significance is not overtly racist (2000:111). Many of symbols of heavy metal are derived from medieval northern Europe, ancient Anglo-Saxon, and Nordic mythologies, thus the heavy metal subculture is rather drawing on the symbols of particular ethnic traditions than is racially based (2000:113). Additionally, the fact underexplored by Weinstein and noted by Hjelm et al. is that in the late 1980s metal arrived in the Middle East and North Africa (2011:10) and extreme metal has become quite popular across much of the Muslim majority world precisely because of its brutal vocals, intense and powerful music, and violence-laden lyrics dealing with themes of corruption, war and oppression (2011:11). Therefore,

recently "whiteness" of metal music subculture is also may be considered at least as a relatively outdated value or characteristic.

Arnett describes heavy metal fans as those who belong to the subculture of alienation, which translates into an opposition to authority and mainstream society. In heavy metal songs, the right of the individual to do what he/she pleases is enshrined among the highest values. The result, however, is not so much a celebration of life as a declaration of alienation and loneliness. According to the same scholar, the individualism of heavy metal fans, carried to the extreme, becomes an active rejection of all social institutions and all forms of social restraint (Arnett, 1996:33). Larsson, whose research is conducted on the topic of constructing individual and social authenticity in heavy metal subculture, considers that individual construction of an authentic heavy metal identity is made through arguments of long-term dedication and through highlighting symbolic events and attributes that are associated with the heavy metal culture. Individually, the heavy metal fans draw boundaries between the true self and the false self while the true self is argued for through the time and emotions spent in relation to the music (Larsson, 2013: 108, 109).

2.4. METAL MUSIC FESTIVALS

Festivals are cultural celebrations and have always occupied a special place in societies with many cultural and social implications of ritual and festivity (Getz, 2010:7). Getz states that festivals are connected to cultures and to places, they help to bind people to their communities and can foster and reinforce group identity (2010:8). A recent increase in the number of festivals and events taking place globally caused developing academic interest in the purposes, meanings and consequences of these activities (Carnegie & Mccabe, 2008:349). Interdisciplinary, festivals have been examined in the context of place marketing, urban development, tourism and more recently social change (Getz, 2008:412).

Music is vital to creating a sense of occasion and celebration since humans experience emotional reactions to music which evokes feelings of nostalgia, elation, energy, melancholy, etc. Music may be a means to define and police 'who belongs' (or not) and invite to feel part of a musical community as fans of a performer or style, or participants in a musical event (Gibson & Connell, 2007:165, 166). People gather in large towns as well as small out-of-the-way places to see their favorite performers and hear their favorite music in the festival atmosphere. However, very little is known about festival's social and cultural impact and meaning (Karlsen, 2011:185). The activities in the metal subculture include the central ritual of attending concerts (and therefore festivals) which affirms the solidarity of the subculture (Weinstein, 2000:134,178,181).

Despite the fact that metal music is not well known and appreciated by general public, metal music festivals and concerts have spread out in a variety of locations over the past twenty years, with large scale events held in Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Poland, Norway, Latin America and the United States. Metal concerts can be found in "underground" style clubs, larger capacity clubs and even on large arenas and festival grounds (Podoshen, 2012:2). The growing popularity of metal and its events is proved by very high level of attendance by metal music fans (Pierry, 2013:142). For instance, according to the website of German metal festival Wacken Open Air, one of the largest annual metal outdoor festivals in the world, all 75,000 tickets for 2013' festival are sold out eleven months prior to the event; this was the eighth year in a row this has happened (Wacken Open Air Webpage, 2013 in Pierry, 2013). Nowadays metal festivals are presented by a wide variety of events within Western Europe, such as Summer Breeze Open Air, With Full Force, Heidenfest, in Germany; Hellfest, Summer Open Air, Fury Fest in France; Graspop Metal Meeting in Belgium; Dutch Metal Fest in the Netherlands, Metaldays (ex-Metalcamp) in Slovenia, Brutal Assault in Czech Republic and many more. Mostly these are summer festivals for two to seven days and they receive ten to hundred thousand visitors each year.

The Internet resource 'Concerts-Metal.com' has listed 308 indoors and outdoors metal music festivals out of 1740 metal events in 2014 (last access May, 2014). It is likely that due to the fact that heavy metal is somewhat marginalized by mainstream media, yet remains very popular among fans, festivals have emerged as a primary means for fans to experience and appreciate the music altogether (Phillips & Cogan, 2009:167).

Although for smaller venues concert organizers often keep different metal styles segregated, in large-scale festivals bands from various sub-genres play on the same stage(s). (Weinstein, 2000:53). Metal music festivals bring together considerable number of metal bands, fans, label personnel, and metal journalists and give exposure to newer as well as more well-known bands (Weinstein, 2000:285). Heavy metal festivals gather music fans coming together in communion to experience the live performance of music at the thunderous volume levels that can only truly occur in a live concert setting has given rock festivals a particular appeal and unique place in popular music culture ((Phillips & Cogan, 2009:93).

Social groups, communities and society as a whole endow special meanings to events. Individuals are affected by these meanings, but are also able to make their own interpretations of events. Therefore, to a large extent events are 'social constructs', with collectively assigned and generally recognized meanings (Getz, 2008:414).

To conclude

As it was already noted before, metal music concerts are mentioned in the majority of scholarly texts related to the heavy metal and its culture (e.g. Krenske & McKay, 2000; Purcell, 2003; Weinstein, 2000). Although visiting metal concerts (and accordingly festivals) is referred to as a vital attribute of metal music subculture, mostly this topic is

covered from the position of 'how' rather than 'why', which means that this activity is mainly covered by scholars in a descriptive way.

Conceptualizing metal music audience of metal festivals as a subcultural activity is seen as the most appropriate for the aims of this particular study. The concept of neo-tribe deals with the use of music as an identity-making resource, however, those identities are 'not fixed' and 'fluid', while metal music subculture is believed to be strongly dedicated 'to the roots' and is an 'elaborate and long-lived' formation. Furthermore, metal music fans' attitude is more likely to be related to the 'ways of life', as an attitude of individuals who often share rituals and patterns of metal community, rather than to the 'creative projects' of lifestyle concept. The concept of scene indeed contributes to the metal music research and was very well elaborated by Kahn-Harris, the ethnographer and theoretician of metal music. The concept, however, is more useful as a 'mapping tool' which is often used to explain the link between music and place in local settings (for instance it might be 'Swedish death metal', 'Norwegian black metal'), although it does not refute its trans-local nature.

In context of large-scale metal festivals where 'Swedish death metal' scene and 'Norwegian black metal' scene may be combined with 'Finnish doom metal' scene as well as dozens of other musical local and trans-local sub-genres of heavy metal, then the 'principle of homology' of subcultural concept does not seem to be a pitfall of this particular research. Metal music are festivals therefore assumed to be the arena of 'festivity of the metal' with its different sub-genres, where tens of thousands metalheads come together as a subcultural formation for celebration their way of life.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description and argumentation of the research design selected, the data generation and the data analysis techniques and position of the researcher as an active participant in knowledge creation.

1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodological approach in this study is qualitative and interpretative. Qualitative research generally starts with the assumption that individuals have an active role in the construction of social reality and research methods chosen are able to capture this process of social construction (Boeije, 2010:6). The primary goal of this research is to explore how and why metal music events in general and festivals in particular are an important aspect of the metal music subculture. I chose qualitative techniques for the reason they allow researchers to explore how people structure and give meaning to their lives and to examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others (Berg, 2001:7).

Shildrick & MacDonald point out that "the social identities and cultural biographies of researchers can influence the sort of research that is undertaken - the groups selected for study, the cultural or leisure activities examined, the theoretical questions asked and not asked" (2006:128). They argue that in studying subcultures such 'insider' approach when the studies are conducted by those who are directly related to these particular subgroups may lead to potential problems (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006:128). Indeed, on the one hand, the personal experience and viewpoint of the 'insider' researcher might influence the results of the study in the direction desirable to the investigator, so acknowledging this hazard is crucial. On the other hand, (especially in case of relatively short-termed researches), the contextual knowledge of the researcher may provide some valuable benefits, such as better understanding of the content, easier connections to and more openness and trust from the participants at the stage of data collection, and, therefore, potentially, a deeper understanding of the phenomena.

The theoretical framework will be used as a starting point in generating and analyzing the empirical data, thereto, my personal background knowledge as a metal music fan would complement the research during the study if necessary.

2. DATA GENERATION

I chose interviewing as the most relevant method for my research aims since qualitative interview provides an opportunity for researchers to learn about social life through the perspective and experience of those living it (Boeije, 2010:62). The interview is an especially effective method of collecting information for certain types of research questions. Particularly it is an appropriate method in understanding the perceptions of

participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to phenomena or events (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998:98 in Berg, 2001:72).

Specifically, I used a semi-structured (semi-standardized) interview since it allows concentrating on the issues of research agenda while preserving open-ended questions for discussion (Schensul et al, 1999: 149). This type of interview involves the implementation of a number of special topics or predetermined questions which are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order; howeverthe interviewers as well as interviewees have a freedom to digress (Berg, 2001:70). The method of interviewing is considered an appropriate method to accomplish the aim of gathering qualitative experiential data which allows getting the necessary information when the interest of the research is in understanding the experience of individuals and the meaning they make of that experience (Jordan & Heather, 2004:221). Besides, it provides the necessary freedom for the respondent to express his/her personal suggestions, adding, specifying and opening new themes.

The method of the interviewing has some limitations which can be conventionally divided into three types: organizational and technical limitations - finding place and time, interview recording, etc. (Jordan & Heather, 2004:222); limitations related to interviewees - difficulty in finding participants who are willing to cooperate (Boeije, 2010:40), interviewees' willingness to answer and elaborate on the topic as well as honesty of the participants; and limitations related to the researchers – conscious or unconscious influence on interviewees and misinterpretation of participants' views by the researcher (Jordan & Heather, 2004:221). Awareness of these limitations may assist in reducing such effects.

The samples in qualitative research are often small, although that is not a fixed rule. Sampling strategies in this type of research typically aim to represent a wide range of perspectives and experiences, rather than to replicate their frequency in the wider population (Boeije, 2010:36). There are sampling tools that suggest that to collect reliable and valid data for cultural analysis very few informants are needed - usually less than forty and often as few as ten (De Munck, 2009:23). For this study, fifteen individuals have been interviewed.

While discussing research methods in cultural studies De Munck notices that when research does not include participant observation and relies on interviews or other more formal methods of data collection, it is still necessary to spend some time in the community in order to gain contextual knowledge and familiarity of the place (2009:26). In total three metal open-air festivals were attended by me (the researcher) within a five years' period (2007-2012). Therefore, I am familiar with the specifics and settings of European open-air festivals that might be important for a clearer understanding of the interviewees' stories.

The interview guide has been developed in accordance with the aims of the research and is partly based on theoretical material which was provided in the previous sections. It

was expected that interviewees will disclose different aspects of perceived self and others through describing their motives, attitudes and experiences while answering related and mutually reinforcing open questions, which in turn will allow to gain a holistic understanding of meanings that metal music fans give to metal festivals. The interview guide is provided in Appendix 1.

Methods of participants' recruitment are diverse and placing advertisements in magazines and the Internet is one of them (Boeije, 2010:40). For this research the interviews' participants were recruited from volunteers who responded to the announcement in the forums and thematic pages at social networks related to metal and metal music festivals. For this study, I published my announcement at Facebook thematic pages (events' and communities' pages) and on the forum of 'metal group' at web-site CouchSurfing.com; at a later stage my announcement was also spread by already interviewed participants — therefore, the snowball method was also ultimately used to recruit interviewees.

After the first response of the potential respondents to any of mail/message services I provided in my announcement (e-mail, Skype, private message or public comment at Facebook/CouchSurfing), I contacted them in order to answer all questions they might have before the final consent to participate in a Skype video interview and to agree on the date and time when they might have around an hour of free time to answer my questions.

As it is important to pretest questions on a subsample of the target population, to find out what problems there might occur for informants, which questions they don't understand quite as the researcher intends, and so on (De Munck, 2009:26), a pilot interview was held to fix potential problems. This interview is also included in the interviews' analysis since the pilot testing of the interview guide did not reveal considerable shortcomings. However, some questions were rephrased and/or complemented for a better understanding by other participants.

As it was already mentioned, I interviewed fifteen volunteers of different sex, age, nationality and site of residence. In total, ten men and five women aged from 24 to 37 who at least once visited European open-air metal festivals were interviewed. Unintentionally, but due to the international character of web-sites where my announcement was published and the events researched, the participants interviewed belong to ten different nationalities (Austrian, Belarusian, Belgian, Dutch, French, Indian, Israeli, German, Romanian, and Russian) and currently are living in nine different countries (Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, and Sweden). That, however, is seen as a benefit here since the results are hence not bound to any specific European country. It lends the research additional authenticity since European open-air festivals have an international character (as it was already mentioned in the previous chapter). The number of festivals visited by the interviewed

metalheads varies from one to one hundred. You may find the participants' short profiles in Appendix 2.

All the interviews were conducted in English and have a length from 35 minutes to 1 hour and 35 minutes, with an average length of 45 minutes.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed in their entirety to ensure the absence of any information loss. Further process of data analysis included a careful reading of all interviews conducted and the coding process – labeling relevant words, phrases, sentences and/or sections. Coding basically fulfills two functions: firstly, reducing the amount of data since only relevant sections are selected and are assigned a summarizing and meaningful code, secondly, playing an important role in exploring and interpreting the data (Boeije, 2010: 119).

In case of this particular research almost entire interviews were coded since new topics touched upon by the respondents are also planned to be taken into account. Furthermore, some phrases, sentences and sections were assigned several different codes, which means that the coding process did not function as a reducing tool, but as a tool of exploring and interpreting the data. After the first stage of coding, some codes were reconsidered and united. At the end of the coding process, 42 different codes were derived. The whole analysis process was performed with a help of the qualitative data analysis program Atlas.ti (5).

The next step comprised the creation of categories by bringing several codes together in families (family tree) in order to draw a scheme of all data provided by the informants for more comprehensive analysis. In total, I united the codes in 14 families. You may find the resulting scheme in Appendix 3. And finally those categories invented and connections between them were formed in themes - the basis for the next sections of the study.

Findings relevant to the subject of study are carefully described in the section 'Empirical findings' and afterwards interpreted and discussed in the section 'Discussions and conclusions'. New themes and interesting additions mentioned by interviewees are also taken into account.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

One the basis of the interviews' analysis, the following themes are considered to be important in providing the comprehensive view of the meanings of the metal music festivals for their visitors: attitude to and meaning of the metal music in everyday life for the metalheads interviewed, reflections on self within everyday social surroundings, reasons and motives to visit metal music festivals, experience of visiting festivals, reflections on self and others in festivals' realms and, finally, after-festival effects.

1. PLACE OF METAL MUSIC IN EVERYDAY LIFE

All the respondents report that they started to listen to metal music in their teen age years and up to now music has been an important part of their lives. The overwhelming majority of the interviewees reveal high frequency of listening to (mostly metal) music - they listen to it on a daily basis: at home, at work, on the go and so on.

Some of the informants note that although mainly they listen to different sub-genres of metal music, they also appreciate other styles that they considered quality music (e.g. some pop music, rock, jazz, punk, and industrial):

"Actually I could say it's general practice for me to extend my musical knowledge. So I am not only listening to metal, well, usually metal, the highest percentage is metal and related to metal genres, but I am also open to different genres. Of course, there has to be something to appreciate"
Mircea

Besides listening to the favorite genres and bands, discovering new music is a general habit among the interviewed metalheads:

"It is like reading books and reading news, yeah, to keep your brain working. You know, you have to keep updated with new stuff. Otherwise it will be boring I think"
Alexandra

The process of discovering varies from individual search through the Internet (Youtube, Spotify, metal radio channels, etc.) to the subscription to metal labels' newsletters or simply following friends' recommendations. Furthermore, metal music festivals are also admitted to be an important source of the expansion of musical taste, which will be discussed in more detail in next sections.

In regard to the importance of the music in life, while some respondents tended to describe their attachment to the metal in terms of years, percentages and hours per day they have devoted to it, others tended to share more emotional aspects:

"...whenever I feel glad or if I feel bad or I feel sad or if something happens it helps me to survive and come over my problems, and also if I have everything great in my life it is also

nice with heavy metal music"
Luci

"Metal music in general makes me feel better. It's like, when I am really down I listen a music and it helps me, you know, it gets me out of my hole. So, it's always there for me. It's like a good friend, you know. I listen to music and it's just makes me feel better"
Jay

Some of the informants point out that besides listening to metal, their other hobbies or even professional careers are also related to music. For example, three out of fifteen respondents write musical reviews and reports for metal music magazines, while others play or compose music, research it or work in musical sphere. Otherwise, with some exceptions, the metal fans interviewed among other activities often visit metal music related places such as metal stores, metal bars, metal concerts, etc.

The immediate social environment seems to play an important role in choosing their activities and places to visit. While some people prefer to go to places related to the music of their choice, others don't have such limitations, and yet others try to combine both. A very good illustration may be provided with next three examples:

"...I don't talk to so many who don't listen to metal. <...> When I go out I go to the metal bars, concerts, festivals, stuff like that. I don't go often to the regular restaurants, normal bars"
Ellen

"I've got a girlfriend, who is not into metal. <...> I'm quite normal. I'm not just seeking for every concert or just hanging with metalheads."
Benedikt

"You know, most of my friends are metalheads, even my brothers are metalheads. So heavy metal is what defines a lot my surrounding anyway. I do have some friends which are different and who, for instance, like pop music. That was never been a problem because unlike other metalheads I've never had a problem actually looking beyond like 'the small plate of metal'"
Laura

While talking about their personalities and impact of music on their lives mostly interview participants find it difficult to extract the exact potential changes the music and its philosophy might bring to the whole self:

"Yes, of course, I'm a little bit different from other people because of my music… No, I don't feel different (laughing). It's kind of difficult"
Kuro

"I am definitely different. I am for sure different from the others. But I don't think necessarily metal music is differentiating me from the others. Metal music is more like a

detail. It is one of the details..."
Tudor

However, a number of significant distinctive features were mentioned by informants: frequently, appearance and, by some of them, attitude to religion and politics, and, in one case, open-mindedness. In regard to the political views, opinions differ from the belief in the strong interrelation between metal music and political views to the belief in unimportance of politics within music preferences:

"...the greatest aspect, to my mind, is your political activity. Most of metalheads tend to be leftists, but also there are a great number of right-wing guys, especially in black metal, black metal is closely connected to right-wing political ideas..."
Dmitry

"No matter what you think about politics it's the music that brings people together. I don't think that music influences my beliefs or something. <...> You can believe in God or you don't, doesn't matter. Or you can be a liberal or conservative or whatever, doesn't matter."
Ellen

Furthermore some metalheads see the relation between politics and music as a concurrence:

"...it corresponds to my attitude, because I never enjoy, for example, authority. And it's something you can attribute to music, metal music"
Fabien

If metal fans mention religious aspects, they report that metal music was not a factor based on which they formed their attitude to religion, but rather a stimulator which drew their attention toward more careful analysis:

"I was born Christian (Catholic) and music was from the essence contradictory to everything. I suppose that I started asking myself some questions and it made me going to the atheist way. I made my choice not based on the music but I think that it made me think about this stuff more than if I listened to Britney Spears instead"
Benedikt

"Maybe some genres of metal music, black metal for example, are closely connected with Satanism and so on. But to my mind the greatest part of metalheads can't say that they are Satanists or something like that (laughing). No, I think that just metal music and ideas that musicians express in their lyrics is more about anti-religion, anticlerical views. And metal music also affected my attitude toward religion. Yeah, I can't say that I am a religious man, no. Vice versa I can say that I do not believe in God and I am skeptical... I can say that I am rather skeptical about religion, about the role of the church in history"
Dmitry

One of the interview participants states that not the music itself but some representatives of the metal music community have made her more open-minded in opposition to those representatives. She reports that the preferences in metal music and the cognition of the metal community made her aware of some inappropriate issues which sometimes occur among them, in particular – racist and homophobic attitudes:

"I try to be very open-minded because I learned the hard way that people don't want to be open-minded about metal. And I am very aware of things that are going wrong in the scene. I have a lot of friends that are homosexuals. That is not welcomed in the scene, which is a huge problem. <...> So, I've became a very self-aware metalhead. Like these black metal concerts where I wouldn't consider myself a part of community because they wouldn't allow any of my friends which are not as fair-skinned as them to be a part of the concert which is just racist and nothing else. I mean sometimes black metal scene may be very exclusive"
Laura

2. REFLECTIONS OF SELF WITHIN EVERYDAY SOCIAL SURROUNDINGS

As it was already mentioned in the previous section, appearance - or style – is a characteristic which is considered by all the participants while they are talking about self in broader social realms. Long hair, tattoos, piercing, black clothes and band t-shirts in different combinations are named by all the interviewees. Here opinions and everyday behavior differ from one story to another.

Some of the metalheads stick to the 'metal style' in everyday life that is mostly connected to the fact that nobody constrains them and they don't have to follow dress-code rules whether it is place of living, place of study or place of work. For example, Vishal, a metalhead from India who moved to Germany and later to Finland, is telling his story:

"I came from India so if you wear something like metal t-shirts and have tattoos it's considered banned there. And if you have good marks or you are good at work they don't care, if they see your tattoos and if you have long hair you are automatically disqualified from the job. When I was in the university in India during my bachelor I had tattoos. I was asked to wear full sleeves every day. I could not come to the university lectures with my tattoos. It wasn't so great. <...> In Germany I was studying, so it wasn't too bad, it was ok. <...> In Finland it's very nice. I am going to work in very metal t-shirts every day and with my tattoos and nobody cares. I'm not in this business things, I'm a scientist, so in this sphere it doesn't really matter"

Some other metalheads consciously follow more casual style in daily life and base it on rational motives:

"Well actually I try to integrate. <...> At home when I am going at work, when I am going shopping I am not wearing 'metal outfit' or maybe some items. I usually tie my hair and wear colored t-shirts and pants, especially in summer. Because people then are more open

to give you information. For example, you need to go from there to there: if you are normally dressed they won't be so reticent when giving the information, because otherwise they may think you are different when you are wearing black and have some things on your arms"
Mircea

Thus, the metalheads interviewed usually tend to think that general public perceives or might perceive them differently:

"It's sometimes I have the feeling that other people think that I am different. Because I am tattooed as well, so maybe it's like a whole appearance makes me a little bit different than others. But I don't think that because I am listening to metal it makes me completely different, you know. But maybe is seen by others"
Jay

"In public places or when you go with a group of metal fans down the street everybody looks at you weird because you look different than normal people"
Martijn

"We live in a small part of ***, in the suburbs and people don't really like band t-shirts with sculls on it and heavily tattooed people like me. They stare. Most of them are friendly, but there are some people, some old people who just say mean things like 'How do you look, that's not good, I wouldn't let my grandchildren to run around like this'"
Ellen

According to the informants' observations, the general public has preconceptions about metal music and metal fans. Also they assume that those preconceptions mainly originate from the 'scary image' of metal:

"Metalheads don't look open but when you go and talk to them they are really friendly and they can have a nice discussion with you. They look like beasts or something – big, tall, with long hair, some people are generally scared of them. But if they go and talk with them I think they are really nice…, so, yeah, very nice with everyone. Like in 99%, most of them are nice"
Vishal

"…I am trying to communicate with people, what I am basically doing - I write about it, and people lose their fear. Because there are so many people who don't feel comfortable in a presence of metalheads for some reason. And what I try to do, I try to help them to overcome that first fear (laughing). For example, I am a pretty good example how not scary metalhead can be, because I am very small, I am blond and I am like so super not scary at all…"
Laura

Metal music adherents assume that others might see them being a bit different, which is typically associated with social stereotypes:

"I think it's a pretty famous thing: the stereotype about metal it's like these dangerous guys and 'drugs, sex and rock-n-roll', which is just a stereotype, basically, nothing is really happening, nothing really wild. Like I said it's not violent, there is absolutely no violence, no drugs, maybe musicians, but not general public..."
Alexandra

To conclude, metalheads generally see themselves being normal, usual people while at the same time the metal music is one of the main interests or hobbies in their lives. Music is not merely an entertainment – not always but very often they are also interested in metal culture and its attributes and follow it to a different extent. Sometimes metal fans consider themselves connoisseurs of music, but state that their love of music is compatible with other strong interests or hobbies:

"...it may sound arrogant but I think that most of the people don't know too much about music... <...> Well, I understand that others, they have different energies to motivate them, different from music. So I can say they do not understand music in that deeper level. It's like for some people football is very important, it's kind of life. And sport is not that important for me, and then of course, I cannot understand deeper phenomenon and other things related to football they are very-very concern of. That works also for music"
Mircea

Also it is worth mentioning that usually interviewees speak of metal public using such terms as 'community', 'brotherhood' or even 'tribe'. They often report almost unconditional preliminary liking of other metalheads in everyday life or at concerts, liking of those they recognize having similar music tastes:

"...the sense of community in the metal scene which you sometimes... You probably best explain it in anecdote: when you just walk down the street and there is a lots of people there and you just wear let's say Slayer t-shirt, then somebody comes along and he wears let's say Orphaned Land t-shirt, and you just immediately, you look at him and you know that's a metalhead too, and that's cool! And I often have the situations like we just smiled at each other and just went separate ways but you feel like at home at that moment because you feel like there is somebody there who is part of the community that you also part of"
Laura

"...because we are getting introduced to each other and then I found out this person listens to metal music, so we already have something in common. I would ask what styles do you like, what bands are your favorite, have you been to festivals... <...> So normally people sit and talk about weather when they have nothing in common, but in this case it will be always a very interesting conversation, doesn't matter the personality of this person. <...> If there is a common ground - loving metal music - then it's a conversation... for the whole night maybe (laughing)"
Luci

"…my presupposition is that they also share my ideas because they love the same band that I do. And it proves for me that all these people though I don't know them, they are some kind of friends for me. I feel very positive about them. Maybe they are |bad guys| actually, I don't know (laughing), but as a starting point I relate to them very friendly"*
Dmitry

3. REASONS AND MOTIVES TO VISIT METAL MUSIC FESTIVALS

According to the participants' statements, twelve different reasons and motives to visit metal music festivals were revealed and then they were classified into five distinctive categories:

- Music;
- Socializing;
- Freedom;
- Escapism;
- Travelling.

Music
Live shows of metal bands are the primary goal of visiting of metal events by all the metalheads interviewed without any exception. If a more detailed picture of the music related motives of going to festivals be drawn, they include the following: the opportunity to see plenty of live metal concerts in a couple of days; the opportunity to see some of their favorite bands; the opportunity to discover new bands in order to broaden the music horizons; to see a spectacular show; and the opportunity to see more bands you like or you might like for less money.

Listening to metal music live is the main driving force for the metalheads to go to festivals, whatever combinations of other attractive or undesired elements of such events are recounted by them thereafter.

"I go there to have good time and see metal bands which are not easy to find. It's simpler to see a lot of bands you like in the same three days at festival… it's simpler and you have your kind of trip around bands and discovering"
Fabien

The opportunity to see favorite bands is very important for festival visitors and usually the line-up of the festivals they choose gives them an opportunity to see a considerable number of favorite metal bands and do it within the same few days at the same venue. As some of the respondents also mention, metal bands are coming for the shows from all

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* foul language

over the world, and sometimes festivals is the only opportunity to see live performances of those bands.

"I could start with things which are sending me to metal festivals. So first and the second places are changeable: so that are bands you want to see and friends. From the all number of bands at festivals we surely find a few for every of us and some for everybody"
Mircea

"First of all, I like line-up. I never go to the festival when I don't like the line-up, so there must be a few bands I can see live..."
Tudor

"I don't like to have a lot of people around me. I endure it because of music (laughing). Because I have to go for music to the festivals, because sometimes the band you see on a festival is not playing in your town or maybe they are not playing in your country at all"
Laura

Discovering of new bands is often seen by many as a benefit of attending a festival:

"... I can see many bands, sometimes I like bands I didn't know before. And the people, who are with me there, say to me - 'hey, this band is great, you have to see them'. <...> So many bands you know and also a lot you don't know, so you have a chance to see bands you never saw and you learn more about some new stuff"
Thomas

During live performances the energy from the band or even spectacular shows are appreciated by the public:

"...light is important for me also, good light show, good performance... when something cool and spectacular is going on onstage <...> As I said for me the performance it's really important. There are a lot of different factors for a good live show. First, it's a production itself, it's like how much efforts are done. If you have the feeling that this band or this artist doesn't want to be there then it could be |worst|* thing of all time even though you really like this artist. That could be, let's say, the worst case scenario. But if you see a band, even there is a band you've never listen before, it could be the best thing you've seen because you are so surprised that there is something else there you've never seen before, and it's just gets you, you know. I experienced all of it. I've seen a |bad|* shows, I've seen a good shows, I've seen bands I like which are great, I've seen bands I like and they were complete |rubbish|, but I also experienced shows or bands I've never heard of before and they were just... they drew me to the music and to the live performance"
Jay

And, finally, some visitors mention such an advantage of the festivals as the opportunity to see live performances of a considerable number of bands for less money:

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* foul language

"You don't have to pay that much to see a lot of bands cause if you go to concerts - it's 20-40-50 EUR to see three or four bands. At festival you pay like 150, but you see plenty of them. I've seen a lot of bands and I'm thinking that if I go to a festival and if I miss some bands it's ok, I'll see it next year"
Benedikt

<u>*Socializing*</u>

Social aspects of metal festivals as a reason to attend festivals involve the wish to meet and spend some time with friends; the opportunity to find new friends; the aspiration to feel the atmosphere of being surrounded by metal public; the wish to interact with people with similar music tastes.

Meeting friends is a very influential motive for metalheads to spend their time at festival area and in some occasions even might be the primary one:

"And I feel good because it is important to go out with your friends and to talk to them and to see them <...> Some of you friends you see one time in a year, two times in a year, because when we are living in different cities you don't have much time during the year to see them often"
Thomas

"...and to meet friends, sometimes you don't see each other that much. And I moved a lot and I made friends a lot, so you go to these festivals you meet all those people, basically from all around the world, which is really cool, yeah"
 Alexandra

"..it's to get together with friends that you don't get to see every day, friends from all over the world that are coming especially for the metal festivals in Europe during the summer. For example, my friend who is coming from Australia every year, so that's the only time to meet him and have some fun time with him. Also for example group of friends are coming from the United States to summer festivals in Europe, so that's the only time for getting together and meeting up"
Guy

Although some of the respondents point out that they are not interested in a close acquaintance with people at metal festivals due to dislike of a crowd, shyness or other reasons, the possibility to meet new people, to get acquainted with them and potentially to find new friends is highly appreciated by the interviewees:

"...it's also really interesting to meet new friends... And it's happening still! And some friends have become friends for life"
Alexandra

"I am kind of misanthropic person I would say (laughing). So, to find interesting people is not so easy for me; and a person I would treat with respect and so on. That's why, these festivals is a great opportunity to find such person. Because when you meet new people you didn't know before, it's very important that they would have the same interests as you. And it is easily to become friends with such people. And that's why it is great opportunity to have new friends"
Dmitry

Normally metal fans go and stay at big metal events in groups of friends; it is less typical to attend the festival with some strangers or on their own; however, one of the respondents says the following:

"You can go on your own and meet everybody there. <…> Just to go to the bar tent, grab a beer and start talking with a complete stranger <…> I try to spot the people who may have the same music taste and go to talk to them"
Benedikt

What also brings metalheads to the festivals is their aspiration to feel the atmosphere of being surrounded by the metal public:

"There some festivals I would attend without knowing any of the bands. <…> it's such a nice atmosphere. I would go there just to relax, to meet nice people and have a good time. <…> When I'm at the festival I don't care because I am like everybody else. So I feel relaxed. It's like a little certain space which is close. There are only the people who are almost like you"
Ellen

"I like metal festivals because they are calm, even though people think metal concerts are not calm because it is like they have the feeling it's very violent and so on, all this kind of stuff. I don't think they are, because I think metal people are different, it's a kind of community. That something I like at festivals, at metal festivals actually. <…> Well, I like that music and the community…"
Jay

Very closely related to the aforementioned motives is the wish to interact with people with the similar music tastes and similar preferences of pastime activities:

"…because I am going to the festival to have fun. That's one of the things, you know. Yeah, its music but I want to have fun, I want to interact with people who also want to have fun. <…> They are here to have fun, it's a different mindsets. You are there to have fun, to enjoy it, you know, and then a human interaction is one part of enjoyment. People like to communicate to each other, to talk with each other, to exchange opinions, feelings…"
Tudor

Freedom

Although freedom is a very metaphorical notion, the feeling of being free was mentioned by a considerable number of participants. The causes of this feeling are diverse among different metalheads, but, relatively speaking, they may be divided by their nature: freedom of expressing yourself, freedom through the absence of everyday social boundaries and freedom from everyday concerns. The following excerpts detail what some of metal fans actually say when they talk about freedom at festivals:

"…I try to say that metal music for me and metal culture in general it's a way of expression of our inner freedom. Yeah. And in all aspects of my clothes, of my feelings, of my mood I try to express this freedom. And freedom is a main mood during concerts and festivals <…> it's different from everyday life because you try to avoid all the cages that we live in (smiling). And you break all these cages, you become free, and you freely express your inner-self, yeah"
Dmitry

"…it's not so easy to describe. So I am there and the first time I look all over the festival and I feel great! I feel a bit something like - free your mind, do what you want, and there is nothing this weekend can happen to you, and you can't do anything at home, so you are free. You can do what you want, I think, at the festival. If some people want to go outside naked or dressed like unicorns or something like that – it's ok (laughing). Feel being surrounded by nice people, that's the thing. I feel more freedom when you look over the tents and the cars and the people and think, 'yeah, you can't do something like this at home, so you have to be here and have fun'"
Thomas

"Freedom, it is a big cliché, but I don't have to think about anything during those three or four days. I just do whatever I want. I really forget the problems I have at home for those days. And it's liberating. <…> cause I don't have this society pressure. At the festival I can be drunk and dirty (laughing). I don't have to worry about whatever people think <…> because they are all doing the same so what the hell (laughing)"
Benedikt

Escapism

For many people visiting of several-days metal festivals is also a chance to get away from everyday life and everyday problems and obligations, which was already partly disclosed in the previous subsection. The respondents list a number of issues, day-to-day problems and concerns they are escaping from, such as job obligations, money, paying bills, etc. They are escaping from the mundane life to the 'little music world' in order to change their everyday surroundings:

"I can say for myself it's a way to get away from everyday life. <...> But the motives is just to get away from all problems, from everyday problems to this little music world and experience great music and see your favorite bands, to see like really great performances"
Luci

"I feel just free, and free from the things that occupy you on the day-to-day basis: like thinking about what are you going to buy, which bills you have to pay or just worrying about how to get up to work in the morning or spend the day in the office with people which you don't really like (laughing). So that's... metal festivals it's just like getting out from the day-to-day routine, meeting with friends, and just enjoying each part of the day whether it's drinking or going to see shows or not doing anything. It just makes a very good vacation"
Guy

"I feel happy, that's it. I don't have to worry or anything like job or money or like you have to go to work next week and you have so many things to do. So you don't think about these things when you are at festival"
Vishal

"...to have a great time, to reboot your head (laughing). When you go there at the festival you don't think about your work, you don't think about problems, you don't think about paying the bills, you only think - 'Hey, what band is next?'"
Thomas

Travelling

And, finally, a number of respondents report that, although when they are going to the festival their primary goal is to experience the festival itself, the trip to the place is a part of their experience when the venue of the festival is in a different country:

"On the other hand there is a trip, the places to see, the things I could meet, funny situations, funny people, all kind of funny things during the trip and festival. <...> A trip is always - you are out of your comfort zone. And festivals it's a mixture: I know the places I know some people, friends. This is included in my comfort zone. But when we are talking about new festival - it's different, it's being totally out of your comfort zone because you discover new places, new routes, you have to think all the way about how to get there, what to take with you, what will you meet, what will you buy. <...> It's keeping your mind busy. But actually it is an important thing to do from time to time - to keep your mind busy. So, it's another point about what I appreciate about metal music festivals. What I like - as I told you before - friends, fun, music and places"
Mircea

"... and it's more or less travelling also. I live in Vienna now and when I choose a festival it will be abroad anyhow, so I have to fly to Finland, to Germany, to Holland. Travelling,

yeah…, so it is all - the package which makes this whole thing exciting: traveling, music, meeting up with old friends, making new friends…"
Alexandra

4. VISITORS' EXPERIENCE AT HEAVY METAL FESTIVALS

The visitors' experience of attending metal festivals is full of diverse stories, impressions, attitudes and perceptions. There are both positive and negative points that are perceived individually: the stance on similar elements is characterized by a great diversity. That, however, does not make it impossible to draw a picture of metal festival settings with their multiplicity, contrasts and similarities.

The structure of this section is based on the principle from private to general and, therefore, it consists of the following subsections: practices and feelings of metal fans themselves; practices and behavior of others how they are seen by the respondents; festival realities and spiritual atmosphere; and after festival effects.

Self: practices and feelings

At metal festivals the majority of the metal public looks like 'normal metalheads', which often includes black clothes, leather clothes, band t-shirts, combat shoes and other metal attributes. The main activities at the festival, as it is has been partly disclosed in the previous sections, include watching live shows, communication with friends and/or other festival visitors, and camping.

Seeing live shows, which is reported to be the primary goal of attending the festival, is often a priority with other side activities:

"What I do I print the line-up schedule and I mark the bands I want to see and I go and see them. And sometimes, I rather go to see some more I've never seen"
Laura

"If it is one day full of good shows you go to see a lot of shows and that is how you spend your day. When that's a day with the shows you are not interested much in you spend some time with friends in the camping you drink you have fun you go to the metal market that most metal festivals nowadays offer"
Guy

"Bar, concerts, mosh pits, - when the music is good. Sleeping when I don't' like really bands that are playing. When I'm tired and I already saw these bands, I make a kind of break: eating a little, meeting people. During the night when there are no live shows, just get drunk and meet people… Yeah. You are inviting people you know…"
Fabien

During live performances that are interesting to their listeners, the respondents may act differently. Standing in front of the stage, in the crowd or behind the crowd, listening

and watching the show, singing along, clapping, jumping, drinking beer, talking with friends or other people – these acts are applicable to any live shows. Besides that metalheads may run around, show devil horns, scream, shout, headbang, and participate in the mosh pits, circle pits and death walls. The behavior of metalheads in front of the stage is highly dependent on the band which is playing (genre of the band, energy from the band), personality of the listener – his/her mood, surroundings and other related settings:

"I am there in the crowd to see the band. Most of the time I am with friends: I am standing and looking at the band. Being there, appreciating people on the stage and making some photos, meanwhile, drinking beer with friends, but it depends on the mood and on everyone's mood. Or there is another case when I am alone: in that moment I am more focused on performance on the stage, I make more pictures, I am more focused on what are they doing, what they are singing, maybe I am more critical"
Mircea

"…for shows and bands that I really want to see live, really want to feel the atmosphere and feel the intimacy by standing close to the band and seeing they facial expressions and getting the real vibe from the band itself"
Guy

While all the participants interviewed do headbang (with varying frequency) or used to headbang in the past (e.g. when they were younger or had long hair), a few others report that they do dance 'in a metal way' during some live performances. Although they admit that such activity might be traumatic, they are aware of this fact and follow some rules of the pits, e.g. not hurt other people, and look after each other. It is not easy for the respondents to explain why they like it, but they think that this is a way to express their emotions:

"…when you are there, people transform in kind of super heroes, you know, - there is a bad guy, there is a guy with a big smile smashing you, you know… and they never hurt you, they never hurt you… it happens but it's bad luck, it happens but it's not… yeah… I feel like… When I come back from this, I feel like 'phewww', you know, - recreation of all that bad energy and taking good energy with people… so it's cool when you're there (laughing)"
Fabien

"…it seems like, like maybe a dancing of madman, this activity reminds maybe of exorcism (laughing). I don't know, it is paradoxically, but I would say it is a way of expression of our fun, of our happiness toward this music. Paradoxical because of the way we express our feelings … If to look at it from a distance for people who are not interested and not fond of such kind of music, it seems…, it really looks weird (laughing)"
Dmitry

"I like the circle pits when you go around and around and around. But violent dancing, I hate violent dancing - this hardcore-stuff dancing… When I see some people like this in a

pit, and they could hurt other people in the back, in the face, because they are not looking after other people (it was not on purpose, but it happened). When I see people like that I take my friend then we go with the elbows inside and then we take him off, because it is not really nice to kick other people in the face"
Thomas

When some part of the audience is getting involved in mosh pits and circle pits, this is usually tolerated by other fans that prefer a more calm way of enjoying the music:

"...the guys are making some mosh pits. I like to have it around even though I don't participate. So I appreciate that guys, people do this type of manifestation I do not do, and it's ok for me to have it around, it provokes me fine feeling"
Mircea

"...it's a way to express your aggression that everyone has inside, or anger or something. But express it in a peaceful way, like those headbangers in circle pits and mosh pits - that's also the way to express for them their aggression, just get it out of you. <...> I don't participate in those circle pits and mosh pits. Yeah, I can headbang for the bands that I really like. Yeah, that is the way maybe to get out all this energy, but I am still positive, when I am headbanging I am positive, I am gladly positive. Doesn't matter if the music is very brutal, I am still happy and smiling (laughing). I don't make evil faces..."
Luci

First and foremost, the energy from the music and live shows and after that, the overall festival environment provokes strong feelings and emotions among participants. The epithets which metalheads use to characterize their states of mind are the following: *happy, good, excited, great, positive, relaxed, safe, satisfied, curious, free, nervous, and disappointed if something goes wrong*. That is what they say about it:

"I am happy, because I'm there, at the festival. And... well... maybe if it's the first time, I'm a little bit nervous, but that's normal. That's because of new area, new environment, all the stuff, because I'm not used to it, so..."
Martijn

"I guess I am curious in the beginning, especially when the festival is new. Curious, what it's like, how it looks like... excited absolutely, relaxed, free. It's sort of vacation I think. Yeah, like really relaxed I think. These are my main emotions"
Alexandra

"Only positive (laughing). Although I am screaming, making angry faces, repeating after the frontmen of these bands - screaming, yeah. But nonetheless, I feel happy..."
Dmitry

"Of course I feel good, I should feel good. And if the band is not good, I am obviously disappointed"
Laura

Camping at the events is a controversial point for the metal festivals' residents. On the one hand, on the campground metalheads are socializing, relaxing and drinking beer, having conversations with friends and getting acquainted with neighbors and other fans, helping each other. On the other hand, camping has a lot of inconveniences, such as all the range of weather issues (when it's too cold at nights, too hot in the mornings, raining and muddy), lack of satisfying facilities (uncomfortable sleep, quality of the toilets, lack of and queues to showers) or too loud and/or too drunk neighbors. While some of the visitors prefer to stay at the nearby hotels/hostels to avoid the camping disadvantages, others like to camp and have an ongoing party on the campground or adapt to the camping realities:

"At some point you just care less and you feel freer. You know that you are going to spend like a few days in a camping mode, and you know that you are going to suffer from the air mattress, and you know that you going where there are no most of facilities that you like. But after a while you just say "yeah, I just go to have some more drinks and then I care about it less (laughing)"
Guy

An interesting addition to the camping experiences of metal festivals' visitors is the circumstance that three out of fifteen respondents told their stories of how they got lost in the camping area at night and were cordially welcomed and given shelter by some unfamiliar metalheads till the morning.

Other visitors at metal festivals

When interviewees describe the appearance of other metal public at festivals they are quite unanimous on what they see around:

"…how they look like, they are these guys with tattoos, wearing t-shirts or something with their favorite bands, with some leather, with some of those metal spikes, a various jewelry, necklaces, piercing… long hair could have, but not necessarily. How they behave? I don't know, depends, it depends on people. Some people just have funny clothes, like bunny, but I understand, it's all for fun; and some of them are serious, I mean they behave more seriously. I don't know, act serious. They do have fun, they are just different…"
Tudor

The main positive behavior patterns of other visitors in respondents' opinions were mentioned and elaborated in the previous sections: these are appreciation of the music, being relaxed, communicative, friendly and helpful to each other:

"So when you put a big crowd, a bunch of people with pretty much the same goal and the same music preferences that also have some common denominator, I guess the atmosphere is pretty relaxed, and pretty nice, and pretty friendly. So, I mean when the people are

friendly and everyone just enjoying themselves and having fun, so I guess there's nothing not to like about the people who go to metal festivals"
Guy

However, there are also some issues which the respondents don't like about their festival social surroundings. Although the majority of the interviewed people like to drink alcohol (mainly beer) at festivals, they often don't like to have too drunk people around and misbehaving related to it:

"People become simple, drunk, simple, and they just screaming and, yeah, they are being just animals I guess at certain point (laughing). It's only funny when everybody is drunk, but when you look at the picture when you are sober… it's really just primitive. Not adequate. Yeah, I think that's quite annoying"
Alexandra

"…there are a lot of drunken (laughing). But there are some funny drunk people that are like pretty peaceful, just lying in their mud and shouting and singing some funny songs, they just simply can't move anymore (laughing), so they are funny but I feel pity for them because everyone close by is taking pictures (laughing). So, there are a lot of those drunken people but normally it's like, you are paying more attention to them, because they are irritating, but I don't think they are the majority. <…> I don't like drunken people that are hardly standing trying either to communicate or to hug you or just go by and can touch you by accident and they are normally really dirty and I don't like dirty clothes (laughing)"
Luci

What is also not appreciated by the interviewed metalheads is that some visitors are coming to the festivals not primarily because of the music, but for the party and getting drunk or some other unknown reasons, that is reported to be the disadvantage of bigger open-air festivals (e.g. Wacken Open Air):

"Some people are there only for the partying in the camping area (laughing). There was a huge area in the camping with its own music and its own stage… And all of them got drunk, of course (laughing), many got drunk"
Kuro

"At festivals people like to drink a lot, so sometimes I don't really understand why people are going there just to go for a drinking cause, because I mainly go because of music cause… that's something I don't understand, but so, you don't have to deal with those people if you don't want to"
Jay

"…it has become popular to go to the festivals and people go to festivals not because of the bands but just to attend the festival. And then they look the band in the Wikipedia and pretend to know something. And then you talk to them and realize that they know

|rubbish|*. That's embarrassing. I think you can go to festivals without knowing the bands but you have to admit it and don't pretend that you know something <...> but festivals like Wacken, for example, or Hellfest, they have become bigger and bigger. I read a lot of blogs. Those blogs about fashion... they go to festivals to write these blogs and to show a festival fashion. I just don't want to go to the festival just to see freaky clothes or something. So it's like fashionable to go to festival..."
Ellen

Some more notes regarding the differences between bigger and smaller festivals are also provided in the following section.

<u>*Metal festival and its atmosphere in contrasts*</u>

During narrations of festival experience, informants compare and contrast this experience to the everyday life, to the holidays, to festivals with diverse styles of music, and to non-metal or non-music festivals. Also they often compare bigger and smaller metal festivals and some of them point out that in different countries metal public might behave differently due to the national/cultural differences and to the frequency of festivals held in these countries.

As much as the comparison of festivals with everyday life was already disclosed in the previous sections, some of respondents also compare going to the metal events with holidays, however, opinions differ regarding the similarity of those types of vacation:

"When I am going to the festivals I am going to the vacation. <...> If the festival went nicely and you didn't get hurt in any mosh-pits or you didn't get sick because it was raining and it was windy, then you get home and you just feel relaxed like after any other vacation. And then you get back to the day-to-day life, you just adapt and get back to the daily routine mode, but I mean that's if everything went well. I guess it depends on how it went just like any other vacation. For me I just treat metal festivals as any other vacations"
Guy

"Well. I think for most metalheads metal festivals are like all inclusive vacation. Metalheads get their good time at festivals, so many of us would rather spend a lot of money on going to festival than going to Mallorca or something like that"
Ellen

"It's very exciting and like kind of vacation, but also after this vacation you need a vacation (laughing) to get back to the normal rhythm of life <...> It is the same like other people go to normal vacation. But this is kind of boring for me. I'd rather go the metal festival then just lay on the beach. I'd better go headbang, get drunk, meet people. That's much more interesting for me. Money well spent let's say"

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* foal language

Luci

Several respondents compare heavy metal festivals with eclectic music festivals including metal music, and with festivals of other music styles. In their viewpoints the audience at those festivals behaves differently to each other and to the informants:

"I've seen some, let's say more diverse festivals, like Sziget festival. So there you have specific music from R&B to extreme metal and people are coming from all over the world. For example for me, as a metal listener, I prefer to go to specific metal festivals, not to mixture of styles festivals, maybe because sometimes I found uneasy to interact with some people that have preconceptions… That's not about different points of view - different points of view have my friends, and I like that we are different. So it's about preconceptions… I could very easy interact and have fun with other people, but I don't think I will go further and being more friendly with them. Because I know that they are here for different things and those different things describe them somehow"
Mircea

"Yeah, at metal festivals it is kind of brotherhood because when you have problems in the camping or something like that, you have always people to help you. I remember one year it was raining a lot, so all cars were blocked in the camping - and you have all these people just helping each other, it goes really fast. I was at other festivals, people are not like that, it's different. I was at kind of trance festival and you don't really have that. There is, but it's not the same, it's more… cold…"
Fabien

Regarding metal festivals proper, many of the respondents note a significant difference between very big open-air festivals and smaller ones. This refers to the different stances: the overall festival settings (accessibility to the stage, too long queues everywhere, distances to the concert area from the camping area), the attitudes toward music and behavior of the crowds, and the atmosphere of festival, which to a certain degree consists of aforementioned issues. Many of the interviewed respondents recently tend to like smaller festivals more:

"Smaller festivals are cozy and less messy. You have a nice overview over the people who are there. You don't have to walk that much usually. At the bigger festival you have to walk like miles and miles from the camping ground to the festival area and from one stage to another. On small festival it's closer. The people are more friendly because… I don't know. I don't know why people at the smaller festivals behave better"
Ellen

"Festivals are starting getting too big and too commercial. There are too many people who are going crazy, at Wacken especially if there's a big headliner, they are only there for the headliner and they are not interested in other bands. So I don't think it's good if there's only one big main event"
Kuro

"Well, typically I don't like when the festival is too big because then people are punching each other, not punching, but when it is so crowded people are trying to get closer to the stage and then they always touch you with their elbows, and they just so in a hurry because they were drinking so hard and about to miss their favorite band…"
Luci

"I guess, people who go to smaller festivals are bigger music fans, they really go specifically for those particular bands that are playing, they are really fans of those bands, they really go for music in the first place. And let's take Wacken for instance, it is always sold out before people know what is going to play, so it's not about this particular bands, not about this particular music, it's just about this particular weekend, just to go out, just to travel there <…> the more popular line-up is the more random the people are and like I said it's not just about music, it's about this whole weekend, travel, misbehave maybe, being dirty and drunk (laughing)"
Alexandra

What the metalheads interviewed strongly value about heavy metal festivals is the atmosphere of the event, as much as atmosphere is something transient in nature. Feel relaxed, listen to the favorite music, have fun, be surrounded by friendly people who share your music tastes and talk and drink beer with them, feel like home – this is a collective image of the festival atmosphere as described by the interviewees. This is how some of them express it:

"The atmosphere, you know, there is this music you're always hearing - non-stop metal, this with you, with beer and with all these people just here to have fun, all of them your friends, they just your friends here (laughing). No, you don't know them but you can know them, you can talk to them and try to discover them if you want. It's open, you know. This is cool, the atmosphere, this connection between people, just you're taking a beer and you can just stay one hour with someone you don't know, just speaking about metal and other things, it's this connection, this atmosphere"
Fabien

"What I like most in metal music festivals is, I would say, atmosphere it brings. It is hard to describe the exact aspects of this atmosphere, but it is a… you appreciate most that feeling that people with the same view are surrounding you during these festivals… it is a great opportunity to find new friends with the same interests, to discover maybe new bands that you didn't know before <…> The main aspects of this atmosphere I named already. But… no, really, it is really hard to describe what exactly it consists of. Maybe it is a perception of yourself as a part of something great that happening during this time you visit festival. Maybe"
Dmitry

All interviewed metal festival visitors unanimously agree that after festivals they come back home tired and physically exhausted, but emotionally charged - they speak of being "positive" and "happy". As with everything else, the feelings and emotions after festivals, the extent of these emotions varies among different visitors:

"After festivals and concerts I'm totally exhausted. So I need one or two days to get to the normal life. So you've been there, you've been outside. In general you don't have electricity, your food is not the best - you're only barbequing and drinking beer the most of the time (laughing). But it's kind of positive exhaustion, I think. You had a good time, you tired, but you know why you did it. For the 3-4 days you were having good time with your friends and you meet new people that impact comes from the festival to your everyday life. But in general it's just something you did, it's a nice experience. So you can move on and get some energy for your everyday life. It's kind of a compensation for your everyday life. Being in another world and come back to your normal life"
 Kuro

They also speak of being a little bit frustrated or disappointed that they have to come back to their everyday work, duties, routine and so on:

 "Sometimes it's like this 'back to reality' slap in your face I think. Especially when it was so good... well, you know, when you go for entire weekend to the festival it's not a reality, even though the people are real, the friendships are real, it is just one big party. And life is not just about party, you come back to this reality, you have to go to work, you have to clean the house, and just those basic boring things. Yeah, of course, it's so huge difference! Every aspect"
Alexandra

"I usually come back home sick <...> But besides from that I really try to incorporate that feelings I had on the festival like being happy and don't care about anyone else and being relaxed, don't care about what people think of my look, and I try to remember it after festival, I'm just a normal metalhead. And I try to keep the feeling of being happy and relaxed. <...> and I'm sad after festival, I'm always so said, because it's over!"
Ellen

Also, for some of the fans, a metal music festival is an experience which gives them energy:

"I'm happy I feel like being recharged; kind of take energy, you know. I spit out bad energy and I take good. When I go - I am excited, happy, and when I come back - I feel like calm and I think it's very..., I don't know, kind of therapy (smiling)"
Fabien

"I can't say that it changes my life radically, because after these festivals you have to return to your everyday life... Yeah, of course, you can bring new emotions, new memories from

these festivals and, of course, you bring new information of new bands that you discovered at festival, new friends and so on. <...> So these festivals also are a special space, special time of breaking all the rules of your everyday life. After that you return new, reborn even (laughing), you have this feeling of these radical changes of your standard life, your everyday life. And, of course, after that you cannot be the person you were before it. Hah. You get transformed I would say. Maybe it helps you to easier live all negative aspects of your everyday life: your boring job, or maybe your disgust toward some aspects of society and so on and so on. And you can manage easier..."
Dmitry

Memories are something that stays with people and some metalheads like to share them with others after the festival is over:

"I share with friends, usually with my metal friends. Otherwise, for example my colleagues at work, they wouldn't understand it, because they are different, they don't know this type of music, so yeah, I might talk a bit to them, but keeping not many details. But with my friends who also like metal and I used to go with them to the festival or something, then I share more details, we talk about specific concerts, how it was, what bands really had a great show, how the festival was organized, how I like it, not like it..."
Tudor

"I am coming back home with kind of euphoria as like I recall all the fun that happened in my memories and I have like this stupid smile on my face. Because I always have something funny to tell to my friends, and I call to my best friend that also goes a lot to different festivals and tell her funny stories that happened to me. Or I call to the friends that I was with at the festival and we laugh together about what happened. And my friends, they are also doing the same to me"
Luci

I would like to finish this chapter again by citing one of the metal festivals visitors interviewed:

"I say that festival is a unique experience, you can't compare it to anything. It's just something you love or you don't. I really like"
 Benedikt

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main aim of this paper was to explore the meanings metalheads attach to the attendance of metal festivals. The question 'why metal fans visit festivals' was explored through the following sub-questions: 'what are their reasons and motives to go to the festivals' and 'what are the metalheads' experiences of visiting such events'. The answers to the same questions were also expected to reveal how metal festivals shape the collective identity of metal fans.

Metal music and socializing are usually the main driving forces behind visiting a festival for heavy metal fans. Furthermore, the aspiration to feel free, to escape from everyday life and to travel also often complements the motives, and makes an enjoyable experience.

To see many live performances of diverse metal bands is oftentimes the primary goal in festival-going for the majority of metalheads. They go to see their favorite bands live and like to discover new bands they did not know before. Metal audience tends to value live metal shows since such performances are a powerful source of energy for them, possibly a supplementary source of material to form the individual attitude to or image of particular bands, and also a source of emotions, thoughts and follow-up discussions for the listeners. The shared enthusiasm by the crowd of many fans who appreciate the band is something that enriches one's feelings.

Visitors whose priorities at a festival are not centered on live performances and music are often in danger of losing respect from more devoted metalheads since usually metalheads see themselves as connoisseurs of music. At festivals devoted metalheads listen to music and often talk about music: discussions about live performances are common practice during and after concerts and also a starting point of opening a dialog with a stranger.

The enjoyment of being surrounded by metal public is connected to two aspirations: the wish to express oneself freely with an expectation of being understood by others and the intention to communicate and share pleasurable experience with those who are very likely to share your musical tastes and ideas. Those aspirations are related to the personal and collective identity.

Expressing of self and being accepted, understood and recognized as a part of community seems to be a valued experience for metalheads. One of the reasons lies in the fact that, as some of the metalheads reported, in everyday life when they look as 'typical metalheads', they might feel being singled out, since the people may perceive them differently — stare at them, be less open and more cautious to them — as sometimes the general public have their preconceptions about metal music and metal fans. While at metal concerts and, for a longer time period, at metal festivals, their look is something normal, which makes them feel comfortable because others around share the same style. Festivals also invoke the feeling of freedom in some of the visitors as they

feel the society pressure diminish and believe that at festivals they may 'do what they want' and be tolerated and accepted by others.

The festival is also a platform for many to meet friends and to communicate with new people, which is closely connected to the collective identity, that is, an individual's mental, moral and emotional connection with a community. Quite widespread general interest in and liking of other visitors at metal festivals is not exactly an occasional affiliation, but is very likely based on the constant presupposition of metalheads that those people who like heavy music belong to the same community, tribe, brotherhood, family or subculture, and, therefore, share a substantial common ground. Metalheads have a tendency to like other metal fans in everyday life, and that is why, generally speaking, festivals for them are a concentration of the music, friends and other metal public, all of which is seen as a powerful resource of enjoyable experience. In addition, as it was mentioned by interviewees, while in everyday life meeting a stranger metalhead is very unlikely to lead to opening a dialog, at festivals that is much more likely.

Preference of metal festivals to music festivals with diversity number of different styles including metal music also indicates the collective essence of the identity of metal fans, as some of them report more relaxed and comfortable experiences and a better connection with the 'pure metal festival public' rather than with a more heterogeneous crowd.

As far as the reported disadvantages of festivals are concerned, they are mainly related to the festivals settings and weather and also some camping issues. In addition, some of the respondents point out the distaste of drunken people at festivals and some unpleasant effects of big crowds (queues, cram and impolite behavior).

What has been revealed to be truly important for metalheads is not a following the metal fashion, but a display of genuine love for and knowledge of metal music and related issues. This research disclosed that many of the respondents prefer smaller metal festivals than the bigger ones. Although many of those preferences were related to the practical issues such as shorter walking distances, smaller queues and less people in front the stages, still many of the visitors noted significant differences on a spiritual level. Some of the respondents state that the atmosphere of the smaller music events brings more satisfaction as compared to bigger festivals. They assume that it also may be related to the subjectively perceived commitment of the others to the music, and some differences in behavior patterns at bigger and smaller festivals. This issue, however, needs further exploration.

As stated by Kruse, the construction of identities not only implies a sense of belonging but also describes a process of differentiation (1993:34). The sense of belonging is often and clearly pronounced in the respondents' stories in a variety of ways. The idea of differentiation has a more complicated structure since it consists of two distinctive layers: the differentiation of self as a part of subculture and the differentiation of self as an individual even from other members of subculture. However, implicitly or explicitly,

interviewees demonstrate their awareness that metal music as a part of their lives influences (and, therefore, sets apart) their own life settings, choices and attitudes; and, in some cases, they consciously differentiate themselves from others – from others within both society and/or community, and from other music-based subcultures.

According to Kahn-Harris, heavy-metal culture "is a contested and controversial marker of both cultural resistance and subcultural conformity, offering a resource that enables individualized identity formation and collective practices" (2011: 209). Based on the respondents' opinions, metal music fans mostly demonstrate adherence to metal music and the metal subcultural group (in their words - community, tribe, brotherhood, etc.) rather than confront or oppose themselves to other music-related subcultures or the society as a whole. It should be noted that all interviewed metalheads reveal their self-pronounced strong commitment to the music in combination with the recognition and following the metal music style of clothing (at least at the metal festivals) and good knowledge of metal music slang (argot), symbols and customs. However, the sharing and following the philosophy of some metal sub-genres or ideas proclaimed in lyrics of the bands those metalheads listen to is not a widespread phenomenon among the interviewees; and, therefore, manifestations of cultural resistance could be attributed only to a few respondents interviewed.

As uncovered in previous chapters, Weinstein argues that metal audience is usefully understood in terms of the concept of subculture since it also stresses the activities of the audience, and takes into account not only contexts of appreciation, but also context of the creation of a way of life (2000:99). The interview data obtained also supports the idea of subcultural adherence of the respondents to the music in the first place, and of the creation of a special way of life by metalheads interviewed that incorporates their social surroundings, day-to-day leisure activities (which are often related to metal music) and also visiting metal concerts and festivals. Thus, the data also supports the statement pronounced by Phillips and Cogan who say that members of the metal subculture often share the idea that to listen to metal music is to live metal; and to live metal is to dress metal, to talk metal, to follow associated metal rituals and to understand the symbols and signs of metal (2009:xxi).

It was disclosed previously that metal music consists of a great number of sub-genres, and that is why metal subculture incorporates a striking diversity of fan groups of different sub-genres. Some interview participants dislike particular metal sub-genres, for instance, black metal for its ideology and exclusiveness, or hardcore for inappropriate behaviour and appearance of fans. However, what is also revealed from the interviewees' stories is that, indeed, one of the factors that binds metal public together, as Hjelm et al. state, is a relatively stable canon of artists which are revered (Hjelm et al, 2011:14). Many of the respondents professed their unconditional love to the 'roots', that is, several artists who are generally considered 'fathers of metal'.

In regard to the aforementioned diversity of metal sub-genres within heavy metal and, therefore, to the distinctive features of different fan groups globally and locally, the concept of scene, as developed by Kahn-Harris, may complement the complexity of the phenomenon. However, in the context of big-scale metal festivals which combine a diverse number of sub-genres, the conceptualization of the metal public as a subcultural group is concluded to be appropriate. In relation to more specific (e.g. local or centered on one sub-genre) festivals, the concept of scene may also be considered.

Besides that, I argue that the widely used connection of the notions 'subculture' and 'youth' must be reframed within subcultural studies and needs further exploration and research. The analysis and description of subcultures, with minor exceptions, are seen as the analysis of youth. Through analyzing the conducted interviews, the relation of age and some activities and behavior patterns related to festivals (e.g. staying at the camping ground, participating in mosh pits, headbanging) was indeed revealed in its classical representation in some stories ("I used to ... when I was younger, but not anymore because..."). However, what is crucial to notice here is that the notion of age and 'being younger' is very much subjective, as some 25 or 35 years old participants have meant the same number of years past.

Weinstein also claims that the metal subculture is characterized by the mid adolescent age grouping of its membership. In her opinion, the metal subculture does not fully include those metal fans that are no longer in their teens (2000:106). As she continues the adults who continue to appreciate metal rarely use the metal media, except for playing their old albums; do not attend many, if any, concerts; do not buy new metal releases or metal magazines, etc. (2000:111). However, according to the respondents (whose age varies from 24 to 37), the majority of them use metal media (often Internet-based), like to discover new metal bands, and do attend metal concerts, albeit with different frequency. Furthermore, since such an activity as visiting metal festivals requires quite considerable financial investments, the majority of the respondents started their 'festival career' after their teens and tends to continue throughout their twenties and thirties. It goes without saying that the comparison between age groups needs further exploration.

The researcher's own interest in metal music is seen as an advantage at the stages of participants' recruitment and data collection (more trust and openness from research participants). However, it must be acknowledged that such a close relation to the subgroup researched may lead to potential problems at other stages of research process. One of the main limitations of this study is seen in the presumptive narrowness of interpretations and conclusions by one researcher. In case of qualitative research, it is quite important for the data to be analyzed separately by several researchers in order to decrease the subjectivity bias. Also I assume that potentially an interviewing of a wider age range might broaden the pluralism of perspectives.

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APPENDICES

Overview of the interview guide:

Bold font – open questions to the respondents;
Regular font – important themes within questions, may serve as additional question if/when respondent didn't broach those subjects;
Italic font – may serve as helpful tool if/when respondent doesn't know how to answer the question or answer in very short manner.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A. GENERAL ATTITUDE TO THE METAL MUSIC AND ITS PLACE IN LIFE

1. What place does heavy metal music have in your life?

- How often do you listen to metal music?
  (live with music; listen to metal music every day/listen from time to time/listen rarely; it is my main hobby/one of my hobbies)

- In what places, situations do you listen to metal music?
  (listento metal only alone/only with friends/only at related places, events - pubs, concerts/ listen metal music everywhere)

- Do you listen to only your favorite style(s), band(s) or like to discover something new - or both?
  (interested only in my favorite style, band/ know a lot about different metal music styles, and bands/ discover new styles or bands all the time, doing both)

2. In your opinion, do your preferences in metal music set you apart from other people in any sense, or not? Shape(d) you as a person?

- Worldview, beliefs, lifestyle

- Perception of self and others

- Appearance (how you look like)

- Special slang or gestures

- Special interests and/or activities

3. How often do you visit metal music places, such as metal shops, pubs, clubs, concerts, festivals, web-sites etc. if you do so?

4. What do you like about metal music festivals?

5. What do you, maybe, dislike about metal music festivals?

6. What are your reasons and motives to go to metal music festivals? *(listening to music; seeing live performances; join the metal community, go for a camping trip; joining friends; hanging out with friends; getting to know new people; finding a partner; seeing the band(s) I wanted to; etc.)*

7. What do you usually do and how do you feel when you are at the big-scale open air festivals? Can you describe it please?

- What are your activities?
  (drinking/not drinking; watching as many bands as I can/watching only favorite bands/watching only previously selected bands; going to see surrounding places/staying at festival area; mostly staying in camping area/spending all the time at concert area; interested in meeting new people/sticking to the company I arrived with/prefer to be alone; etc.)

- What are your feelings, emotions?
  (feel comfortable/uncomfortable; feel as usual/different; feel more excitement/feel more calm/feel more anger/etc.; feel surrounded by nice people/feel surrounded by not nice people; feel more freedom/feel less freedom; feel that people understand me better/feel that nobody understands me; etc.)

8. What do you usually do during live performances when you are at the concert area? *(greeting the band; standing/sitting and listening; dancing; headbanging; slamming; moshing; drinking; shouting; chatting with friends/other people)*

 8.1. Is it important for you to share impressions about live performances and other things related to the festival with others? *(not important/important to share with friends around; important to share with unknown metal fans around)*

9. How do you like other metal fans on the metal festivals?

- What are the people around generally speaking

- How do they look like

- How do they behave

- How do they behave in relation to you

10. How do you act, behave, and look like on metal music festivals?

- Behave as usual or differently

- Look like always or the differently

11. How do you feel after festivals? Does it change in any aspect/sense your everyday life when you are coming back home? *(nothing changes; listening to metal music more/less often; meeting with regular friends more/less often; meeting with new friends more/less; chatting with new friends more/not contacting them; etc.)*

SECTION C. DEMOGRAPHICS

Sex:

Age:

Nationality:

Place of living:

Number of festivals attended (approx.):

#	Name	Sex	Age	Nationality	Place of living	№ of festivals attended (approx.)
1	Tudor	male	35	Romanian	Belgium	15
2	Martijn	male	25	Dutch	Netherlands	8
3	Alexandra	female	30	Dutch	Austria	30
4	Kuro	male	27	German	Germany	3
5	Guy	male	28	Israeli	Germany	8
6	Ellen	female	27	German	Germany	10
7	Dmitry	male	30	Belarusian	Belarus	1
8	Luci	female	26	Russian	Sweden	30
9	Benedikt	male	24	Belgian	Belgium	23
10	Jay	female	32	Austrian	Austria	100
11	Vishal	male	25	Indian	Finland	2
12	Fabien	male	24	French	Spain	8
13	Laura	female	26	German	Germany	70
14	Thomas	male	32	German	Germany	30
15	Mircea	male	37	Romanian	Romania	35