Driving, Not Knowing

On Resonance in the Hitchhiking Encounter

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By Aron van Ees

Supervisor: Oona Morrow
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''Un altro mondo è possibile.''

— Mario Monicelli (2000)

Abstract

In this thesis, I investigate the nature of resonance in the contemporary practice of student hitchhiking. The term resonance describes the quality of human relationships to the world and refers to a mode of relating in which individuals experience being touched, moved, or addressed by the people, places, objects, or other things they encounter. In order to examine whether lift-seekers experience the practice of hitchhiking as conducive to evoking a state of resonance, this study looks into their motivations, the forms that resonance can take in the hitchhiking encounter, and for whom resonance is evoked in the practice. Informed by 16 in-depth interviews with student lift-seekers, I argue that the practice of hitchhiking may result in the formation of resonant relations with the self, others, and the world at large. With regards to the hitchhiker's relationship to the self and to the world at large, there must be a context of mutual trust, genuine openness, conscious vulnerability, and ample time for the possible occurrence of resonance. As for the lift-seeker's relationship to other people, there must be a *mutual* stance of openness and conscious vulnerability. When we resonate with the world around us, we are irrevocably transformed, and it is this transformation that makes us feel alive. This study into the contemporary practice of hitchhiking has implications for the cultivation of the good life and may serve as an example of tourism degrowth in practice. In its insistence on valuing the process of transportation, hitchhiking as a form of leisure travel illustrates that not only is another tourism possible, but also that travel need not exceed planetary boundaries. By challenging the individualized, formalized, monetized, efficient, predictable, and hurried nature of conventional mobilities, the practice of hitchhiking not only invites lift-seekers to confront their relationship to late-modern temporalities, but also to enact a different way of moving and being together.

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1.
Introduction

According to sociologist Hartmut Rosa (2019), our contemporary way of relating to the world is ''screwed'' (69). He argues that most people in Western capitalist societies have an instrumental relation to the world, and that – driven by the logics of growth, acceleration, and innovation – the world has become a point of aggression. Importantly, this mode of being in the world, of relating to the world, extends beyond the realm of individual experience; to him, our collective mode of relating is a deeply political category. Rosa (2017) claims that most modern subjects perpetually seek to ''have more and move faster'' (444), and that they are driven by, what he calls, the ''escalatory logic of dynamic stabilization'' (444) – the promise of securing the good life by increasing one's scope in the world, by making more and more of the world available, accessible, and attainable. This cultural imperative to make the world more available, accessible and attainable has had far-reaching consequences and has, in contexts where the strategy has been most successful and where there is an abundance of resources, contributed to the proliferation of mental and physical burnout. Understanding burnout as the most radical form of alienation, Rosa (2017) asserts that this mode of being is characterized by an utter loss or lack of a responsive connection with life and with the world. As the cultural imperatives of late modernity result in a *failed* way of being and relating, and as this dominant mode of relating to the world shapes our understandings of and efforts to attain the good life, we must therefore strive to cultivate a *different* mode of being in the world.

This problematic late-modern attitude towards the world influences virtually all aspects of our lives: it affects not only how we relate to work, to loved ones, or to the domestic sphere, it also shapes why and how we move and travel, and how we relate to the world around us when in transit. While movement is largely geared towards overcoming the 'friction of distance' – getting from A to B – in the most efficient way possible, some modern subjects purposefully defy the cultural logics of speed and control. Indeed, some people choose instead to relocate themselves in geographical space in a seemingly inefficient, inconvenient, and slow way, using mobility to seek new solidarities, experiences, challenges, and feelings. One such alternative form of mobility is the practice of hitchhiking.

Hitchhiking is a mode of transportation that requires lift-seekers to ask people, usually drivers who are strangers to them, for a free ride in their car or other road, sea, or air vehicle (O'Regan, 2016). Definitions of hitchhiking vary, but they generally emphasize that the lift-seeker is travelling with the aid of a motorized means of mobility. Moreover, definitions highlight that the hitching actor depends on the charity of others (Laviolette, 2014). While dependent on cars (or other vehicles) and their drivers, hitchhiking is not simply about individuals connecting to a form of transport to get from A to B. Hitchhiking, as a form of alternative mobility, unsettles the familiar and expected ways of moving, dwelling and doing as it trades speed, convenience, and time, rather than cash, for experiences, encounters, and connections (O'Regan, 2012). As such, the practice of hitchhiking can be understood as a mode of transportation which challenges the individualized, formalized, monetized, efficient, predictable, and hurried nature of more conventional forms of mobility, and thereby, the late-modern temporal predicament.

Building on Hartmut Rosa's (2018) sociology of human relationships to the world – specifically his work on resonance – in this thesis I investigate hitchhiking as a mode of being in and relating to

the world. In this sense, I approach hitchhiking not only as an alternative mode of transportation, but also, and more importantly, as a mode of being in the world in which individuals eschew the growth and speed imperatives of late modernity, and the concomitant values of independence, invulnerability, efficiency, predictability, and formalized monetary exchange. As such, the focus of this study is on the practice of student hitchhiking as a form of leisure travel, rather than on other forms of ride-sharing or lift-giving. I am principally interested in the ways in which the practice of hitchhiking, influences the lift-seeker's mode of being in the world – their relationship to self, others, and life at large – within and beyond the hitchhiking experience. In essence, I explore to what extent hitchhikers experience this alternative mode of travel as a realm which is conducive to evoking a state of resonance – a mode of relating to the world in which individuals experience being touched, moved, or addressed by the people, places, objects, or other things they encounter. To this end, qualitative methods have been used to investigate the motivations of young adults who have engaged in the practice of hitchhiking, their sensory experiences while on the road, and the ways in which these influenced their mode of relating to the world within and beyond the confines of the car. As Rosa's sociology of human relationships to the world is rather new and has not yet been used to examine social practices, this study serves to fill the gap in knowledge on resonance in social practices, specifically the act of hitchhiking.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: In the literature review, I discuss how the phenomenon of hitchhiking has previously been studied, touching upon hitchhikers' motivations and the social and cultural implications of the practice. In the conceptual framework, I give an overview of Rosa's sociology of human relationships to the world, highlight the concept of resonance and its four crucial elements, and argue why resonance is a useful lens to understand the contemporary practice of student hitchhiking. In the methodology section, I outline the research questions, the methods used, the composition of the study sample, the way I analyzed the data, and discuss the ethical considerations, and my positionality. In the results section, I present my findings, first highlighting student hitchhikers' motivations, then examining the nature of resonance in the hitchhiking experience, thereby describing what it looks and feels like and for whom it is evoked. In the discussion section, I interpret my findings, and consider the broader implications of this study as well as its limitations, and present possible avenues for further study. Finally, in the conclusion, I briefly reiterate my arguments and discuss the relevance of this thesis.

2.
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The origin of the counter-cultural practice, which reached its peak in the 1960s and '70s, has generally been traced back to World War I (Garner, 2008), around the time when the automobile was invented the United States (Lauricella & Lauricella, 2017). While hitchhiking is typically pinpointed to have emerged with the advent of the new technology of the car and truck (Chesters & Smith, 2001), various scholars point out that there are historical precedents for automotive hitchhiking (McGuire, 2017), such as train and horse-drawn vehicle hopping (Garner, 2008). As McGuire poetically notes, ''[a]fter all, before humans roamed the earth in SUVs and four-wheel-drives, people still travelled far and wide in their boats and on their trains, atop their horses and inside their carriages, and many of these vehicles had room to spare for penniless travellers in search of a lift'' (2017: 25).

Although the practice has been around in its current fashion for over a hundred years, and may now be seeing a resurgence (Gao, 2019; Garner, 2008; Laborde, Gerlach & Vaughan, 2020; O'Regan, 2012), hitchhiking has, overall, received relatively little attention in academia (Chesters & Smith, 2001; Gao, 2019; Garner, 2008; Laviolette, 2014). As with the practice itself, scholarly interest in the hitchhiking phenomenon has waxed and waned. Most research on hitchhiking dates back to the early 1970s, when the phenomenon underwent a surge in popularity. Due to a variety of factors, the following decades saw a decline in both the practice of hitchhiking and the extent of academic investigation into this mode of transportation. The modest revival of the hitchhiking phenomenon in the past decade has brought about a novel wave of scholarly inquiry. Indeed, in recent years the significance of the hitchhiking phenomenon in the fields of anthropology and sociology has been acknowledged by various scholars, such as O'Regan (2012), Laviolette (2014, 2020), and most recently, Purkis (2022).

Previous investigations into hitchhiking approach the phenomenon in a multitude of ways, from a focus on lift-seekers' motivations (Chesters & Smith, 2001; Gao, 2019; Greenley & Rice, 1974; McGuire, 2017; Reid, 2020), their personality (Franzoi, 285; Laborde, Gerlach & Vaughan, 2020; Miller, 1973), to hitchhiking as a form of delinquency and deviant behavior (Greenley & Rice, 1974), a rite of passage (Garner, 2008a; Laviolette, 2020; Mahood, 2016; McGuire, 2017; Miller, 1973; Reid, 2020), an escape from the time pressures, obligations, and anxieties of modern life (Greenley & Rice, 1974; Garner, 2008a; Laviolette, 2016, 2020; McGuire, 2017; Reid, 2020), and a means of breaking down isolationism (Chesters & Smith, 2001; Reid, 2020; Rinvolucri, 1974), to name just a few. Furthermore, research on hitchhiking has touched upon countless themes, such as, but not limited to: race, gender, class, freedom, adventure, independence, environmentalism, trust, risk, danger, vulnerability, control, alienation, dependence, fear, unpredictability, morality, temporality, economic exchange, reciprocity, mutual aid, hospitality, sociability, and spirituality (Chesters & Smith, 2001; Carlson, 1972; Derrick, 2017; Gao, 2019; Garner, 2008a; Greenley & Rice, 1974; Juchnevičiūtė, 2019; Lauricella & Lauricella, 2017; Laviolette, 2014, 2020; McGuire, 2017; Miller; 1973; Mote & Whitestone, 2011; Mukerji, 1978; O'Regan, 2012, 2016; Purkis, 2012; Reid, 2020; Rinvolucri, 1974; Schlebecker, 1958).

2.2 Early Work: Motivations, Meanings, and Personality Types

Carlson's (1972) brief ethnography is, according to Laviolette (2014), one of the few studies to directly address the subject of hitchhiking. Her study investigates the meaning that this mode of transportation holds for female students in Britain. Through participant observation, she examined the terms that young women employ to make sense of their actions as they hitchhike. In essence, Carlson's research describes the plans women make in addition to the risks and dangers they expect while hitchhiking. Her main argument is that, even if they often do not recognize it as such, those who hitchhike have cultivated systematic methods of mobility which have developed within a ''culturally constituted series of behaviors'' (Laviolette, 2014: 7). Carlson further claims that the network regulating the exchange of cultural knowledge on the practice is gendered and generally confined to male circles. Such culturally constituted behaviors which persuade drivers to stop, range from knowing the suitable times, weather conditions and places to get lifts; appearing clean, friendly and keen; having the appropriate gear to signify that one is really a traveler, such as a sign, a backpack or a sleeping bag; to trying to make some kind of personal contact with drivers by standing, smiling and looking into their eyes while waiting for a lift, as well as by engaging in conversation with them once sat in their vehicle (Laviolette, 2014). Although hitchhiking may seem like an arbitrary set of actions, Carlson suggests that it is, in fact, a complex process which has status value among British students. As such, she asserts that this means of transport is not merely utilitarian, replacing other forms of mobility: ''Rather it was with pride that students recounted their tales of adventure and the strategies they had used to overcome the problems encountered. The freedom to go where one pleased at any time was valued, but even more so when it is acquired by one's own ingenuity'' (Carlson, 1972, as cited in Laviolette, 2014: 7).

Another study from the early 1970s discusses hitchhiking by focusing on traveler personality. Miller's (1973) journalistic account presents a classification for the various kinds of road travelers roaming the highways at the time. He proposes a threefold categorization: students, street and road people, and runaways. While street people, who are at the bottom of the social hierarchy, are dependent on others for food and shelter, road people are those who have rejected the normative status structure of larger society in order to establish an alternative lifestyle. Contrary to road people who attempt to remove themselves from society, runaways are often making frantic attempts to create a home environment that is more tolerable than the one left behind. The third type of person on the road is the student, who is most relevant to the study at hand. Student travelers tend to view their hitchhiking experience as an adventure, and as a testimony to their independence and their ability to survive at minimum expense. Driven by the ideological romance of poverty, student travelers seek personal growth and rely on their wit and restraint. The student hitchhiker is engrossed in a quest to escape the constraints and responsibilities of adulthood, and reports having a compelling need to live life intensely and to pursue profound physical and mental experiences. However, the student's brief stint at poverty is a luxury accessible mostly to educated middle-class youth, rendering the romantic vision of squalor rather illusionary. The road thus becomes a living fantasy, a means of assuaging the dissonance between the irresponsibility of adolescence and the hitchhiker's looming adulthood.

Greenley and Rice's (1974) study, informed by questionnaires, sought to shed light on female hitchhikers' motivations by employing three broad approaches in deviance theory – strain or

motivational theories, control theories, and subcultural theories. As Chesters and Smith (2001) point out, the authors' use of strain, control, and subcultural theories illustrates their normative assumption that hitchhiking can be understood as a form of delinquency and deviant behavior. As for their motivations, Greenley and Rice (1974) argue that the students who hitchhiked did so because they had friends who engaged in the practice, regarded it positively, benefited from it in practical terms, and had had virtually no negative experiences of it (Greenley & Rice, 1974). Moreover, Greenley and Rice (1974) report that hitchhiking may signify a sense of trust between the motorist and hitchhiker and that it could be regarded as ''an active demonstration of the need and utility of cooperation and the sharing of possessions'' (1974: 99). Moreover, the authors posit that hitchhiking is a conscious demonstration of the hitchhiker's exemption from the time schedules and obligations which dictate most people's lives.

Rinvolucri's (1974) UK-based research was primarily informed by questionnaires and interviews with British hitchhikers (most of them male) in the late '60s (Chesters & Smith, 2001). Citing journalistic, autobiographical, and fictional material, Rinvolucri illustrates that hitchhiking was practiced in Britain, the United States and in other countries long before its heyday in the countercultural era of the '60s and '70s (*ibid*, 2001). According to Chesters and Smith (2001), Rinvolucri commends hitchhiking as an example of mutual aid and altruism, stating that it is '''an oft repeated act of practical friendly co-operation between human beings''' (3), and as a possible means of dissolving isolationism or indifference. In Rinvolucri's study, the hitchhikers are primarily students, and, at the time, often donned distinctive university scarves, signaling to potential lift-givers that they are 'respectable' and 'trustworthy'. Furthermore, he remarks that: ''There has to be basic trust for the hitch-hiking situation to be thinkable'' (Rinvolucri, 1974, as cited in Chesters & Smith, 2001: 4), and, while criticized for his outdated and naïve stance towards the personal risks associated with hitchhiking (Chesters & Smith, 2001), states that his interviewees reported few experiences of threatening sexual or violent encounters.

2.3 Unpredictability and Uncertainty

Unlike most academic work on hitchhiking which focuses on domestic travel in the United States and Britain, Garner's (2008a) research sheds light on the history of hitchhiking and lift-giving in post-war Australia. Her study is informed by a range of written and oral sources, particularly hitchhikers' memoirs and anecdotes, and touches upon a wide range of topics, such as trust, danger, sociability, control, economic exchange, morality, hospitality, and unpredictability. Garner (2008a) argues that the phenomenon of hitchhiking is characterized by paradoxes. While hitchhikers purposefully and self-consciously act outside of the market economy, they depend on the cooperation of drivers who *do* function within that system. Furthermore, the intentional renunciation of control over timetable – and, sometimes, even over destination – imbues the hitchhiking journey with a unique sense of unpredictability. This unpredictability can be experienced by turns (and even simultaneously) as freedom from the requirement to be anywhere at a particular time, and as imposed, exasperating passivity.

The haphazard rhythm of the voyage, with long waits between lifts in isolated and often dreary places, followed by intimate encounters with strangers, can be awkward, enlightening, comforting, and sometimes frightening (Garner, 2008a). Garner (2008a) cites American journalist and

author Tony Horwitz, who hitchhiked through the center of Australia in 1987, and who writes of a '''paranoid clarity that comes to those who stand alone by the road, for hours,''' and characterizes hitchhiking as '''at once the loneliest and most social of occupations. One moment you're stranded by the highway, as rootless as a piece of driftwood. The next moment you're thrust into someone else's car, someone else's life. Where the driver goes you will follow'' (Horwitz, 1989, as cited in Garner, 2008a: 11). This recurrent sequencing of acute solitude and intense togetherness necessitates certain strategies for psychological and physical survival. Yet what seems burdensome, even intolerable at times during the journey, is often described in hitchhikers' accounts as exactly that which draws them back again. Indeed, written accounts indicate that hitchhikers experience the journey as a test of character, and often describe their trip as a rite of passage, regardless of their age or situation. Many wish to reenact this rite of passage, particularly when they feel themselves once again being consumed by the routine of everyday urban life. Garner (2008a) admits that this is, to some extent, true of all travel experiences, no matter the kind. However, she argues that what is unique to hitchhiking is that there is no dependable template for the journey ahead, beyond its very unpredictability; "*anyone* (or no-one) might offer a lift. […] The trip might be slow or fast. There might be sleeping out under the stars (or the rain), or luxurious accommodation and food offered by a host. […] This uncertainty, at once exhilarating and scary, lies at the heart of the experience'' (*ibid*, 2008a: 11-12).

2.4 The Temporalities of Hitchhiking

According to O'Regan (2012), hitchhiking, with its varied paces and rhythms, challenges the standard, disciplinary patterns of movement and presents alternative, occasionally utopian notions of time. As a result, it is now being embraced by people who desire authentic social connections and seek to transgress cultural, social, and physical barriers, despite the prevalence of accelerating rhythms and normative patterns of movement.

In *Time and the Hitchhiker*, Garner (2008b) further elaborates on the temporalities of hitchhiking, arguing that hitchhiking's temporal mode differs vastly from other forms of travel. With most forms of transportation, the traveler can be fairly certain that – whether they be waiting in a queue for a ticket, or waiting for a bus, train or plane to arrive – eventually they will reach the front of the queue, and the vehicle will come. This doesn't apply to the hitchhiker; for them, there is, generally, no relaxing into the wait (*ibid*, 2008b). The brief moment of possibility during which the potential lift-giver speeds past in their car, is key to the particular quality of waiting that the hitchhiker experiences. For, as Garner (2008b) contends, when standing at the side of the road waiting for a ride, the hitchhiker must continuously perform for each passing vehicle. This involves displaying their face, presenting an upturned thumb or a sign indicating their intended destination, and conveying through their demeanor, facial expression, and attire that they are a trustworthy and friendly person who poses no threat to the driver. While those waiting in a bus shelter or airport lounge have the freedom to withdraw into their thoughts or express frustration at delays without penalty, the hitchhiker is bound to the anticipatory mode, and must display a constant positive attitude while waiting for a ride, which can make the waiting time feel never-ending.

Furthermore, Garner (2008b) suggests that the hitchhiker's expectation of the unknown – the possibility of encountering either something great or terrible with every ride – adds a distinct emotional dimension to the wait that distinguishes it from 'interstitial time', the period between

events. In today's fast-paced world, where waiting for anything is often viewed as undesirable, the hitchhiking experience serves as a reminder of the potential enjoyment that can be derived from waiting. Indeed, as author Anne Péchou writes: '''The uncertainty makes my heart speed up, the novelty sharpens my gaze''' (Péchou, 1981, cited in Garner, 2008b: 13).

2.5 Sociality and Exchange

While, as Garner (2008a) contends, the hitchhiker is motivated by a desire to escape from the constraints, time pressures, and anxieties of modern life, the lift-seeker still craves a level of control. This sense of control is directed, at the very least, towards the hitchhiker's ''own way of being, in space, and in relation to others in the world—for this is all they can control in the circumstances'' (*ibid*, 2008a: 12). In all the memoirs that Garner (2008a) has studied, the author establishes rules or principles, which serve to guarantee a measure of physical safety, as well as to invite good, long lifts. Furthermore, what her hitchhiking narratives have in common is the acknowledgement of an essential moral element in the encounter, an understanding of the ride as an exchange, not monetary but social. Those who hitchhike recognize an obligation to entertain or listen to the driver, and sometimes to keep the driver from dozing off at the wheel, even to take over some of the driving when asked to do so. According to Garner (2008a), recurrent hitchhikers cultivate a strong sense that they are giving as much as they are taking, which is a prevalent sentiment within the literature on hitchhiking (Gao, 2019; Lauricella & Lauricella, 2017; Laviolette, 2014, 2020; McGuire, 2017; O'Regan, 2012, 2016). Indeed, reciprocity is an indispensable element in the hitchhiking encounter (Lauricella & Lauricella, 2017).

According to O'Regan (2012), the practice of hitchhiking can be understood as part of an alternative mobility culture, one that challenges the conventional and expected ways of moving, dwelling and doing. Instead of paying for convenience and speed, hitchhiking values experiences, connections, and encounters. O'Regan asserts that each ride represents a unique and authentic moment that breaks through the monotony of everyday life. These journeys provide new knowledge and insights into the temporarily tangible and often memorable lives of others. Rather than relying on monetary exchange and binding conventions, the ability to engage in exchange relations is based on the shared experience of moving and dwelling together for brief but intimate periods, creating bonds that are both imagined and felt. Respondents who engage in hitchhiking believe that it enriches their lives by providing opportunities to challenge their assumptions and dispositions and refresh their energies to re-enter the rat race (*ibid*, 2012).

Garner's (2008a) in-depth analysis of hitchhiking narratives also expounds on the sociality of the encounter. In her account, the transient nature of the connection, and the intimate space of the car in motion, are fertile ground for confessions. On the one hand, the encapsulated space of the moving vehicle may bring about profound exchanges. Canadian travel writer and novelist, Will Ferguson, reveals that: ''When you are a hitchhiker, people spill their lives into your lap. Things they would never tell their family, they gladly surrender to a hitchhiker precisely because the hitchhiker is a stranger, a fleeting guest, a temporary confidant. But there is also something about the physical position; there is little eye contact'' (Ferguson, in Garner, 2008b: 11). On the other hand, this openheartedness may not always be appreciated: hitchhikers often describe getting an aural load from drunks, xenophobes, and misogynists. Out of fear of losing their ride, they seldom dare to

contradict the lift-giver. Such a loaded exchange may render the ride rather uncomfortable and exemplifies the ways in which power relations can function within the semi-private space of the vehicle (*ibid*, 2008a).

Although such distressing hitchhiking encounters do occur, Garner (2008a) reports that more often lift-seekers experience extraordinary hospitality and kindness from lift-givers, which may stretch beyond the lift itself, from lengthy detours to the provision of accommodation and home-cooked meals. Being offered such generosity and care convinces hitchhikers that putting their faith in strangers is largely worth it (*ibid*, 2008a). This hospitality can even have divine dimensions, as Lauricella and Lauricella (2017) suggest in their study on spirituality in hitchhiking as a practice and as a metaphor. The authors argue that hitchhiking is about finding and keeping faith. Both the lift-seeker and the lift-giver must have mutual trust, vulnerability, and openness. Following the rules of the road – facing the oncoming traffic, extending one's thumb and/or holding up a sign indicating the desired destination, ensuring that all parties are visible to the driver – helps to build credibility, honesty, and trustworthiness on the part of the hitchhiker (*ibid*, 2017). Although the notion of generosity is evident in the hitchhiking encounter on the part of the driver, Lauricella and Lauricella (2017) assert that the hitchhiking relationship is characterized by an element of reciprocity. While freeloaders are unappreciative and selfish, hitchhikers are, generally, extremely grateful, and generous, offering ''knowledge, small gifts, conversation, or simply sincere thanks, friendship, and good vibes'' (*ibid*, 2017: 4). The spiritual effect of such a hitchhiking encounter, one that entails uncommon benevolence between strangers, may be that, as the authors report, ''[it] restores [one's] faith in people'' (*ibid*, 2017: 3).

Despite the inherent turbulence and friction, hitchhikers view their journeys as valuable and inspiring, with the potential to affect, develop, and transform the self (O'Regan, 2012). The sense of control hitchhikers feel over their own mobility often fills them with pride. Although hitchhiking may be highly fragmented and inconvenient compared to the 'seamless' experience of private car travel, the intense encounters along the way keep hitchers open and sensitive to external effects, where physical sensations and efforts are acutely felt (*ibid*, 2012). By embracing the speed surrounding them, hitchhikers believe they can break down boundaries between public and private, insider and outsider, mobility and immobility, virtual and physical, host and guest, and tourist and traveler. In contrast to those who conceptualize hitchhiking as a form of alternative mobility which challenges the logic of speed, O'Regan (2012) argues that hitchhikers are not resistant to speed, but rather to the sense of placelessness and the loss of human interaction that it can bring.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, over the years, the phenomenon of hitchhiking has been studied from various perspectives, ranging from the motivations of hitchhikers to the social and cultural implications of the practice. Despite the diversity of these studies, certain elements emerge as central to the experience of hitchhiking. Mutual trust between lift-giver and lift-seeker and an understanding of the ride as a form of social exchange are fundamental to the practice. The transient nature of the connection between driver and hitchhiker and the nature of uncertainty further add to the excitement of the experience. Moreover, the hitchhiker's intentional renunciation of control and the practice's ability to overcome isolationism or apathy between strangers make hitchhiking unique. Hitchhiking is not only

about finding transportation, but may, for some, also be about finding and keeping faith in humanity. While hitchhiking may not be as common today as it once was, these core elements continue to make it a fascinating phenomenon worthy of further study.

3.

Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

While the phenomenon of hitchhiking has been studied from a multitude of perspectives, so far none have investigated the practice through the lens of resonance. The term resonance describes the quality of human relationships to the world, and Rosa proposes the concept of resonance as the *antithesis* to alienation – the particular mode of relating to the world of things, to people, and to oneself in which there is no responsivity, no meaningful inner connection (Rosa, 2018). Alienation is, in other words, a ''relation of relationlessness'' (Jaeggi, 2014: ix). This mode of relating is marked by the absence of a true, vibrant exchange and connection (Rosa, 2017), and this absence is a fundamental element of most forms of depression and burnout (*ibid*, 2018). Resonance – alienation's 'other' – thus refers to a way in which a person cognitively, emotionally, and physically connects with the world, whereby they feel impacted by the world or a part of it, rather than feeling disconnected or estranged (López-Deflory et al., 2022). Put differently, resonance is a mode of relating to the world in which individuals experience being touched, moved, or addressed by the people, places, objects, or other things they encounter (Rosa, 2017).

To enter a state of dispositional resonance, we must be willing to take the risk of making ourselves vulnerable (Rosa, 2018). This means being open to the possibility of being touched and even transformed in ways that are unpredictable and beyond our control. In situations where fear, stress, or the need for a specific outcome dominate, we are unlikely to permit resonance to occur. Furthermore, the desire to exert complete control over processes and outcomes in order to maximize efficiency and transparency is also an inhibitor to the cultivation of relationships of resonance, for such attempts at control are incompatible with the unpredictable and transformative nature of resonance. Therefore, the conditions necessary for resonance to occur require a context of mutual trust and fearlessness, which in turn requires time and stability as background conditions (Rosa, 2017).

As mentioned previously, the phenomenon of hitchhiking has not yet been theorized from the relatively novel angle of resonance. However, since there are various parallels between the available literature on hitchhiking and Rosa's antithesis to alienation, I believe that the student-led practice of lift-seeking would be an interesting site to explore the potential occurrence of resonance. For example, not only does Rinvolucri (1974) explicitly state that hitchhiking could be understood as a possible means of breaking down isolationism – a synonym for alienation – but the foundational elements of resonance – mutual trust, fearlessness, and time – as well as its inherent unpredictability and transformative potential further link the concept of resonance to the hitchhiking experience. In my view, the hitchhiker's intentional surrender of control over the journey, their openness, vulnerability, and complete reliance on strangers to get them someplace else, in addition to the fleeting and potentially profound nature of connection between driver and hitcher, render the hitchhiking experience, at least in theory, a potential site of resonant encounters. Admittedly, the nature of one's hitchhiking experience – whether it be dreadful, somewhat pleasurable, or wholly transformative – as well as the access one has to the practice itself, are dependent on a variety of factors, such as, but not limited to, one's race, gender, age, previous experience, location, time, and the weather. Thus, while the 'good' or 'transformative' hitchhiking experience may not be (easily)

available to all, the lift-seeker's time on the road and, specifically, the encounter between lift-seeker and lift-giver may, I believe, be an interesting case to investigate the concept of resonance.

In the following section, I will briefly outline Rosa's work and situate his concept of resonance within his larger oeuvre.

3.2 A Sociological Theory of Human Relationships to the World

German sociologist and political scientist, Hartmut Rosa, is considered by some to be a rising star in contemporary sociology and critical theory (Susen, 2020). His research, which has become increasingly influential, is focused on, among others, the analysis of modernity, the sociology of time and theory of acceleration, and what he calls the 'sociology of our relationship to the world'. His book *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (2019) is the latest stage in his analysis and critique of modernity. Rosa's endeavor to construct 'a sociology of world-relations', whose central element is the concept of 'resonance', stands firmly in the tradition of critical theory, for it seeks to uncover not only the pathological aspects of modernity, but also its utopian potential (Susen, 2020). In *Resonance*, Rosa seeks to extend the scope of critical theory by moving beyond the sphere of inter-subjective relations and by focusing on the *pathic* side of relationships, thereby emphasizing relation, emotion, and connection over agency, autonomy, reason, and emancipation (Rosa, 2023). By stressing the importance of receptivity and an attentive stance towards others, resonance theory implies an ethics of care. Moreover, in *Resonance*, Rosa is driven by two principal convictions: firstly, the diagnostic belief that, ''in the present era, the 'conditions of resonance are disturbed,''' signifying that '''modernity is out of tune'''; and secondly, the normative conviction that '''a different way of being-in-the-world, a different form of world-relation, is possible''' (Susen, 2020': 321).

Rosa's core interest lies in the question of the good life, and he considers modernity in terms of a broken promise: the very technology and social revolutions that were expected to bring about greater autonomy are instead becoming increasingly oppressive (Lijster & Celikates, 2019). In his previous work, *Alienation and Acceleration* (2010), Rosa conceptualizes acceleration as a totalitarian process, for it encapsulates all aspects of our personal and social lives, and is nearly impossible to resist, escape or criticize. As the book's title suggests, Rosa understands acceleration as the main contemporary source of alienation (*ibid*, 2019). In *Resonance*, Rosa builds upon the foundations laid in *Alienation and Acceleration*, resuming his investigation into the concept of alienation, which has a long and tenuous tradition in modern philosophy. According to German philosopher Axel Honneth (2005, in Jaeggi, 2014), no concept has been more influential in delineating the nature of early critical theory as the concept of alienation; the term is truly essential to the critical diagnosis of the conditions of social life. However, the concept of alienation has all but disappeared from the philosophical lexicon, as it presupposes a conception of the human essence, for ''whatever is diagnosed as alienated must have become distanced from, and hence alien to, something that counts as the human being's true nature or essence'' (*ibid*, 2005, in Jaeggi, 2014). Thus, while the concept of alienation is commonly considered an inherently problematic category – for it implies that certain subjects are removed from a state of 'true' humanity or authentic life, and who is the critical theorist to decide whose life is 'authentic' and whose isn't? (Lijster & Celikates, 2019) – Rosa believes that if connected to the conception of the good life, the contentious and neglected concept is reimbued with diagnostic significance. Indeed, Rosa

argues that by entirely discarding the notion of the good life, the concept of alienation loses its substance; ''it then risks becoming a mere label for things we don't like'' (Rosa, 2019: 64).

Armed with the revived concept of alienation, Rosa sets out to explore both the empowering and disempowering dimensions of modern societies (Susen, 2020). With regards to his conviction that acceleration is the primary contemporary source of alienation, Rosa states that ''[o]ne very curious but consistent fact about late-modern life is that almost irrespective of their values, status and moral commitments, subjects feel notoriously short on time and tirelessly pressed to hurry'' (Rosa, 2017: 438). Rosa further argues that the predicament that best defines the daily experience of the vast majority of individuals in Western capitalist societies is the imminent risk of 'temporal bankruptcy', despite their financial and technological affluence (*ibid*, 2017). This temporal predicament, he asserts, holds paramount importance in all our endeavors to lead a good life. Rosa's analysis of late-modern society identifies the structural requirements of growth, acceleration, and innovation as the main culprits of this temporal dilemma (*ibid*, 2017). In his work, Rosa (2010; 2017) identifies two cultural mandates that translate the structural need for growth, acceleration, and innovation into a strategic imperative to our pursuit of a fulfilling life: the logic of 'dynamic stabilization' and the 'triple A approach' to the good life. Furthermore, he proposes a different notion of what constitutes a good life, which could serve as a cultural and motivational tool to challenge these imperatives and collaboratively overcome the challenges of late modernity (*ibid*, 2017).

Put briefly, Rosa (2010; 2017) argues that the defining feature of a modern society or institution is that it can only stabilize itself dynamically. The logic of 'dynamic stabilization', i.e. the perpetual need for growth, acceleration and innovation, implies that we can only keep what we have – both on an individual and collective level – if we continuously increase speed and productivity. Indeed, ''Every year we have to run a bit faster to keep what we have'' (Rosa in Lijster & Celikates, 2019: 67). Moreover, Rosa posits that the core of leading a fulfilling life is not about the extent of one's resources (in money, wealth, options, or capabilities) – which he describes as the act of making more and more of the world available, accessible, and attainable; the 'triple A approach' – but rather, it is a particular way of *relating* to the world – to places and people, to ideas and bodies, to time and to nature, to self and others. The cultural imperative to enhance one's scope in the world – to turn the world into a point of 'aggression' (*ibid*, 2020) – Rosa asserts, leads to increasing alienation ''as a *failed* way of being and relating'' (*ibid*, 2007: 449; italics in original). This begs the following questions: What is the opposite of alienation? What is a 'good' or fulfilling way of relating to places, people, time, things, and self? And what is a non-pathological mode of being-in-the-world? This is where his theory of resonance comes in.

3.3 On Resonance

The 'dialectic of resonance and alienation' lies at the core of Rosa's argument concerning the profound ambivalence that pervades modern societies (Susen, 2020). Building upon his earlier work on acceleration, Rosa asserts that if the escalatory logic of capitalist modernity has produced crises in the environmental, political, and psychological spheres, then the counter-value which should be recognized and encouraged is resonance (Anderson, 2023). As he succinctly states in the first sentence of the book, ''If acceleration is the problem, then resonance might be the solution'' (Rosa, 2019: 1). For Rosa, resonance is not an emotional state, but a relational mode, according to which individuals

experience being touched, moved, or addressed by the people, places, objects, or other things they encounter (Rosa, 2017). Resonance can be regarded as both a *descriptive* and a *normative* concept (Masquelier, 2020). At the descriptive level, resonance describes what makes us human, as it is both a basic human need and a basic human capacity (Susen, 2020). Put differently, human beings are anthropologically disposed to resonance and are driven by two fundamental motivating factors: the desire for resonance and the fear of alienation (Anderson, 2023). At the normative level, the concept of resonance can serve as a critical tool, as a yardstick of the good life (Lijster & Celikates, 2019). The human search for resonance is intricately linked to the pursuit of a meaningful life; devoid of resonance-seeking activities, our lives would be purposeless (Susen, 2020). Put differently, ''We resonate, therefore we are'' (*ibid*, 2020: 315).

At the descriptive level, resonance can be experienced not only in relationships of love or friendship, but also in various settings, such as genuine dialogue, playing a musical instrument, engaging in sports, and in the workplace (Rosa, 2017). Resonance is not solely based on the experience of being emotionally moved, but also on the perception of one's own ability to influence others. This self-efficacy is realized when we recognize our capability to connect with and affect others, and when they respond in an honest way. Moreover, resonance is not a luxury form of relationship, but the most fundamental and primordial form of being in the world (Rosa, 2023). It's not something we need to acquire through cultural education; instead, we *unlearn* it in schools and in the competitive pursuit of economic, social, and cultural capital – i.e., the triple A approach to life. Indeed, in late-modern capitalist societies, there are a number of institutional 'resonance-killers', such as constant time-pressure, increased social competition and ontological insecurity (*ibid*, 2023). These elements erode people's trust and self-efficacy, diminishing the likelihood of resonant relationships.

Rosa (2017) describes resonance as the ''dual movement of af←fection (something touches us from the outside) and e→motion (we answer by giving a response and thus by establishing a connection)'' (449). Importantly, resonance cannot be established or controlled intentionally; it always remains elusive. Resonance is something that the subject *allows to happen*, not something the subject does; it is about *participating* rather than *acting* (*ibid*, 2023). Moreover, resonance shifts the locus of agency from the entities involved in a relationship to the shared space between them. For example, during a dance or a jazz performance, the dancers or musicians might feel that none of them individually has the lead or determines the sequence: The dance or the music itself is taking the lead (*ibid*, 2023). Furthermore, resonance is not an echo: it is not equivalent to hearing one's own voice amplified or merely experiencing a sense of reassurance. On the contrary, resonance requires encountering a real 'other' that is beyond our control, who communicates in a voice or manner different from ours, and who remains 'alien' to us (*ibid*, 2017).

We can only genuinely feel 'grasped' and moved when we sense that the other entity, which could be a person, a musical composition, a mountain, or a historical event, holds valuable insights for us, regardless of whether we find them agreeable or not. Thus, although resonance necessitates a moment of self-transcendence, it does not require prior experience of this other. Furthermore, resonance is not simply consonance or harmony; rather, it requires difference and opposition in order to facilitate a 'true' encounter. In fact, being 'in harmony with the world' and 'going with the flow' are the opposite of resonance, for resonance necessarily involves an element of transgression, of surpassing the anticipated and established (*ibid*, 2023). As such, resonance requires the possibility to say ''no'' within a resonant relationship. Thus, in a wholly harmonious or consonant society, resonance

would be absent, as we would be unable to differentiate the voice of an 'other', and consequently, unable to recognize and distinguish our own voice (*ibid*, 2017; 2018). In short, resonance necessitates diversity that enables the potential for assimilation: a reciprocal connection that involves gradual, mutual transformation and adaptation. As such, resonance lies between the states of consonance and immutable dissonance (*ibid*, 2017; 2018).

As mentioned previously, resonance necessitates an encounter with a real 'other,' one that remains 'alien' to us. This component of 'otherness' does not, however, mean that resonance as a mode of being-in-the-world can only be experienced by encountering the 'exotic', exceptional, extraordinary. Nor does it imply that this mode of being can be evoked through colonizing, domineering dynamics with other beings and things. The opposite appears to be the case, for Rosa (2019) writes that resonance is a responsive relationship, in which subject and world are mutually affected and transformed. Moreover, resonant relationships require that both subject and world speak in their own voice, while also remaining open enough to be affected or reached by each other (*ibid*, 2019). And finally, and most pressingly, resonance is Rosa's (2019; 2020) conception of a way of being-in-the-world that is *diametrically opposed* to the mode of being in which the world is a point of aggression: when we approach the world from a point of aggression, it appears to us as something to be known, exploited, attained, appropriated, mastered, and controlled – and this relationship to the world is incongruent with mutual affect and transformation.

3.4 The Four Elements of Resonance

Resonance, as a mode of relation, is defined by four crucial elements. The first characteristic is *being affected* – a←fection in the sense of the experience of being inwardly reached, touched, or moved by another person, a landscape, tune, or idea (Rosa, 2020). This experience of being moved by something can be described as a 'call' or an 'appeal.' We are suddenly called upon by something external to us and it becomes important to us for its own sake. The person or thing that makes this call upon us is not just of instrumental value, but 'intrinsically' important. We know we have been affected in this way when our sad or gloomy demeanor suddenly transforms into one of happiness, or when we find ourselves unexpectedly shedding tears. These signs indicate that the façade of objectification that typically governs our lives, with its focus on escalation, optimization, calculation, and domination, has momentarily been ruptured and we have left, what Rosa (2020) calls, 'the realm of aggression'.

The second characteristic of resonance is *self-efficacy*. Genuine resonance can only be said to occur when our receptive *response* follows the initial call. This e→motion always manifests itself in a physical response that we might refer to colloquially as '"getting goosebumps,' 'having the hairs on the back of our neck stand up,' or 'experiencing a shiver down our spine'" (Rosa, 2020: 32). Physiologically, this can be observed through changes in our skin resistance, breathing rate, heart rate, or blood pressure. Resonance also involves us responding to the impulse that calls us by reaching out towards what has stirred us. Viewed in this way, true resonance can only happen when we are capable of reaching out to the other side, when we feel connected to the world because we have the ability to influence something in it (which, in turn, also affects us). While autonomy is a necessary precondition for the experience of self-efficacy, autonomy by itself is not sufficient to enter into resonant relationships. Autonomy does not by itself establish the first element (affectability): "It gives us a voice, but not necessarily the ears to enter into resonance; it might make us responsible but not

necessarily 'response-able' per se'' (*ibid*, 2023: 8). If we are response-able and have the metaphorical ears to enter into such a relationship, a resonant connection may come about. The most basic form of such a resonant connection occurs when there is an exchange of glances or a dialogue in which both participants actively listen and respond to one another. ''Our eyes are windows of resonance'' (Rosa, 2020: 33), for when we gaze into someone's eyes and sense their gaze in return, we are resonating with them, unless we recoil from them by glaring in a hostile manner or ignore them with a lifeless stare.

Thirdly, there's the element of *adaptive transformation*. Whenever we resonate with another person, a book, a song, a landscape, or an idea, we are transformed by the encounter, although the nature of the change may vary greatly. Some encounters leave us feeling like a completely different person, while others may only result in minor, fleeting alterations, such as a change in our tone of voice. Nevertheless, in each case, resonant experience involves a shift in our relationship with the world. When we resonate with the world, we are irrevocably transformed. Experiencing resonance has the power to *transform* us, and it is this transformation that makes us feel alive (Rosa, 2020). If we no longer allow ourselves to be called or transformed, and we become unable to respond to the myriad of voices around us, we feel lifeless, unresponsive, and incapable of resonance. This state is symptomatic of depression, in which our axes of resonance have grown silent and desensitized, leaving us unresponsive and unfeeling. Simultaneously, we also experience a sense of being unable to connect with anyone, frozen and incapable of change. *''Everything out there is lifeless and dead*, we tell ourselves, *and everything in me is mute and cold*'' (Rosa, 2020: 34; italics in original). Thus, in order to experience resonance, we need to strike a delicate balance. We must remain open enough to be impacted or transformed by external stimuli, while also being closed off enough to respond effectively with our own unique voice.

The fourth aspect of resonant relationships is their *uncontrollability*. Resonance cannot be manufactured or engineered. There is no method, no seven-step guide that can ensure that we will be able to resonate with people or things. We can never predict whether or not resonance will occur and, if it does, how long it will last. Even if we try to manipulate subjective, social, spatial, temporal, and environmental factors to cultivate a resonant experience, it is still possible to feel completely unresponsive to stimuli. As with the act of falling asleep, the more effort we put into trying to make it happen, the less likely we are to succeed. Resonance is inherently beyond our control in another crucial way. While it inevitably transforms us, we cannot predict the exact nature or extent of that transformation until it is complete. Whether we are engaging with another person, a different form of life, an idea, a book, or a landscape, we cannot know beforehand how deeply we will be changed. As a result, the transformative effects of a resonant relationship always evade any intentional planning on our part. Resonance's inherent openness regarding its outcomes creates a fundamental tension with the social norms of continuous escalation and optimization. Furthermore, the uncontrollability of resonance means that it cannot be accumulated, saved, or instrumentally enhanced; as soon as we seek to instrumentalize other people and things, we close ourselves off, diminishing the possibility of resonance (Rosa, 2020).

3.5 Resonance in the Hitchhiking Encounter

Hitchhikers' accounts often emphasize the value of connections and encounters. Each ride may represent a unique and authentic moment that ruptures the tedium of everyday life. The shared experience of moving and dwelling together for brief but intimate periods often enables the formation of bonds that are both imagined and felt. These bonds, connections, and moments of genuine presence indicate that hitchhikers experience being touched or moved by the people and places they encounter on the road. True resonance can only happen when we can reach out to the other side, when we feel connected to the world because we have the ability to influence something in it, such as using one's skills to obtain a lift. Resonance may be evoked when, standing on the roadside, our gaze meets the driver's; when the car comes to a halt, the window rolls down, and an unfamiliar voice tells us to hop in. Or when, sitting in the backseat, the driver opens up, locking eyes with us in the rearview mirror. In such moments, we recognize our capability to connect with and affect others, as they respond to us in a genuine way, opening not just the private space of their vehicle, but also their usually hidden selves, to a stranger in need. The ride may involve an exchange of glances or a dialogue in which both hitcher and driver actively listen and respond to one another.

The hitchhiker is at odds with the surrounding environment: an image of stasis in a space marked by motorized movement, a bare human figure in the realm of anonymous, metal shelter. Moreover, in an age characterized by the neoliberal value of self-reliance, the purposeful dependence on other humans in an environment built for cars may serve to enhance the likelihood of connection. Connection may ensue when the hostile setting of the roadscape is humanized, when the driver recognizes the lift-seeker's humanity and grants them access to their vehicle. As with the hitchhiking experience, resonance is based on openness: we must remain open enough to be impacted or transformed by external stimuli for resonance to occur. Resonant experience involves a shift in our relationship with the world, and this transformation makes us feel alive. For the lift-seeker, the hitchhiking experience may bring about a transformation of the self as they encounter generous strangers, experience the road and time differently, and break with previous travel experiences, which have heretofore been premised upon monetary exchange. The encounter may not only affect the lift-seeker but may also change the driver: picking up a hitchhiker may challenge the lift-giver's previously held notions of risk and danger and may lead to a novel conception of their private vehicle and their personal space, as the car is momentarily rendered a form of semi-public transportation. In short, the hitchhiking encounter may be an exercise in recognizing others' humanity: when the driver stops and offers a lift, it confirms our self of self, our personhood, and our worthiness of help and kindness.

In short, I believe that it would be fruitful to use the concept of resonance to investigate the hitchhiking experience and the encounter between lift-seeker and lift-giver, for the practice constitutes a particular mode of being in the world which is, to some extent, at odds with the logics of late modernity. The purpose of this investigation is not to draw up a method for evoking resonance within the hitchhiking encounter and to present the practice as a surefire way of countering alienation – for that is impossible – but rather to explore hitchhikers' relationship to the world, and to look into whether their particular mode of relation to the people, places, objects, and other things they encounter on the road extends beyond the hitchhiking experience. In other words, in this study, I examine the motivations and affects of student hitchhikers, explore their mode of being while on the road, and investigate the nature of self-transformation within and beyond the hitchhiking experience.

4.

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This master's thesis investigates student hitchhikers' relationship to the world through qualitative means. Based on the literature review, there appears to be a methodological gap regarding the concept of resonance. Aside from one study in the field of nursing (López-Deflory et al., 2022), Rosa's theory of resonance has seemingly not been operationalized or used to study social practices. As for research on the phenomenon of hitchhiking, most scholars make use of ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and in-depth interviews, as well as textual analysis. As resonance is largely understudied and finding methods that are apt for investigating the concept has proven challenging, I have chosen to tweak conventional ethnographic methods to explore the concept of resonance.

As such, I have conducted semi-structured interviews, using a form of sensory elicitation when possible. Participants were asked to bring along an image, video, or audio fragment that was recorded during or that reminded them of their hitchhiking experience. This audio-visual elicitation material served to guide the interview process, aiding participants to get 'into the zone' and tap into memories of resonance on the road. Put differently, the sensory elicitation methods were used to facilitate respondents' recollection and narration of previously experienced affects, emotions, and mode of being in and relating to the world during the hitchhiking journey. As there is, to my knowledge, virtually no other research that uses the concept of resonance to investigate social practices, this study is rather exploratory in nature.

4.2 Exploring the Visceral Realm

In this research project, the focus is on the sensory, or visceral, realm. The 'visceral' has been described as the bodily realm where feelings, sensations, and moods are experienced (Hayes-Conroy, 2010), and as ''the ways of being that emerge from our sensory engagement with the material and discursive environments in which we live'' (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2010: 1274). Put differently, the 'visceral' broadly refers to a realm in which bodies are affected, registering feelings, sensations, moods, emotions and so on.

4.2.1 *Sensory Elicitation Methods*

One way of tapping into participants' feelings, sensations, and moods is by using sensory elicitation techniques. Elicitation is a research method in which informants' reflections are sought by using a prompt rather than by asking direct questions (Harris, 2015). Elicitation methods seek to gain accounts of experience, memories, emotions, and the meanings that respondents place on the elicitation material (Allett, 2010). According to Harris (2015), the use of probes enables participants to be more relaxed during interviews, as they may feel that they are not the object of the investigative session. While some scholars argue that elicitation encourages respondents to reveal *more* information, others posit that the effect of elicitation is not more information, but a different *kind* of information (*ibid*, 2015).

Much of the literature on elicitation techniques focuses on the use of visual material, such as photographs and drawings, or elicitation with objects (Harris, 2015). With regards to visual elicitation, there are three types: the use of researcher-generated images, found images, and participant-generated images (*ibid*, 2015). As for sonic elicitation, researchers can make use of musical and non-musical sounds to trigger memories and stories from informants that might otherwise be difficult to describe or remember.

Concept	**Variables**	**Operational definition**	**Operationalization**
Resonance	Being affected	Being affected is the experience of being inwardly reached, touched, or moved by something external to us.	We experience an affective response. We know we have been affected when our sad demeanor suddenly transforms into one of happiness, or when we find ourselves unexpectedly shedding tears.
	Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy is the experience of responding to the initial call, which manifests itself in a physical response, and reaching out towards what has stirred us.	Self-efficacy manifests itself in a physical response, such as changes in our skin resistance, breathing rate, heart rate, or blood pressure. It can also take the form of an exchange of glances or a dialogue in which both participants actively listen and respond to one another.
	Adaptive transformation	Adaptive transformation is the experience of being transformed by the encounter with another person, an object, a place, or an idea.	A resonant encounter may leave us feeling like a completely different person, while others may only result in minor, fleeting alterations, such as a change in our tone of voice.
	Uncontrollability	Resonance is inherently uncontrollable: it cannot be engineered or manufactured. We can never predict whether resonance will occur and, if it does, how long it will last.	We experience resonance as fleeting. We cannot expect it to occur nor have any control over its duration.

Graph 1: Operationalizing Resonance.

4.2.2 *Methodological Limitations of Visceral Research*

Hayes-Conroy (2010) argues that for a discipline increasingly attuned to bodies, geographers often put too much emphasis on talk. She stresses that commentary alone is not a substitute for the subtleties of embodied life, even if it is talk about the body. Moreover, verbal answers to questions of feeling, while important, could oversimplify visceral experience (*ibid*, 2010). Harris (2015) appears to agree with her, stating that although sensory memories may be vividly recalled by "the faintest whiff" (25), they are notoriously difficult to describe verbally. In her article on sound elicitation, Harris (2015)

sheds light on the ways in which respondents may choose to express their visceral experiences, from using words to describe their impressions, to making gestures, pictures, or mimicking. In essence, Hayes-Conroy (2010) writes that visceral fieldwork is meant to open space for questioning, addressing and possibly shifting our ways of feeling and sensing the world, and that verbal data is limited in its capacity to capture the complexity of visceral experience. I will discuss the potential limitations to verbal data in more detail in the limitation section.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

4.3.1 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

In this research project, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In the interviews I covered a variety of themes, from students' motivation to hitchhike, and the experiential component of the practice – what they felt and how they were affected – to how they regarded and experienced the practice in comparison to their everyday lives. I intended to get respondents to reflect on the themes of viscerality and affectivity – the sensory experience of hitchhiking – their mode of relation to the world while on the road, and the factors that contributed to or inhibited resonance within the hitchhiking experience. Below, I've outlined the research questions and the topics I covered in the interviews.

4.3.2 *Research Questions*

1. What motivates students to hitchhike?
2. What does resonance look and feel like in hitchhiking?
3. For whom is resonance evoked in hitchhiking?

RQ1: What motivates students to hitchhike?	**Motivation**	Why do students hitchhike? What are they after? What are they hoping to encounter or get away from?
RQ2: What does resonance look and feel like in hitchhiking?	**Affect**	What do student hitchhikers feel when on the road? How do they describe the sensory experience of hitchhiking? How are they affected? What contributed to these affects? To what extent do they seek to be affected in this way?
RQ2: What does resonance look and feel like in hitchhiking?	**Mode of Being**	How do hitchhikers describe their mode of being while hitchhiking? How do they relate to time, space, self, and others while on the road? Does the sensory experience of hitchhiking differ from the ways of being in daily life, and if so, how?
RQ3: For whom is resonance evoked in hitchhiking?	**Resonance**	For whom is resonance evoked in hitchhiking? What factors contribute to or inhibit resonance on the road?

Graph 2: Interview Themes.

4.3.3 *Sensory Elicitation Techniques*

With regards to the structure of the interviews, I explored the concept of resonance by making use of sensory elicitation techniques whenever possible. I believed that photo and sonic elicitation techniques, which entail the use of an image or sound fragment to guide the interview process, would be most useful to the present study. This elicitation material was either participant-generated or participant-found, i.e. the material was either recorded by or in the presence of the interviewee during the hitchhiking trip, or it was selected by the interviewee because of its reminiscence to their visceral experience on the road.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted as follows: Once I received confirmation that the respondent wished to participate in the research, they were sent a Participation Information Sheet (see Appendix) in which they were informed about the use of sensory elicitation methods. In an email, I asked participants to bring along an image, video, song, or sound fragment that was taken during their hitchhiking trip or that reminded them of their journey on the road. These audiovisual pieces were used to guide the interview process and served as vehicles for the recollection and narration of the participants' visceral experiences while hitchhiking alongside the predetermined interview questions. I asked the respondents to expound on why they selected the material, what it evoked in them, how they thought they felt in the moment, how it captured their hitchhiking experience, and what else stood out from the trip. As such, the expectation was that the elicitation material would aid in the stimulation of visceral memory and (further) facilitate a dialogue.

4.3.3.1 *General Interview Questions*

1. Why do you hitchhike? How did you get into hitchhiking?
2. Where and with whom have you hitchhiked?
3. What were you trying or hoping to get (away from)?
4. What does hitchhiking mean to you? What do you like and dislike about the practice?
5. Tell me about a memorable experience on the road. Why was it memorable? What about it stands out? Did this experience change you? If so, how?
6. Tell me about an experience when you felt connected to a stranger, when you experienced generosity, or when you felt vulnerable. Why did you feel connected or vulnerable? How has this experience influenced you?
7. How does your hitchhiking experience differ from your daily life? What is, to you, different about hitchhiking? What elements of hitchhiking do you normally not experience in your everyday life?

4.3.3.2 *Photo and Video Elicitation*

Please tell me about the image or video fragment you've selected.

1. If participant-generated: What's going on here? Where was it taken? How do you think you felt in the moment? What does it evoke? What else stands out from this trip?
2. If participant-found: Why did you choose it? How does it make you feel? How does it capture your hitchhiking experience? Why do you associate it with being on the road? What stands out from your trip?

4.3.3.3 *Sound Elicitation*

Please tell me about the sound fragment or song you've selected.

1. If participant-generated: What's going on in this sound fragment? Where was it taken? How do you think you felt in the moment? What does it evoke? What else stands out from this trip?
2. If participant-found: Why did you choose it? How does it make you feel? How does it capture your hitchhiking experience? Why do you associate it with being on the road (melody, lyrics, etc.)? What stands out from your trip?

Research Questions	**Conceptual Framework**	**Methods**	**Type of Analysis**
1. What motivates students to hitchhike?	Rosa's theory of Resonance.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews using sensory elicitation techniques.	Qualitative analysis: interview transcription and coding.
2. What does resonance look and feel like in hitchhiking?	Rosa's theory of Resonance.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews using sensory elicitation techniques.	Qualitative analysis: interview transcription and coding.
3. For whom is resonance evoked in hitchhiking?	Rosa's theory of Resonance.	Semi-structured in-depth interviews using sensory elicitation techniques.	Qualitative analysis: interview transcription and coding.

Graph 3: Research Matrix.

4.3.4 *Ethical Considerations*

4.3.4.1 *Ethical Reflection on Methods*

Although ethics are an issue for many research methods, there are particular ethical considerations that arise when probing into sensory memories that might generate stories otherwise concealed. As Harris (2015) points out, sensory memories may evoke flashbacks or traumatic experiences – they might unleash emotions for which the respondent is unprepared. As resonance is not an emotional state, but a mode of relation, 'negative' emotions such as sadness or loneliness can result in experiences of resonance (Rosa, 2019). Therefore, when exploring the concept of resonance in the practice of hitchhiking, the use of sensory elicitation methods aimed at gaining access to participants' visceral realm may, in effect, conjure up negative emotions. Put differently, while the intention here was not to evoke painful emotions on the road within the participants, the concept of resonance does not discriminate between so-called negative and positive emotions. Therefore, it was of utmost importance to remain vigilant to the ethical consequences of opening up potentially sensitive areas and to approach the participants in a sensitive and sensible manner, incorporating trauma-informed care strategies in the interview sessions.

4.3.4.2 *Trauma-Informed Research Guidelines*

While I did not intend to bring up traumatic memories among the research participants, there was a chance that, in exploring resonance, respondents were brought to revisit emotionally laden experiences on the road. To ensure the interviewees' safety and promote their resilience, I made use of Alessi and Kahn's (2023) trauma-informed qualitative research guidelines. While their research focused on multiply marginalized queer and transgender migrants in South Africa, I believed that some of the guidelines they formulated would be useful for my investigation. In essence, they argue that researchers should recognize that trauma is pervasive and thus may have impacted research participants (Alessi & Kahn, 2023). Three out of five guidelines for conducting trauma-informed qualitative research were particularly pertinent to the present study, namely: (1) Preparing for the qualitative interview or focus group: Establishing safety and trust in the research environment; (2) Extending safety and trust into the qualitative interview or focus group, and; (3) Knowing when to change course to avoid re-traumatization in the interview or focus groups. More concretely, Alessi and Kahn (2023) stress that researchers should: conduct research in a physical environment that is not only accessible but also welcoming; strengthen participant capacity for choice, control, and setting boundaries (internal safety); remember that certain questions, which may seem benign to researchers, can be triggering to participants if they bring up memories or strong feelings about a specific situation; recognize the implicit or explicit messages that participants send when they may be uncomfortable (e.g., going numb, appearing blank or disengaged, expressing overwhelming emotion, appearing angry or frustrated); and finally, ensure that participants conclude the interview feeling empowered.

4.3.5 *Study Sample*

In this study, I conducted 15 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 16[1] young adults between the ages of 18-30 that had engaged in the practice of hitchhiking as a form of leisure travel. I mainly targeted students in the Netherlands that had some experience hitchhiking. However, this experience was not necessarily extensive: people that had been on a single hitchhiking trip were also considered for this investigation. I attempted to include a diverse sample of respondents with regards to age, gender, race, nationality, geographic location of the hitchhiking journeys, and experience (both with regards to the number of trips taken by this mode of travel and the overall experience of being on the road, i.e., positive or negative associations to hitchhiking). I made use of a variety of recruitment techniques to attempt to reach a sufficiently diverse study sample. Firstly, I used the method of snowball sampling, as I had some initial connections and believed that potential respondents would be able to direct me to friends or other acquaintances that had engaged in the practice or with whom they had hitchhiked together. Additionally, I recruited participants outside of my social sphere by disseminating calls for participants online, through public university-related social media groups or private messaging groups (WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook).

[1] One interview session was conducted with two interviewees simultaneously. These two were a couple who had gone on an extensive, cross-border hitchhiking trip together and who recounted their shared experiences on the road.

Interviewee	Gender	Age	Nationality	Interview setting
1	F	25	Non-Dutch European	In-person
2	F	24	Non-Dutch European	In-person
3	M	27	Dutch	In-person
4	M	28	Dutch	In-person
5	M	27	Dutch	Online
6	M	25	Dutch	In-person
7	M	24	Dutch	In-person
8	F	27	Non-Dutch European	Online
9	F	26	Dutch	Online
10	M	24	Non-Dutch European	Online
11	M	24	Dutch + Non-Dutch European	In-person
12	M	30	Dutch	In-person
13	F	24	Non-Dutch European	Online
14	M	26	Dutch	In-person
15	F	28	Dutch	In-person
16	M	25	North American	Online

Graph 4: Study Sample

4.4 Data Analysis

The interviews were either conducted in person (in Wageningen and Amsterdam) or online (through Microsoft Teams). The former method applied to 9 interviews and the latter to 6. The interviews lasted between 30 – 80 minutes. The in-person interviews were recorded both on my laptop and phone, and the online interviews were recorded using Teams software, all with my participants' consent. After the interview sessions, I transcribed the recordings using Microsoft Word online transcription software and then edited the Word-generated transcriptions by hand. First, I analyzed the interview transcriptions on paper and then used the qualitative data analysis program, ATLAS.ti, to digitally code the interview transcripts. The use of qualitative software enabled me to process and analyze a large dataset more easily than by hand.

During the textual analysis stage, I read through the data, applied codes to excerpts, conducted various rounds of coding, grouped codes according to themes, and then made interpretations that lead to the ultimate research findings. Moreover, I combined both deductive and inductive approaches to coding, meaning that I started off with a set of codes, came up with new ones as I combed through the data, and re-evaluated the initial ones through repeated cycles of coding. The initial set of codes contained terms such as: 'practices', 'emotions', 'time', 'space', or 'identity', and were later further divided into subcodes. The initial codes, new codes, and subcodes were grouped together and collectively formed a coding tree for thematic analysis. This grouping enabled me to discern themes and patterns and allowed me to interpret the data.

4.5 Further Considerations

4.5.1 *Positionality*

In this positionality statement, I locate my views, values, and beliefs about the research design, conduct, and output. As such, I acknowledge my current position vis-a-vis three areas: (1) the subject under investigation, (2) the research participants, and (3) the research context and process (Holmes, 2020).

I approached the topic of study as an aficionado of hitchhiking – one who has undertaken several hitchhiking trips across Western and Central Europe, and with some experience lift-seeking in Japan. My academic background in anthropology and human geography, and my longstanding interests in social ethics, 'alternative' ways of living, and the psychosomatic manifestation of contemporary speed regimes, collectively inform my investigative lenses – from a focus on the body and viscerality, to temporalities, and the moralities of social interaction and care, to name but a few. Having come of age in a time marked by, in my view, increasing neo-liberalization, political polarization, screen-mediated social interaction, environmental degradation, and the resulting erosion of trust between strangers, I have been drawn to seek out 'other' ways of being together; modes of social interaction that implicitly and explicitly challenge the logics of my present place and time. Put differently, I have been curious to explore ways of living that subvert the currents of increased speed, growth, efficiency, control, privatization, digitization, individualization, and monetization. In my view, the practice of hitchhiking can, under certain circumstances, be experienced as a realm in which both the lift-seeker and lift-giver break with the logics of modernity and collectively enact alternative ways of conviviality, in the sense of 'being together'.

Aside from my personal, theoretical, and philosophical beliefs, the approach in this investigation and the experiences that informed it, were, naturally, also shaped by the intersection of my various identities. While I acknowledge that I am, in all likeliness, not wholly aware of how I have constructed my identities and the role they played in this research project, I do believe that I was able to identify at least a few ways in which my selfhood guided my investigative lenses and the potential influences my identity markers had on the project at hand. Not only has my age shaped my perspective on travel and my desire to focus on the experiences of fellow student hitchhikers, but my socioeconomic status as a privileged young adult with a significant amount of cultural capital, limited economic capital, and an inability to drive, also guided my interest in the practice and my approach to hitchhiking as a form of leisure travel, rather than as a way of commuting or as a permanent lifestyle on the road. Furthermore, my gender (man), race (white), religious beliefs (atheist), political beliefs (socialist, anarchist) also served to influence my approach.

While I have not engaged in the practice of hitchhiking for very long, nor have I embarked on many multi-day road trips, I do believe that my limited experience hitchhiking did render me somewhat of an insider in this alternative mobility culture. My deliberate choice to focus this research on a social phenomenon I had previously taken part in also influenced who I wished to engage in this study and how the participants may have conceived of my identity. Indeed, I was curious to explore the experiences of other student hitchhikers, to investigate to what extent their relationship to the world while on the road showed parallels to mine, and to gain an insight into the contextual factors that influenced the particular mode of being that hitchhiking enables. My positionality here influenced

not only how I found participants, but also how informants perceived me and related to me, how I guided the interview sessions, what I listened for, how I unconsciously biased and analyzed the data. Although I acknowledge that I may not have been fully aware of how others constructed my identities, I hoped that my status as an insider – a fellow student hitchhiker with striking memories, both frightening and illuminating, from my time on the road – would allow me to engage potential participants, gain their trust, facilitate their verbal accounts, and accurately represent their experiences while hitchhiking. However, it must be noted that, despite my best intentions, my fixed identity markers – such as my race, sex, gender, age – may have acted as limitations to the diverse, intersectional, and accurate description of student hitchhikers' relationship to the world.

Finally, I must locate myself with regards to the research context and process. Once again, I should acknowledge that, within the research context and process, bias is inevitable, and that qualitative research can never be wholly free from subjectivity. To illustrate, Jameson's (1981: 9) concept of the 'political unconscious' highlights how ''we never really confront a text immediately, in all its freshness as a thing-in-itself. Rather, texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations''. Here, Jameson draws attention to our fundamental inability to approach an object of study from an objective standpoint. As such, my positionality not only shaped my interest in the topic at hand, but, as Holmes (2020) points out, has also influenced my interpretation of and belief in the validity of the academic literature that I've read for this proposal, and my views about the research design, conduct, and output. Nevertheless, in this positionality section, I have given considerable thought to how my selfhood might have influenced my research project, and I made a conscious effort to cultivate a sense of awareness of my biases and mitigate them whenever possible.

5.

Results

5.1 Motivations

According to my interviews, student hitchhikers are motivated to engage in the practice for a multitude of reasons. Their motivations range from, and are often a combination of, social, philosophical, political, practical, and personal growth factors. As such, most interviewees stated that they were drawn to hitchhiking because they regarded it as a cheap, fun, and adventurous way of traveling, one that entails a certain level of sociality, freedom, spontaneity, unpredictability, and flexibility. Some also mentioned that they engaged in the practice of hitchhiking for environmental reasons; because it is a conscious and slow mode of travel; because it is the most convenient way of getting around in areas with a lack of public transportation options; because it enabled them to challenge themselves or because they wished to experience a different way of living; and finally, because hitchhiking was a common mode of local transportation in a certain area, which they wanted to partake in. In the following section, I will outline the range of student hitchhikers' motivations in more detail and illustrate them with respondent quotes.

5.1.1 *Cheap, Fun, Adventurous*

By far the most prevalent reason to engage in the practice of hitchhiking that respondents mentioned is that the act of lift-seeking represents a fun, adventurous, and cheap way to travel. Interviewees stated that they *''just wanted to go on an adventure''* (P3), and that they *''wanted an adventurous plan''* (P14 & 15). Moreover, hitchhiking was *''a fun thing to do''* (P3), *''a way to be adventurous and meet new people on the road''* (P11), it allowed them to *"seek adventure or things you can't predict''* (P5), and it was considered *''just a fun way to get around (…) that is free and adventurous''* (P10). Another important motivating factor was the cheap nature of hitchhiking. Interviewees stated that they *''didn't have a lot of money to spend''* (P14 & 15), that they *''wanted to do a budget trip, so it was mainly to save money''* (P8), that *"When you're a student, you don't have a lot of money, and hitchhiking is kind of a way to save money''* (P11), that *''Because I'm a student, I don't have a lot of money and it's for free, or cheap''* (P7), and that *"Going from A to B in a cheap way is the most important motivation for doing it. All these things that you experience (…) are additional to the main goal of getting somewhere cheaply''* (P5).

5.1.2 *Strangers, Encounters, Conversations*

Aside from it being a cost-efficient and adventuresome mode of travel, the most often mentioned reason for partaking in the practice was that it is a sociable way to get around, one that enables participants to encounter strangers and engage in conversation with them. As such, participants expressed that they wanted to *"meet new people''* (P3), that *''the encounter was what I was hoping for''* (P4), and that they could foster *"connections or ephemeral relationships with strangers (…). You meet people, spend time with them and ask them about their lives, and they ask you about your life''* (P1). These chance encounters also enabled participants to interact with people that they were

unlikely to meet otherwise. They shared that hitchhiking *''is about interacting with people you otherwise wouldn't''* (P10), that *''you [come] into contact with people that you normally maybe wouldn't. [You] get to (…) talk with them on a very intimate level that goes both ways''* (P12), and that it allows them to *''get out of my bubble a bit''* (P6).

5.1.3 *Process over Destination*

Another common motivating factor that respondents mentioned was that hitchhiking was not simply about reaching a certain destination, but that it also placed importance on the journey itself. According to some interviewees, *''the point of things is also the process, not just the end result – especially when travelling''* (P1), and that while *''the destinations were always fun, (…) the trip wasn't only about arriving at a destination. [It was about] having some nice experiences on the journey somewhere''* (P13). One respondent stated:

> *There's a different weight that you're placing on different parts of (…) the journey because you're saying: the journey is as important as the destination. (…) It's also kind of saying like, ''The nice thing about this holiday is us being together wherever the fuck we end up,'' rather than this idea of getting to El Dorado as fast as possible and then expecting El Dorado to justify the whole. It's company over location in a way''* (P11).

For some participants, the destination wasn't simply of *less* value than the process; it was of virtually *no* importance at all, for they didn't even have a physical location in mind: *''You don't even need to necessarily have a fixed destination; you can allow yourself to be inspired along the way''* (P2).

5.1.4 *Spontaneity, Unpredictability, Freedom*

Closely related to the aforementioned factors of adventure and sociality, respondents also disclosed that they were looking for a sense of spontaneity, unpredictability, and freedom. One interviewee stated: *''Spontaneity [and] the unexpected: That's the whole point of hitchhiking''* (P11). Other respondents said that *''hitchhiking is just really spontaneous. You don't know who you'll meet, how it'll go. And I like to live life a bit more spontaneously''* (P7), that it's about *''seeking adventure or things you can't predict''* (P5), that what drew them to the practice was *''not knowing who you're getting in a car with''* (P6), and another respondent disclosed that while *''it gives me a fuck ton of anxiety (…), I like that sort of freedom, the spontaneous part''* (P2). Moreover, one respondent with extensive hitchhiking experience shared that the unpredictable nature of the practice is the principal reason for their recurring participation: *''I haven't found the pattern to it, so that's what keeps me coming back''* (P10).

5.1.5 *A Personal Challenge and a Different Way of Being*

For some interviewees, hitchhiking was an appealing practice as it served as a way to challenge themselves to interact with strangers or embrace uncertainty, thereby making life more interesting. One respondent said: *''I think it was a bit of an exercise for me because I don't necessarily like talking*

to strangers. It was (…) an exercise to enter into a different mindset'' (P13). Another participant shared that they *''saw it as a bit as a [personal] challenge to (…) allow myself to be spontaneous. To embrace that a bit, that fear. Not knowing where you'll sleep that night and not knowing what people you'll meet''* (P2). Similarly, one interviewee shared: *''I like to have control in daily life, and this allows me to completely detach from that''* (P9). According to one respondent, weathering manufactured challenges makes life more compelling:

> *Overcoming challenges – even if it's artificial ones like, ''Are we going to get a ride?'', and ''Let's make our lives difficult by not going by bus and by hitchhiking instead'' – most people see it as making your life more difficult, but with the right person, it actually feels like you're making it more interesting.* (P10)

For other participants, hitchhiking was charged with political significance; it served as a way to temporarily enact ways of living and relating to others that were uncommon in daily life:

> *I feel like it's really about trying to live your life in a different way. On the one hand, it's a very simple thing to do, to hitchhike. But it's also charged with this power: you're doing something that is not [really] intended by the system. It's a bit political to me to try to put into practice how you would interact differently with people.* (P13).

Another mentioned that he was drawn to the practice of lift-seeking because it allowed him to relate to others differently:

> *I've always been interested in the bonding or generosity aspect of strangers helping you get from point A to point B. There's always been that point of relying on other people in the community to help you in a time of need.* (P16)

5.1.6 *Flexible Mobility*

Another motivating factor that respondents mentioned was that hitchhiking allowed for more flexibility than formalized forms of transportation and that hitchhiking enabled them to get around in areas where public transportation was either lacking or wholly absent. Interviewees stated that they *''wanted to be flexible''* (P14 & 15), and that they:

> *[D]idn't want to plan anything. And that's the thing with hitchhiking, you don't have to plan anything; you* can't *even plan anything. You just go and see where you end up. If you want to take the train or a bus then you have to plan, and I don't like that.* (P3)

In line with that, another respondent said that *''It's not a fixed route that you're taking. So you [just] talk to people and they drop you off where you need to go, in the best possible outcome. You're not bound to any schedules or trains and buses''* (P2). As for the element of lacking public transportation options, participants shared that *''It was mostly for short ends in really desolate areas where there wasn't [any public transportation]. There were no buses, for example, so it was born out of necessity''* (P9), that they *''had to interview people in very remote places in Bulgaria, in mountainous villages, where there's no public transport at all''* (P10).

5.1.7 *Slow, Sustainable, Local*

Finally, interviewees also shared that what attracted them to the practice was that it was a conscious mode of travel, which allowed them to be more aware of the environment and of the geographical space they were traversing, and that they wanted to take part in a local custom. One respondent stated:

> *I think it's nice to realize that if you're going far, you're going very far. And I think you realize this more when you travel in this way. You have this sense that you're moving slowly across the map rather than ''OK, I'll fly for a for a day, and I'm halfway across the world.'' [For me, it's about] internalizing how nice it is to be able to travel. I think slow travel allows for that a lot more.* (P1)

On the topic of sustainability, participants stated that they didn't want to *''go by plane''* (P14 & 15), or *''take any flights''* (P8), and that they *''always see people alone in their car with four empty spots and, in a very practical sense, I see it as a nice way of filling those spots''* (P2). Lastly, an interviewee mentioned that in some parts of the world, hitchhiking in a common local practice, and that they wanted to explore this local custom: *''If you need help and you [stand] by the street, someone will pick you up. It's part of the culture there. We wanted to get inside the culture and have this experience, too''* (P8).

5.1.8 *Reflection*

In my conversations with interviewees, it appeared to me that for most respondents, the act of hitchhiking principally represented a mode of travel that served as an alternative to most conventional forms of transportation. These interviewees stressed the importance of flexibility, affordability, and sociality, and shared that they were initially drawn to the practice by a longing for adventure. This valorization of experiences, connections, and encounters over convenience and speed reflects O'Regan's (2012) understanding of hitchhiking as part of an alternative mobility culture, one that challenges the conventional and expected ways of moving, dwelling and doing. Moreover, the interviewees' accounts also confirm the continued relevance of Miller's (1973) typification of student travelers, for, as with the student hitchhikers in the early 1970s, my participants tended to regard their lift-seeking experience as an adventure, and as a testimony to their independence and their ability to survive at minimum expense. They were also motivated to challenge themselves, pursue profound physical and mental experiences, and seek personal growth.

While they often initially sought to experience a different mode of travel, in some cases, participants' motivations changed over time as they gained both more hitchhiking and life experience. As such, some of them expressed that while they were originally motivated for reasons of cheap, sociable adventure, over the course of their hitchhiking travels they came to regard the practice in different light, attributing broader social meaning to their trips. However, a minority of respondents expressed that they were drawn to the practice for reasons of social and societal significance from the start. For them, the significance of the practice of hitchhiking extended beyond the realm of travel and represented not simply an unconventional mode of getting around, but more so a way of enacting other modes of living and being together with others. For these participants, the act of lift-seeking was often part of a larger set of beliefs and practices and was borne out of an interest in anarchism or

a longing for alternative ways of living. Some mentioned that hitchhiking was a manifestation of their political or philosophical convictions, which placed value on non-commercial cooperation, mutual trust, and voluntary simplicity. This understanding of hitchhiking, which I regard as a form of prefigurative politics – the deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now (Raekstad & Gradin, 2020: 10) – differs markedly from Miller's (1973) description of the student traveler's motives. Rather than being driven by a romantic vision of squalor and engaged in a quest to break with the constraints and responsibilities of adulthood, this type of hitchhiker is arguably motivated not by escape, but by the constructive desire to enact alternative modes of relating to others.

5.2 Resonance in Hitchhiking: What Does it Look and Feel Like?

As mentioned previously, resonance is a relational mode, according to which individuals experience being touched, moved, or addressed by the people, places, objects, or other things they encounter. Resonance is not only subject to the experience of being emotionally moved, but also on the perception of one's own ability to influence others. This self-efficacy is realized when we acknowledge our capacity to connect with and affect others, and when they respond in a 'genuine' way. Furthermore, resonance is not an echo: it is not equivalent to hearing one's own voice amplified or merely experiencing a sense of reassurance. On the contrary, resonance requires difference and opposition in order to facilitate a 'true' encounter. Crucially, getting into resonance involves a sense of not knowing when it happens, not knowing what the outcome will be. Resonance can be experienced in a reciprocal connection that involves gradual, mutual transformation and adaptation and thus requires a disposition of openness and a conscious acceptance of vulnerability.

Within the realm of hitchhiking, resonance can take various forms. Resonant relationships may be directed towards other people, to the self, or to the world at large[2], and may conjure up a whole range of emotions. Oftentimes, these relationships of resonance – in which the hitchhiker feels touched or moved – form a contrast with the subject's mode of being in daily life. While this isn't to say that subjects do not experience resonance in daily life – that is generally far from the case – the contrast with the lift-seeker's daily life and the novelty of experience appears to heighten their sensitivity to resonance.

In the practice of hitchhiking, lift-seekers must, to some extent, enter a different mindset, whereby they confront emotional barriers to asking others for help, depend on and adapt to people they have heretofore never encountered, and are faced with their ability to handle challenging circumstances. In the relationship to self, resonance may take the form of a sense of empowerment, accomplishment, and confidence. Resonant relationships may also be directed towards others: to the (potential) lift-giver and, in the case that one is traveling with one or more fellow hitchhikers, to one's road companion(s). In these relationships with others, resonance might look like a powerful

[2] This is a bit of an arbitrary distinction as these categories are not mutually exclusive and regularly overlap. Nevertheless, the three-pronged differentiation seemed to me the most comprehensive way to discuss the multiple sites of resonant relationships in the hitchhiking experience.

empathetic connection with a fellow human being, due to the fleeting, practically anonymous, intimate conversation between lift-giver and lift-seeker; the mutual vulnerability of sharing space with a total stranger; or the strengthening of the bond between fellow lift-seekers as they jointly face challenging circumstances. As for the relationship to the world at large, resonance may come about as a result of the lift-seeker's renunciation of control and embrace of uncertainty, flexibility, vulnerability, and surprise; the hitchhiker's break with conventional temporalities; and their heightened presence to their immediate surroundings and appreciation for the natural environment. In simpler terms, hitchhikers might experience resonance when, for example, offered a ride, in conversation with the lift-giver or fellow passengers, when adapting to the lift-giver's plans and seeing the world through the other's eyes, when watching the mountains pass by or witnessing a sunrise or sunset, or when finally reaching one's destination.

In the interviews, participants report experiencing a whole range of emotions while hitchhiking. One interviewee phrased it as such: *''It was a rollercoaster of emotions. That's what stuck with me most: this back and forth of good and bad emotions''* (P2). The affects that respondents mentioned comprise the entire spectrum of human emotion, from fear, anger, and sadness to surprise, joy, and love. As such, they articulated that they felt, at times: scared, insecure, nervous, and anxious; frustrated and annoyed; disappointed and lonely; moved, amazed, stimulated, and awe-struck; excited, hopeful, happy and euphoric; and lastly, grateful, and appreciative. Moreover, interviewees further described their experiences on the road in terms that aren't emotions, but rather states of being. Indeed, while hitchhiking, lift-seekers similarly felt a complex range of mental states, from a sense of anticipation, vulnerability, exhaustion, insignificance, ungroundedness, and awkwardness to freedom, aliveness, trust, safety, recognition, relief, and connection to the earth and to nature.

While 'negative' emotions, such as fear, anger, and sadness were not uncommon among participants, 'positive' emotions, such as surprise, joy, and love were more prevalent. One interviewee shared that *''in 95% of the cases I got out of someone's car and was super euphoric, and thankful, and I felt a lot of really positive emotions, which definitely [still] stick with me''* (P2). According to another respondent:

> *In general, 99% of the encounters in hitchhiking are positive, from neutral to very positive. [I had] only a couple of negative experiences. But even if it's a bit boring, or when you slightly disagree with someone, I still would say it's a positive encounter.* (P4).

Despite the negativity bias – the cognitive bias according to which things of a more negative nature, even when of equal intensity, have a greater effect on one's mental state than neutral or positive things – all but one respondent conceptualized their hitchhiking experience as generally enjoyable, meaningful, and to be repeated. While it can be argued that that is the result of selection bias – that those with overwhelmingly negative experiences on the road are unlikely to participate in a study on hitchhiking – it may also be due to the nature of resonance in the hitchhiking experience.

According to Rosa, there is no such thing as negative resonance. In his eyes, resonance is only imaginable as a positive experience, which thus renders 'negative resonance' an oxymoron (Susen, 2020). Relations of resonance imply a generally positive form of encounter with the world, whereas relations marked by alienation bring about experiences of indifference or repulsion. While

dispositional resonance is premised upon the purposeful acceptance of vulnerability and an attitude of openness, the world-relation of repulsion entails an inner hardening and enclosure. When a person is obligated to respond or behave in a certain way, Rosa argues that we leave the domain of self-determination and enter the realm of manipulation, coercion, domination, or even—under extreme circumstances—violence (*ibid*, 2020). Thus, according to my understanding, resonance can be inhibited by negative affects, such as fear or anger, as these emotions may be accompanied by an inner hardening and closing off to the outside world. However, while relations of resonance may not be established *as a result of* such negative affects, they might instead come about *against the backdrop of* feelings of, for example, anxiety, boredom, insignificance, ungroundedness, or awkwardness, as long as participants maintain a disposition of openness and consciously accept their vulnerability. In other words, while the occurrence of resonance in the hitchhiking encounter depends on a variety of factors, the experience of negative emotions or unpleasant mental states does not strictly prohibit the establishment of relations of resonance.

In the following section, I will discuss what resonance looks and feels like in hitchhiking in more detail, illuminating the hitchhiker's relationships towards other people, to the self, and to the world at large.

5.2.1 *The Relationship to Other People*

One of the most fruitful sites of resonant encounters in the hitchhiking experience is the lift-seeker's relationship to other people, most notably the lift-giver. The lift-giver, by its very nature, allows the lift-seeker to join them in their vehicle, thereby recognizing their dependence and need for help in a sea of indifference. By offering assistance, the lift-giver's kindness forms a contrast with the covert dismissal, outright rejection, and anonymity of passing cars. Following the indifference of others and the lift-seeker's uncertainties about the driver's character, a practically anonymous, sometimes intimate conversation emerges. This stranger, an unknowable other who remains perpetually out of reach, may briefly open up and speak with honesty and vulnerability, thereby forming a fleeting connection between the actors involved. Occasionally, as chance would have it, the actors involved share commonalities, such as similar interests, languages, or places of origin, which may enhance the interpersonal connection. However, usually the lift-giver and lift-seeker have little in common, which enables them to engage with someone outside of their general social environment, their 'bubble'. This interaction may open up discussion and, at times, disagreement, allowing them to come to new understandings or perspectives, illustrating their common humanity and shared kindness despite the difference of opinion. In some cases, the interaction might also serve as a challenge to the actors' biases, either with regards to hitchhiking on the part of the lift-giver, or regarding the intersectional identities of both lift-giver and -seeker.

In the next section, I will first discuss the nature of resonance in the hitchhiker's relationship with the lift-giver and then illustrate my assertions on the occurrence of resonance between the two actors using several lengthier quotes. While the first three anecdotes all exemplify a (self-reported) positive encounter between lift-giver and lift-seeker, the last one forms a contrast with the previous examples, illustrating an interaction in which the lift-seeker does not feel touched or moved by the dynamic with the lift-giver.

5.2.1.1 *The Hitchhiker's Relationship to the Lift-Giver*

In the encounter with the driver, resonance can occur in numerous instances over the course of the lift. To start, the hitchhiker may feel moved by the trust and recognition extended by the lift-giver. One respondent stated: *''I felt very recognized, because people are interested in you for the time being, and they say by their actions that you're trustworthy enough to take into their car, into a situation that could be precarious''* (P12). Moreover, in some cases the hitchhiker is immediately confronted with their latent biases towards the lift-giver, hit with a sense of surprise as the lift-giver's identity doesn't match their expectations. According to interviewees, while it was often quickly disconfirmed, they initially judged the lift-giver based on first appearances: *''They seemed like the most middle-of-the-road kind of people that wouldn't pick up hitchhikers, but then they did, and they were really lovely''* (P12); *''a surprising [number] of people with really fancy cars pick you up''* (P9); and:

> *He drove a really nice car and we kind of made assumptions like, ''This guy's not going to stop for us – he's driving a BMW. He's not going to care about these four little students on the side of the street.'' But no, he stopped for us and was very kind. He went out of his way to bring us closer to where we needed to go.* (P16)

Once the lift-seeker is seated in the car and the vehicle has taken off, a dialogue generally emerges, for as a hitchhiker, *''conversation is your currency''* (P12); that's *''what you 'pay' [with]''* (P3). Due to the enclosed nature of the space, the limited time, and the unlikeliness of ever encountering each other again, conversation may be more open and deeper than usual. Indeed*, ''it's a private and very tight space that you're in, [and] you're not forced to make eye contact. I think that reinforces that sense of wanting to open up fast''* (P9); and *''[in] the hour you're together, you can talk about everything so openly, because it doesn't matter; you'll never see each other [again]''* (P7). Similarly, another respondent hypothesized: *''Maybe that's why people share information in the first place, because it's anonymous''* (P4). Sometimes, the lift-seeker and -giver have things in common and talk about shared interests; at other times, the subjects don't share similarities, which may bring about new insights: *''It's either somebody that you can really vibe with, or it's somebody that you wouldn't usually interact with, and they give you very interesting perspectives''* (P10). Oftentimes, the encounter entails a difference of opinion and, although confronting at times, may give the actors a new outlook on life:

> *A lot of the time, I'm very much in a bubble. It's easy to forget that there are other people out there as that have different opinions. But when you're hitchhiking, you meet people with [very] different opinions. I [have sat] in cars with people where I was like, ''If you [hadn't] taken me, I would not have talked to you, with your opinions'' Then I see that these disagreements exist, and you can still interact with people – [that] it's not the end of the world if someone has a different opinion. I think it broadens my horizon of how to interact with people, and I think it probably also broadens the other person's horizon.* (P13)

Moreover, it might allow for them to see the familiar with new eyes and put their daily life in a different context: *''[The] hitchhiking experience, especially outside of Europe, really makes you think about life here in the Netherlands. It kind of changes your perspective on people in [other] countries, and [on people] here''* (P14 & 15). According to another interviewee, this sense of perspective on life is less common in other realms in life: *''[It] gives you [some] perspective into the lives of others that*

you normally wouldn't [get], not to that extremity'' (P12). For one interviewee, hearing about other people's lives is not just a major motivating factor, but even one of life's purposes:

> *[When] hitchhiking, you get to see the inner life of someone who is very different to you. It's not someone you would meet in your context. Often people tell me about their jobs, where they live, what they do, how their daily life is. I find it so interesting and incredible how different people's lives are, and their opinions and values, even if I really disagree. Indeed, this is why we're alive, not just to stay in our little corner, but to go out there and see stuff. It makes me feel quite alive* (P1).

This brief but intimate exchange of personal information in the private space of the moving vehicle may, for some, result in a sense of shared humanity and of greater trust in other people: *''I think hitchhiking played a role in increasing my trust in strangers''* (P10), *''For me [hitchhiking is] a confirmation of [my] faith in people''* (P7); and:

> *I think hitchhiking is a process of breaking through the wall towards strangers, but then – it sounds so cringey – finding out that you tick in very similar ways. Hitchhiking reinforced the world image that I want to have; [one] of trust in strangers.* (P11)

Another element that may enhance the connection between lift-giver and lift-seeker is the latter's voluntary adaptation to the former's plans, their acceptance of travel suggestions or recommendations, and their adoption of the former's viewpoint. As with the previous example, this evidences a level of genuine openness to the other. One interviewee went along with the lift-givers' suggestions and ended up doing things he otherwise wouldn't have done:

> *In Romania, the [driver] took me to all these churches; I would never [have done] that on my own. And now he just led me. The same [goes] for the Moroccan guy. He [took] us for coffee, on a boat trip, to a restaurant. We would have never done the boat trip ourselves. You just adjust to [the other's] way of doing things.* (P3)

Furthermore, the hitchhiker might be moved by the driver's efforts to show them the surrounding environment from the latter's point of view and by their newfound outlook. Driving in Argentina, one respondent was given an impromptu tour by her lift-giver, enabling her to enjoy her immediate environment more as she could see things from the local angle:

> *When I looked around, I could appreciate the view and I could see the birds that I'd never seen before. I was already quite appreciative of what I saw, but he really opened my eyes to what it might look like to someone else – what the local view is, what he saw. He kind of painted a context [for me].* (P13)

5.2.1.1.1 *Four Anecdotes on the Relationship with the Lift-Giver*

In the following section, I highlight four participants' accounts of their relationship with the lift-giver in more detail. The first three anecdotes illustrate a self-reported positive encounter between lift-giver and lift-seeker, in which the hitchhiker remains open to and feels moved by the dynamic with

the lift-giver. The fourth anecdote differs from the previous examples, as it exemplifies an interaction in which the hitchhiker feels forced to respond in a particular way, thereby entering the realm of coercion and shutting himself off from resonant relations. I selected these accounts, for they most clearly articulate what relations of resonance on the road can look like. Although some of the other interviewees also had comparable encounters – which I did not include in detail – not all participants seemed to experience such care, honesty, or kindness from their lift-givers, or at least did not share their accounts with me. While some of my respondents were rather new to the practice of hitching and thus had limited experience driving along with lift-givers, those who had embarked on multiple or longer-distance trips were able to recount similar tales of connection on the road. In other words, these accounts of the interactions between hitchhiker and lift-giver are neither particularly unusual or uncommon nor exactly representative for all respondents; they are emblematic in their detailed description, but not a race occurrence.

5.2.1.1.1.1 *The Perfect Sleep*

In this anecdote, respondent 2 – a young, white, German woman – recounts her interaction with a middle-aged woman while hitchhiking in France with her female friend several years ago. In this encounter, the lift wasn't simply a ride, but rather an emotional and deeply meaningful act of care, as the lift-giver went out of her way to help two stranded girls at night and find them adequate shelter.

> *We were stuck at a roundabout and this woman, who only spoke French, picked us up. She was very sweet and really like, ''Oh, my God, can I help you? Where you need to go?'' I felt super thankful in that moment, and I got past the fear of not being able to speak proper French. We had really nice conversations, and my language skills were incredible at that moment. I felt confident, because she was continuously validating my language skills and telling us that she was super happy to have picked us up. At some point – it was almost the middle of the night – she was like, ''I would love to bring you home to [mine], so you can sleep there. I live very close by.'' [We were in] a bit of a weird environment where it was difficult to find a place to sleep. Then she became super emotional and told us that she really would love to help us, but that she had been having trouble with her husband. She said that they had been having lots of fights in the past days, that it's been very difficult, and that she feels a bit uncomfortable bringing us into that situation. You could tell that she was really conflicted because she wanted to help us. I tried to tell her how much I appreciated it, that I completely understood, and that [there'd] be zero negative feelings if she said ''No, I can't bring you home [with me].'' It was a very sweet, honest conversation. She was close to crying, and it felt nice for her to have this conversation with strangers that she felt she was helping. It was a very emotional car ride. In the end, she dropped us off somewhere because I told her, ''It's OK, we'll find something.'' We were sitting under a tiny little roof smoking a cigarette, trying to figure out where to go next [when], about fifteen minutes later, she came back. She was like, ''Girls, I remember there's this car park. Please go there.'' She told us it was about three streets away and that we could sleep there and be dry. We went there, and it was perfect – we hid behind some bushes on the third floor of a car park balcony.*

This account illustrates a genuine connection between the lift-giver and the hitchhikers, as the lift-giver picks up two young strangers at night and becomes invested in their safety and wellbeing. Not

only does she express her joy at having taken them on, but she also opens up about her domestic situation and even returns to point them towards a secluded sleeping spot. This disposition of openness, honesty, and vulnerability on the part of the driver made the interviewee feel safe and conjured up a deep sense of gratitude toward her. In my view, the mutual openness and voluntary vulnerability between the lift-giver and the hitchhiker – as evidenced by the timing of the ride (at night), the slight language barrier, the exchange of personal information, and the expression of emotion – enable the occurrence of resonance. In other words, in this encounter, resonance takes the form of a powerful empathetic bond between the lift-giver and the two hitchhikers.

5.2.1.1.1.2 *A Murder on the Mondsee Express*

In the following story, respondent 12 – a white, Dutch guy – shares a memorable encounter on his trip to Slovenia with a friend at the age of 21. Here, fate seemed to bring the lift-giver and lift-seekers together, invoking a relaxed, open, and spontaneous encounter, which culminated in an impromptu overnight stay by an Austrian lake with the driver's sister.

> *It was the second day [of our trip], and we were waiting at a very random truck stop in Cologne. This white Toyota stopped and out came this real shabby looking guy – a white guy with dreads, of course. And he said: ''I don't have to [get gas], but something in me thought that I should stop here, [that] somebody needed my help; and there you are. So, if you want to hitchhike with me, feel free [to].'' And I was way less cynical at that time, so I was like, ''Well, that's beautiful.'' His mother's second husband [had] died. He had to go to Salzburg because there was a big chance that this man hadn't died of natural causes, that his mother was actually responsible for this very wealthy Austrian man's death. He and his sister had a very bad [relationship] with their mother, but they had a good connection with the person that died. They [had] to figure out what to do, [whether to] take it to court or go to the police. It was amazing to hear the story [on] the 8-hour journey there. We drank copious amounts of Red Bull, smoked a lot in the car, and just exchanged conversation. Then we arrived in Salzburg, and he said: ''You know, I can just drop you off somewhere or we can pick up my sister. Then we can go to this really beautiful place [by] a lake and camp there. [Tomorrow] morning, I'll drop you off at this place [from] which you can hitchhike to Slovenia.'' So, we were like, ''Yeah, this guy is amazing. We're going to go with him to the end of the world.'' So, we picked up his sister, and the four of us went to the Mondsee, or somewhere close by, and then we just slept under the stars, made a big fire, and drank some beer. The next morning, we woke up, had a dip in the water, and then continued our journey to Slovenia*.

In my view, this account illustrates a resonant encounter between the lift-giver and the lift-seekers as the ride is characterized by the exchange of personal information, the offer of an alternative plan, the acceptance of the spontaneous proposal, and the assistance the driver offers the hitchhikers to continue on their journey. I believe that both the driver and the hitchhikers share a disposition of openness and conscious vulnerability, as they give each other the benefit of the doubt and either suggest an outing or go along with the proposal. As with the previous anecdote, this particular attitude of openness and voluntary vulnerability allows for the occurrence of relations of resonance, which take the form of an empathetic connection with another person.

5.2.1.1.1.3 *The Reunion*

In this anecdote, respondent 1 – a young, white, bi-national European woman – shares her most treasured hitchhiking experience, in which she witnesses a reunion of two best friends in southern Spain, is invited to their house, decides to adjust her plans, and tries to pay them a visit.

> *I was going to El Chorro, and these two men picked me up. They were lifetime [best friends] who had been separated for 20 years. One of them was English, and [the other] was American. They had met when they were young and had fixed up [a] house together. One of them, the American one, had this dream of living on a sailboat, so he and his wife bought a sailboat and went to the Caribbean. This guy's ship sank, so he was shipwrecked. He [had] lost all his stuff, his entire life, and he didn't know what to do. He rang up his old friend and he was like, ''Hey, just come over here, you can live with us.'' I'm not sure what happened to his wife. He didn't really mention her, but at that time they were just there alone. So, he came back, and this was the reunion that I witnessed. The two of them in the car together, catching up. They [told] me their life stories and invited me to their house in Ardales. They were like, ''Come by if you want. You can just ask [around] in the town, people will tell you where we live.'' I was like, ''Oh, sounds like a good idea.'' Eventually I arrived [in] this very Andalusian town. The people were extremely local. When I walked into the bar, they all turned around and looked at me because they probably don't see foreigners that often. And I asked them: ''Do you know of this guy? He's English, he's blond. He says he's lived here for a very long time.'' And they were like, ''En el castillo! The guy from the castle!'' And they told me he lived in the castle on top of the hill. It was a beautiful town, [with] white houses. I got to this castle and I'm looking around like, ''How does he live in this castle?'' And there's this tiny little hut – it was barely a house – on the side of the castle, and this [was] apparently where he lived. It was the house that they had fixed up together, the two guys. But they weren't there that day, so I just left them a note and my address, like, ''If you want to write me something, you can.'' Then I had to leave, so I left. I guess they were out catching up or whatever. That was my cool experience. I think that was my favorite hitchhiking experience ever.*

Here, a meaningful, empathic bond is formed between the hitchhiker and the lift-givers as they take her on board and allow her to be part of a special moment in their lives. In this encounter, the lift-givers open up about their shared friendship and their personal hardships and invite the lift-giver to pay them a visit to the house they had built together years ago. Not only do they help the interviewee further along her journey, but they also express their desire to further their connection by extending an invitation to her, thereby illustrating their openness towards one another. As for the hitchhiker, she consciously takes on a position of vulnerability by hitchhiking alone, entering a car with two unknown adult men, and making an effort to pay the lift-givers a visit the next day. As such, in my view, the hitchhiker experiences a meaningful connection with the lift-givers and feels the occurrence of resonance between them.

5.2.1.1.1.4 *The Longest Ride*

In the following story, respondent 10 – a white, Bulgarian guy – recounts his experience meeting 'Ivan the Crazy', while hitchhiking through Bulgaria with his girlfriend. This experience differs significantly

from the three previous stories, for it is marked by a deep sense of unease at the lift-giver's inappropriate behavior and questioning.

> *Once we had a pretty interesting experience in a car with three people – Roma, Bulgarian Gypsies – and they were very friendly, but one of them was like, ''You know, they call me Ivan the Crazy. That's because I'm a bit insane. I just got out of prison 2 weeks ago.'' He was friendly, but you could tell that in a second, he could flip if you said the wrong thing – he could become just insane. His wife [was] in the car, and he was constantly harassing [her]; touching her, poking her, and grabbing her breasts, while talking [about] the most ridiculous shit, asking me, ''How many times a day do you jerk off?'' [It made me] very uncomfortable. It was in the middle of summer, and it was very hot. The car, of course, [had] no AC, and we were cramped like sardines, you know, five people inside. When I got [out], [I was] super sweaty, and extra sweaty because I was nervous, on edge. They stopped at a gas station, and they wanted to put some gas in their car, so they got [out] with us. And I immediately nudged my girlfriend to go inside the gas station because they wanted to talk to me. The guy was like, ''You're a good fellow, come here, give me a hug.'' And he hugged me, and I was like, ''Jesus Christ, I just want to get out of here.'' He also took my phone number because I told him I studied in the Netherlands, and he was like, ''Oh, is there work in the Netherlands?'' And I grabbed [onto] this straw of normal conversation and decided to just go with it and try to talk about that as much as possible. I told him I worked in a warehouse and in a restaurant. He was like, ''Maybe you can help me find a job there.'' And I was like, ''Yeah, man, for sure. Anytime.'' He [said], ''I'm not going to forget about you. I'm going to call you. You help me find a job.'' ''Yeah, sure, man. [Let's] keep in touch for sure.'' And then eventually he let me go and I remember I had maybe two or three cigarettes left, and I just took the biggest puff of relief after that. In one word, relief.*

In this account, feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and responsibility hinder the occurrence of relations of resonance, as the lift-giver's inappropriate behavior closes the hitchhikers off towards him. Rather than embodying a sense of openness towards the lift-giver, the lift-seekers experience feeling vulnerable as they believe that the driver may suddenly lash out to them. This disposition of vulnerability is thus not voluntarily taken on. Contrary to the previous three accounts, the hitchhikers wish to get out of the interaction as soon as possible and make no genuine attempts to follow up on the driver's suggestions. In my view, the lack of openness and voluntary vulnerability on the part of the hitchhikers thus render this encounter devoid of genuine connection between the passengers in the cramped car.

5.2.1.1.2 *Reflection on the Anecdotes*

As mentioned previously, the first three anecdotes illustrate a positive encounter, in which lift-giver and lift-seeker enter a state of dispositional resonance, while the last one highlights an uncomfortable encounter, in which the hitchhikers do not feel moved and where resonance remains absent. It can be argued that the way in which resonance occurs in the first three narrations is in the form of a powerful empathetic connection with a fellow human being, as a result of mutual openness and conscious vulnerability, which is seemingly not the case in the latter example.

In the first narration, despite the slight language barrier, the passengers in the car engage in an honest, open, vulnerable, and emotional conversation, making the lift-seekers feel not just at ease, but deeply touched. The lift becomes more than just a ride, as the lift-giver feels personally responsible for the lift-seekers' wellbeing, makes an effort to help them along and direct them to shelter, and feels conflicted about not being able to do more for them. In the second anecdote, the empathic connection between driver and hitchhiker(s) comes about due to the open conversation, and the lift-seekers decision to give the driver the benefit of the doubt and go along with his proposal. As such, resonance can be said to occur as a result of the lift-giver's initial confession; his openness about his relationship to his mother and to his stepfather; his mother's possible involvement in her partner's sudden death; the act of drinking, smoking, swimming, and camping together; making a fire and sleeping under the stars by a lake; and being helped further along the way the next morning. In the third narration, the meaningful, empathic connection is established over the course of the ride and the following day, as the hitchhiker is witness to a special moment between two people; hears them share their life stories; is invited over to their place, accepts the invitation and changes her plans; inadvertently uses the search for their house as an opportunity to talk to local villagers; lets herself be directed by them, climbs the hill and finds the house; is struck by their absence and unavailability; and leaves them a note, hoping to hear from them sometime in the future.

While the hitchhikers in the fourth narration are offered a ride in the heat of summer, in my opinion there is no empathic connection between lift-seekers and lift-giver, due to feelings of anxiety and responsibility. Here, the lift-giver creates a hostile environment due to his inappropriate behavior and questions, which results in a dynamic marked by repulsion, hardening and closure, rather than voluntary vulnerability and openness. Moreover, the interviewee feels even more bothered by the circumstances due to his feelings of responsibility for bringing his girlfriend into the situation. Rather than being authentically open to the lift-giver's prompts or challenging him, the respondent feels compelled to go along with his advances, straining to remain calm, placate the deranged lift-giver and make conversation, all to ensure that both of them get out unscathed. Thus, it appears that the presence of fear, and the absence of openness and voluntary vulnerability, inhibit the establishment of empathic connections and resonant relationships.

Although the lift-seekers and lift-givers in all four accounts differed from each other in some obvious ways – from their nationality (1, 2, 3) and language (1), to their gender (3) or age (1, 2, 3, 4) – the contrast between driver and hitchhikers seemed most pronounced in the fourth anecdote. In the last encounter, the differences between lift-giver and lift-seeker appear to extend beyond the visible or surface-level markers of identity, such as one's gender, age, linguistic ability, or national origin. My assumption is that – unlike in the first three encounters – while they share the same country of origin, the actors in the last anecdote do not come from similar racial, ethnic, class, or cultural backgrounds. As Romani, the lift-givers in the fourth encounter belong to a historically marginalized group in Bulgaria, and face discrimination, racialization, and social stigmatization (Virág, 2018). I argue that it may be possible that the sense of discomfort on the part of the lift-seekers was heightened as they shared a common language with the lift-givers and could therefore engage in conversation, and because the lift-seekers were familiar with the discriminatory cultural connotations that non-Romani Bulgarians have of the (Bulgarian) Romani. In other words, the hitchhikers may have been less open to their fellow passengers as they were able to 'read' them according to the negative and commonly held social script they were accustomed to.

Differences between the lift-giver and lift-seeker do not necessarily prohibit the formation of empathic connections. In some cases, differences in terms of class, religion, culture, national origin, race, gender, age, or sexuality may temporarily be overcome in the hitchhiking encounter, as the passengers strike up a conversation and, over the course of the exchange, gain a (slightly) different perspective on the other. However, not all differences are equal. When the imbalance of power between hitchhiker and driver is too vast, and when it is coupled with a lack of openness – i.e. prejudice and discrimination – on either side, the actors may experience the emergence of fear and an inner hardening or enclosure towards the other. In the third chapter of the results section, I will discuss the influence of the hitchhiker's identity in the experience of resonance in more detail.

5.2.1.2 *The Hitchhiker's Relationship to Their Fellow Lift-Seeker(s)*

Aside from the relationship with the lift-giver, the relationship with one's fellow hitchhiker(s) is also a possible site of resonance. According to my interviewees, travelling with one or more companions has several advantages, such as an enhanced feeling of safety, the ability to share the workload, and the opportunity to bond over challenging circumstances. An increased sense of safety and the possibility of dividing the work of obtaining rides and making conversation enables the hitchhiker to feel at ease and recharge their social battery, thereby bringing them closer to a state of openness. Moreover, the shared experience of dealing with challenging situations could strengthen the connection between hitchhikers, leading to a greater sense of intimacy and interpersonal understanding.

With regards to sharing in the tasks at hand, interviewees shared that: *''If you're with someone else, you can just eat for a bit, and someone else can just pay attention to the driver''* (P7). That when you're traveling with a companion, *''you can entertain each other and share the workload''* (P3), that it's *''a shared load, a shared mental energy''* (P12), and that *''At the start, I felt curious towards the people that helped us, but [later], that dropped a bit, because I was tired. [Then] my friend took over. For him, it was peaking then, so it worked out quite well''* (P6). Moreover, having a friend or acquaintance by one's side heightens the sense of safety that hitchhikers experience and allows them to share in the excitement and joy:

> *I really like the idea of being with a friend. For safety, of course, but also for the experience. I think a lot of the fun of hitchhiking was these moments of getting into the car with my friend, when someone finally stopped and we were like, ''Oh my God, yes! We're continuing the journey!'' It's a nice bonding experience.* (P2)

Interviewees further stated that *''[hitchhiking] together with a friend made it a very safe experience and [it was] fun to share the stories afterwards''* (P6), and that *''It's one thing to have a crazy experience, but it's completely different when you share it with somebody [else]. You can relate to it on a very much deeper level because you both experienced it''* (P10). Regarding the connection with one's road companion, an interviewee shared:

> *[There's a] feeling of embarking on something together, starting a project together, dedicating yourselves to each other for a bit, and putting trust and faith in each other. With hitchhiking, you accept before you go that there's going to be fun moments and less fun moments, that*

> *you're going to be stuck with each other throughout both of those peaks and troughs. There's something very intimate [about this] mutual dedication.* (P11)

This joint adventure can bring the lift-seekers closer together – ''*it made [our relationship] stronger*'' (P14 & 15) – especially if there are shared feelings of discomfort and anxiety: *''If you feel uneasy in relation to your driver, it binds you. Feelings [of discomfort] are strong and if you experience them together, share them and outlive them, it creates a very strong bond among travelers*'' (P5). Thus, while fear or uneasiness vis-à-vis the driver could hinder openness and empathy towards them, it may, under certain circumstances, allow the fellow hitchhikers to bond over the shared discomfort of the ride, thereby enabling the occurrence of a relation of resonance between them.

5.2.2 *The Hitchhiker's Relationship to Self*

Another possible site of resonance in the practice of hitchhiking can be seen in the lift-seeker's relationship to themselves. In response to experiences 'out in the world', the hitchhiker may develop, to some extent, a novel sense of self. While there are, naturally, various other factors involved, many respondents report feeling changed as a result of their hitchhiking experience. Generally, this slight sense of transformation – which can manifest itself in an increase in self-knowledge, agency and, most commonly, confidence – is noticed retrospectively, when reflecting on and recounting one's tales of the road. However, some participants recall feeling a heightened sense of confidence *during* their hitchhiking adventure, as they became more used to, for example, approaching strangers, listening to their gut, saying 'no' when things seemed amiss, adapting to the lift-giver's ways, and dealing with rejection and being stranded. Although respondents described their changed sense of self in a variety of ways – from an elevated sense of agency, adaptability, capability, self-knowledge, empowerment, accomplishment, self-actualization, intuition, self-trust, and confidence – what they appear to have in common is the faith in one's ability to navigate challenging, out of the ordinary situations. This belief in oneself is often accompanied by feelings of joy and a disposition of openness to the world. As such, I believe that subjects could, both in the moment and when narrating their journey, experience the formation of a resonant relationship to self. In the following paragraphs, I will use interviewee accounts to illustrate what such a sense of resonance in relation to self may look like.

According to one respondent, the hitchhiking trip might reflect the narrative of the hero's journey, in which the traveler faces struggle and returns home slightly transformed. He states that in this narrative structure:

> *The hero leaves home, encounters opposition, learns, then battles opposition, and then comes home again slightly changed. (…) I really do believe in the power of these testing moments, the tiny hero's journeys in which you can face a certain danger head-on, then you come back, and you've changed a little bit*. (P12)

One female interviewee stated that her experiences on the road gave her new insight into her capabilities. This ability to interact with others made her feel self-reliant and empowered. According to her, while hitchhiking:

> *[You're] confronted with what you're actually [capable of]. I was really surprised to see how easygoing I can be while interacting with people – not to manipulate them, but to ask honest questions and to interact like: ''Hey, I need to go here. How about you take me?'' And it feels incredible. It gives you a sense of strength to [get to] where you need to go or get [further along] your way. It makes you feel like you're very self-reliant. Which is funny because you're allowing other people to take you.* (P9)

For another respondent, his experience navigating distressing situations made him trust himself more and made him more open to engaging with strangers. He believes that:

> *Hitchhiking played a role in increasing my trust in myself, (…) [in] handling uncomfortable or different situations. (…) It gives you a sense of safety, of comfort in all sorts of environments. It's made me more open to other things as well: asking for directions, asking people for the time or whatever it might be, interacting with strangers, and maybe even with public speaking.* (P10)

One interviewee described experiencing an increased level of flexibility and having the feeling *''that everything will be alright, (…) [that no matter what] situation you're in, there will be a way, and [I] thus [experience] less stress about certain situations. I think hitchhiking [reinforced my flexibility] and made [me] more confident''* (P14 & 15). Another respondent shared that although each lift evoked feelings of anxiety, the practice of hitchhiking has enabled her to trust herself more and feel pride over her ability to embrace uncertainty:

> *After a couple of really good experiences with amazing, sweet people, I became a bit more confident and a bit less scared. I really saw the nice things about it: the conversations you have with people, letting yourself just enter a random situation and embracing it. I think I became more confident being in whatever situation, turning off the look-into-the-future [mindset], just being there and seeing what happens, which is scary [when] you put yourself in such a vulnerable position. I was often very proud of myself. (…) Still, every new situation of hitchhiking causes anxiety and is scary – that's just how it is. But the trust in myself that I can navigate a situation like that has definitely gotten a lot bigger.* (P2)

Shyness was also a recurring factor in the interviews; and facing it, by engaging with strangers, was considered a confronting experience that led to character development:

> *[Going up to] people and asking them for a ride, especially [when] shy, is quite a confronting experience. That's something to go through and I think it's led to character development, dealing with no's. I [also] think standing on the side of the road for many hours contributed a lot to patience.* (P4)

Another interviewee regarded hitchhiking as a good exercise for challenging her shyness and which had led to a passive sense of confidence, one that is contextual and needs to be reactivated from time to time. With regards to her hitchhiking experience, she stated that:

> *I [have] definitely learned a lot from it: this [sense of] confidence in myself, but also trust in other people. It [has] definitely helped me, even with stuff like my field research, where I had*

> *to talk to people that I don't usually talk to. It was definitely a good exercise for that because I can be quite shy, and then [it] helps to know [that] I [have done] this before. I have proven [to myself] that I can do it. (…) [But] it's kind of a passive [sense of] confidence. [It's] an exercise that you have to practice – well, at least for me. The longer I don't do it, the harder it [is] to get [back] into, and the more I do it, I'm like, ''Oh yeah, this is fine.''* (P13)

Similarly, another participant said that his time on the road enhanced his confidence in interacting with strangers, but that that faith in oneself is not a constant. He shared that he got *''more confidence speaking to strangers, although that ebbs and flows, I think. [And I have] less shame and [embarrassment] about being vulnerable''* (P3). For one respondent, who had been dealing with mental issues at the time, hitchhiking was a measure of strength, both to himself and his loved ones. It was a way to ''e*ncounter myself and see [whether] I was indeed stronger than I was at mentally low points. [It was] a test of strength towards myself and towards other people that had [been] taking care of me [at] the time''* (P12). Finally, according to another participant, confidence is not just a possible consequence of one's time on the road, but a certain level of confidence is also a prerequisite to the hitchhiking experience, which enables the hitchhiker to interact with strangers in the first place. This confidence in one's ability to say no is particularly pertinent to women:

> *I think [for] everyone, but especially [for] women, being able to say no is a big thing. If you're confident enough to not feel judged, you're confident in your ability to say no, and you just feel confident being there, that makes it much more possible [to] engage with strangers [and] ask for a ride. If I don't feel this way, I would be much less inclined to do it.* (P1)

5.2.3 *The Hitchhiker's Relationship to the World at Large*

The last possible site of resonance in the practice of hitchhiking can be found in the lift-seeker's relationship to the world at large. As with the hitchhiker's relationship to self and others, their relationship to the world at large harbors the potential for resonance due its distinction from the lift-seeker's mode of being in daily life. According to interviewees, the contrast with their conventional mode of being in and relating to the world – specifically their openness towards uncertainty, unpredictability, surprise, not knowing, flexibility, and scarcity – may evoke a whole range of emotions and may cause them to feel moved by their circumstances and surroundings. As such, resonance can come about as a result of the lift-seeker's voluntary renunciation of control and embrace of the unknown; the hitchhiker's break with conventional temporalities; and their heightened presence to their immediate surroundings and appreciation for the natural environment.

Firstly, an often-voiced statement in the interviews was that the practice of hitchhiking differed significantly with students' mode of being in daily life. This was said to be due to the distinct experience of structure, time, control, and unpredictability. As such, interviewees mentioned that: *''It was really a contrast; you [encounter] a lot of contrasts when you're just entering random cars''* (P7); *''Every day was like a whole new story and a whole adventure''* (P2); *''In normal life, I like things to be a bit more arranged and [the hitchhiking experience] differed completely from my day-to-day life''* (P12); and that *''everything was different, [particularly] the concept of time – not having deadlines, not having work to do''* (P8).

With regards to their relative relinquishment of control and acceptance of vulnerability and the unknown, respondents shared that hitchhiking is characterized by *''a lack of control; you choose to forfeit a very big part of your mobility in exchange for semi-free travel''* (P12); that *''you always put yourself in the hands of [another person] by stepping into someone's car''* (P4); and that:

> *The moment you step into someone's car, you give up a lot of power over what happens to you, where you go. You make it very easy for other people to decide something for you, to stop you from doing something, or to take advantage of you in some way.* (P2)

For some, the loss of control over process evokes seldom experienced feelings of discomfort:

> *Suddenly you feel how small and insignificant you are, and you know you've stepped out of your usual networks where you'll always have people that care about you. When you're standing by the highway and everyone's driving past you, it can make you feel very insignificant and ungrounded*. (P11)

However, this experience may also be accompanied by a multitude of positive effects, such as a sense of openness towards out of the ordinary activities: *''I might [be] more inclined to [do] random things outside of what I would be doing here [at home in the Netherlands], if it's in the moment, I'm anonymous, and feel free to express myself''* (P4). Another respondent felt, alongside her lack of control, a sense of possibility and appreciation for the little comforts available:

> *Not knowing what you're going to get makes everything [feel] possible at the same time. Even if it's really shit, if nobody picks you up, you might still be sitting in the sunshine in a bunch of grass. It really forces you to relativize everything and be appreciative of whatever comfort you can get. It makes me grateful – not per se of the life I normally have, but of everything I find along the way when hitchhiking.* (P9)

And yet another interviewee reported that the partial renunciation of control enabled her to reconceptualize her relationship to it, thus realizing that it could also have positive effects:

> *You give up some of your autonomy and I think that really helped me in the moment, because I was having a lot of conflicts. Going on the road and seeing that a loss of control doesn't always mean conflict, [that] shit hits the fan, and [that] everything goes wrong – it can also mean positive things. [I] experienced that giving up control and doing out of the ordinary things is not as devastating and bad as [I thought].* (P13)

While the hitchhiker necessarily gives up a degree of autonomy in order to get further ahead, one participant stresses the importance of maintaining a sense of agency over the journey. This can be done by having a goal or destination in mind, for:

> *If you don't have a destination, you're just part of your driver's plans. The challenge is a big part of [hitchhiking], because otherwise it feels like you're just an object in the passenger seat of the car and you're just riding along in a random direction. When you have a goal, [the driver] helps you achieve it. He has his plan for getting somewhere, and you have your plan. Briefly, you both [go in] the same direction, and then you go your separate ways.* (P10)

The unpredictable nature of the hitchhiking experience – and the feelings of boredom and frustration that are often involved – may enhance the sensation of joy, excitement, and accomplishment once a ride has finally been obtained. This metaphorical pendulum swing from annoyance to elation, and the accompanying release of adrenaline and dopamine, is what, for some, makes the whole experience worth repeating, or even addictive:

> *It's a bit like gambling. Usually what you do is say, ''OK, let's stay here for 30 minutes. If we don't get a ride in 30 minutes, then we think of something else.'' Then you stay for 30 minutes and [you're] like, ''Maybe if we stay for five more minutes, somebody else might take us.'' And then [when] somebody does take you – that's the best. You risked it and you got a [ride]. You don't know if you're going to get a shot of dopamine, it's unpredictable, but eventually when you do, it's nice. I feel like the uncertainty that you might get a ride is what makes it addictive. Because when you do, it's a big up and when you don't, it's just like, ''Oh, well, next time.''* (P10)

> *Getting bored is very rewarding. If you're standing somewhere for three hours, then somehow the most interesting people turn up. Very often I think, ''This encounter has been great. It was definitely worth the three hours of waiting.'' You get more adrenaline when someone stops after you've been frustrated for a while, and you have this mood shift that you don't get in daily life really from other things. It's romanticizing [the experience], but going through a bit of struggle to get these very nice rewarding rides, makes the whole thing seem a bit richer* (P4)

Regarding the hitchhiker's experience of time, there seems to be, to some extent, a break with conventional temporalities: *''The concept of time is different when you hitchhike. You need to take time. I think that hitchhiking values the concept of time more [than other realms of life]''* (P8). For some lift-seekers, this different perception of and relationship to time is experienced as a heightened sense of immediacy and presence. This sense of presence, of being in the moment, can make the hitchhiker forget time, or may diminish their temporal scope, emphasizing the short-term: *''[When] you go hitchhiking, that's your [sole] focus. There aren't many things to distract you. You don't know what you're going to do, except that someone will take you somewhere''* (P14 & 15). Scarcity may play a role in the increased sense of immediacy' one respondent shared that *''there is only [the] short term when you're hitchhiking. You're forced into that state by scarcity. A scarcity of people you know, [toilet] breaks, and snacks. You can only have what you can carry, and that's finite''* (P9). With regards to being in the moment, two participants said that:

> *I think the whole living in the moment thing is true. For a moment, you're suspended in time and space because you're completely dependent on your next ride. For a moment, your whole world is the petrol station where you're stuck and there's no point in thinking about your essay that's due next week, because right now the only thing that matters is getting to the next petrol station. I think that's nice about hitchhiking*. (P11)

> *With hitchhiking, it's just you, in that moment, with that person. The possibilities are big, but the world [becomes] very small – it's just you with someone in a car, you're talking about life,*

and you're not on your phone. You're fully in the moment, and you forget time a bit. Time doesn't matter because you just wake up and you go to the next point. (P7)

Lastly, in the hitchhiker's relationship to the world while on the road, the sense of presence to one's immediate surroundings may also increase the lift-seeker's acknowledgement of and connection to nature. As one interviewee put it, *''hitchhiking expanded my appreciation for being in nature, (…) and being open to all these different experiences''* (P15). Similarly, two other participants shared that seeing the mountains in the distance, the birds flying overhead, and the sky full of stars conjured a deep affinity to the natural world:

> *I'd gotten up early and I was still in the south of Spain, so I had a long stretch and ahead of me. I was just waiting and my mind sort of wandered: ''When am I going to get home, how am I going to do it, will someone pick me up?'' I was there for a while so I could look around [at] the Pyrenees. And then I noticed a bunch of birds of prey; seven or eight really big birds circling above me. They were circling [around], moving along the sky. I loved it. It's [ironic], because I was next to his highway, and I felt super connected to nature* (P9).

> *We [had] just [gotten to] Kazakhstan and we [were about to] hitchhike there for the first time. I was kind of scared: ''Where are we going to go, is it going to go [be okay]?'' We didn't have a lot of experience at the [time]. But then as soon [as] we got a ride, [the feeling] was gone. When we arrived on the steppe and pitched our tent at night, with all the stars above us, I almost cried from this special feeling – [a] release of tension and stress. The steppe is such a [vast] landscape, you can look so far [into the distance] and [there are] huge stars above you. It was super empty, there were [very few] people. That night I felt more connected to the earth [than] ever before* (P14 & 15).

5.3 Resonance in Hitchhiking: For Whom is it Evoked?

As illustrated in the previous chapter, in the practice of hitchhiking, relationships of resonance can be directed towards the self, other people, or to the world at large, and may be evoked during many stages of the hitchhiking trip. The hitchhiker's experience of their trip and the occurrence of resonance is dependent on a multitude of factors, which inform the lift-seeker's perception of and behavior towards self, others, and the world around them, as well as how the lift-seeker is perceived and treated. These contextual factors may range from but are not limited to: the geographical context of the lift; the legal status of, and the individual and cultural stance towards, hitchhiking in the area; and the lift-seeker's previous experiences in life and while hitchhiking. Other elements of interest may be the hitchhiker's temperament and personality; their political beliefs; and their mental state during and preceding the trip. And finally, the lift-seeker's and lift-giver's identity can be of importance: their gender, sexuality, religion, race, age, physical build, and class; and how their respective intersectional identities are perceived by one another and by others on the road. While there may be many other factors which shape the hitchhiker's experience and the occurrence of resonance on the road that I have not mentioned nor even conceived of, in this section I will focus mainly on the lift-seeker's temperament, mental state, and identity, as these were most often discussed in the interviews.

5.3.1 *Temperament*

The act of hitchhiking generally required lift-seekers to overcome personal inhibitions and consciously adopt a mindset which enabled them to interact with unfamiliar others for prolonged stretches of time. While this was true for many participants, it seemed more pertinent to those who self-identified as introverts. Some respondents stated that they relish such encounters and purposefully seek them out; others shared that this outgoing, sociable persona takes a lot of energy and quickly dissipates after their return home. With regards to the conscious shift necessary to interact with others on the road, one interviewee expressed: *''I can be quite shy. It would take me some energy to get back into it, but I know that it's possible. If I would prepare my mind for it, then I could tap into it again''* (P13). In line with this, another participant shared: *''Normally I'm a bit introverted. So, when I'm hitchhiking, I'm really on a sort of proactive switch to interact with people. Part of that makes me step outside my comfort zone and I truly enjoy that''* (P9). For another respondent, these interactions also were a source of pleasure:

> *I'd say I'm a reasonably introverted person. I don't do well in big groups and parties. I shut down quite often in this type of setting, but I don't mind these types of interactions with strangers. I do think I seek them out because [they're] just interesting to me.* (P10)

For some, the realm of hitchhiking, particularly the conversations with lift-givers, served as a site of personal change, prompting them to temporarily access and express an alternative mode of being in the world. As such, one seasoned hitchhiker hypothesized that his mode of expression differs markedly from his daily life and that this change is short-lived:

> *Maybe the summary is: in my daily life, I'm an introvert; [when] hitchhiking, I'm an extrovert. I do have to get into the process of having a lot of conversations. I notice that during my hitchhiking trips, I get really good at small talk. But when I come home after a few weeks, I'm just back to having nervous breakdowns [when making] small talk.* (P3)

Lastly, for another participant, her temperament – i.e. her introverted nature – generally diminished her openness to engage in conversation with lift-givers. However, it did not appear to limit her sensitivity to resonance, as she admitted to enjoying the ride, while looking out the window and witnessing her boyfriend's interaction with the lift-givers. Her partner's presence allowed her to take part in and savor the experience, for she wouldn't conceive of enjoying the practice by herself:

> *Fortunately, I was with my boyfriend [who's] very sociable and friendly. I like talking, but I also like to be quiet sometimes and not speak, especially if I'm on the road and if I'm just looking out the window. Both of us enjoyed the ride, because he was getting to know the people that [were] giving us a ride and I was just relaxing and doing what I like to do when I'm in the car. If I [were] by myself, [I'd] have to be friendly, socialize. And [then] maybe I would rather take public transport, because I just like to be quiet sometimes and not interact with anybody.* (P8)

While those who are naturally more extroverted may have less trouble interacting with lift-givers, they are not by nature predisposed to greater levels of resonance than introverts, for whom making conversation with strangers is generally more of a challenge. Resonance is premised upon the individual's general disposition towards openness and their willingness to make themselves vulnerable, which can be, to some extent, innate or purposefully taken up. Although extroverts may be more outgoing and talkative than introverts, the second crucial element of the necessary

disposition, one's conscious acceptance of vulnerability, does not seem to be linked to extroversion. Therefore, the ideal temperament for the occurrence of resonant relations in the encounter between lift-giver and lift-seeker is not necessarily synonymous with extroversion. If the more introverted hitchhiker is able to overcome personal inhibitions and consciously adopt an open mindset and take the risk of making themselves vulnerable, they may be just as likely to establish relations of resonance with the lift-giver as those who are more extroverted and take a similar risk. Furthermore, as illustrated in the previous section, relations of resonance are not limited to the encounter between the hitchhiker and the lift-giver: the hitchhiker may also experience resonance vis-à-vis the self, a fellow lift-seeker, and the world around them. In other words, the occurrence of relations of resonance is contingent on the interplay between the subject's innate temperament – as either extroverted or introverted – and their ability to enter into a mental state characterized by voluntary vulnerability and an openness towards the people, places, or other things they encounter.

5.3.2 *Mental State*

The extent to which the hitchhiker feels touched or moved by their experience on the road depends in part on their mental state during and, in particular, preceding the hitchhiking journey. While for some the practice of hitchhiking is mostly an accessible and cheap means of experiencing adventure and doesn't have a particularly profound effect, for others the hitchhiking experience may serve as a (sub)conscious site of personal transformation, enabling them to temporarily access and embody an alternative mode of being in and relating to the world, one marked by relations of resonance, rather than alienation. This is particularly the case if there's a contrast between the hitchhiker's somewhat alienated daily life and their sociable, present mode of being on the road. While this isn't to say that those who do not feel meaningfully changed by their hitchhiking experience have not formed any relations of resonance, those who face a considerable degree of personal struggle in their daily lives may have greater quantitative and qualitative experiences of resonance. In other words, participants' capacity to experience resonance is linked to their sensitivity to experiences of alienation outside of the hitchhiking encounter.

As such, interviewees report purposefully or unknowingly using the hitchhiking trip as either a means of escape from their alienated day-to-day life – one characterized by feelings of mental distress, insecurity, chaos, and social anxiety – or as a test of strength, a way to show themselves and other people what they were in fact capable of it. While for some, this break with their daily life was a conscious act, for others it only became clear that they had wanted to leave in retrospect. The latter was the case for one interviewee, who stated that:

> *At the time, I didn't realize it, but it was just a form of escape from my life here. Maybe I found that there was no room for me to breathe. I just wanted to get away, and this was a nice way of doing it.* (P3)

Another respondent shared this understanding, expressing how the act of hitchhiking helped her gain a new perspective, that a loss of control doesn't necessarily result in struggle:

> *Now that I look back on it, I'm really like, ''Oh, those were kind of interesting moments of escape, a needed escape from this chaos and from my everyday life situation.'' [When*

hitchhiking] you give up some of your autonomy. I think in that moment that really helped me, because I was having a lot of conflicts. Going on the road [helped me see that] a loss of control doesn't always mean conflict; it can also mean positive things. (P13)

Moreover, for another interviewee, the desire to escape was not a realization in hindsight; rather, he consciously embarked on a solo hitchhiking trip in order to challenge his negative mental state. Although the transformative effects of the hitchhiking journey were not permanent, it he regarded it as a good means of addressing his issues and overcoming them to some degree:

The second time [I hitchhiked] was because I had [been having] a lot of mental problems. They [had] started to subside a little bit, but I felt that there still was this nagging insecurity within [me]. And I was just like, ''I'm going to prove that I can do something that takes a lot of mental courage.'' [So] then I wanted to hitchhike all by myself. A large part of the year I suffered from [agoraphobia], the fear of open spaces. Going to Paris was a good way to battle that. Being with strangers very intimately serves the same purpose. It's just this great thing that happens during travel, but especially during travel [by means of] hitchhiking: you have to become an open person. You can't be your secluded little self and stay in a corner, because then you won't get anywhere. [This sense of change] lasted for a bit, but the mind needs more than just the hitchhiking trip to get over some things. (P12)

Finally, one participant that appreciated hitchhiking for its ideological underpinnings, but that had quite some personal grievances towards the practice, also pinpointed the transformative potential of the act if one were feeling alienated or struggling mentally. He speculated that:

If you're in a phase of your life where you're stuck in a loop, or you feel disconnected or whatever, I can imagine hitchhiking can break you out of that loop and make you see new people, new possibilities. Maybe that's my that's my tagline for hitchhiking: hitchhiking is breaking out of the matrix. (P11)

While some participants with a heightened level of sensitivity to experiences of alienation in their day-to-day life report utilizing the hitchhiking trip as a means of escape or as a test of mental strength, in the process experiencing the journey as a site of resonant encounters, this is not necessarily the case for other people. Put differently, although those who mention experiencing mental distress, insecurity, chaos, and social anxiety in their daily lives may have a greater chance to experience resonance on the road in comparison to those who are less sensitive to alienation, others with mental health struggles may not undergo such a process of self-transformation. In fact, facing challenging circumstances on the hitchhiking journey might have the opposite effect, resulting in an inner hardening and a closing off towards the outside world on the part of the lift-seeker. As such, the good hitchhiking experience necessitates a certain level of confidence and resilience, which enable the hitchhiker to interact with strangers and deal with difficult situations. Furthermore, the relationship between alienation and resonance cannot be instrumentalized; the hitchhiker with mental health struggles cannot be sure to diminish or overcome mental distress by embarking on a lift-seeking trip, for then they would enter the realm of manipulation or domination.

5.3.3 *Identity*

If the occurrence of resonance necessitates a disposition of openness and voluntary vulnerability, and is hindered by fear, stress, or the need for a specific outcome, then the resonant hitchhiking encounter is not only premised upon, to some extent, one's temperament and mental state, but also on one's identity. For, the hitchhiker's identity plays a significant role in determining their actual susceptibility to or subjective perception of risk, and thus, to the likelihood of feelings of fear and stress. Some lift-seekers are subject to more potentially fear-inducing socially determined factors than others, most notably due to their (perceived) gender and sexual identity. Other factors that may be of influence on one's general experience or susceptibility to risk, but that respondents didn't address in detail, are one's age, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, social class, or physical build. In the interviews, gender was an often-mentioned topic which influenced many participants' experiences on the road. While all (cisgender) women interviewees expressed that their (perceived) gender played a significant role in their hitchhiking experience, from influencing their sense of safety, to the ease of getting rides and the conversation with the lift-giver, this wasn't the case for all of the (cisgender) men respondents, as some stated a lack of awareness on the role their gender played and others posited that it was of no importance at all. Furthermore, one participant discussed the influence of his sexual identity, or queerness, on his experience hitchhiking, sharing that the possibility of encountering people with homophobic mindsets and the accompanying heightened sense of awareness of his body language and behavior enhances feelings of stress and fear and diminishes the likeliness that resonance will occur.

However, the relationship between identity and resonance is far from straightforward. Although the hitchhiker's identity in terms of gender and sexuality is of importance to their susceptibility to or perception of risk, and thus, to the presence of fear and stress, it seems unlikely that those with a more marginalized sexual and gender identity, i.e. women and queer people, are structurally less prone to the formation of resonant relationships. On the contrary, it may be argued that socially disadvantaged individuals experience hitchhiking as a realm which is as, if not more, conducive to resonant encounters than non-marginalized individuals, as they may be more sensitive to feelings of alienation. Moreover, an individual's vulnerability to violence is not only dependent on their gender and sexual identity, other identities and experiences of oppression and privilege – such as one's race, class, sex, ability (including mental health), ethnicity, religion, physical appearance, etc. – also play a role. An intersectional lens sheds light on the ways in which one's multiple identities result in unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. An intersectional approach reveals that not all women and queer people are equally vulnerable to discrimination or violence: for example, white women and queer people are generally less prone to risk than women and queer people of color (POC), and trans women are generally more vulnerable to violence than cis women. If individuals with less privileged identities and with experiences of oppression willingly take the risk of making themselves vulnerable by placing their trust into the hands of individuals they have encountered by sheer chance, if their trust is not abused, the sense of relief, connection, gratitude, and meaning may be greater for them than for more privileged individuals, who are generally less subject to socially determined risk.

In the following section, I will discuss the influence of the hitchhiker's gender and sexual identity on their experience on the road, specifically with regards to their sense of safety.

5.3.3.1 *Gender and Sexual Identity*

The relationship between participants' gender and their perception of risk on the road was most evident for the interviewees who identified as female. These respondents shared that their (perceived) gender makes them feel more exposed or vulnerable, that they would only consider hitchhiking with another person, and that if they were men, they would hitchhike by themselves as well. As such, interviewees who identified as female expressed: *''When I travel, I always think: ''If I [weren't] a woman, I would dare to do so many more things. I would hitchhike all the time.'' And now I do it in specific circumstances where I feel safe''* (P1); that *''[Gender] plays a very, very big role. It makes it [scarier] – I feel more exposed. My gender, or my perceived gender, is part of the reason why I like hitchhiking with another person''* (P2); and that:

> *I would always [go] hitchhiking with someone else because, unfortunately, I'm a woman, and that makes me feel more vulnerable. If I [were] a man, I wouldn't care, I wouldn't mind doing it alone. I think the matter of my gender forces me to do it in with other people.* (P8)

Not only does gender impact hitchhikers' sense of safety while hitchhiking, but it also appeared to play a role in their likelihood and ease of getting rides. Most participants, both those who identified as male and female, shared the belief that women have an easier time obtaining a lift than men. This was often used as a strategy: if men and women were hitchhiking together, the men would hang back and the women would actively seek out contact with potential lift-givers: *''Getting a ride as a girl is much easier than as a boy. This is used by hitchhiking travelers a lot because it's much more efficient. You [just] ask the girls to stand beside the road''* (P5). Moreover, a participant who identified as female echoed the statement that her gender helps her to obtain a lift, for some people are keen to look after women in potentially dangerous circumstances:

> *I think my gender helps me to get rides, for better or for worse. People want to take care of you on the road. And even if they're not eager to interact with you, they are eager to get you out of what to them is a perilous situation.* (P9)

Similarly, other interviewees stated that the nature of the conversation with the lift-giver also differs, that they, as women, get treated differently when traveling with another woman in comparison to with a man. According to one participant, she was subject to:

> *[A different kind] of attention. A lot of men picked us up, far more than women. And the [conversation] was a lot about sex and about family. [It did] not really [make me feel uncomfortable], but I think that was because it was in Spanish. We didn't speak enough Spanish to really understand it, so it was kind of funny sometimes. I think we laughed it [off] a little bit.* (P14)

Another respondent expressed that she was made very aware of her gender both in who gave her a ride and in the conversations that he had in the car, which were often about her safety:

> *Just the fact that I do it, a lot of times, defies expectations of what a woman, or a person read as a woman, should be doing, or what's safe. When I hitchhike alone or with a female friend, we tend to get picked up by a lot of middle-aged men, who are like, ''I picked you up because I have a daughter and I wouldn't want a creep to pick her up. So, I took you'' – kind of this protective idea. I've also had a few situations where I hitchhiked with a guy, and a person would first only see me and be like, ''Oh yeah, I can take you.'' And then the guy came, and he*

> *was like, ''Oh, no, actually, I don't have space in my car.'' Then afterwards you think, ''Oh, my God. OK, weird.'' I think you're made very aware of your gender, already in who picks you up, but then also [in] what kinds of conversations you have. I think [at least] 70% of the conversations that I've had when I hitchhiked alone or with a female friend were about our safety, and then people were like, ''This is not OK for women to do. You should really be more careful.''* (P13)

Some participants who identified as male shared that they were well aware that their gender identity played a role in their experience hitchhiking, both in terms of safety and with regards to getting a ride: *''I think [that] being male, and my teammate also being male, helped in feeling safe at all times. We didn't have to second-guess anyone's intentions, or at least we didn't – maybe we should have''* (P6). As with the female interviewees, most participants who identified as male believed that their gender influenced whether or not they were offered rides:

> *In terms of safety, being a man helps, of course. But then on the receiving end, very often people would tell me, ''I'm sorry, I don't pick up guys,'' ''I [don't] pick up guys as a woman driver,'' or ''I wouldn't [have] pick[ed] you up if you weren't hitchhiking with this girl.''* (P4)

However, while some men[3] might be generally less susceptible to social risk as a result of their gender, the geographical context is important. Moreover, it cannot be said that men aren't subject to any risk or predatory sexual behavior on the road. One participant with extensive hitchhiking experience in Turkey and Iran stressed the significance of contextual factors, stating that:

> *It really depends on the place. There are so many things that, as a man, you just don't have to deal with. A lot of people [think] that men don't [encounter predatory behavior on the road], but I experienced it quite a lot myself. (…) Very often, people would simply ask me for sex, very straightforward[ly]. [To] draw the line [and say] that women [experience] all risk and men none would be way too extreme.* (P4)

A queer interviewee expressed that, when hitchhiking, he became very aware of how he might be perceived by strangers and, consequently, how he performed his gender. His gender performance was made to ensure his personal safety amidst the potential of homophobic discrimination or violence and meant to guarantee that he didn't come across as threatening to potential female lift-givers. While he admitted that he believes he can 'pass' – which means being perceived by people as (cisgender or) heterosexual – he doesn't enjoy having to make the effort to conform to conventional notions of masculinity. An intersectional lens reveals that while this participant identifies and presents as a man, and may gain some privilege as a result, his queerness renders him more prone to discrimination and violence on the road:

> *Whenever you approach someone, you very consciously think about how that person is going to interpret you and how best to market yourself. I don't like having to do that. If it's a very heterosexual man, I might try and hide my feminine traits, but if it's a woman, I might [exaggerate] my trying to look like a student from a good, normal family kind of thing. I think the most uncomfortable feeling I have is the feeling of being intimidating or dangerous towards women. Strangers have to estimate me on first appearance and that can sometimes*

[3] Not all men are less subject to discrimination and violence as a result of their gender identity. Racialized men (which, of course, varies by context), as well as queer (i.e. gay, bisexual, and trans) men are at much greater risk of violence than white, cisgender, straight men.

> *be quite confronting. (…) [It] reminds me of the way that I'm seen as a man. [While it] might put [some] people off, the fact that I'm a man [generally] lends me more safety. But the fact that I wear an earring and have fairly effeminate body language places me at risk, because there's plenty of people out on the road with homophobic mindsets. Those things kind of counterbalance each other in terms of safety when hitchhiking. I think I can pass – I don't like having to do it, but I think I can.* (P11)

While some interviewees who identified as male stated that their gender and sexual identity was a prominent factor in their experience hitchhiking, others were either unaware of the influence of their gender in the moment or said that they believe that their gender doesn't really have any influence on their experience on the road. While he wasn't mindful of his relative privilege while hitchhiking, one respondent did realize the advantages his gender and sexual identity leant him during the interview:

> *I [have] really reflected on my experiences and the strange settings I've been in and realized that in those situations I never thought about myself being in danger because of my gender identity or sex. In that sense, [I'm] privileged. I'm not that conscious [of] it. It's not that I'm on the side of the road like "I'm a man so I'm privileged."* (P5)

Finally, a different respondent who identified as male posited that his gender identity barely had any influence on his hitchhiking experience, and that what is more crucial to one's sense of safety is one's level of comfort being in an enclosed space with strangers:

> *I don't think it really does. I never had the feeling that I wasn't [getting] picked up because I [am] a man. [As] for safety, I guess it depends on the person – how soon you feel comfortable being in a being in a small space with strange people. And I also never looked that much at gender differences, so maybe that's why I don't notice it.* (P3)

As illustrated, some participants were either ignorant of the role their gender played or thought that their gender identity has little influence on their experience on the road. This gender blindness among some of my participants may be due to the fact that in a patriarchal society, being cisgender male, heterosexual, and white, means to be unmarked and neutral. The intersections of cisgender male, heterosexual, and white generally results in a privileged identity and low susceptibility to discrimination, oppression, and violence. Thus, the overlap of identities which are privileged in our patriarchal society may be a factor in some of my participants' inability to see the importance of gender in the hitchhiking experience.

5.3.4 *Conclusion*

In this section, I sought to understand to what extent participants experience the practice of hitchhiking as a realm which is conducive to evoking a state of resonance. To do so, I set out to answer the following research questions: (1) What motivates students to hitchhike?; (2) What does resonance look and feel like in hitchhiking?; and (3) For whom is resonance evoked in hitchhiking?

Firstly, I found that student hitchhikers' motivations range from, and are often a combination of, social, philosophical, political, practical, and personal growth factors. In my conversations with interviewees, it seemed that for most respondents, the act of hitchhiking principally represented a mode of travel that served as an alternative to most conventional forms of transportation. These participants stressed the importance of flexibility, affordability, and sociality, and shared that they

were initially drawn to the practice by a longing for adventure. Some interviewees also mentioned that they traveled by means of lift-seeking for environmental reasons; because they regarded it as a conscious and slow mode of travel; because it is a convenient way of getting around in areas with a lack of public transportation options; because they wanted to challenge themselves; and because hitchhiking was a local custom, which they wanted to partake in. Finally, for some, the significance of the practice of hitchhiking extended beyond the realm of travel as it represented not simply an unconventional mode of getting around, but more so a way of enacting alternative modes of living and being together with others.

Secondly, within the realm of hitchhiking, resonant relationships can be directed towards other people, to the self, or to the world at large, and may be accompanied by a variety of emotions. Oftentimes, these relations of resonance – in which the hitchhiker feels touched or moved – form a contrast with the subject's mode of being in daily life. In the relationship to self, resonance may take the form of a sense of empowerment, accomplishment, and confidence. As for the hitchhiker's relationships to others, resonance may look like a powerful empathetic connection with another human being, due to the ephemeral and intimate conversation between lift-giver and lift-seeker; the mutual vulnerability of sharing space with a total stranger; or the heightened connection between fellow lift-seekers as they face challenging circumstances together. With regards to the hitchhiker's relationship to the world at large, resonance may come about as a result of their voluntary relinquishment of control and embrace of uncertainty, flexibility, vulnerability, and surprise; their altered sense of time; and their increased awareness of their immediate surroundings and admiration for the natural environment.

Thirdly, the hitchhiker's experience of their trip and the occurrence of resonance appeared to be dependent on a multitude of factors, which shaped the lift-seeker's perception of and behavior towards self, others, and the world around them, as well as how they were perceived and treated. While various other contextual factors may be of influence, interviewees most often mentioned the importance of their temperament, mental state, and their gender and sexual identity. Resonance is premised upon the individual's general disposition towards openness and their willingness to make themselves vulnerable, which may, in some cases, be diminished by their innate temperament, but may still be consciously adopted. Moreover, participants' capacity to form resonant relations is linked to their sensitivity to experiences of alienation outside of the hitchhiking encounter. While some who experience mental distress in their daily lives form relations of resonance on the road due to their sensitivity to alienation, others with mental health struggles may undergo a process of inner hardening and a closing off towards the outside world while hitchhiking. Finally, the hitchhiker's identity also plays a role in determining their likelihood of experiencing resonance. As resonance is inhibited by feelings of fear and stress, an individual's intersectional identity – which shapes their vulnerability to violence and the susceptibility to feelings of anxiety on the road – plays a role in the formation of resonant relationships. While an individual's vulnerability to violence is not only dependent on their gender and sexual identity; it may be that socially disadvantaged individuals experience hitchhiking as a realm which is as, if not more, conducive to resonant encounters than more privileged individuals, as they may be more sensitive to feelings of alienation.

6.

Discussion

6.1 Interpretations

The hitchhiking experience stresses the value of encounters and connections. Each ride may bring about a unique and authentic moment that disrupts the monotony of day-to-day life for both the lift-seeker and lift-giver. The shared experience of moving together for short but intimate periods often enables the creation of interpersonal bonds between the hitchhiker and driver. Confronted with different people, places, and an uncommon mode of being in and relating to the world, the hitchhiker may feel touched or moved and may experience a sense of transformation. In the hitchhiking encounter, the lift-seeker may feel affected by the lift-giver's kindness and openness, or the unfamiliar experience of space and time on the road, thereby developing a new outlook on oneself, the other, or the world at large. My personal experience lift-seeking and the heightened level of sensation I felt while on the road, in addition to hearing other hitchhikers' provocative stories, made me think that resonance would be an apt concept to investigate and understand the contemporary practice of hitchhiking.

In the following section, I will first put my findings in conversation with the literature on hitchhiking, then shift the focus to resonance, thereby discussing how the elements of vulnerability, mutual trust, and fearlessness play a role in the hitchhiking encounter, how 'good' hitchhiking experiences differ from resonant ones, and in which ways the practice reflects and challenges the literature on resonance.

6.1.1 *Hitchhiking Today*

In many ways, the contemporary practice of student hitchhiking reflects the experience of previous generations. Writing in the early 1970s, Carlson (1972) argues that student hitchhikers spoke with pride about their adventures on the road and the tactics they had used to overcome challenges. She emphasizes that lift-seekers cherished the freedom to go where they wanted, especially when brought about by their own resourcefulness. As mentioned previously, the experience of my interviewees mirrors Miller's (1973) subjects, who tended to regard their lift-seeking experience as an adventure, and as a testament to their self-reliance and their ability to get by with limited resources. Miller's student hitchhikers were, like the ones interviewed here, motivated to challenge themselves, pursue intense physical and mental experiences, and seek personal growth. Additionally, according to Garner (2008a), hitchhikers may experience the journey as a test of character, which was a recurring theme in the interviews. Furthermore, students' prioritization of encounters and connections over convenience and speed shows similarities with O'Regan's (2012) more recent work on hitchhiking. O'Regan understands the practice of hitchhiking as part of an alternative mobility culture, which breaks with the conventional and expected ways of moving, dwelling and doing. In this sense, the current practice of student hitchhiking substantially aligns with the relatively recent, as well as earlier, literature on hitchhikers' motivations for, understandings of, and affects brought about by the practice.

However, there are also various elements of the literature that do not appear to hold true for my participants. For example, Carlson (1972) posits that the network regulating the exchange of cultural knowledge on the practice is gendered and generally limited to male circles. Since the 1970s, the cultural knowledge of the practice has become much more accessible to women, as several of my female respondents have never hitchhiked in the company, or with the help of, a man. Moreover, Greenley and Rice's (1974) assertion that hitchhiking is a conscious demonstration of the hitchhiker's exemption from the time schedules and obligations which govern most people's lives also does not fully apply to the participants in this study. While the lift-seeking trip generally necessitates a relatively large amount of unstructured time, and the hitchhiker's non-adherence to conventional time regimes and responsibilities forms a contrast with those they meet along the way, the participants in this study do not appear to *consciously* demonstrate this non-adherence. Although they valued the sense of spontaneity, freedom, and flexibility that the hitchhiking trip brought, none of the interviewees expressed that they purposefully wished to convey their temporary lack of responsibilities to others on the road. Finally, some respondents' accounts also differ from Miller's (1973) description of the student traveler's motives, who, like Greenley and Rice, discusses the hitchhiker's lack of obligations. Rather than being driven by a romantic vision of poverty and engaged in a quest to reject the constraints and responsibilities of adulthood, some hitchhikers in this study were motivated not by escape, but by the constructive desire to enact alternative modes of relating to others. Furthermore, Miller's characterization of hitchhiking as a rite of passage – as a one-time, short-lived battle against the duties of adulthood, after which the student continues along the respectable, pre-set path laid out for them – does not hold true either. This oppositional or rebellious conception of the practice is, I argue, a fallacy – while certainly more challenging than during student life, the individual is still able to embark on a lift-seeking trip at a later stage of life, as evidenced by one participant who continues to engage in the practice even as he has entered his post-graduation, working life. As such, the conceptualization of student hitchhiking by scholars in the 1970s strikes me as overly homogenous and does not capture the diversity in experience of lift-seekers today.

Aside from the aforementioned elements, this study also differs from the literature on hitchhiking in another way: it departs from the common focus on participants' motivations, meanings, and personality types to investigate the practice through the conceptual lens of resonance. To date, no other social science research has used Rosa's 'relation of relationality' to understand the practice of student hitchhiking. In the next sections, I will briefly examine how my findings relate to the literature on resonance and then discuss the nature of resonance in the hitchhiking encounter in more detail.

6.1.2 *A State of Dispositional Resonance*

To enter a state of dispositional resonance, Rosa (2018) argues that we must be willing to take the risk of making ourselves vulnerable. This means being open to the possibility of being touched and even transformed in ways that are unpredictable and beyond our control. He further states that in contexts where we are scared, stressed, in fight mode, or are focused on bringing about a certain result, we do not allow for resonance to occur. Furthermore, the desire to exert complete control over processes and outcomes in order to maximize efficiency and transparency is also problematic for the cultivation of relationships of resonance, for such attempts at control are incompatible with the unpredictable

and transformative nature of resonance. Therefore, according to Rosa (2018), for resonance to occur, there must be a context of mutual trust and fearlessness, which requires time and stability as background conditions. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss how these elements play out in the hitchhiking encounter.

With regards to the element of vulnerability, I believe that there is a discrepancy between perceived vulnerability – by society at large and by the individual hitchhiker – and experienced vulnerability. Society at large may deem the act of hitchhiking riskier and more unsafe than the hitchhiker, who, by contrast, has purposefully chosen to take part in the practice, and often argues that the fearful narrative surrounding the mode of travel does not reflect the reality of contemporary lift-seeking. While some may posit that those who engage in the act of lift-seeking necessarily take the risk of making themselves vulnerable, I argue that the hitchhiker's willingness to make themselves vulnerable depends on their perception of risk on the road. Those with limited experiences of oppression and with relatively privileged identities may not experience hitchhiking as particularly vulnerability-inducing, while others with less privileged identities may describe many of their experiences on the road as marked by vulnerability. Indeed, all cisgender women interviewees expressed that their (perceived) gender played a significant role in shaping their sense of safety on the road, which wasn't the case for all cisgender men respondents. While one gay male participant shared that his queerness enhanced feelings of stress and fear, participants with more privileged identities – cisgender male, heterosexual, and white – and who were thus considered 'neutral' in patriarchal Western society, expressed that they rarely or never felt vulnerable while hitchhiking, or didn't attribute sporadic feelings of stress and anxiety to risk and vulnerability.

Furthermore, for the establishment of relations of resonance, not only must the lift-seeker take the risk of making themselves vulnerable, but, I believe, so must the lift-giver. In the relationship between the lift-giver and lift-seeker, there must be mutual vulnerability and openness for the possible establishment of relations of resonance, as resonance is premised not on autonomy but on relationality. For the lift-seeker, this state of voluntary vulnerability involves soliciting rides from strangers, entering their vehicle, trusting them to help them along safely and not take advantage of them, and engaging in an honest and open dialogue. As for the lift-giver, this disposition involves allowing the lift-seeker to enter the private space of their vehicle, trusting them to not take advantage of them, and engaging in an honest and open dialogue. Finally, although some lift-seekers do regularly experience instances of vulnerability while on the road, they do not necessarily conceptualize this vulnerability as inherently negative, nor does it generally dissuade them from returning to the practice. Indeed, the partial renunciation of control and acceptance of vulnerability was, for some participants, accompanied by a multitude of positive effects, such as an increased level of openness towards out of the ordinary activities, and a sense of possibility and appreciation for the little comforts available. Moreover, all but one interviewee characterized their hitchhiking experience as generally enjoyable, meaningful, and to be repeated. Thus, I believe that the practice of hitchhiking is not an inherently risky endeavour and that it depends on the context whether or not the lift-seeker enters a state of dispositional resonance.

As for the influence of one's mental state on the occurrence of resonance, Rosa argues that fear, stress, and a goal-oriented mindset hinder the formation of resonant relations. These factors may diminish one's general openness to the world, as they entrap the lift-seeker within their own minds, inhibiting a state of mental presence, and the possibility to connect with their surroundings.

As I see it, resonant hitchhiking can be understood as an exercise in mindfulness, for the lift-seeker must not only cultivate a sense of openness to an alternative conception of time and space, but also an acceptance of things not working out as expected. This acceptance of circumstances without becoming angry, frustrated, or anxious, wards off the process of inner closing or shutting down. With regards to Rosa's understanding of a mental state suitable for resonance, I have some remarks. The findings from this study thus challenge the literature on resonance in several ways. Although Rosa argues that a goal-oriented outlook impedes resonance, I believe that to have a destination in mind, and thereby possess a goal-oriented mindset, does not necessarily occlude the establishment of resonant relationships in the practice of hitchhiking. In fact, as one participant maintained, to pursue a specific destination enables one to retain a sense of agency over the journey, which increases one's sense of control, thereby reducing feelings of fear and stress. My understanding of resonance in the practice of hitchhiking also differs from Rosa's work on resonance in another way. I believe that to experience anxiety and stress at some point in the hitchhiking experience does not categorically rule out the occurrence of resonance, as such emotions can be temporary and may be overcome over the course of the encounter with new places or the lift-giver. Therefore, while Rosa rightfully posits that fear and stress negatively influence the likelihood of resonance – as evidenced by Participant 10's uncomfortable interaction with his lift-givers in Bulgaria – it cannot be argued that an encounter in which such affects are present at some point will never bring about resonant relations. The interplay between fear and stress and resonance appears to be more complex than a straightforward causal relationship.

Regarding the aspect of control in the hitchhiking encounter, among the participants there appears to be a general lack of desire, as well as an inability, to have dominance over processes and outcomes, and to maximize efficiency. Additionally, both the practice of hitchhiking and the experience of resonance are inherently unpredictable. In that sense, the act of lift-seeking shares similarities with the particular mode of being that allows one to enter a state of dispositional resonance. While all resonant encounters are, to some extent, transformative – as evidenced in this study by some respondents experiencing an increase in self-knowledge, agency and confidence, or gaining a different perspective on the other – not all hitchhiking encounters are resonant. For some participants, particularly those with relatively few experiences on the road, the practice was mostly regarded as an accessible and cheap means of adventurous travel and was not believed to have a particularly profound effect. Therefore, I argue that a 'good' hitchhiking experience is not synonymous with a resonant one. In the following section, I will discuss the ways in which 'good' hitchhiking experiences differ from resonant ones.

6.1.3 *Good Experiences vs. Resonant Experiences*

In my view, there is a fundamental difference between a pleasurable hitchhiking experience and a resonant one. A good hitchhiking experience may be characterized by good weather, short waiting times, helpful lift-givers, conversation with said lift-givers, not getting stranded, a sense of uncertainty and spontaneity, but no prolonged feelings of vulnerability, and the arrival at a pre-determined destination. In other words, a relatively comfortable journey marked by few challenges, and where the arrival at one's destination is of principal importance. The resonant hitchhiking experience, by contrast, entails a certain level of discomfort, challenge, interaction, conversation, trust, presence,

difference, and honesty. In the resonant hitchhiking experience, the goal – arriving at a pre-determined destination – is not considered the most important element and does not supersede the process itself – the interaction with the lift-giver and the embrace of an alternative mode of being in the world. Here, the hitchhiker challenges their personal inhibitions, engages in a dialogue with the lift-giver, is faced with novel perspectives, thereby experiencing a sense of connection with the driver, applying the significance of the experience to other contexts, experiencing an increase in faith in humanity, or a religious, spiritual, or mystical sensation of connectedness with the world. In other words, the lift-seeker extends themselves outwards and allows themselves to be affected by the world around them, at times experiencing the formation of relations of resonance.

6.1.4 *Fear and Longing*

As I previously touched upon ways in which my understanding of resonance in the practice of hitchhiking challenges the literature on resonance, in this section I will briefly conclude by highlighting two ways in which they correspond and present questions for further investigation.

In the interviews, it became apparent that the likelihood that the lift-seeker experienced the practice of hitchhiking as conducive to resonance was greater if they possessed a sensitivity to experiences of alienation. This sensitivity to alienation, which is in part determined by their intersectional identities, could explain why certain participants were more affected by their time on the road than others. This correlative dynamic between resonance and alienation aligned with the literature on resonance, for Susen (2020) argues that, rather than contradictory or mutually exclusive, the two modes of being are co-constitutive. He further states that, oftentimes, people's most freeing forms of (creative) resonance arise from intense experiences of alienation and oppression. Therefore, paradoxically, alienation can act as both a barrier to and a justification for resonance-laden practices. According to Susen, resonance is only conceivable against the backdrop of an other that remains alien and silent, which might be identified in the hitchhiking encounter as all the potential lift-givers that pass by the hitchhiker without acknowledging or stopping for them, all the strangers that they don't choose to entrust with their mobility and safety, or all the people outside of their bubble they choose not to engage in intimate conversation with in daily life. Moreover, this sense of alienation can also stem from the lift-seeker's experiences of oppression and discrimination outside of the hitchhiking encounter and may, for some, serve as a reason to partake in the practice.

Another way in which the interviewees' accounts reflect the literature on resonance is in their yearning for something else, their desire to experience something extraordinary (Susen, 2020). While for some participants this wish to experience something uncommon was illustrated by their longing for freedom and unpredictability, for others this longing stretched beyond the yearning of adventure. Speaking of their desire to enact alternative modes of living and being together with others, some participants appeared to seek, what Susen (2020) calls, a ''moment of transcendence,'' for such experiences harbor the potential of a different form of relating to the world, a ''not-yet'' (319). This wish to contribute to the creation of a different world, one characterized by a deep sense of connectedness between human actors, by engaging with and relating to others differently, to me exemplifies how some participants attempt to transcend contemporary, normative realities and orient themselves towards a future 'not-yet'.

The findings from this exploratory study shed light on the ways in which the elements of vulnerability, mutual trust, and fearlessness play a role in the hitchhiking encounter, how 'good' hitchhiking experiences differ from resonant ones, and how the practice of student hitchhiking both reflects and challenges the literature on hitchhiking and resonance. Furthermore, the findings raise new questions about others' understanding of the good life, other forms of lift-seeking, other participants, and other geographic locations. As such, one may wonder the following: How does the practice of hitchhiking as a mode of student travel fit within other scholars' conceptions of the good life? Do alternative forms of lift-seeking (commuting, or hitchhiking out of necessity rather than for pleasure) also serve as potential sites of resonant experience? Does hitchhiking as a mode of travel also serve as a potential site of resonant experience for people beyond the age of 30 or those who aren't students? Does the contemporary practice of hitchhiking also serve as a potential site of resonant experience in countries with heightened levels of social polarization and/or a history of government-induced fearmongering of strangers and hitchhikers, such as the USA?

6.2 Implications

According to Rosa, the concept of resonance is not just about a subjective stance towards the world (Lijster & Celikates, 2019). He argues that ''The way in which we relate to the world, the way we are set in the world, is not an individual issue, it is a deeply political category'' (ibid: 69). Not only does he wish to turn resonance into a political category, but also wants it to be used as an institutional yardstick to critically determine how institutions should be established. Therefore, resonance, and by extension, hitchhiking, has implications beyond the realm of individual affect. In order to discuss the larger implications of this study, I will first situate the practice of hitchhiking within Rosa's conception of the good life, and then locate this alternative mode of being and moving within current debates on degrowth and tourism.

6.2.1 *The Good Life*

As mentioned previously, Rosa believes that the predicament that best defines the daily experience of most individuals in Western capitalist societies is the perpetual sense of a loss of time. This temporal crisis, brought about by the structural requirements of growth, acceleration, and innovation, is, Rosa asserts, of principal importance to our endeavors to lead a good life. He posits that the essence of leading a fulfilling life is not about the extent of one's resources (in money, wealth, options, or capabilities) – which he describes as the act of making more and more of the world available, accessible, and attainable; the 'triple A approach' to the good life – but rather, it is a particular way of relating to the world – to people, places, ideas, time, self, and nature.

In the practice of hitchhiking as a mode of leisure travel, the lift-seeker embarks on a journey across geographic space by means of a motorized mode of transportation, thereby increasing their scope in the world and potentially enhancing their cultural capital. While hitchhiking in a road vehicle is arguably an accelerated form of transportation when compared to walking or cycling, for some the journey is regarded as a form of slow travel, as you must work for your rides and become more aware of the distance you're traversing. Additionally, Rosa claims that speed is not per se bad, and that it is only harmful when it leads to alienation (Lijster & Celikates, 2019). For the hitchhiker, the lift serves

to make world more available, accessible, and attainable, enabling the lift-seeker to see more of the world and interact with a great variety of people. However, although there are some elements in the hitchhiking experience that overlap with the triple A approach to the good life – which generally entails that we close ourselves off from resonance – I believe that the practice may instead be understood as a potential site of resonant encounters. Whether or not the practice of hitchhiking is an enactment of a failed way of relating and counter to Rosa's conception of the good life depends on the hitchhiker's relationship to the mode of transportation. If the hitchhiker enters into an instrumental relationship with the lift-giver and the journey – whereby the end supersedes the means, i.e. the destination outweighs the process, or the journey is intended to bring about a certain change – then, in my view, the practice does not fit within Rosa's conception of the good life. If one's engagement with the practice is characterized by a desire to use the experience in order to be more successful, then it does not really involve getting into contact with something that truly transforms you, it is merely about temporarily forgetting the instrumental stance you are forced to take. Yet, it should be noted that various, at times conflicting, motivations and modes of being and relating may exist alongside one another, making it hard to formulate a definitive answer to the question of how hitchhiking fits within the good life. As the concept of resonance is still being developed in the interaction between Rosa and his critics, and social research that employs the concept remains virtually non-existent, it may be too early to unequivocally determine the status of hitchhiking within Rosa's critical theory.

Since resonance has not yet been applied in social science research, this study was exploratory in nature, seeking to understand whether the concept could be operationalized in the first place. In my view, applying the concept of resonance to the study of social practices can certainly give an insight into participants' visceral experience, as a focus on resonance emphasizes an individual's openness to being affected by the world around them. However, operationalizing the rather elusive concept of resonance was a bit of a challenge, as it has been conceptualized in a multitude of ways, making it difficult to confidently and accurately identify on the basis of participants' verbal accounts. In other words, not only does Rosa discuss a variety of factors that together may give way to resonant relations – vulnerability, openness, mutual trust, fearlessness, and a conscious renunciation of control, among others – but he also formulates four crucial elements of resonance – being affected, self-efficacy, adaptive transformation, and uncontrollability – which are, in my experience, not as easy to pinpoint as the aforementioned features. Thus, while the conditions for the occurrence of resonant relationships may, at times, be clearly present among certain respondents and may also be easily recognized by them, the ways in which participants were affected, experienced self-efficacy, and adaptively transformed as a result of their encounters on the road, were often not as apparent to them, making me question whether to ascribe meaning to something that some participants did not experience as such. As the necessary elements for resonance may look, be experienced, and be expressed slightly differently depending on the individual, in addition to the fact that resonance cannot be brought about at will, there is no clear-cut guide available for conjuring and determining relations of resonance.

Nevertheless, this study has contributed to the development of the concept of resonance and adds to the currently minute body of work that uses the concept to explore the transformative potential of social practices. In my view, Rosa's focus on resonant praxis has room for development as, aside from brief mentions of in which realms and as a result of what acts resonance may be experienced, he has not (yet) used the concept to investigate the resonant potential of social practices

in greater detail. While Rosa may not be focused on applying the concept to resonance to the study of everyday life or irregular activities, other researchers may do so instead. I believe that this study may contribute to other types of research that seek to operationalize resonance, for it illustrates that the concept can not only be applied to understand subjects' relationship to the world if one pays close attention to the experiences, affects, and dynamics present, but that it may also assist in the creation of an alternative relationship to the world. Therefore, I hope that more social scientists will discover and use Rosa's critical theory to investigate why and how certain practices contribute to a non-alienated mode of being, thereby facilitating greater understanding and, hopefully, wellbeing.

6.2.2 *Tourism and Degrowth*

Aside from its implications for the cultivation of the good life, the practice of hitchhiking may also be significant to the realm of sustainable tourism. Not only does the practice of lift-seeking challenge tourism infrastructures by serving as an alternative to conventional modes of mass transportation, but it also unsettles the traveler's relationship to the journey and that which is meant to be seen or experienced. Furthermore, the practice of hitchhiking arguably has an environmental component. Therefore, in this section, I will situate this alternative mode of being and moving within current debates on degrowth and tourism.

The rapid and uneven expansion of tourism following the 2008 economic crisis has been met with growing social discontent over 'overtourism' (Fletcher et al., 2019). Despite decades of global efforts towards sustainable development, socioecological conflicts and inequality have continued to escalate in many regions. In response to this global crisis, the concept of degrowth has emerged, advocating for a radical socio-political transformation towards a decarbonized society with reduced material throughput. While traditional approaches to 'sustainable tourism' have often focused on sustaining economic growth, proponents of degrowth argue that true sustainability requires moving beyond capitalist development towards post-capitalist forms of production, consumption, and exchange. Degrowth challenges the model of capitalist production and its inherent need for growth, and emphasizes principles of commons creation, care, and conviviality, aiming to rebuild societies around more sustainable practices. Degrowth initiatives, such as cycling, car-sharing, vegetarianism or veganism, or reuse, aim to reduce resource consumption and foster a culture of ''frugal abundance'' or ''ecofeminist sufficiency'' (*ibid*, 2019: 1752). Moreover, proponents of degrowth generally renounce ''techno-promethean utopias'' in favor of shifting towards a future which involves living with less and with a lower ecological footprint (*ibid*, 2019: 1752). Although many such endeavors may not explicitly label themselves as degrowth initiatives, their vision and goals often closely align with principles of tourism degrowth.

According to Fletcher et al. (2019), questioning tourism development implies questioning the fundamental mechanisms that allow modern subjects to channel discontent brought about by the increasing speed, competition and stress experienced in their work lives. Thus, to question tourism development is not only about addressing environmental concerns, but also challenging the capitalist productive model and its growth imperative. When seen through Rosa's critical lens, this desire to engage in tourism activities may be understood as a means of diminishing one's feelings of alienation brought about by increasing social acceleration. Like resonance, degrowth calls for a different qualitative criterion for what sorts of relations and experiences can constitute a 'good' life.

Experiencing resonance is not necessarily dependent on energy consumption or resource use; it can be experienced with simple means and in all types of environments (Eversberg & Schmelzer, 2023). Tourism degrowth, if conceptualized from an anti- or post-capitalist politics, would involve transitioning towards a more collective and community-centered approach to travel, and may be linked to the relational concept of resonance, which refers to a quality of positive experiences of mutuality and (interpersonal) connection. Moreover, advocating for touristic degrowth should not be regarded as a complete denunciation of tourism per se. Instead, it involves a process of de-touristification, which focuses on reducing the intensity and impacts of tourism particularly in overcrowded destinations, thereby facilitating a genuinely sustainable tourism.

Regarding the practice of hitchhiking through the lens of touristic degrowth, we can see various similarities. Hitchhiking as a form of travel may be understood as a non-capitalist form of consumption and exchange, as the lift-seeker does not (generally) pay for the ride with money, but rather with conversation. As with degrowth initiatives, lift-seeking may involve the principles of care, conviviality, and commons creation, as the lift-giver offers to help the hitchhiker further along their journey and provides them with the gift of transportation. Some hitchhikers I spoke with were explicitly driven by environmental concerns. According to them, the act of lift-seeking served as a slow and haphazard alternative to flying and, although they still effectively contributed to the emission of greenhouse gases, they regarded it as a way to diminish their carbon footprint by joining already moving vehicles. As such, they mentioned that they expressed their wish to reduce their resource consumption and live with a lower ecological footprint. Other participants mentioned that they were principally motivated by social principles, wanting to interact with strangers on the basis of mutual trust, foster connections, and seek new solidarities. While none of the participants explicitly labelled themselves as engaging in an act of degrowth, I believe that some interviewees' vision and motivations closely matched with principles of tourism degrowth. Thus, in my view, the act of hitchhiking, whether explicitly or implicitly driven by environmental or social principles, may be considered a form of post-capitalist tourism in practice. In its insistence on valuing more than just the destination and intimately engaging with the people along the way, hitchhiking as a form of leisure travel exemplifies that not only is another tourism possible, but also that travel need not exceed our planetary boundaries. By challenging the individualized, formalized, monetized, efficient, predictable, and hurried nature of conventional mobilities, the practice of hitchhiking not only invites lift-seekers to confront their relationship to late-modern temporalities, but also to enact a different way of moving and being together.

6.3 Limitations

In this section I will reflect on the limitations of the present study and discuss how they might have influenced the results and subsequent conclusions. Firstly, the study sample was rather homogenous in terms of identity and experience. With regards to identity, this study was composed of mostly white, European participants, as it proved difficult to find more than two POC respondents who were willing to take part in the research. As for the nature of the participants' experience, the study sample was comprised of mostly aficionados of the practice. Aside from one participant, all respondents generally described their hitchhiking experience in positive terms and have either continued to engage in the practice after their first trip or intend to do so in the future. Aside from the homogenous nature of the

study sample, this study was limited in its scope, as its focus was on hitchhiking as a form of student leisure travel. Therefore, the results are not generalizable for all (potential) participants, not for all forms of lift-seeking, as hitchhiking may also be practiced as a way of commuting and may be characterized by necessity rather than by free choice.

Secondly, and, I believe, more significant than the homogeneity of the study sample, this investigation may have been limited by the choice of methods. As the interviews were principally informed by participants' recollections and their subsequent verbal narration of memories on the road, the chosen methods may have been limited in their ability to accurately capture the participants' affects and mode of being in the world during the hitchhiking encounter. In the interviews, some respondents recalled experiences they had several years ago. Aside from complications in the recollection of one's feelings at the time – i.e. overcoming the barrier of time – the chosen methods also presupposed that affects can be accurately conveyed through words – i.e. overcoming the barrier of speech. Therefore, while inner sensations may generally be difficult to identify, articulate, and accurately convey, the added complication of temporal distance may have rendered the in-depth interviews a rather unreliable method to explore the visceral realm. According to Hayes-Conroy (2010), despite the growing attunement to the bodily and visceral realms, human geography places an outsized emphasis on speech. She argues that verbal data is limited in its capacity to capture the complexity of visceral experience, which, in the case of this study, I would agree with. This study thus contributes to the methodological discussion on how to best capture visceral experience, for it argues that research into the realm of emotions should not limit itself to textual methods and should ideally make use of a variety of textual and visual methods.

Thirdly, and related to the second limitation, this study may have encountered the barrier of speech on the part of the researcher. Inner sensations and affects may not only be difficult to identify and articulate by the interviewees, but they may also be hard to interpret by the researcher. Not only is it difficult to understand someone else's experience, but it may be even more so when they're based on recollections and expressed in a language which is not one's own. In other words, the intricate nature of the subject matter – resonance – requires accuracy of narration, which may be, to some extent, complicated by having to express oneself in English, which was not most participants' native language.

Lastly, another potential issue may have affected the generation and interpretation of the data, namely researcher bias. Although I cultivated a sense of awareness and made a conscious effort to not ask leading questions, when I sensed that participants did not understand certain questions or when they personally expressed that they did not comprehend my formulation, I attempted to reformulate the query without putting words into their mouths. However, I was at times unsure how to ask in a non-leading way and how to probe when the question had already been posed from several angles. Although I believe that despite my awareness, I may have biased the creation and interpretation of the data, this seems unavoidable, as all data is partly created by the researcher. Thus, maybe the best we can do as social scientists is to try to be transparent about it.

6.4 Recommendations

As the present study may have been limited by its reliance on participants' recollections and the verbal expression of inner sensation, an investigation into resonance in the hitchhiking encounter may be

more accurate and reliable if undertaken in real time and if using a combination of textual and non-textual methods. Rather than using retrospective in-depth interviews as a method of study, I recommend the use of a variety of ethnographic methods – such as participant observation, field notes, in-the-moment interviews or reflections, and visual methods – to capture the fleeting nature of resonance on the road. These written or spoken reflections, and forms of visual documentation are preferably participant-generated but may also be researcher-generated if they are 'in the field' together. Furthermore, future research into students' affects and modes of being in the world in the practice of hitchhiking would also benefit from a more diverse study sample, with regards to both identity and experience.

Moreover, as the literature on resonance has, aside from the present study and one on nursing, seemingly not been used to study social practices, I would invite other social scientists to incorporate the concept of resonance in their research into the realm of relationships, education, sports, entertainment, healthcare, religion, tourism, social change activism. More specifically, such research could look into pleasure activism, adventure travel, transformative pedagogies, stand-up comedy, live music, psychotherapy, counselling, friendships, dating, hookup culture, sex work, religious rituals, spiritual practices, hiking, rock climbing, yoga, or gardening, among others.

7.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I sought to understand the nature of resonance in the contemporary practice of student hitchhiking. To examine the extent to which to lift-seekers experience the practice of hitchhiking as conducive to evoking a state of resonance, I looked into their motivations, the forms that resonance can take, and for whom resonance is evoked in the practice. Based on in-depth interviews with 16 student lift-seekers, I argue that the practice of hitchhiking is, under certain conditions, favorable to the formation of resonant relations. This study confirms that the elements required for the occurrence of resonance broadly overlap with those necessary for the practice of hitchhiking. As such, the development of resonant relationships requires a context of mutual trust, openness, vulnerability, and time, and these elements are often present in the practice of lift-seeking as a form of leisure travel. However, while the hitchhiking experience generally compels participants to plan for ample unstructured time and place their trust in others, not all those who hitchhike are equally willing to make themselves vulnerable or open to engaging with the people, places, and other things they encounter along the way.

With regards to openness, the presence of fear, stress, and exhaustion may cause some hitchhikers to undergo a process of inner hardening, thereby closing themselves off from the world around them. Therefore, such feelings negatively influence the hitchhiker's openness to the world and thereby their likelihood of experiencing resonance. With regards to vulnerability, I argue that the hitchhiker's sensitivity to resonance and their willingness to make themselves vulnerable depends on their perception of risk on the road. Participants with limited experiences of oppression and with relatively privileged identities may be less sensitive to experiences of alienation and may not experience hitchhiking as particularly vulnerability-inducing. As resonance and alienation are co-constitutive rather than mutually exclusive, hitchhikers with less privileged identities and with a sensitivity to experiences of alienation may have a greater chance to form relations of resonance on the road.

In the hitchhiker's relationship to the self and to the world at large, a state of dispositional resonance – in which the subject is willingly vulnerable and open to being affected, and answers the initial call – may at times result in the formation of resonant relations, thereby transforming the hitchhiker to some degree. In contrast, in the relationship with other people, the hitchhiker's embodiment of a state of dispositional resonance alone is not enough. Since resonance is a relational concept, when other actors are involved, there must be a mutual stance of openness and conscious vulnerability for the possible occurrence of resonant relations. Whenever we resonate with another person, a landscape, or an idea, we are transformed by the encounter, although the nature of this change may vary. Nevertheless, in each case, resonant experience involves a shift in our relationship with the world. When we resonate with the world around us, we are irrevocably transformed, and it is this transformation that makes us feel alive.

This study is of relevance to the fields of sociology, critical theory, and sustainable tourism studies as the contemporary practice of hitchhiking has implications for the cultivation of the good life, and may also serve as an example of tourism degrowth in practice. In its insistence on valuing more than just the destination by intimately engaging with the people along the way, hitchhiking as a

form of leisure travel illustrates that not only is another tourism possible, but also that travel need not exceed planetary boundaries. By challenging the individualized, formalized, monetized, efficient, predictable, and hurried nature of conventional mobilities, the practice of hitchhiking not only invites lift-seekers to confront their relationship to late-modern temporalities, but also to enact a different way of moving and being together. In an age of disconnection, the fleeting, intimate conversation and the mutual vulnerability of sharing space with a total stranger may bring about a powerful empathetic connection and may even restore one's faith in humanity.

8.

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9.

Appendix

6.1 Data Management Plan

Organizational context

Name researcher	Aron van Ees
Name supervisor(s)	Oona Morrow
Chair Group	SDC
Start date of project	11-01-2023
(Expected) end date of project	30-11-2023

Research project

Title	Feeling the Road: On Resonance in the Hitchhiking Encounter
Project summary	This master's thesis intends to investigate hitchhikers' relationship to the world, and particularly the concept of resonance, through qualitative means. I will conduct semi-structured interviews, using various forms of sensory elicitation, in addition to autoethnographic recollections. Participants will be asked to bring along an image, video, or an audio fragment (music, voice message) that encapsulates or reminds them of their hitchhiking experience. This audio-visual material will serve to guide the first stage of the interview process, getting participants 'into the zone', and facilitating the recollection and narration of previous experiences and emotions during their hitchhiking encounter. The qualitative data will be analyzed using a data processing program and will allow me to make conclusions about the nature of resonance within the hitchhiking experience.

Define data management roles

Roles	
Who is collecting the data?	Aron van Ees
Who is analyzing the data?	Aron van Ees

Other (Do you make use translators or others who help you with collecting and/or analyzing data)	No.
Partner organization	N/A.

Data storage while doing your research (after your research, you submit your data for protected storage by the university)

Data stage	Specification of type of research data	Storage location during research	Back-up location
Raw data	*Content: what does your dataset contain?* Recorded /transcribed interviews, audio-visual material (images and songs/sound fragments) that remind interviewees of their hitchhiking experience. *Context: who, what, why, where, and how will the data be collected and analyzed?* The data will be collected and analyzed by me, using a qualitative program (Atlas-ti, for example). The interviews will take place in person in the Netherlands. I will record the interviews using my phone or another recording device (laptop, voice recorder).	Personal laptop	WUR cloud
Processed data	*Content: what does your processed dataset contain?* It will, most likely, contain a coding tree.	Personal laptop	WUR cloud
File structure	Give your folder the following name “Data_[last name]_[thesis]_[[year}. Giving your data files in this folder a descriptive name (such as “interviews”, “observations”, “pictures” etc.)	Personal laptop	WUR cloud
Protection	How do you protect your data while in the field? Password-protected	Personal laptop	WUR cloud

6.2 Informed Consent Form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Feeling the Road: On Resonance in the Hitchhiking Encounter

Brief outline of the study

This master's thesis intends to investigate student hitchhikers' relationship to the world through qualitative means. In this research project, I seek to investigate hitchhiking as a countercultural mode of being in and relating to the world. I intend to explore the affects and emotions that have come up in hitchhikers during their experience on the road and their encounters with lift-givers To this end, in-depth interviews will be conducted to investigate the motivations of students who have engaged in hitchhiking, their sensory experiences while on the road, their thoughts on the countercultural aspects of the practice, and the ways in which these influence their mode of relating to the world within and beyond the confines of the car.

In short, the aim of this study is to explore whether and how hitchhikers experience this mode of travel as a realm which is conducive to evoking a state of resonance – a mode of relating to the world in which individuals experience being touched, moved, or addressed by the people, places, objects, or other things they encounter. As such, I wish to situate the practice of hitchhiking within the sociology of the good life and explore how it relates to our late-modern mode of being-in-the-world.

Your involvement in this research project

I wish to speak with students who have hitchhiked for my in-depth research into resonance in the practice of hitchhiking. This research will be composed of interviews with students and involves sensory elicitation techniques. Sensory elicitation entails the use of participant-selected images, videos, or sound fragments to guide the interview process. This audio-visual material will serve as a vehicle for the recollection and narration of the students' visceral experiences while hitchhiking.

Please read this sheet carefully and be confident that you understand its contents before deciding whether to participate and provide signed consent. If you have any questions about the project, please don't hesitate to ask the investigator. As part of this study, I wish to conduct what is called a 'semi-structured interview'. This simply means that, rather than ask a series of 'yes or no' questions, I have just a few 'open-ended' questions and you can respond to these in as much detail as you like. You can also offer information that I may not ask you about but that you feel is important. Importantly, you have the right not to answer any particular question and you needn't give a reason for this. You also have the right to pause or end the interview at any point if you so wish. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes depending on your answers.

With your permission I will audio record the interview and transcribe the conversation for analysis. If you don't want to be audio recorded, that's fine; you can still participate (and I will take notes of our conversation).

Benefits and risks of participating

By participating in this research, you will be contributing to a better understanding of the practice of hitchhiking. Your participation in this study is voluntary. Sensory elicitation techniques are intended to tap into participants' affects and emotions and may, in some cases, evoke unanticipated emotions. Although unintended, there is a possibility that, in exploring resonance, respondents are brought to revisit emotionally laden experiences on the road. In order to avoid harm, I will work to establish safety and trust in the research environment and strengthen your capacity for choice, control, and setting boundaries. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer for any reason. You are also free to pause or end the interview at any point in time. Moreover, if you feel uneasy about your continued participation you can withdraw your interview at any time (up to the point at which it is processed/incorporated in the final report). There are no costs to you for participating in the study and the information collected may not benefit you directly.

Data management

The information collected from this study will be reported on in a way that ensures confidentiality unless you request otherwise on the attached consent form. To ensure confidentiality, data will be stored away safely and will be viewed only by the project investigator. Also, pseudonyms (rather than your real name) will be used in the final report — unless you expressly wish to be identified by name.

Your Rights

To reiterate, as a participant you have the right to:

(a) Decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer and pause or end the interview at any point.
(b) Withdraw from the project at any time and withdraw any unprocessed/unpublished data previously supplied.
(c) Be guaranteed that the project is for the purposes of research only.
(d) Be guaranteed that any personal information you provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where you have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
(e) Be guaranteed that the security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study.

The contact details of the researcher and his supervisor are:

Aron van Ees
Researcher
MSc student of International Development
Sociology of Development and Change Group
Wageningen University
Email: aron.vanees@wur.nl

Oona Morrow
MSc thesis supervisor
Assistant Professor in Food Sociology
Rural Sociology Group
Wageningen University & Research
Email: oona.morrow@wur.nl

If you have any questions about the study, please contact: **Aron van Ees**, aron.vanees@wur.nl, Wageningen University.

CONSENT FORM
INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION

Feeling the Road: On Resonance in the Hitchhiking Encounter

Consent

1. I have had the above project explained to me, and I have read the information sheet.

2. I agree to participate in the above research project as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

3. I agree to**:**

[ ] be interviewed and audio-recorded for this project.
[ ] be interviewed but **not** audio-recorded for this project.

4. I wish to**:**
[ ] remain anonymous in any publications or presentations associated with this project.
[ ] be recognized in name for my contribution to the project and thus not remain anonymous in any publications or presentations associated with the project.

5. I acknowledge that:
(e) I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed/unpublished data previously supplied (unless follow-up is needed for safety).
(f) The project is for the purpose of research. It may not be of direct benefit to me.
(g) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law.
(h) The security of the research data will be protected during and after completion of the study.

Participant's consent

Full name of participant (Please print): _____

Email: _____ Phone number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____