

Uniformization in the Digital Age

Anna Kamneva-Wortmann*

University of Paderborn (Germany)

Published: October 26, 2023

Abstract

This paper introduces the concept of uniformization within the theoretical framework of sartorial networks. The model of sartorial networks deals with self-organized vestimentary cultures and is designed to analyze spatiotemporal dynamics of persistence and innovation in the field of postmodern vestimentary fashions, in particular in the Digital Age. It is derived from interdisciplinary research within the tension field of fashion, media, communication and network studies. Postmodern trend pluralism is often linked to mass individualization, whereby groups or individuals are unable to articulate either their shared identity or distinction by means of sartorial practices in the media-infused culture of style bricolage and trend revivals. In contrast to these theoretical positions defining fashion in terms of differentiation and time/innovation, the approach suggested in this paper empathizes the aspects of uniformity/similarity and the importance of spatial stabilization within the framework of the fashion mechanism. Uniformization will be described as a process of connecting individuals in space through similarity. Using examples of contemporary everyday fashion trends, it will be shown that bottom-up organized networks of uniformity can emerge as unplanned structures undermining norms, regulations, or dictates, and producing recognizable patterns of conformity based on scattered activity of several participants with equal agency.

Keywords: Fashion and Uniformity; Fashion and Media; Postmodern Trends; Sartorial Network; Digital Culture.

* ✉ anna_kamneva@me.com

Introduction

Since the rise of countercultures, sartorial fashions have been considered pluralistic and democratic. In the Digital Age, the democratization of fashion practices seems to have taken on a new dimension. This is not because anyone can become an influencer and determine what is fashionable, but because contemporary sartorial cultures usually arise bottom-up.¹ The emergence and the decline of such fashions do not depend on the fashion industry in terms of seasonal innovations or “the imposition of a prevailing mode or shape”² (top-down): they exist as long as the participants — unplanned and often unconsciously — interact with each other.

Bottom-up-constituted fashions emerge without the help of the well-connected mediating figures such as designers, celebrities, fashion media or subcultures, but form vestimentary structures based entirely on local interactions between individuals with relatively equal agency. The *muffin top* from the 2000s, normcore,³ fashions that appeared in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as workleisure etc., can serve as examples of bottom-up generated sartorial cultures. Such sartorial cultures do not materialize as rebellious anti-fashions, setting difference from the margins, but emerge because many participants, separated from each other in time and in space, unbeknownst to each other, engage in similar vestimentary practices.

Structures that result from such collective sartorial behavior can be described as *distributed* sartorial networks. Networks are usually modelled on the basis of relations of nodes as participating actors and links representing connections between them. In the case of sartorial networks, the participants (*fashion bodies*⁴) can be considered as nodes and their sartorial similarities (trends) as links. Distributed networks are non-hierarchical, mesh-like structures, in which all the nodes are equally important/well connected (as opposed to centralized and decentralized networks).⁵

How are bottom-up regulated spatiotemporal interactions to be modelled within this framework? Although fashion is usually associated with time, every fashion trend has a spatial and a temporal extension: it spreads in space and lasts for a certain period of time. For this reason, spatial and temporal interactions seem to be equally important for the stabilization (and destabilization) of sartorial networks. This paper focuses on the spatial stabilization of sartorial structures, which will be termed *uniformization*. *Uniformization* is defined as a process of alliance formation between interacting *fashion bodies* across spatial distances. In the following sections, the key criteria of *uniformization* will be examined: *expansion* (between *coordination in contiguity* and *coordination in similarity*) and *density* (between *centripetal* and *centrifugal effects*).

Fashion vs. Uniformity

Why should *uniformization* and uniformity be considered with respect to bottom-up organized fashions? Military and civilian uniforms are usually characterized as top-down organized, restrictive sartorial practices. Superficially, they seem to be the opposite of fashion practices: while fashion is associated with individuality, distinction, and instability,⁶ uniforms are designed to eliminate these criteria, thus

1. See Anna Kamneva-Wortmann, *Modenetze — Modeschwärme. Kleidungskulturen ohne zentrale Akteure* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2023).

2. Colin McDowell, *McDowell's Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion* (London: Frederick Muller, 1984), ix.

3. See Robert Seyfert, *Beziehungsweisen. Elemente einer relationalen Soziologie* (Weilerswist: Delbrück Wissenschaft, 2019).

4. The term fashion body (Modekörper) was established by Gertrud Lehnert. Drawing on the spatial aspects of bodies and clothes, she defines the term as an amalgamation of the body with clothes and accessories, resulting in a new, hybrid spatial entity. See Gertrud Lehnert, “Mode als Raum, Mode im Raum. Zur Einführung,” in *Räume der Mode*, ed. Gertrud Lehnert (München: Fink, 2012), 7–18; Gertrud Lehnert, “Der modische Körper als Raumsulptur,” in *Theatralität und die Krisen der Repräsentation*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 528–549.

5. See Paul Baran, “On distributed communications: I. Introduction to distributed communications Networks,” *IEEE Transactions on Communications Systems*, Vol. 12.1 (1964): 1–9.

6. See Elena Esposito. *Die Verbindlichkeit des Vorübergehenden. Paradoxien der Mode* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004).

representing sameness, conformity, and stability. Yet according to Gabriele Mentges and Birgit Richard, fashion and uniformity are structurally co-dependent: practices associated with fashion inevitably lead to conformity and uniformity, while uniformity contributes to fashionable variety.⁷ Mentges points out that one of the reasons of this structural correspondence is that both fashion and uniformity rely on standardization, seriality, and mass production, made possible by the Industrial Revolution.⁸ One could also argue that since the Digital Revolution — the era of simulacra, digital reproduction, algorithmic cultures⁹ etc. — their mutual dependency has intensified.

Standardization, seriality and technical reproduction are not exclusively reserved for the industrial production of goods such as clothes and textiles, but are also important structural components and instruments of media and communication. For example, especially since Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the movable-type printing press, letterpress printing is considered paradigmatic for the democratization of knowledge in the 15th century, just as mass industrial production of clothing stands for the democratization of fashion in the 19th century.¹⁰ These technologies share a crucial functional characteristic: they are designed to produce identical copies in large editions and make them simultaneously accessible across spatial distances,¹¹ creating networks of uniformed entities distributed in space. In the Digital Age, technology not only provides easy access to individual copies, but at the same time offers a network of associated/similar/uniformed goods or information: from online stores to social media or streaming platforms — the algorithms are quick to show similar/uniformed items or images.¹²

In post-modern sartorial cultures, uniformity and fashion are not to be considered mutually exclusive. As Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson point out, “differences between uniform and fashion are at times subtle, and at other times, stark,”¹³ it might be suggested that their structural relationship can be visualized as a spectrum: at one extreme, there is rigid uniformity that does not allow for any form of individual expression (e.g. North Korean mass games), at the other extreme there is unreproducible fashionable idiosyncrasy (e.g. Haute Couture bordering on art). Between the two extremes, there are various vestimentary practices — processes of uniformization — producing different levels of sartorial *uniformity-with-variety*. Bottom-up structure formation can be found among those practices.

Uniformity as a Spatial Stabilizer

Uniformity is a spatial phenomenon. In the military context, sartorial uniforms are designed to help positioning and mobilizing the soldiers' bodies in space.¹⁴ Because uniforms are closely associated with territorial claims, military parades are such an effective visual means of demonstrating power over space. Thus, uniformity appears most striking, when uniformed bodies are located in close spatial proximity and can be observed simultaneously.

Symbolically, rigid uniformity — be it military or civilian — represents hierarchical organization and is based on spatial inclusion and exclusion. Examining civilian uniforms, Elisabeth Hackspiel-Mikosch and Stefan Haas point out that their development is historically linked to the emergence of the mod-

7. See Gabriele Mentges, “Die Angst vor der Uniformität,” in *Schönheit der Uniformität. Körper, Kleidung, Medien*, ed. Gabriele Mentges and Birgit Richard (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2005), 17–42.

8. See Mentges, 22.

9. See Robert Seyfert, *Algorithmic Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2016).

10. See René König, *Menschheit auf dem Laufsteg. Die Mode im Zivilisationsprozeß* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1999), 113.

11. See Hartmut Winkler, *Diskursökonomie. Versuch über die innere Ökonomie der Medien* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2004), 29–31.

12. See Hartmut Winkler, *Ähnlichkeit* (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2021), 7.

13. Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson, “Understanding Uniform: An Introduction,” in *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World*, ed. Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 1–22, 8.

14. See Mentges, 20.

ern administrative systems. As an organizational tool, uniforms provide information about the ‘place’ (position and status) of every individual within the structure.¹⁵

In contrast to rigid uniformity, bottom-up constituted uniformity-with-variety undermines hierarchies. Contrary to the common association of uniformity with subjugation, it relies on its less obvious implications: comparability, equivalence and relationality. When fashion bodies interact with each other in space (coordinate), they form similarity-based alliances which can be characterized as distributed networks of spatial relations. As stated above, distributed structures consist of entities connected to each other across spatial and temporal distances. These distances are key to the understanding of *expansion* as a central criterion of uniformization.

Contiguity vs. Similarity

How do we observe fashion trends spreading in space? One might suggest that we intuitively estimate the distances between sartorial similarities we encounter. When something is popular, we run into it repeatedly in rapid succession. For example, photographs by Hans Eijkelboom show that standing on a busy street of a big city for one or two hours, one can count at least eighteen very similar looking people.¹⁶ But what can the distances between uniformed individuals tell us about their relationships within a sartorial network?

When *fashion bodies* form similarity-based alliances with their close neighbors, their relationships may be characterized as *coordination in contiguity*.¹⁷ This phenomenon occurs when *fashion bodies* seek stabilization in their immediate environment. Successful *coordination in contiguity* results in spatially continuous, concentrated uniformity-with-variety that can be observed simultaneously. As stated above, this constellation is typical for top-down organized uniformity. In bottom-up organized sartorial structures, coordination in contiguity occurs less frequently. It may appear at youth-cultural *events* such as conventions, music festivals, etc.¹⁸ In such cases, the place and the occasion draw the spatially dispersed individuals together. For example, at the Wilderness Festival, a music festival that took place from 1 to 4 August 2019 in Charlbury (GB), at least twelve women, wearing the same polka dot dress by ZARA that had unexpectedly gained popularity in the summer of 2019,¹⁹ came together to be photographed lying in a row next to each other, thus demonstrating the startling effect of accidental uniformity.²⁰ The closer the observer approaches such a structure, the more differences become detectable between the uniformed entities.

Otherwise, we do not usually encounter *bottom-up* constituted uniformity-with-variety in synchrony, but in temporal succession. Such sartorial interactions can be termed *coordination in similarity*. Observers of such relationships have to filter out uniformities from a pool of amorphous dissimilarity and use their memory to ‘connect the dots’ between similar *fashion bodies*. The longer the distances between uniformed *fashion bodies* are, the more abstract are their sartorial interactions: they might never meet in the actual geographical space. While *coordination in contiguity* generates a concentrated, continuous, *synchronous* spatial structure, *coordination in similarity* just simulates such a continuum.

15. See Elisabeth Hackspiel-Mikosch and Stefan Haas, *Civilian Uniforms as Symbolic Communication. Sartorial Representation, Imagination, and Consumption in Europe (18th–21st Century)* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006).

16. See Hans Eijkelboom, *People of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2014).

17. In semiotics, *contiguity* refers to spatial, temporal, or causal closeness and is often considered the counterpart of similarity. See Roman Jakobson, “Zwei Seiten der Sprache und zwei Typen aphatischer Störungen,” in *Aufsätze zur Linguistik und Poetik*, ed. Roman Jakobson (München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1974) 117–141.

18. See René König, *Menschheit auf dem Laufsteg. Die Mode im Zivilisationsprozeß* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1999), 55.

19. See Sirin Kale, “The story of The Dress: how a £40 Zara frock stole the summer,” *The Guardian online*, accessed August 19, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/aug/11/the-story-of-the-dress-how-a-40-zara-frock-stole-the-summer>.

20. See Hot4thespot (@hot4thespot), “I’M SHOOK @giloscope,” Instagram photo, August 3 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BotadAv1eR/>.

Uniformization can be characterized as a process of overcoming/reducing spatial distances between fashion bodies via similarity, forming sartorial networks. In a postmodern, pluralistic sartorial environment, several uniformization processes take place at the same time, competing with each other. Similarities crystalize out of several spatial interactions — and then dissolve into alternative, concurrent networks. This complementary process may be termed *heteroformization*. When *uniformization* turns into *heteroformization*, the distances between uniform *fashion bodies* increase.

Centripetal vs. Centrifugal Effects of Uniformization

Observing dynamics between *uniformization* and *heteroformization*, one might notice that some sartorial networks are more flexible and diverse, while others are more fixed and conformist. Flexible networks dissolve fluently and smoothly into competing ones, while rigid structures disintegrate more abruptly. The degree of *density* in sartorial networks can be described in terms of *centrifugal* and *centripetal* effects of *uniformization*. *Centrifugal* and *centripetal* forces regulate, how much variety/diversity/complexity a sartorial network can withstand under the pressure of competition without disintegrating. In other words: How much variety is tolerated within uniformity? How dense and binding are the relationships within and between competing structures?

Analyzing the influence of mass media on social organization, communication theorist Denis McQuail distinguishes between *centrifugal* and *centripetal* effects. Mass media, such as television, radio, the internet etc., transcend spatial distances and convey information to many recipients at the same time. For this reason, McQuail argues that mass communication has both diversifying (*centrifugal*) and unifying (*centripetal*) effects on modern societies. According to McQuail, centrifugal effects can be positive, such as freedom, change, and diversity, and negative, such as normlessness and loss of identity. Centripetal effects also have advantages, such as integration and solidarity, and disadvantages, such as dominance and conformity.²¹

Analogously, one could argue that in the field of postmodern, democratized fashion(s), spatially oriented uniformization has similar effects on the formation of sartorial cultures. On the one hand, its *centrifugal* tendencies lead to individualization and diversity, but threaten with mass individualization (“everyone can be anyone”²²), and ‘the flood’ of trends. On the other hand, its *centripetal* tendencies allow marginalized *fashion bodies* to connect to each other and form group identities (sub-, youth, countercultures), but can also lead to individuals ‘living in a (vestimentary) bubble’, meaning homogenization and limitation of sartorial choices.

Centrifugal and *centripetal* effects of uniformization can be described as tendencies regulating structural *flexibility/adaptability* or *rigidity/conformity*. If centrifugal tendencies dominate the process of *uniformization*, the network becomes more flexible and differentiated. Such adaptability allows its coordinating constituents to draw on the diversity of competing structures. If centripetal tendencies shape the process of *uniformization*, it leads to the emergence of dense, close-knit sartorial alliances. Such structures guard against the competition and the chaos/complexity it brings. The more rigid and homogeneous a sartorial network becomes, the more abruptly coordinating *fashion bodies* shift from one structure to the other. In short, the difference between *centrifugal* and *centripetal* effects is comparable to the contrast between normcore and punk: A fashion body belonging to the former, identifies with the broad spectrum of mainstream fashions, can adapt quickly and easily to fit into different groups, and pursues ‘freedom to be with everyone’;²³ a fashion body belonging to the latter, strongly identifies with a particular, limited group, and is less open to coordination with competing sartorial cultures such as mods or hippies etc. Yet in a pluralistic environment of sartorial cultures of the Digital Age, in which the boundaries between polarities such as street styles vs. mainstream, elite vs. everyday fashion

21. See Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (London: Sage, 2010), 91.

22. Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of desire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 249.

23. “Youth mode: A report on freedom,” *K-Hole*, 2013, accessed April 12, 2019, <http://khole.net/issues/youth-mode/>.

etc. are blurred, any interaction between two (ore more) *fashion bodies* is a tension field between several *centrifugal* and *centripetal* tendencies.

Transformation Distance

Comparing different criteria of *uniformization*, one might assume that *coordination in contiguity* is related to *centripetal* tendencies, and *coordination in similarity* correlates with *centrifugal* tendencies: the former produce close-knit sartorial relationships, the latter loosely knit alliances. Although these categories correspond, there is a crucial difference between them. *Coordination in contiguity/similarity* generates close-knit/loosely knit networks *in space*. In terms of *centrifugal/centripetal effects*, the expressions ‘close-knit’ resp. ‘loosely knit’ have figurative meaning and refer to the degree of consensus within the structure. Centrifugal and centripetal effects emerge in *conceptual space*²⁴ (as opposed to actual, geographical space). For this reason, the categories *coordination in contiguity/similarity* and *centripetal/centrifugal effects* can be used independently, as alternative analytical registers of *uniformization*.

What criteria can be used for measuring distances in *conceptual space*? One might suggest the notion of *transformation distance*, originating from a branch of cognitive psychology dealing with perception of similarity. Ulrike Hahn and Nick Chater define the term as follows: “similarity is determined by the *transformation distance* between representations: entities which are perceived to be similar have representations which are readily transformed into one another, whereas transforming between dissimilar entities requires many transformations.”²⁵

The term *transformation distance (TD)* can be thus applied within the framework of *centrifugal* and *centripetal* effects of *uniformization*. On the one hand, short *TD* between *fashion bodies* within a sartorial network, and long *TD* to *fashion bodies* belonging to competing networks indicate *centripetal tendencies*. On the other hand, (relatively) long *TD* within a sartorial structure and shorter *TD* to the competing ones are a sign of *centrifugal tendencies*. A possible application is shown in the following section using the example of bottom-up organized *lavender fashions*.

Lavender Fashions

In the Digital Age, street fashion is not confined to the streets. As popular travel destinations, lavender fields provide a photogenic backdrop for fashionable display. They gained even more popularity on social media as places of sartorial coordination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because lavender fields are distributed in space, one may find uniform *fashion bodies* e.g. in France, Germany, Tasmania,²⁶ etc. Observing *lavender fashions*, one can easily filter out women in airy white, purple or yellow dresses, equipped with straw hats and wicker baskets, whose uniformity might be provisionally labeled *romantic boho chic*,²⁷ from the pool of other everyday sartorial practices that are not bound to this particular location.

24. See Peter Gärdenfors, *Conceptual Spaces. The Geometry of Thought* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004).

25. Ulrike Hahn, Nick Chater, and Lucy B. Richardson, “Similarity as transformation,” *Cognition*, Vol. 87 (2003): 1–32, 1, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(02\)00184-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(02)00184-1).

26. See GirlsTravelMagazine(GTM) (@girltravelmagazine), “Provence-Alpes-Cote d’Azur, France,” Instagram photo, July 13, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CRRz7eaMTeJ/>. See Thewanderingcountess (@thewanderingcountess), “~ Petite Provence ~ Germany,” Instagram photo, July 5, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQ8yW7wMo7v/>. See Sheisnotlost (@SHEISNOTLOST), “Bridgestowe Lavender, Tasmania,” Pinterest, August 12, 2012, <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/582582901799963065/>.

27. The Urban Dictionary defines *Boho Chic* as follows: “A fashion trend that is part bohemian and part chic. It is tied to the vintage phenomenom [sic.] in fashion where the trend was to bring back vintage styles for the modern era. Boho chic combines organic, colourful, detailed, folk-inspired pieces with simple, modern pieces. An example would be wearing a beaded peasant dress with a white tank top.” “Boho Chic”, accessed January 20, 2021, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=boho+chic>.

To analyze the phenomenon of *uniformization* on lavender fields, I have collected 500 images from different social media platforms from the period between ca. 2015-2022 and written an algorithm to visualize the distribution of uniformity in terms of *centrifugal* and *centripetal* effects based on the concept of *TD*. This project is designed to illustrate some aspects of the model of sartorial networks and is not to be considered an empirical study. This would include a critical examination of the relationship between fashion and social media, which is not part of this theoretical framework.²⁸

The algorithm sorts the images by similarity based on pre-defined characteristics²⁹ regarding colors and types of dress and accessories, as well as body and image techniques, and translates the degree of uniformity into spatial proximity, representing semantic/conceptual neighborhoods (Fig.1). Being considered as a node in a network, each *fashion body* is embedded in a reference system of semantic neighborhoods and is simultaneously integrated into several similarity-based alliances. Its coordinates in the overall structure are determined by the *TD* to other nodes. Thus, two images of people in yellow dresses are not always located next to each other, because this particular uniformization vector might be interrupted or relativized due to stronger relationships.

In the center of the graph, there are clusters of entities with the shortest *TD*, representing *centripetal tendencies* of the *uniformization*. The clusters consist of fashion bodies with overlapping *feature sets* (Fig.2). On the other hand, all fashion bodies are quite similar: it takes on average four steps to transform any two fashion bodies into each other, meaning that overall *TD* between competing structures are rather short.

In contrast to cluster-specific *feature sets*, this interconnectedness owes itself to two types of *single features*: *omnipresent features*, which almost every considered *fashion body* has (e.g. *open hair*; *back to the camera* etc.), and *non-specific features* (e.g. *flowing dress/skirt*; *band at the back of the head*), randomly scattered across all sub-areas of the overall network. These single features point to *centrifugal* effects of the *uniformization*, holding all *lavender fashions* together and combine them into a coherent, relatively homogeneous whole. Thus, the boundaries between competing structures are fluid, and it cannot be precisely determined, how many of them constitute *lavender fashions*. Due to *centripetal* effects, fashion bodies at the edge of the network are no isolated difference-makers, but participants creating diversity within uniformity.

28. Drawing on models from media and communication theory, this study focuses on mechanisms, which media and sartorial fashions share as systems providing social and cultural connections. Thus, this interdisciplinary approach differs from some established methodologies, such as defining clothing as a medium of communication, examining the role of media in relation to the representation, distribution, and perception of fashion, exploring the mediality of textiles, etc.

29. Generally, the concept of *TD* does not rely on pre-defined characteristics of similarity such as feature sets, but it allows for such applications as well.

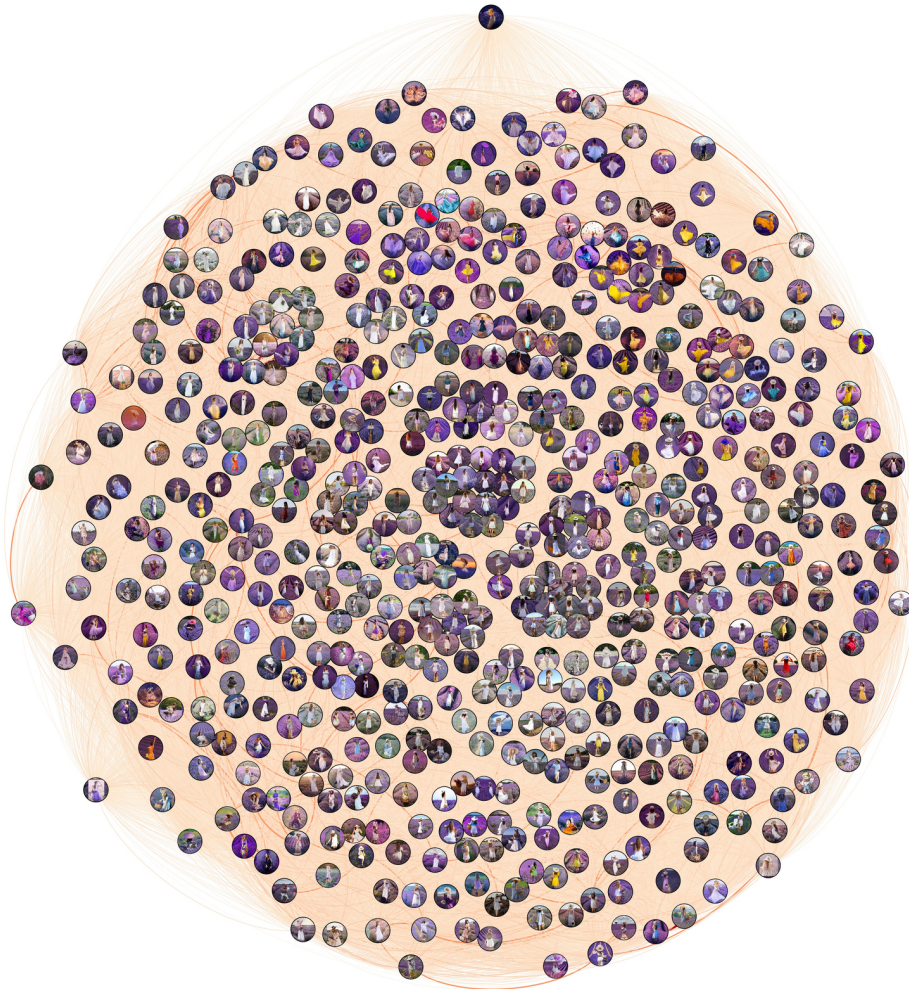


Figure 1. Uniformity distribution in "lavender fashions"

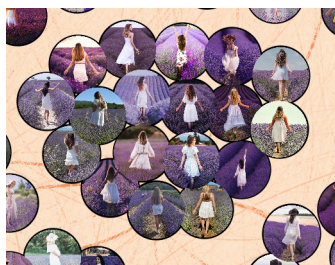


Figure 2. A cluster of uniformity (fragment of Fig.1)

Conclusion

The model introduced in this paper assumes that in the field of democratized postmodern fashions of the Digital Age, every participant is integrated into a reference system of spatial relationships and is simultaneously involved in processes of *uniformization* of several competing sartorial networks. These formations show that bottom-up organized sartorial structures do not always emerge out of difference, novelty and instability. Instead, they are constituted by means of largely unconscious orientation of the participants towards the normal and the similar. Focusing on similarity instead of identity and difference of individuals or groups means comparing and drawing attention to constantly transforming relations between them. The concept challenges the modern Western understanding of fashion as a process of incorporating the abnormal/marginal/different (aesthetics of supposed outsiders) into the spectrum of normality/similarity by the fashion industry with the help of key figures such as designers, influencers or fashion media, thus offering a new perspective on the democratization of fashion.

The mechanism of *uniformization* draws attention to space as a crucial, but often neglected dimension of sartorial interactions. It has been demonstrated that bottom-up organized stabilization and destabilization of sartorial cultures in space rely on the structural template of uniformity. Connecting similar *fashion bodies* across spatial distances, *uniformization* creates distributed networks of uniformity-with-diversity. During this process, different types of relationships between coordinating fashion bodies emerge: there are close and concrete, as well as distant and abstract connections. These connections can be examined with the help of the analytical registers *coordination in contiguity/similarity*, and *centripetal/centrifugal effects*, — the former describing sartorial interactions in terms of spatial distances between uniform fashion bodies, the latter in terms of density and commitment.

Analyzing the mechanism of *uniformization*, it has been pointed out that the combination of spatiality and similarity create a structural tendency towards *synchrony*: spreading in space, fashion trends move against the flow of time. Yet in contrast to top-down created rigid uniformity, bottom-up generated *uniformization* is a process that never comes to a halt, and therefore relies on time-as-duration. To understand the process fully, it has to be scrutinized in terms of depth, dynamics, and the duration of sartorial interactions.

Bibliography

- Baran, Paul. "On distributed communications: I. Introduction to distributed communications Networks." *IEEE Transactions on Communications Systems*, Vol. 12.1 (1964): 1–9.
- McDowell, Colin. *McDowell's Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion*. London: Frederick Muller, 1984.
- Eijkelboom, Hans. *People of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Phaidon Press, 2014.
- Esposito, Elena. *Die Verbindlichkeit des Vorübergehenden. Paradoxien der Mode*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2004.
- Ewen, Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen. *Channels of desire*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982.
- Gärdenfors, Peter. *Conceptual Spaces. The Geometry of Thought*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004.
- GirlsTravelMagazine(GTM) (@girltravelmagazine). "Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur, France." Instagram photo, July 13, 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CRRz7eaMTeJ/>.
- Hackspiel-Mikosch, Elisabeth and Stefan Haas. *Civilian Uniforms as Symbolic Communication. Sartorial Representation, Imagination, and Consumption in Europe (18th–21st Century)*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006.
- Hahn, Ulrike, Nick Chater and Lucy B. Richardson. "Similarity as transformation." *Cognition*, Vol. 87 (2003): 1–32. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(02\)00184-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(02)00184-1).
- Hot4thespot (@hot4thespot). "I'M SHOOK @giloscope." Instagram photo, August 3 2019. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BotadAv1eR/>.
- Improviduto. "Boho Chic". *Urban Dictionary*. Accessed January 31, 2006. January 20, 2021. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=boho+chic>.
- Jakobson, Roman. "Zwei Seiten der Sprache und zwei Typen aphatischer Störungen." In *Aufsätze zur Linguistik und Poetik*, edited by Roman Jakobson, 117–141. München: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1974.
- Kamneva-Wortmann, Anna. *Modenetze — Modeschwärme. Kleidungskulturen ohne zentrale Akteure*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2023.
- K-Hole. "Youth mode: A report on freedom." Accessed April 12, 2019. <http://khole.net/issues/youth-mode/>.
- Kale, Sirin "The story of The Dress: how a £40 Zara frock stole the summer." *The Guardian online*. Accessed August 19, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/aug/11/the-story-of-the-dress-how-a-40-zara-frock-stole-the-summer>.
- König, René. *Menschheit auf dem Laufsteg. Die Mode im Zivilisationsprozeß*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1999.
- Lehnert, Gertrud. "Mode als Raum, Mode im Raum. Zur Einführung." In *Räume der Mode*, edited by Gertrud Lehnert, 7–18. München: Fink, 2012.
- Lehnert, Gertrud. "Der modische Körper als Raumsulptur." In *Theatralität und die Krisen der Repräsentation*, edited by Erika Fischer-Lichte, 528–549. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001.
- McQuail, Denis. *Mass Communication Theory*. London: Sage, 2010.
- Mentges, Gabriele. "Die Angst vor der Uniformität." In *Schönheit der Uniformität. Körper, Kleidung, Medien*, edited by Gabriele Mentges and Birgit Richard, 17–42. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2005.
- Seyfert, Robert. *Beziehungsweisen. Elemente einer relationalen Soziologie*. Weilerswist: Delbrück Wissenschaft, 2019.

Sheisnotlost (@SHEISNOTLOST). “Bridgestowe Lavender, Tasmania.” Pinterest, August 12, 2012. <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/582582901799963065/>.

Thewanderingcountess (@thewanderingcountess). “~ Petite Provence ~ Germany.” Instagram photo, July 5, 2021. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQ8yW7wMo7v/>.

Tynan, Jane and Lisa Godson. “Understanding Uniform: An Introduction.” In *Uniform: Clothing and Discipline in the Modern World*, edited by Jane Tynan and Lisa Godson, 1–22. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019.

Winkler, Hartmut. *Diskursökonomie. Versuch über die innere Ökonomie der Medien*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2004.

Winkler, Hartmut. *Ähnlichkeit*. Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2021.

Anna Kamneva-Wortmann – University of Paderborn (Germany)

✉ anna_kamneva@me.com

She is a PhD holder and she is research fellow at the department of Art, Music and Textiles at the University of Paderborn, Germany. She studied Fashion, Textiles & Design (BA) and Media Studies (BA, MA) in Paderborn and was an associate with the research training group “Automatisms. Cultural Techniques of Complexity Reduction” (2016-17); since 2014 editor-in-chef of “Weft”, e-journal on fashion, art and textile studies, published by professor Iris Kolhoff-Kahl (www.weft-magazine.de). PhD thesis: “Sartorial Networks and Swarms: Vestimentary Cultures without leading figures”; her research focuses on the tension field between fashion and media theory.