

More matter, with less art?

On the transformation of university students' cultural lifestyles and culturalization after the millennium

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Abstract

The university has traditionally been a cornerstone of a nation's artistic and cultural life through its education of professional artists and cultural workers, the *bildung* of an interested audience capable of apprehending its products, and functioning as a hotbed of avant-garde cultural appropriation and experimentation. In the last twenty years, this role has been challenged by an increasing and more socially varied recruitment of students, a changing educational landscape, massive university reforms and the digitalisation of cultural goods. How has this changed students' relationship with the world of art and high culture? Using a series of surveys from the second largest city in Norway in 1998 (N=1113), 2008 (N=1223) and 2020 (N=1589), the analysis paints a broad picture of the importance of social class to understand students varying integration into the cultural field (their culturalisation). The results suggest that students' educational mobility and cultural lifestyles are increasingly weighted down by their social inheritance. At the same time, they appear increasingly detached from the national field of art and its products.

Keywords

Cultural lifestyles, cultural capital, students, Bourdieu, Scandinavia

Introduction

In the Middle Ages, new students who entered the university had to go through the ritual of deposition, named so after the practice of *deponere cornua* [taking the horns off], from the removal of the literal horns placed on the student, which marked his transition from a rude beast to a civilised creature. This idea of the university as a civilising institution is perhaps most famously associated with Wilhelm von Humboldt's (1767–1835) educational

philosophy. To him, the university was a key cultural institution, a place secluded from the whims of the surrounding world where excellence in the arts and science was fostered and a competent labour force produced, all while providing general cultivation of the mind and body (*Bildung*) for everyone who entered, helping them becoming good, upstanding and well-informed citizens (Günther, 1988).

If societal and political changes have increasingly challenged Humboldt's influential vision for the universities, the core belief in the university as a crucial place for the cultivation of a nation's population and for the advancement of culture is still very much alive. This is particularly true for the most traditional and legitimate arts – the products of the cultural field (Bourdieu, 1993a) – where mass education in government's educational and art policies is often seen as a prerequisite for forming the necessary tastes and skills for enjoying more complex forms of culture (e.g. Pasikowska-Schnass, 2017), a view no doubt helped by the fact that art audiences are dominated by highly educated people (Eurostat, 2021). Universities have also played a historically significant role as *avant-garde* milieus where new cultural impulses and forms were widely enjoyed before they later became more widespread, not only in the case of traditional art (e.g. pop art) but also for later more popular forms of culture (e.g. hip-hop music, independent cinema and anime). It has also often been a hotbed for cultural innovation and experimentation, and for many cultural workers, it is where they found their vocation. The 2023 Nobel prize winner in literature, Jon Fosse, debuted in 1981 with a novel in a student newspaper in Bergen, the city which forms the case of this article.

Starting with a consideration of some of the social, cultural and political reforms which in the last twenty years have made their impact on student life at European universities and some clarifying remarks about the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), this article explores students' changing relationship to art and legitimate culture through a Norwegian case, using a series of surveys on their backgrounds, educational careers and cultural lifestyles in 1998 (N=1113), 2008 (N=1223) og 2020 (N=1589). The emphasis is here on the role of class. In the first analytical part, the social space of students today is sketched based on capital indicators for students' families, and these differences are discussed regarding 1) who studies art and culture, 2) the distribution of cultural lifestyles, and 3) degree of culturalisation (i.e. integration into the cultural field). In each case, some brief remarks are also given on changes in these respects, including increasing barriers to social mobility, a changing role of art and high culture as a mark of social distinction, and an increasing detachment from the national field of art and its products.

The reformation of a world

In the last two decades, universities across Europe have been the site of sweeping transformations that have impacted students' cultural lifestyles and their relationship to the arts. The first is their (1) *massification*: While the most significant rise in university students in most countries happened in the sixties and seventies, the last two decades have seen a continuing rise mostly everywhere (European Commission, 2020). While this rise has entailed an *overall* increase of students from the working classes and females in many countries, it appears unlikely that this entails genuine democratisation of most young people's life

chances, as differences in students' cultural and economic inheritance appear persistently linked to educational and social mobility outcomes (Hugrée et al., 2023), and also impacts students' life conditions (Antonucci, 2016). Combined with rising social inequality in most countries (Savage, 2021) and knowing the importance of family class background for the formation of cultural dispositions and competencies (Bourdieu, 1984; Lareau, 2011), it appears likely that such changes in the social composition of students will have consequences for both their educational mobility and cultural lifestyles.

The cultural climate of universities is also affected by a second massification, that is, the (2) *increased access to cultural goods* following digitalisation processes, which has a wide range of consequences for how people access, distribute and experience culture. While in many respects a continuation of trends originating with the earlier popularisation of mass media, especially television in the sixties and seventies, its importance for forming young people's everyday cultural lifestyles is evident and central to sociological debates about changing cultural lifestyles (Coulangeon, 2021) and new digital distinctions (Purhonen et al., 2021). This issue is further complicated by how this digitalisation is also part of (3) *changes in the world of art and culture*, ranging from changes in art education (e.g. the rise of digital arts), increasing internationalisation, the popularisation of new mediums (e.g. computer games) and spaces (e.g. the rising importance of social media), and changes in artistic themes, genres and expressions (Lucie-Smith, 2020). These changes, both in the space of classes and in the world of culture, are the basis of well-known debates on the changing social valorisation of traditional art and culture and emerging forms of cultural capital (e.g. Bennett et al. 2009; Prieur & Savage, 2013).

Finally, (4) *the universities themselves have changed*. In addition to a constantly changing educational landscape with new studies and institutions rising to prominence and the concrete impacts of digitalisation in students' everyday lives (e.g. in teaching and reading practices), the last decades have in Europe seen more higher educational reforms than any other such short period in history (Klemenčič, 2022; Uvalić-Trumbić, 2022). Many of these follow from the Bologna declaration of 1999, which has led to a significant restructuration and standardisation of courses and grades, typically making them shorter and more school-like in their teaching and assignments, which has led to considerable critique of its negative consequences for traditional university values and intellectual life (Štech, 2011; Wihlborg, 2019).

Our question is how all these social, cultural and educational reforms have impacted the university as *a space of cultural lifestyles*. What are today's major social (i.e. classed) patterns in students' relation to culture and art, and how have these changed in the last two turbulent decades? While most European universities have experienced the changes described above, which likely will produce some similar effects on students' cultural lifestyles everywhere, our case of Bergen has certain particularities worth considering in a European context. This student city is the second largest in Norway and houses 35,000 students (a fifty per cent increase in the last two decades). It is dominated by four institutions with a wide selection of studies: The *University of Bergen* (with faculties for art, social science, humanities, medicine, law, natural science and psychology), two business

schools, *The Norwegian School of Economics* (educating Norway's financial and administrative elites), *The Norwegian Business School* (and the only private institution in the sample, primarily offering shorter and less prestigious courses), and *The Western Norway University of Applied Science* (vocational courses, e.g. teaching, nursing, social work and engineering). These institutions are elements of a welfare state whose educational system is relatively homogenous, with few private and elite institutions and low economic barriers: Secondary education is free, higher education has minimal fees, and state loans are offered to anyone to cover their costs (for a more detailed discussion, see Flemmen et al., 2022). For such reasons, Norway offers something of a deviant case, one which Bourdieu could only hypothesise about in his studies of French students in the sixties:

... the potency of the social factors of inequality is such that even if the equalisation of economic resources could be achieved, the university system would not cease to consecrate inequalities by transforming social privilege into individual gifts or merits. Rather, if formal equality of opportunity were achieved, the school system would be able to employ all the appearances of legitimacy in its work of legitimating privileges. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979, 27)

Regarding educational mobility, it seems that Bourdieu was essentially correct. While attainment for young people in Norway is among the highest in Europe, class differences are comparable to most European countries, especially for the longest and most prestigious studies (Hansen & Mastekaasa, 2006). The same goes for the relationship between class and cultural lifestyles (Flemmen et al., 2018). On the other hand, Norway had early widespread adoption of digital devices and technology (Hovden & Rosenlund, 2021) and is also one of the countries where European educational reforms have been earliest and most thoroughly adopted (Pinheiro et al., 2019). In these respects, Bergen offers an advanced case of how major trends have transformed a European university as a site for students' cultural lives and possibilities.

Cultural capital and field cultures

As we are concerned with students' cultural lifestyles and relation to art in a class context, it would be useful to briefly clarify some aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, which sometimes appears confused. In his early works mainly used as a hypothesis to explain different scholastic success of French children from different classes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990); he later expanded on this to explain how appropriation and mastery of cultural goods – in their embodied, objectified, or institutionalised forms (Bourdieu, 1986) – were important for general social recognition and people's life chances in the whole of society, the French social space (Bourdieu, 1984). Social recognition can, however, also be found in more local forms in social fields, such as microcosms, which form around a specific form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993b). To quote Durkheim (1997, 210): "The soldier seeks military glory, the priest moral authority, the statesman power, the industrialist wealth, the scientist professional fame".

An analytical distinction must therefore be made between the social value of well-to-do people's cultural lifestyles and investments in a social space (e.g. a country, or in our case, students in a city), and, on the other hand, the particular value linked to cultural investments and mastery in a particular social field (e.g. a scientific or cultural field). In the first case (*cultural capital vulgare*), social recognition might follow people's cultural integration into and mastery of one (or several) competing elite cultures: The cultural field, the political field, the financial field, and so forth. In the second case (*cultural capital propre*), its social value is restricted to a narrower milieu of peers – agents in the cultural field – and might not be recognised in broader society (this exchange value varies over time). For example, being deeply familiar with the work of Henrik Ibsen might still have social value in the Norwegian field of literature but is now likely no longer recognised as a mark of being a wise and upstanding member of the wider community.

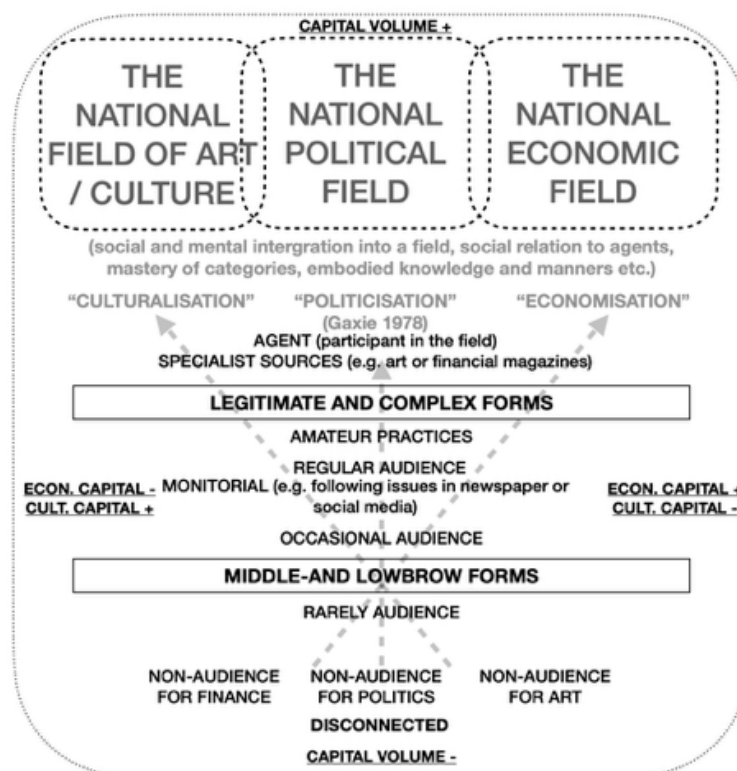
Recognition in society and a specific field is essentially the same phenomenon: a social recognition (with real effects on people's life chances) of the mastery of and social integration into a *culture* – being knowledgeable about, or better, familiar with its most powerful agents, mastering its language and its most important classifications, its myths and history of its manners – in other words, its particular way of social life (Hovden, 2023).

In Bourdieu's (1984) analysis of the French situation of the sixties and seventies, a world before the popularisation of television culture and before mass education, investments in the cultural field were then in France more widely socially recognised than today (Coulangeon & Duval, 2014), if perhaps less so than he argued in the case of the dominated classes (Grignon & Passeron, 1989). The cultural and economic elites' power of social classification (Bourdieu, 1996) was more balanced than it is today (note that *Distinction* was based on data from the lowest point in Piketty's (2014) famous historical graph of income inequality). This has led to well-known debates on the role of class in the social value of traditional art and culture in other times and cultures, that is its effectiveness as cultural capital in the societal sense (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Lamont, 1992; Lahire 2004). Among those most favourable to the relevance of Bourdieu's analysis for modern societies, some have discussed the possibility of a "meltdown scenario" for the social value of art (see the discussion by DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2008), while others argue that traditional forms of cultural capital are being replaced by emerging forms (Prieur & Savage, 2013), with less emphasis on traditional art, but with increasing social importance of cosmopolitan lifestyles and the ability to make knowing distinctions among all forms of culture, also popular. The above discussions are important for our first question about the changing nature of students' relation to art and culture: what kinds of cultural lifestyles tend to be more common among those with *elite backgrounds* and thus have the potential to function as cultural capital in the student world? In this way, the study joins a long sociological tradition of studying students to understand the orientation of emerging social elites (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979; Habermas, von Friedeburg, and Oehler, 1961), which has inspired many later studies (e.g. Broady and Palme 1992; Gripsrud & Hovden 2000; Huguée 2009; Husbands 2019; Eßer 2023).

The second question concerns students' *varying social and mental integration into the fields of culture and art*. Considering national social fields (cultural, political, economic,

etc.) as cultures in a broad, anthropological sense, people will, to varying degrees, be familiar with and integrated into them – what we might call their *field enculturation*. This is far from a novel idea, e.g. being present in Bourdieu's (2000) writings on *illusio*, as an orientation towards the "game" of a social field, of being interested, invested, giving attention and oriented towards its forthcoming. However, it is a theme that appears to have been explored little empirically, and this concept might help sensitise us (Bluhmer, 1954) to the anthropological roots of this process. First, it reminds us that the entrance to a social field is not simply a matter of amassment of relevant capital (e.g. reading investments for a literary field) but also of social integration and mastering a whole social way of life, and second, it does not imply a clear boundary between insiders and outsiders, or even between amateurs and laypeople, and emphasise our relation to a field as a process of enculturation over long periods and (social) space; the top artists in the national galleries, the amateur painter, the occasional gallery visitor and the child being in-structed by his mother in the proper way to use a colouring book, are simply at different stages in this process, where many are called, but few will be chosen. For the enculturation into the cultural field, we can use the term *culturalisation* to emphasise its analogous nature (and inspiration from) Daniel Gaxie's (1978) concept of politicisation for people's relation to the political field. We could also extend this logic to varying integration into other fields, like the economic (economisation) or even the overarching field of power (elitisation), so that we have the model suggested in Figure 1, partly based on the analysis later in this article.

Figure 1. Field enculturation. A simple model of the social and mental integration into three social fields in the social space.



Culturel lifestyles and social inheritance

As Dominique Pasquier (2005) noted in her seminal work on French school culture, the cultural lifestyles of young people, following the rising importance of television and screen culture, is in many respects a shared culture. So also for the students of Bergen: Rather than islands of distinct subcultures, the most popular artists and cultural works are often known and liked (or at least not actively disliked) by most students across studies, as e.g. seen in the choices for personal favourites in open questions (Table 1).

Table 1. Top favourite artists and works from open questions in four cultural realms by university faculty (2020).

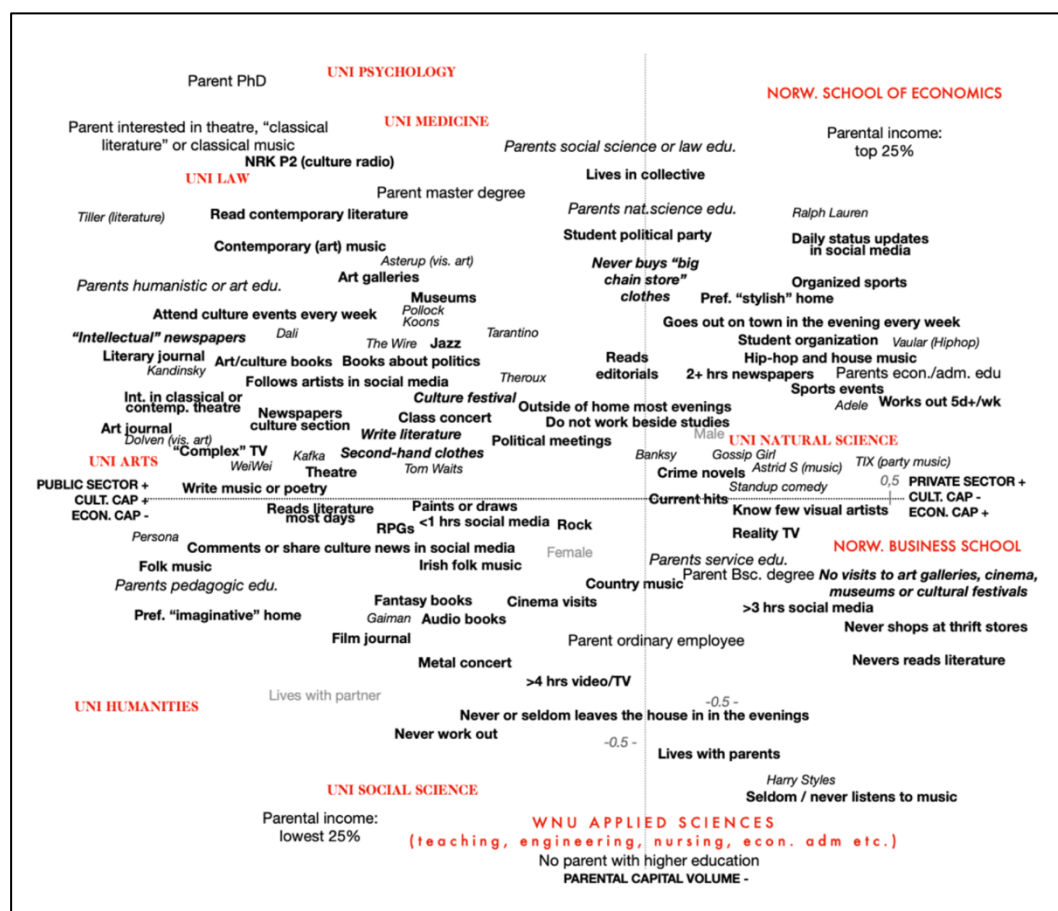
	ART	HUMAN.	SOCIAL	PSYCH.	NAT. SCI	MEDICINE	LAW
			SCL.				
Musicians	Sundfør	Sundfør	Aurora	Sheeran	Eilish	AstridS	Karpe
		Nordstoga	Beyonce	Aurora	Sigrid	Queen	Sheeran
		Aurora	Karpe	No. 4	Astrid S	Sigrid	Cezinando
TV series	How I Met Friends	GOT	Brooklyn 99	Friends	GOT	GOT	GOT
		Outlander	Greys A.	GOT	Modern Fam.	Greys A.	Friends
		Friends	Westworld	Westworld	White Collar	71 degr. N	71 degr. N
Authors	Rowling Allende Martin	Tolkien	Tolkien	Rowling	Nesbø	Murakami	Rowling
		Rowling	Moyes	Ferrante	Moyes	Rowling	Christensen
				Murakami	Rowlking	Coelho	Murakami
Artists	Monet Munch Kahlo	Munch	Pushwagner	Dali	Munch	Banksy	Monet
		van Gogh	da Vinci	Munch	Pushwagner	Picasso	
		Miche- langelo	Miche- langelo			Munch	

At the same time, students' cultural lifestyles are also divided, often by their class background, which will be the main focus of this analysis. To study the importance of social inheritance for students in relation to culture and art, we will first (re)construct *the social space* (Bourdieu, 1984) of the student city in 2020 using specific correspondence analysis (Le Roux and Rouanet, 2010). Six variables indicating the capital composition and volume of both their parents (the number of categories in parenthesis): *combined family income* (5), parents' *cultural investments* measured by their reported interest in theatre, literature, movies and visual art (index, 5), *parents highest educational level* (5), *fathers type of education* (6), *mothers type of education* (6) and *students' place of study* (13). Of 1589 respondents, 319 were removed due to missing answers, making the final number of active individuals 1270. The resulting construction is dominated by two axes, which explains two-thirds of the substantial inertia (Table 2, p. 12), which will be the focus of this analysis.¹ The most important absolute contributions are given in Tables 3 and 4 (below at p. 13-14).

Table 2. Eigenvalues and explained variance of the MCA.

	Axis 1	Axis 2	Axis 3	Axis 4	Axis 5
Eigenvalues	0.338	0.263	0.243	0.234	0.226
Explained variance (%)	5.947	4.632	4.274	4.128	3.971
Modified rates (%)	52.150	16.550	10.310	8.190	6.180

Figure 2. Cultural lifestyles in the social space of students, 2020. Specifik MCA, axis 1-2.



The first social divide (the vertical opposition in Figure 2) is the parents' *volume of capital*. At the top, one finds students from the *upper classes* – illustrated with the father's ORDC class (Hansen, Flemmen, and Andersen, 2009) as supplementary categories – where both parents have higher education and high incomes, for example, through professions such as doctors, lawyers, professors, and top leaders in business. Conversely, at the bottom, one finds students from the *working classes*, where usually only one or none of the parents have higher education, and in occupations that are low-paid and have low status, such as industrial workers, farmers, and artisans. In between lie the students from the *middle classes*, where the parents typically have jobs as administrative officers, engineers, and teachers,

professions that presuppose a shorter higher college education and with incomes and status in the middle.

Table 3. Absolute contributions of explaining categories, axis 1. Specific MCA.

Variable	Category	Contrib. (left)	Contrib. (right)	Total contrib.
Par. Edu	Primary	9.9		31
	Master		8.9	
	Second.	6.2		
	PhD		6.1	
Fam income	>1900K		9	18.9
	<900K	7.2		
	15-1900K		2.7	
Edu Father	SocSci/Law		3.6	12.6
	NatSci/Tech		3.4	
	Health/Social		2.9	
	Econ/Adm		2.7	
Fam CultIdx	++		5.1	8.6
	–	3.5		
Edu Mother	SocSci/Law		4.6	8
	NatSci/Tech		3.4	
Study	NHH		5.1	5.1

This divide is moderated by the balance between different types of resources – the parents’ *composition of capital*. On the left side of Figure 2 we find those with parents who are typically characterised by *cultural capital*, often with culturally oriented educations and professions in the public sector – teachers at all levels, academics, humanists, and artists – while on the right side, we find students whose parents typically show signs of high *economic capital*, not only through being in high-income groups but through professions related to business, varying from top leaders in the financial world, self-employed, lower employees in sales and insurance, and so on. In the middle, we typically find those with parents who combine both high incomes and high educations, lawyers and doctors, or who lack both, such as craftsmen, and intermediate professions that are neither characterised by having particularly high wages nor strong cultural investments for their level of education, like engineers and many scientists. This is a model that has the same basic structural features as similar analyses of the adult Norwegian population (see, e.g., Rosenlund, 2000; Flemmen, Jarness, and Rosenlund, 2018) and analogous with Bourdieu’s fundamental model (Bourdieu, 1984) – an axis of capital volume and one of capital composition.

In the following, we will use this social model of students’ class backgrounds to explore the role of social inheritance in their relationship to art and culture, first for their place of study, then their cultural lifestyles, and finally, their culturalisation, while also suggesting some changes in the last two decades.

Table 4. Absolute contributions of explaining categories, axis 2. Specific MCA.

Variable	Category	Contrib. (left)	Contrib. (right)	Total contrib.
Edu Mother	SocSci/Law		15	24.4
	Humanities	9.5		
Edu Father	Econ/Adm		9.7	21.8
	Health/Social	8.8		
	Teaching	3.3		
Study	Humanities	6.6		19.3
	Art	4.7		
	NHH		4.4	
	BI		3.7	
Fam CultIdx	++	5.4		8.6
	–		3.2	
Par. Edu	PhD	3.4		6.5
	Bachelor		3.1	
Fam Income	>1900K		3.4	3.4

Inheritors

1. Educational reproduction

Looking at the distribution of studies in the space of students' social inheritance in Figure 2, we find a familiar pattern of educational reproduction of class position (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The shorter vocational programs such as teaching, engineering, and nursing are much more common among students from the working classes and lower middle classes, while the opposite is true for the longer and more prestigious professional studies in psychology, law, medicine, and economic studies. The latter studies are also more common for students with parents with a predominance of economic capital, while arts and the humanities (and also, to some lesser degree, social science and teaching) education are more common for those whose parents have a predominance of cultural capital. These students (and students of art more than humanities) are much more likely to have parents with art or humanities education than other students, have a job placing them in the cultural class fractions or say that their parents were interested in visual art, theatre, literature and so on (Table 5, opposite).

2. Class polarisation and social closure

While the number of students has expanded in the last two decades, the fundamental relationship between place of study and class background among the students in Bergen appears to have changed remarkably little. Vocational studies (e.g. teaching, nursing, social work, engineering) have an increasing share of working-class students, while the elite studies (the top business school and the professional studies of medicine, psychology and law) appear now, if anything, more socially selective (Figure 3, p. 16). This is especially clear

when considering both their parent's resources: Where the elite students were, e.g. twice as likely as the vocational students in 1998 to have two parents with a master's degree, they are now four times more likely (OR).

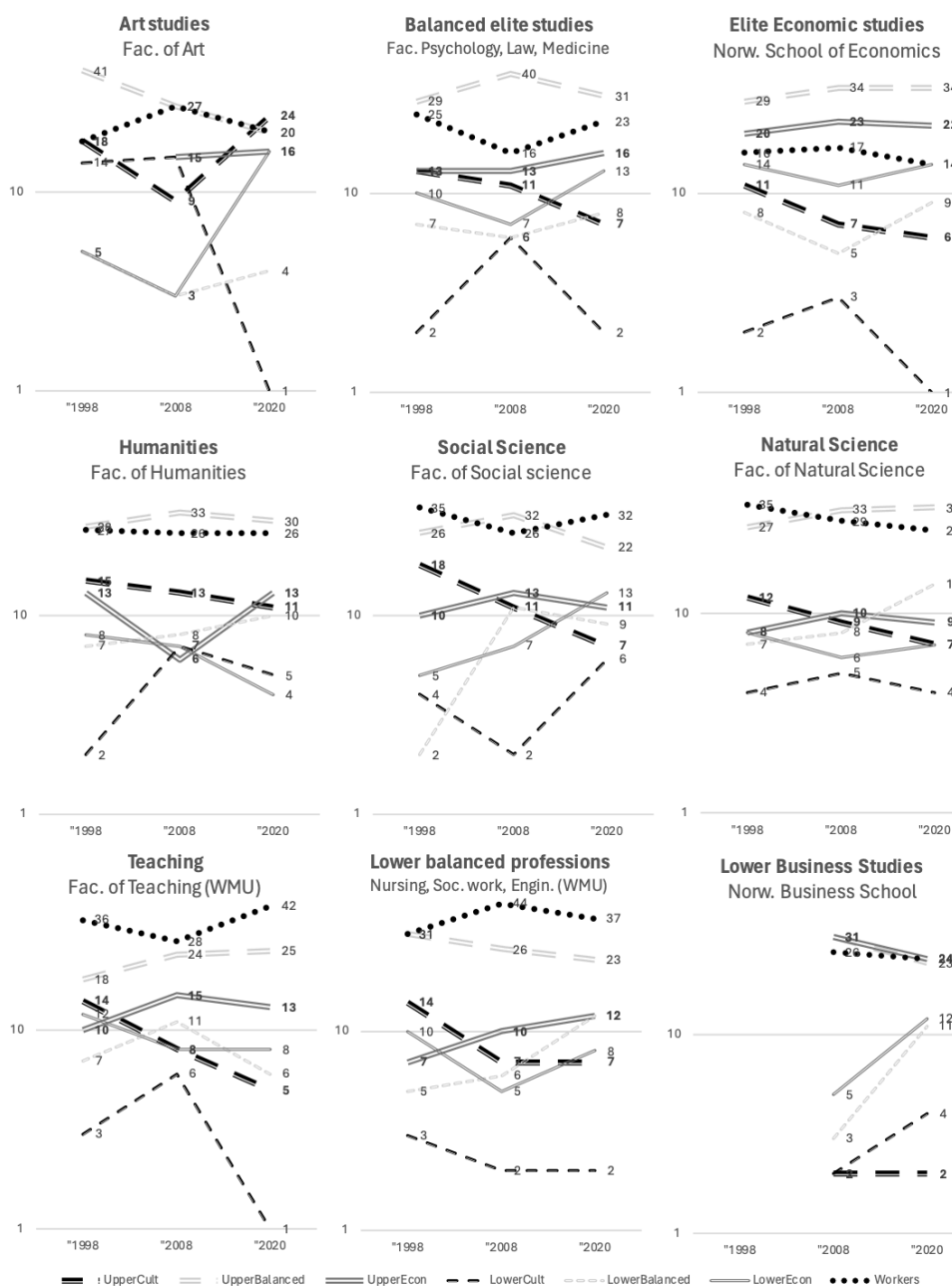
Table 5. Selected characteristics of parents by place of study (2020). Percentages.

	Art studies	Humanities	Prof. Elite studies	Econ. Elite studies	Social Science	Natural Science	Vocat. studies	Total
<i>N=</i>	39	119	245	344	124	122	367	1360
Female	77	69	84	53	64	52	73	67
ORDC Class (Father)								
Upper, cultural	9	13	11	7	11	9	8	10
Upper, balanced	27	33	40	34	32	33	25	32
Upper, economic	15	6	13	23	13	10	11	12
Lower, cultural	15	7	6	3	2	5	5	5
Lower, balanced	3	8	6	5	11	8	8	7
Lower, economic	3	7	7	11	7	6	8	7
Workers	27	27	16	17	26	29	36	26
Parents highest edu. level								
Master	52	41	51	52	28	43	31	42
Bachelor	28	32	35	35	43	41	41	37
No higher edu.	21	27	15	13	29	16	28	21
Both parents Master degree	7	16	28	28	8	21	8	19
One parent humanistic or art edu	17	11	4	3	3	1	2	4
At least one parent interested in								
Visual art	61	49	41	33	31	27	29	35
Art film	33	15	16	12	13	14	9	13
Classical music	55	37	34	25	33	30	23	30
Norw. folk music	33	22	18	13	19	13	13	16
Theatre	42	44	37	33	33	29	27	33
Classic Norw. literature	30	37	41	34	38	31	30	34

Note: Prof. Elite studies = Psychology, Law and Medicine (Univ.). Econ. Elite studies = Norwegian School of Economics. Vocational studies = WMB (incl. nursing, teaching, engineering and social work)

Also, the social divide between cultural and economic studies appears wider. Higher business studies are now more dependent on having (preferably both) parents with business backgrounds or high income, and cultural studies, especially art, are more dependent on having parents with cultural capital. For example, while top business students in 1998 were almost as likely as studies of art and humanities to have a parent interested in visual art, the latter two groups are now three times more likely to have this. Access to studies and, with them, different social opportunities, advantages, and access to different elites appear now increasingly polarised by class both vertically and horizontally, which is in line with general trends in Norway (Flemmen et al., 2022). This goes hand in hand with the rising importance of class-related social handicaps and advantages for students' living conditions and their possibility of maximising a return on their investment.²

Figure 3. Students ORDC class composition by faculty, 1998-2020. Percentages (log.)



The increasing weight of their social inheritance is expressed by students not just by their *de facto* mobility but also by their shifting belief in its very possibility. This is seen vertically in how university students with working-class backgrounds are now less likely to believe themselves ‘well-suited’ for both higher business studies and art studies (Table 6) and horizontally in how the economic elites and cultural elites feel relatively less suitable for each other. This is especially clear for the coming business elites: While half of students

at the Norwegian School of Business in 1998 felt themselves suited for studying the humanities, only one in ten do so now.

Table 6. Studies university students feel 'suitable' for, by fathers ORDC class. Percentages 2020 and changes 1998-2020.

ORDC Class	2020 (%)			Changes 1998-2020 (%pt)		
	Art studies	Humanities	Elite business studies	Art studies	Humanities	Elite business studies
Upper cult.	21	33	16	-5	-35	0
Upper balanced	11	25	17	-15	-36	-4
Upper econ.	20	29	24	0	-40	5
Lower cult.	26	42	0	4	1	-33
Lower balanced	15	19	15	-13	-45	4
Lower econ.	16	27	21	-8	-36	8
Workers	15	34	13	-11	-23	-4
Total	15	29	16	-10	-33	-2

Class lifestyles

Moving on to the students' cultural lifestyles, we also find a familiar tale: Students from upper- and middle-class families tend to be more oriented towards the lifestyles and worlds of the social elites to which their parents and they (via their studies) are socially closest to, being it frequenting literature events (the art field), following national politics closely in the news (the political field) or having expensive lifestyles, e.g. travelling abroad or buying expensive clothes, and also, competitive sports (the economic field).

1. The social distribution of students' lifestyles

A first divide, which follows the vertical axis in Figure 2, appears at first glance as a general dimension of engagement and activity. Students from the upper classes are characterised more often by outgoing, urban lifestyles. They spend less time at home and are more often active in student organisations; they visit all kinds of cultural events (including sports) more often and go out on the town more. These are often, one might also note, activities that cost money. This goes together with a greater interest in keeping up to date about culture and nightlife through news, social media, specialised websites, and magazines, and they are generally more likely to say they are interested in all kinds of artists and works or to give examples of their favourites when asked.

On the other hand, students from the working classes appear characterised by a lower cultural (and political) activity, with the exception of more time spent on TV- and video-

based services. Most of these characteristics of elite student lifestyles appear in line with other descriptions of emerging forms of cultural capital (Prieur, Savage, and Flemmen, 2023). Rather than seeing these patterns, as it is often done, as being lazy, inactive and disinterested, as a sign of an underlying pathology of the working classes (Skeggs, 2004), we should note that this divide mainly regards *a varying engagement and integration into cultural worlds of social elites*, be them cultural, political or financial. In important ways, the elite's domination of crucial institutions in broader society is mirrored in the student world by how their children dominate the student institutions that have traditionally been breeding grounds for the same elites (e.g. student political parties, cultural organisations and business school student organisations³).

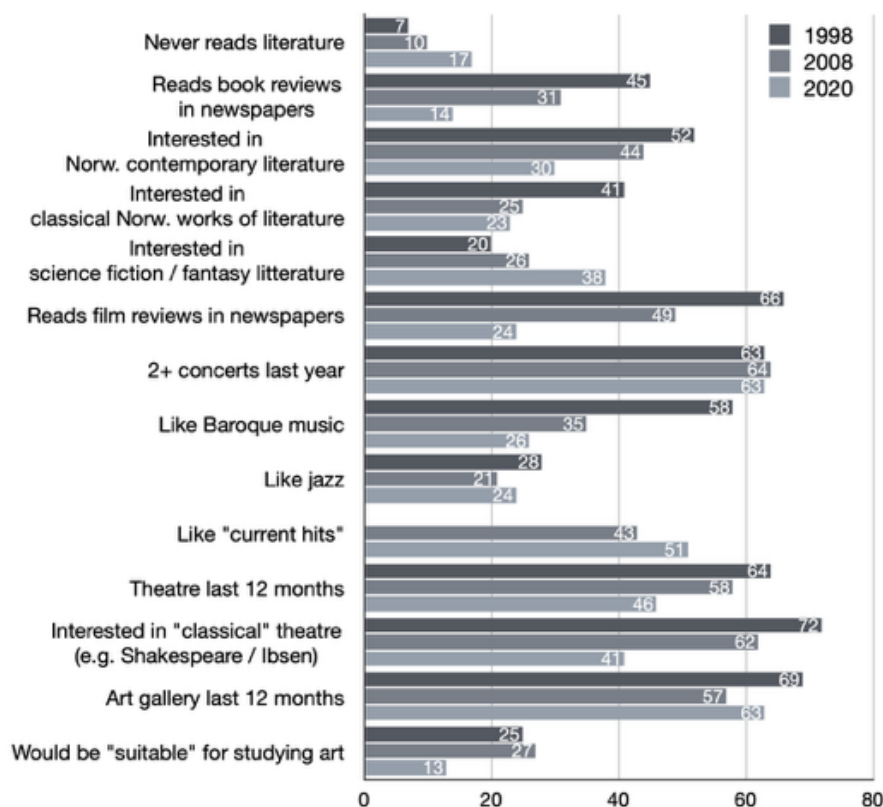
When it comes to the horizontal dimension, separating students with more inherited cultural than economic capital and vice versa, we find the former most likely to engage with the world of legitimate culture, in both traditional and modern forms, either as practitioners, audiences or readers of cultural-oriented newspapers and art magazines, and the latter, characterised by economic capital, being more oriented towards the most popular and accessible cultural goods. This opposition can be found both between art forms (e.g. visiting art galleries or theatres, compared to playing video games) and inside every art form, e.g. between liking jazz or classical music rather than current hits, reading classical or contemporary “difficult” literature versus crime and fantasy novels, liking more complex TV shows like *The Wire* or *Sopranos* versus traditional sitcoms like *How I Met Your Mother*, and finally, inside the genres themselves (e.g. a preference for the crime drama *True Detective* rather than *Criminal Minds*). Similar divisions can be found in other cultural realms, e.g. in buying used clothes in charity shops versus shopping for expensive and popular brands, or in a reversed direction, how interest in sport and most kinds of physical activities tend to rise in the economic fraction of this space. These fundamental oppositions are often analogous to Bourdieu's map of the French social space based on data from more than sixty years ago (Bourdieu, 1984), between appreciation of cultural goods that require advanced symbolic mastery and the most readily available and accessible ones, but with a greater emphasis on distinctions inside popular art forms and genres.

2. Changing lifestyles and cultural hierarchies

In 1998, hardly any student had access to the web; only half had their personal computer, and the iPhone was not introduced until much later. In 2008, only half of students owned a smartphone, and modern streaming services and social media were surfacing. The consequences of new technologies and digitalisation have led to profound changes in students' everyday cultural lives, not least by the central importance of the smartphone and social media for communicating and information, and their vast and immediate access to cultural works from around the world – music, film, books etc. (Coulangeon, 2021; Cvetičanin et al., 2024). This shift goes together with increasingly cosmopolitan lifestyles. They are more active in the city nightlife (a rise from 23 to 41 % who go out every week) and work out more (a rise from 58 to 83 %, again by week). More students travel or study abroad, and more have parents born in other countries. Their tastes appear more open towards non-

Western forms of food (e.g. shopping in immigrant stores, liking Japanese food) and entertainment (e.g. Asian movies and music), and increasingly oriented towards “green life-styles”, like trying vegetarianism (one in three, compared to one in ten twenty years ago). As noted by others, this internationalisation, while forming an essential element of modern elites, appears an elective internationalism (Savage, 2021), dominated by an orientation to anglophone cultures (e.g. fewer say they can read French or German).

Figure 4. *Changing orientation of university students towards art and culture, 1998-2020. Percentages.*



While visits to art museums and concerts are pretty stable, and some art forms have become more central in students' cultural lives in these two decades (e.g. video games, TV series and shorter video clips), there is an increasing number of students who never read books, fewer visits the theatre and appear interested in movies (e.g. by going to film clubs or festivals, and very few now mentions film directors when asked about favourites). For genres and artists, the most significant declines are seen for both the most traditional and modern, most “artistic” genres, and this seems to happen across art forms (figure 4). For example, students' interest in classical and contemporary literature has declined markedly while popular genres have gained popularity. This is especially evident when we look at students' favourite literary authors (Table 7). In 1998, pre-war writers from the traditional national literary canon (e.g. Hamsun, Ibsen, Skram, Undset, and somewhat younger, Bjørneboe and Mykle) and giants of world literature (Dostoyevsky) were quite common, these are rarely

mentioned today, and students' lists are increasingly dominated by foreign authors in the popular genres, especially in suspense and fantasy genres. This decline of the national canon, but less so the Anglosaxon one, can be seen across art forms and genres (e.g. students still mention Kandinsky and Shakespeare, but not Krogh or Ibsen, which they did earlier). Rather than a 'natural' change of cultural hierarchies over time, this seems to signal a significant restructuring of the national cultural sphere (Habermas, 1989).

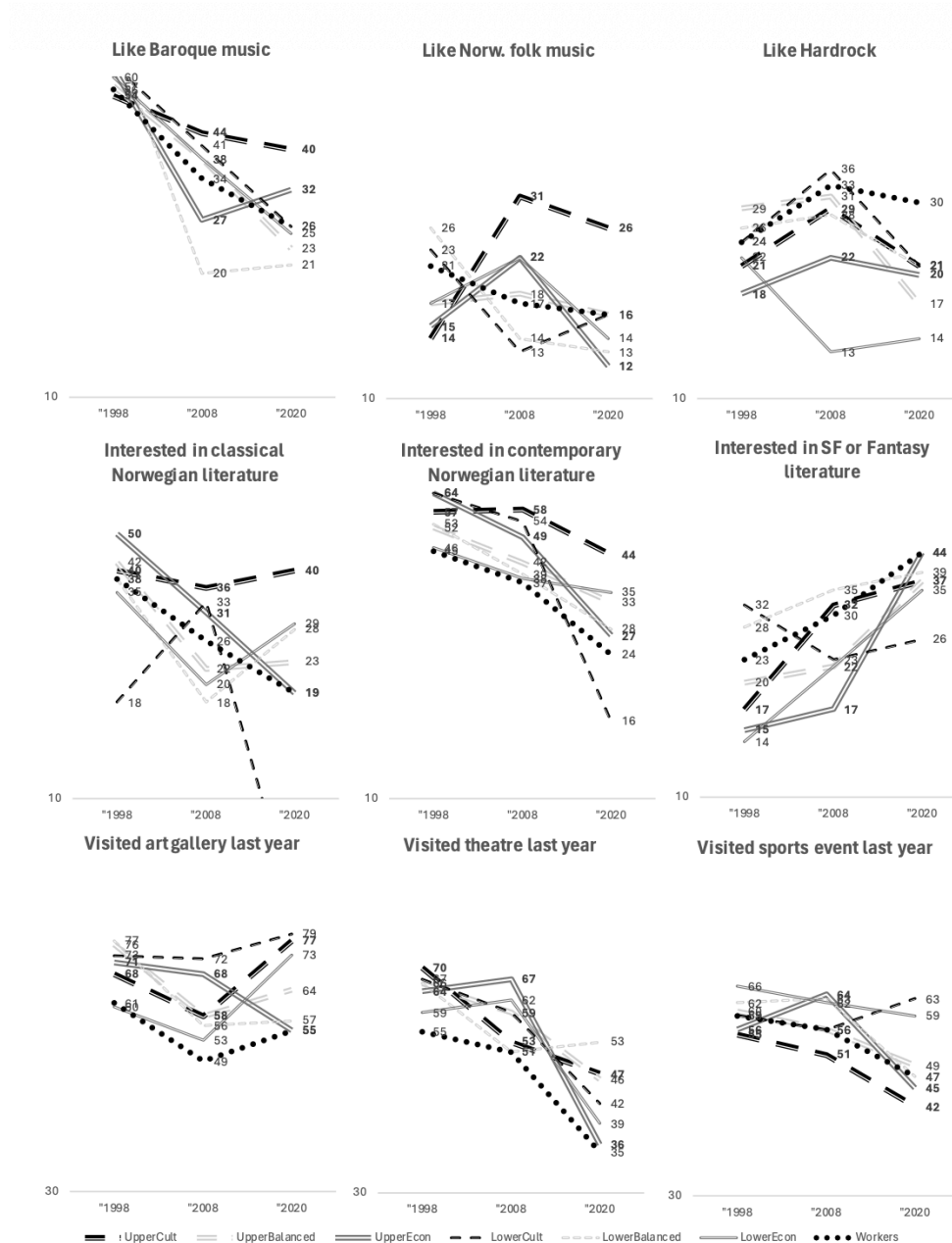
Table 7. Top 20 authors mentioned in open questions. University students 1998-2020.

1998	2008	2020
Knut Hamsun	Jo Nesbø	JK Rowling
John Irving	Stieg Larsson	Jo Nesbø
JRR Tolkien	Erlend Loe	Jojo Moyes
Lars S Christensen	JK Rowling	JRR Tolkien
Anne Karin Elstad	JRR Tolkien	Haruki Murakami
Ingvar Ambjørnsen	Lars S Christensen	Dan Brown
Gunnar Staalesen	Dan Brown	George RR Martin
Anne Holt	Knut Hamsun	Lucinda Riley
Jens Bjørneboe	Unni Lindell	Paulo Coelho
Isabel Allende	Gunnar Staalesen	Erlend Loe
Herbjørg Wassmo	Paulo Coelho	George Orwell
Jostein Gaarder	Henning Mankell	John Greene
Erlend Loe	Jan Guillou	Lars Saabye Christensen
Stephen King	Jostein Gaarder	Karl Ove Knausgård
Henrik Ibsen	Khaled Hosseini	Cecilia Samartin
Jan Guillou	Anne B Ragde	Jane Austen
Agnar Mykle	Jane Austen	Stephen King
Amalie Skram	John Irving	Steven D Levitt
Sigrid Undset	Tore Renberg	Terry Pratchett
F. Dostoyevsky	Isabel Allende	Yuval Noah Harari

3. A still socially distinctive but marginalised art?

While traditional elite culture and art are now much less important in students' lives, such interests and practices are becoming more socially distinctive, especially as a sign of having a cultural elite background (Figure 5). For example, while most students liked Baroque music in 1998 and preferences for it did not have a clear class profile, it is today a rare taste and much less common among working-class students than students from the upper and upper-middle classes. But it is also now clearly more common among those from the cultural rather than the economic elites. Similar changes appear to have taken place for most practices related to the national field of art (e.g. interest in classic or contemporary Norwegian literature or visiting the theatre). In this way, such art form's potential to mark *general* vertical symbolic boundaries is likely reduced, and with that, likely also their role as cultural capital in the student society (c.f. Prieur, Savage, and Flemmen, 2023).

Figure 5. Changing cultural preferences and practices. University students 1998-2020. Percentages (log.).

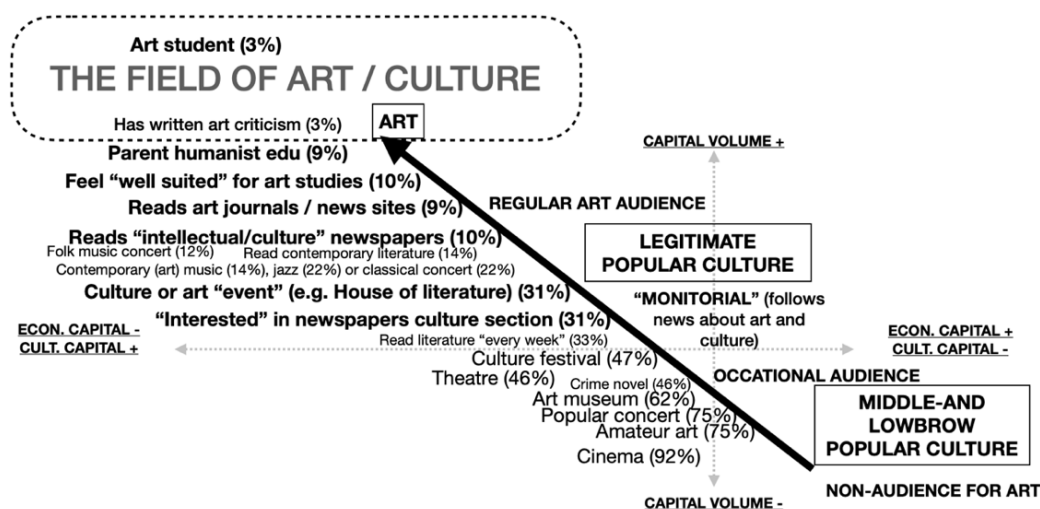


Culturalisation and class

Tracing the distribution of students' cultural practices and interest in the social space (Figure 2), it follows the familiar reproductive pattern (Bourdieu, 1984), where their cultural engagement tends to follow the lower right - upper left diagonal of parents' level of cultural capital (Figure 6). In light of our discussion, this is an expected but also somewhat trivial result unless we try to unpack its more profound social logic. The axis is not simply separating more from less "cultural" students (whatever that means) but sketching a series of gradual oppositions. First, separating 1) *higher versus lower volumes of inherited cultural*

capital (parents) also means a separation of 2) those with *stronger versus weaker social ties to the field of art* (e.g. if parents are cultural workers or artists). In the case of the students, it separates 3) *professionals (full agents in the field of art) and semi-professionals from amateurs and out-siders*, and also 4) *higher versus lower levels with engagement with debates in the art field*, seen e.g. in the move from those who write cultural critique in the top left, to varying “monitorial” practices (from reading specialist art magazines and intellectual/cultural newspapers to those who read culture pages in popular newspapers and web pages, or nothing like this). This parallels the axis separation of 5) *the most versus the least active audiences for art* (and more generally, for outgoing cultural practices). Finally, it separates 6) *the most legitimate artistic forms and works* (e.g. contemporary and classical literature) *from more legitimate* (e.g. *The Wire* or the music of Tom Waits) *and middle-brow and more popular variants* (e.g. current hits, video games, popular sitcoms etc.), which also go together with 7) *varying symbolic competence and knowledge of art* (e.g. seen in how the number of “don’t know”, when asked about preferences for artists, falls when moving along the diagonal). More than simply demonstrating that cultural tastes tend to be inherited, we see that this is also true for students’ culturalisation, in their mental and social integration into the fields of art and culture, in the form of investments, familiarity, attitudes, experiences and competencies.

Figure 6. Culturalisation in the social space of students' lifestyles, MCA axis 1-2.



More matter, with less art?

Any discussion about changes in the university in the last decades must start with the expectation that the societal, technological, cultural and educational reforms, which seem to have the traditional university turning in the widening gyre, have not hit every part of it with the same force, or even at the same time. For example, the “streamlining” of studies following university reforms, often leading to an increase in the number of assignments and compulsory attendance, has likely changed the daily life of students of social sciences and humanities much more than for those at the professional studies, which were already more school-like. In the cultural realm, something similar can be seen in the rise of non-

readers among students, which is often presented as a general crisis but which, when examined, varies much by study, especially by their varying share of students with working-class backgrounds, who tend to lack the skills and attitudes that universities typically presuppose (Hugrée and Poullaouec, 2022).

Analyses of the students of Bergen twenty years ago (Gripsrud and Hovden, 2000) showed patterns of educational and cultural reproduction by class which, if weaker, were analogous to those shown by Bourdieu and Passeron (1979): Their studies and cultural practices tended to echo their social inheritance, first by their parents' distance to social elites (capital volume), and second by their investments and positions relative to the cultural and economic powers (capital composition). Similar patterns were found ten years later (Gripsrud, Hovden, and Moe, 2011), and now, twenty years later, it is clear that rather than a great social levelling of educational and cultural opportunities, the reforms and proclaimed revolutions have, if anything, strengthened the class differences among the students in Bergen in both respects, demonstrating the immense inertia of the social world and the efficiency of its reproductive social mechanisms. This result is in line with arguments of a general rise in social inequality in Norway (Flemmen et al., 2022).

Compared with students two decades ago, three changes appear especially remarkable in students' relation to art and culture. The first is the waning engagement with traditional legitimate forms of culture and art, which aligns with international trends (Bennett et al., 2009; Coulangeon, 2021), especially in its literary forms (including theatre). We should also add that this change has a distinct Anglosaxon bias, as Norwegian canonised artists and works seem to disappear more rapidly from the cultural world of university students. At the same time, traditional legitimate practices and interests in art have become more socially distinct. But instead of such practices becoming a general sign of social nobility, they appear increasingly a marker of students from the upper cultural classes, as they retain more of these practices, which have more or less disappeared among students not just in the lower classes but also in the economic upper classes. This likely weakens arts' potential to function as cultural capital, which aligns with the arguments of Prieur, Savage & Flemmen (2023). The relative social downclassing of art studies (and even more, the humanities) compared to studies for professional and economic elites is a sign of the increasing domination of economic elites *vis-a-vis* cultural elites, in line with increasing economic inequalities both in Norway and internationally (Hansen & Toft, 2021).

These changes suggest ongoing processes of social closure (Weber, 1978) for both economic and cultural sectors of the student world, which appear more and more restricted to those already born and raised in them. For the world of art and culture, an *entzauberung* – disenchantment – appears to have taken hold of the remaining students, a feeling that it is no longer a world for them, neither as audiences nor as practitioners, and something which demands their hearts, time and attention. In Norway, these signs of a gradual decoupling of the student world from the cultural field seem to echo some of its earlier decoupling from the political field. Where the student societies of Norwegian universities in the sixties and seventies were crucial institutions where major avant-garde artistic events and political debates took place to large audiences, this is no longer the case. If correct, such signs of a decreasing autonomy of the student world as a cultural and political space are also one of

its weakening importance as a cultural institution and a space for *Bildung* and experimentation. On the other hand, this seems perfectly suited to the current spirit of political and educational regimes; the university, rather than a cultural world to get lost in, should be the place one passes through, preferably, as desired by Hamlet's mother, quoted in the title, by getting the business done as quickly and efficiently as possible.

This article has previously been published as Hovden, J.F. (2024) 'More matter, with less art? On the transformation of university students' cultural lifestyles and culturalisation after the millennium.', *Sociological Problems*, 56, pp. 138–164.

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Notes

- ¹ The third and fourth axis primarily separate students from parents who respectively have teacher education and social science education. This inability of the analysis to capture finer differences in the students' social heritage is not surprising. We are, after all, dealing with indirect data, with lower validity than if we had surveyed their parents directly.
- ² While Norway e.g. has some of the wealthiest students in Europe (Netz et al., 2015), the proportion who work beside their studies has risen for all, but most among those with working-class backgrounds. In the period, the share of upper-class students working beside their studies rose from 38 to 51 per cent, but from 41 to 65 among working-class students.
- ³ For the latter, see, for example, the case of business schools discussed by Holmqvist (2023).

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