

UNIVERSITA' CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE  
MILANO

Dottorato di ricerca in Culture della Comunicazione

Ciclo XXIV

S.S.D.: SPS/08 Sociologia dei Processi Culturali e Comunicativi

# Independent to What? An Analysis of The Live Music Scene in Milan

Tesi di Dottorato di: Silvia Maria Tarassi

Matricola: 3710771

Anno Accademico 2010/2011



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# 1. Introduction

*“My independence which is my strength implies my loneliness which is my weakness.” (Pasolini, 1969)<sup>1</sup>*

When I have read this quotation projected during a musical and visual performance<sup>2</sup> organized by a famous independent Italian band, I Tre Allegri Ragazzi Morti, and dedicated to Pierpaolo Pasolini, I have soon realized that much better than me Pasolini had been able to explain the complexity and contradiction entailed in independent cultural production.

The quotation from Pasolini (1969), contained in an article titled *My Provocative Independence*, explains, in a very clear and straightforward way, how the independence actually generates a contradictory tension between being independent or not.

The notion of independent implies a continuous struggle between two contradictory tensions: the need of being autonomous and different but at the same time the need of being interconnected to an economic, political and cultural environment.

As Pasolini emphasizes independence is very linked to a relational issue, and this is the crucial question that the thesis will address. In Pasolini’s example, the independence referred to his contentious relationships with the media and the cultural industry (in particular film and publishing), while in this thesis it is connected to independent music production.

## 1.1 Thesis Topic: Independent Live Music Scene

The term ‘independent’ in the context of music, it is commonly used to indicate forms of grass-roots music production claiming their autonomy from the mechanisms of the music industry but also more generally from the cultural, social, political environment in which are located.

This thesis seeks to investigate the relationships existing in independent music production, analyzing the actions and interactions that characterize small-scale cultural producers<sup>3</sup> in the

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from Italian: “La mia indipendenza che è la mia forza implica la mia solitudine che è la mia debolezza”

<sup>2</sup> The concert *Pasolini l’incontro* was held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011 at Teatro dell’Arte, Milano (Italy).

<sup>3</sup> In the thesis the term ‘cultural or music producers’ is used to indicate, as Strachan does, “individuals involved in the creation and distribution of various types of cultural artifacts and events including musical texts,

context of Milan, but at the same time their independence or interdependence from the music industry, media, policies, politics and cultural context. The thesis therefore seeks to analyze how music-making<sup>4</sup> practices come into relationship with the urban area characterized by a series of structural opportunities and constraints affecting circuits of independent production. In this regard, the analysis focuses on the interactions within the circuits of micro production of live music<sup>5</sup>, which bind more strongly to urban economies.

Attention will be directed particularly to the analysis of independent production and performance of live music. The interest towards live music is justified by the growing importance that this sector plays today in economic and cultural terms (eg Frith, 2007). However it is important to notice that the field of live music is actually very interconnected with other areas of music production and is thus impossible to analyze it without considering its relationship with the recording industry, with music journalism, with high entertainment and more general with cultural production of the urban environment.

Furthermore, the main purpose of the thesis is to fill the gap existing, especially in the academic Italian context, in a literature, that is instead widespread in the Anglo-American context, and that relates to the analysis of grass-roots independent music production and performance. In sociology of music and in popular music studies<sup>6</sup>, this literature has widely made reference to the notion of the 'music scene' (e.g. Straw, 2001; Peterson & Bennett, 2004), a highly debated and controversial concept used as a way of understanding either music-making practices taking place in particular localities, or genre-based music formations. The thesis wants to challenge the traditional way in which music formations have been understood and particularly to provide a critical account of the notion of music scene, pointing out its weaknesses and placing it in relation to other critical perspectives such as the 'art world' (Becker, 1982), field of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993) and creative network (van Heur, 2010).

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performances, records, written publications, artwork and websites”(Strachan, 2003, p.11), and at the same way 'music production' is used in the thesis to indicate all music-related activities.

<sup>4</sup>The term 'music-making practice' is used in the thesis to indicate the wide range of activities related to the production, performance, promotion of music.

<sup>5</sup> In the thesis, live music is used to include a wide set of performances which range from the live music performances of people playing on instruments to DJs performances. By talking about micro grass-roots production in the case of live music, I mean that I will concentrate my attention upon small scale production and upon small- medium size music venues and clubs.

<sup>6</sup> Popular music studies are an interdisciplinary field of studies, (combing musicology semiotics, sociology, anthropology, geography and cultural studies) who are united by a common interest in the study of popular music. Popular music studies try to broaden to all genres, cultures, and repertoires from whole over the world, even Italy, using for them the English expression 'popular music' (e.g. Fabbri, 2010).

The ensemble of concepts and theoretical models which have been adopted to describe music and more generally art formations can be regarded as a proof of the complexities which are entailed in analyzing music collectivities.

These concepts and models all tend, from different perspectives, to answer to a general question: how to look at the complexities of actions and interactions characterizing cultural activities while still taking into account macro influences that can affect and be affected by these activities? This is the theoretical challenge that my work wants to address, namely how to take into account the complexity and mobility of actions and interactions or the members of a music scene, while still considering the constraint and interdependency with structural constraints?

The issue is much bigger than what this research is aimed to answer, but I think that there's a need of coming back to the questions in order to understand the better way of conceptualizing the music scene perspective that this thesis is aimed to explore.

Besides the final result of this thesis has been the construction of a theoretical model to better understand the relationships and interconnections within the circuits of music production, and in particular to investigate how these circuits live in the intersections with a context that cannot be reduced to the physical space of the city of Milan, but is rather a relational terrain in which the various networks of independent music gravitate.

I think that it's important to point out that the conceptual framework the thesis presents has been theorized at the end of the fieldwork. That's because most of the assumptions I'm making are actually very much influenced by some understandings I had from the fieldwork<sup>7</sup>. This is connected to the exploratory nature of this research which was not aimed to corroborate initial hypotheses but rather to explore the complex nature of the networks of independent music production and performance gravitating around the context of Milan. For these reasons, the research has used a qualitative methodology (particularly through the use of semi-structured interviews, participant observations and document analysis) because a qualitative methodology could better suit to the exploratory nature of this study.

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<sup>7</sup> The fieldwork has been conducted from January to July 2011, mainly within the context of the city of Milan, but without restricting to the city boundaries.



## 1.2 Research Interest

My PhD research interest builds on previous post-graduate work which examines practices of cultural production and their interlinked relationships to urban environments and to dynamics of urban regeneration<sup>8</sup>. At the beginning of my PhD I thought my project could be a continuation of my postgraduate thesis in which I had analyzed a case of gentrification in a quarter in Milan, applying the Anglo-American literature on this issue to the peculiarity of the Italian context. Initially in the PhD, I was interested in looking at the role played by the music production as key element in regeneration of cities, with a special concern given to cultural policies adopted at a local level, which has been major focus of attention within popular music studies (e.g. Cohen, 2007). Hence I initially intended to undertake an analysis of music policies applied at a local level in Milan aimed at supporting independent and emerging music, and comparing this with the Anglo-American context.

Therefore starting from the initial idea of analyzing the music policies adopted by the City Council of Milan at a comparative level with other cities, I conducted a pilot study<sup>9</sup> following the only initiative that at that time (March 2010) the City Council of Milan was organizing aimed at supporting emerging musicians in Milan. This policy initiative, LiveMi, which comprised public funded music performances of emerging artists in the city centre metro station, ended up being a simple rebranding strategy aimed at re-imagining the city and particularly the mayor as music- friendly in view of future elections.

When I started to analyze my pilot study data<sup>10</sup>, I began to see difficulty in working at a comparative level between the British and the Italian context. In Milan there was no awareness at an institutional level of the economic and cultural value of local music and of possible ways of fostering the local music industry. I actually started to realize that while classical music was funded for its cultural value, while main major mainstream popular music acts were organized being a possible source of attractiveness to re-imagine the city and to

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<sup>8</sup> My post-graduate thesis deals with a case of gentrification in a urban area of Pietrasanta (Milan), and is titled *Cultura e tessuto urbano: casi milanesi di gentrification* (Culture and urban environment: case studies of gentrification in Milan).

<sup>9</sup> The results of the pilot study are only partly contained in the PhD thesis, but they have been published in Tarassi, S. 2011. LiveMI: Popular Music Policies and Urban Regeneration. Available at: <http://www.comunicazionisonline.it/2011/5/9/>.

<sup>10</sup> The data of the pilot study were collected conducted by using a qualitative methodology The case study LiveMi was analyzed through a qualitative methodology. Ten events of LiveMi were held on Saturdays from 13 March to 8 May 2010: during this period, 26 semi-structured interviews were conducted to musicians, councillors and organizers involved. Furthermore, participant observation was conducted to understand the role of music performances In transforming subway stations into lively and sociable places for music consumption and performance.

increase tourism, while emerging artists were in the case of the pilot study primarily supported as way of supporting social youth, there was a sort of ‘no man’s land’ which was constituted by the independent music sector and which was no object of any public funding and of any music policy. There was no interest in promoting a sector which was independent by definition.

All these cases suggested me the need to change the perspective of my research project and reframe it to try to understand how the independent live music sector was kept going despite and the lack of support, and in some cases negative (non) interventions, of the City Council.

In focusing on the social problems of live music in the city I was then able to assess my new research problem: how to deal with the fragmented and complex nature of activities and relationships existing in the independent live music sector in Milan? How to consider ‘external’ interactions existing with the City Council and the music industry? How to look at the ways local factors can shape or be shaped by the independent live music sector?

This pilot study has therefore been a starting point for considering the importance of analyzing the actual interactions and activities existing within the independent music sector as crucial starting point for the thesis.

## 1.3 Structure Of Thesis

The thesis is structured in the 3 sections: namely the theoretical synthesis, the methodological framework and finally the empirical study.

The first section, the theoretical synthesis, aims to explore the different ways in which music formations are understood or even more broadly how cultural and artistic groups are analyzed not only in popular music studies but even more generally in the sociology of culture.

In particular in chapter 2, I will draw my attention upon the music scene perspective, which has been widely used in the studies of grass-roots music-making practices. The chapter will particularly emphasize how the music scene perspective was born in rejection of previous theoretical frameworks connected to sub-cultural theories. Later the chapter point out how music scene perspective has been particularly focused upon the analysis of grass-roots music making practices, taking place at a local level and upon the subjective representation of the scene members. This way of understanding local music scenes have been challenged by several studies which have suggested the existence of trans-local and virtual scenes (Peterson & Bennett, 2004). This distinction is criticized of not being able to explain how actions and interactions among members of the scene are much more mobile, complex and interconnected than what the music scene perspective allows to explain.

I conclude the chapter criticizing the music scene perspective. The notion of music scene is criticized to be a vague and 'catch-all' tem which doesn't illuminate the researcher in the analysis of music production. Therefore I suggest the need of using a multi-layered theoretical framework to better conceptualize circuits of grass-roots music production.

In chapter 3, I therefore propose to come back to the theorizations of art and cultural formations diffused in the sociology of culture to better conceptualize the music scene perspective. I particularly refer to two highly influential frameworks in the sociology of culture, namely Becker (1982)'s theory of the 'art worlds' and Bourdieu (1992)'s theory of the 'field of cultural production' and to their application to the study of music-making practices in Finnegan (1989), Kruse (2003) and Webb (2007).

The chapter then moves to assess the usefulness of the theoretical conceptualization of network and particularly of the mobility approach proposed by Urry (2000, 2005) who seeks

to take into account how networked relationships are enacted by distance and mediated interactions which make encountering, visiting and meeting crucial in networks.

Chapter 4 tries instead to analyze the complexity of the notion of independent, considering the importance of looking at the social discourses of the independent music culture that the ‘independents’ defend. Besides I suggest that some of the assumptions about the notion of independent are related to its theorization especially in music scene studies. I then consider how the notion of independent need to be understood in its modes of production (Strachan), and of possible intersections existing between the independent music production and the corporate music industry (Hesmondhalgh, 1999).

I propose therefore a new conceptualization of independence which allows to consider possible interactions that the independents can entail not only in the recording industry, but even how independent music production is situated in the intersection with broader economic, technological and political changes that can affect the independent music sector.

In chapter 5, I provide a I try to provide a multi-layered model which enables us to analyze the circuits of independent live music production. This multi-layered model draws upon several critics I made to the music scene perspective, and to my understanding of the notion of independent. My criticisms focuses on three main areas which are interconnected but which I will now try now to distinguish. The model comprises three levels of analysis, one concerning the need to analyze the music scene for its productive and organizational characteristics, the second one refers to the relationship with the media, economic, regulatory, political and cultural environment and the third level that seeks to analyze the complex nature of the terrain in which such practices take place which cannot be restricted to the city of Milan.

The following section and chapter 6 is related to the methodological framework which has been used in the fieldwork. In this chapter I therefore mention the research object and questions, the methodological challenges entailed in the sampling, particularly referring to choice of several informants who have guided me in the different circuits of independent production. I refer to the choice of semi-structured interviews, and the usefulness of participant observations in analyzing social gathering events taking place. An finally I mentioned some ethical issues which were related to my involvement in the field.

The next section is dedicated to presenting the research findings and is structured in 3 chapters which refer to the 3 layers of the model presented in chapter 5.

In chapter 7, I consider the first level of the model and I analyze how the notion of independence, applied to the specific Italian context, is a contested and unstable definition and a result of an ongoing struggle of different perspectives, in which processes of professionalization and institutionalization may face tensions within the various circuits.

Besides the chapter attempts to explain the importance of looking networks gravitating around music scene as part of circuits of cultural production.

In chapter 8 I develop the second level of the model which aims to look at how the circuits that comprise the independent music scene I have described in the previous chapter are in rooted in a social terrain which lives in a certain equilibrium of different forces which can be summarized in different dimensions: media, economy, policy-regulations, politics and finally culture.

Finally chapter 9 looks at the mediated and mobile practices which characterized the circuits of the independent music scene gravitating around the city of Milan. The attempt is of considering Milan, not as the site of situated and localized music-making practices, as in the traditional understanding of the local music scene, but as one of the possible hubs of the multi-sited and multi-tasking practices of independent music producers.

## 2. The Music Scene Perspective

### Introduction

The chapter will review the music scene perspective in the attempt to provide a critical rethinking of this highly debated and contested field of research which has particularly developed within popular music studies. The chapter seeks to understand which is the theoretical framework in which we need to situate the notion of music scene, and to outline some problematic issues.

I start by looking at the ways in which the music scene perspective was born in rejection to the structural framework of sub-culture studies in the theorization by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). I will stress how this shift has implied the fact that the music scene perspective is embedded in ethnographic studies which have put priority on local variations and to subjective representations given by the scene members. Additionally I suggest that the notion of scene has been for a long time used in its vernacular meaning and there has been a confusion between its use as an analytical framework and a common sense use of the term to describe music making practices in a local setting. I will then point out that the notion of the music scene is traditionally interlinked to its attachment to a local context and that recent theorizations (Straw, 1991; 2001) have tried to challenge the locality by considering the importance of global interconnections. The chapter will finally outline some criticisms that we can make to the scene perspective.

### 2.1 Sub-Culture And Post Sub-Culture Studies

I will now try to review the debate existing within popular music studies, which has been focused upon the concept of ‘music scene’ as analytical tool to study music collectivities. The term has been adopted in rejection of previous theoretical frameworks such as the ‘subculture’ approach. I think it’s important to point out how ‘scene’ was used in place of ‘subculture’ because it enables us to understand the different theoretical and methodological frameworks in which these concepts were established.

I'm not aiming here to review sub-cultural theories, but rather wish to concentrate on how the critics to the structuralist approach of subculture studies gave the conditions to establish the scene perspective.

The sub-cultural tradition, as it was theorized in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)<sup>11</sup>, was aimed at giving a systematic way of studying style-driven youth cultures (e.g. Hebdidge, 1979). Sub-cultural theory, applying Gramscian Marxist analysis, drew upon structuralist approach and was meant to understand sub-cultural affiliations as indicators of youth working-class resistance against parental mainstream culture taking place especially in the British Society, where the concept took mostly shape and which was mostly analyzed in case of punk in London (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hedbidge, 1979).

Sub-culture approach has been criticized for its attempt of accounting music collectivities as fixed and self sustained social entities instead of considering the role played by social actors themselves in the construction of sub-cultural identities.

The point which was mostly criticized is that the structuralist approach of CCCS assumed that sub-cultural theories were meant to find strict correspondences between young people, music tastes and affiliations, and class membership. And these correspondences were the product much more of a pre-given total theory rather than of the subjective viewpoints of sub-culturalists (Muggleton, 2000). As Martin emphasizes:

Such attempts to establish systematic correspondences or structural homologies between cultural values and practices, on the one hand, and underlying patterns of social organizations, on the other, are likely to exhibit all the failing of structural sociology more generally, with its toolkit of collective concepts and its presuppositions that social groups can be defined unambiguously as entities (Martin, 1995, p. 162).

On this concern many authors, such as Redhead (1990), point out how subculture came to be a pure abstract term which was created much more by sub-cultural theorists than from subcultures themselves. He states, in a quotation that has become influential in critiques to subcultural studies: “subcultures were created by subcultural theorists and not the other way around” (Redhead, 1990, p. 25).

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<sup>11</sup> For the scope of the chapter, I'm not referring here to earlier accounts of the Chicago School in which subcultures were often related to youth delinquency (e.g. Park 1925; Whyte 1943) but only to the development in CCCS and to the application of the structural-Marxist framework to study the homologies existing between music styles and youth cultures. That's because critics to sub-culture in post-subcultural studies have mainly made reference to the notion of subculture drawn by the CCCS, with few references to its early theorization in the Chicago School.

These critics depended upon the fact that sub-cultural theories were not supported but empirical findings<sup>12</sup> but rather stressed the “universality of subcultures” (Waters, 1981) without considering local differences.

Music affiliations were in fact much more loosely and fragmented and depending upon local specificities than what the sub-cultural theories were suggesting. This emphasis upon fluidity of taste cultures, upon their attachment to a local context, and upon the need of applying empirically grounded methodologies such as ethnography became central in new approaches to study music affiliations, which has been largely known as post sub-cultural studies (e.g. Muggleton, 2003).

As Muggleton (2000), in his book *Inside Subculture: the Post-Modern Meaning of Style*, summarizes the shift in the neo-Weberian approach to the study of subculture, which is therefore grounded in the subjective reality of those under study. As he states, his approach aims to:

1. privilege the subjective meanings of subculturalists rather than deriving these from pre-given totalizing theory;
2. take a ‘nomalist’ rather than a ‘realist’ position on social reality – for example, proceed on the phenomenal level rather than viewing this as an expression of an underlying structure;
3. recognize the independent explanatory role of cultural values rather than theorizing these as necessarily related to economic and social factors (Muggleton, 2000, pp. 9-10).

Using a neo-Weberian approach, Muggleton argues that social theorizations are always partial and dependent upon the researcher’s point of view, without being determined by a social structure. That’s even the position taken by Martin (2004) who also uses a Weberian approach to explain how collective concepts such as subculture are not bounded entities but are instead “symbolic representations of fluid, sometimes amorphous, sets of social relations” (Martin, 2004, p. 26)

Moreover this theoretical and methodological shift has been largely reconnected to changes taking place in a ‘postmodern’ environment in which music styles and youth cultures have become more fluid and fragmented and therefore needed a new conceptual framework to be understood.

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<sup>12</sup> As I’ve said I’m referring to the subculture studies of CCCS, and not to the urban ethnographies of sub-cultures of the Chicago School.



Contemporary 'postmodern' society is characterized by such as: less commitment to membership of social groups; greater heterogeneity in society as a whole; increased possibilities for multiple social affiliations ... Such changes make it hard to maintain any notion of subculture as a social formation. (Harris, 2007, p. 18)

However this shift has been even the product of epistemological changes from the structuralist macro approach of sub-cultural studies to a more pragmatic approach of post sub-cultural studies oriented to the micro-analysis of situated practices. As Bennett states:

The rejection of structuralism as a means of explaining away social processes, combined with an increasing concern with the micro-social, local aspects of everyday life as the focus for critical enquiry, has led to an interest among academic researchers in music-making as an activity via which young people make sense of, negotiate or resist the local circumstances in which they find themselves. (Bennett, 2000, p. 136)

As the CCCS structuralist approach was meant at understanding subcultures as abstract and cohesive social formations, the new approach was relying upon subjective understandings of their members.

Starting from these critics and these assumptions, many scholars (e.g. Redhead, 1995; Muggleton, 2000) have therefore revised the subculture perspective.

As Muggleton (2003) describes, attempts have been made to abandon the theoretical and methodological perspective of the CCCS through establishing a new theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of subculture. The problem was that it was difficult to use the term 'subculture' without considering the structuralist approach in which the concept took shape. Besides while the notion of subculture was criticized to be abstract and far from subjective understandings of sub-culturalists, it was in fact entering in journalistic and common sense accounts as a way of understanding young people music affiliations, contributing therefore to make the term even more loosely and unclear. As Bennett suggests:

In introducing the term 'subculture' into the wider public sphere, the media have completed the process began in sociological work of reducing subculture to a convenient 'catch-all' term used to describe a range of disparate collective practices whose only obvious relation is that they involve young people (Bennett, 1999, p. 605).

Therefore there have been several attempts to find new terms able to grasp music affiliations, "rejecting outright any possibility of continuing usefulness of the subculture terminus" (Muggleton, 2003, p. 5).

These new terms wanted to capture the fluidity of music formations and of lifestyles, considering membership with no fixed class restrictions as in the sub-cultural perspective.

In all these approaches there is a recognition of the importance of embeddedness of music expressions in specific localities and in everyday life activities. That's because, as Blackman (2005) has pointed out, those who have criticized subcultures fixity have put priority on local variations and micro focus of everyday contexts that shape music affiliations. Besides the priority has been given to subjective meanings and to individual lifestyles in place of the social structures affecting subcultural members. Whereas in the subculture tradition the emphasis was given to resistance, new approaches to subcultures dismiss the importance of resistance in favor of leisure.

Many have been the terms which have been adopted in substitutions of subcultures: 'club-cultures' (Thorton, 1995; Redhead, 1997), which are taste cultures particularly related to the dance settings (the clubs); 'neo-tribes' (Malbon, 1999; Bennett, 1999) which come from the theorization of *tribus* in Maffesoli's book *The Time of the Tribes* (1995) to refer to the fluidity of postmodern consumer's life-styles and music tastes. In Bennett, neo-tribes designate "a series of temporal gatherings characterized by fluid boundaries and floating membership" (Bennett, 1999, p. 600).

And finally 'music scene' is the one which has developed within popular music studies. And it's in this theoretical and methodological approach that the scene perspective took shape.

## 2.2 Affirmation Of The Music Scene Perspective

I have suggested above that the music scene perspective was established in order to overcome the theoretical assumptions of the structuralist perspective to subcultures, and was born within micro-sociological analysis of particular localities.

I will now try to explain how it's therefore difficult to separate the term 'music scene' from the initial notion, in its rootedness in a local environment.

In describing the context in which the music scene perspective took shape, it's important to point out that the term 'music scene' was commonly used by music journalists and fans much before its establishment in the academic debate. And the journalistic discourses have often contributed to create a sense of belonging to the scene for its members and to connect particular music scenes to particular local contexts. And relationships between music scenes and peculiar local sounds (e.g. Liverpool, Austin, Seattle) have been stressed by press, by the music industry and even local authorities.

Interestingly music scenes have been used in the academic debate in its common sense meaning, without being critically explained. By this I mean that Hedbidge (1979) when talking about punk subcultures, Thornton (1995), Redhead (1994) when talking about club-cultures and Bennett (1999) when talking about neo-tribes commonly used the term music scene in their common sense meaning to refer to music scenes in a particular located space. Harris (2007) suggests how even Cohen (1991), in her ethnographic research of music-making practices in Liverpool I will talk about later, commonly refers to scene without spelling out what she means for the term.

In its common sense meaning music scene was and is still highly understood in everyday discourses by musicians, fans, music journalists, and academics to refer to a group of people sharing musical tastes and practices, as well as the production and consumption of a particular genre or style of music within a particular context where this style of music has developed. In this definition the sites of music making practices are intrinsically connected to the understanding of the music scene. And it's exactly with this meaning that the term spread in the academic debate "to signify some kind of much more located and sub-cultural space ... as a descriptor for *local sites* of cultural, particularly cultural, production and consumption" (Bennett & Harris, 2004, p. 13, my emphasis).

## 2.3 Local Music Scene

The notion of music scene has been used to describe music-making practices taking place within a given geographic space and to underline the association of locality with specific style of music, with a peculiar city sound (Cohen, 2007), and for establishing a certain music localism (Straw, 1991). The analysis of the music scene was therefore focused on the importance that particular places can play in creating specific kinds of music associated with that particular location. And it's this association of the scene with a locality, which has become a major focus of attention in these studies.

As Stahl (2004, p. 51) suggests: "this so called spatial turn has meant a different interpretative schema for the study of musical practice has come to the fore, one that revolves around the notion of scene".

Micro-analyses of localized music scenes (Finnegan, 1989; Cohen, 1991; Shank, 1994) have considered how the characteristics of a particular social and cultural context can affect the formation of a scene and how the local scene is constituted through the everyday local activities among the members of the scene. The focus of these ethnographic studies is given by local practices, because, as Finnegan suggests: "local music is a matter of active collective practice" (Finnegan, 1989, p. 297).

Cohen in the introduction to *Rock Culture in Liverpool* (1991) suggests that need for "ethnographic data and micro-sociological detail" and for 'the grassroots of the music industry', looking at the everyday experiences of music-making of local musicians.

Cohen (1991), in particular, by analyzing the rock music scene in Liverpool, showed how the scene is created through activities and interactions among musicians and audience, and is shaped by characteristics of the local setting. Besides the exchange of information, advice, word of mouth, fanzines, newspapers play an important role in increasing the scene itself and the sense of belonging and identity and of distinction between inside and out the scene.

This point is emphasized in Shank (1994)'s definition of music scene in Austin as 'embryonic signifying community' in which the "buzz" plays a central role in creating a sense of identity and belonging.

Shank (1994) in his historical and ethnographic analysis of the music scene of Austin underlines the importance that the scene plays in the process of identity formation. As he states, referring to the stories of the music scene in Austin: "the details of story give us many ways to think about how the performance of popular music functions as a process of identity

formation...” (Shank, 1994, p. 10) to the local music scene. As described by Grazian (2004) in relation to the blues music scene in Chicago, participants enjoy music as an activity in which meanings are collectively imagined and disseminated within a specific social space which is opposed to the one external to the scene. Grazian points out how this scene is influenced by a certain ideology due to the romantic notion of ‘authenticity’, meant as the perception of the scene as a space of perfect expression of a sense of local identity, tradition and roots. It is, however, also pointed out that the same musicians, venues owners contribute to the construction of a “symbolic economy of authenticity” (Grazian, 2004, p.34), which is often used to promote the authentic blues scene in Chicago for tourists. This example highlights how the emphasis upon local scene has to be understood as a discursive construction of a ‘rhetoric of the local’, which serves as way to create a sense of belonging to a particular locality which can be used as a marketing strategy of city branding. There is therefore a process of fetishisation of localities (Appadurai, 1990, p.16) which is created through the attachment of music scenes to particular places.

The notion of space in which music scenes are located needs to be contested, and to be understood considering the influences of broader networks, which go beyond the locality.

It’s interesting to see why and how the notion of local music scene had such widespread diffusion in popular music debate.

The music scene perspective in its attachment to a local context, as I have already mentioned, was established in a moment in which there was a shift in the approaches to sociology of music from a textual analysis to ethnography, and a change in the social categories adopted from class and sub-subculture to the role played by everyday practices and discourses, to subjective construction of identity, and to the issue locality. And it’s exactly in the relationships between everyday practices, music styles, locality and identity that we can place the development of the music scene perspective.

As Shepherd (2003) suggests, it’s probably not a coincidence that the first theorizations of the music scene perspective (Straw, 1991) came in the same year in which Cohen suggested the need for “ethnographic data and micro-sociological detail” (1991, p. 6) in popular music studies. What I want to suggest is that the establishment of the music scene perspective is intrinsically connected to the development of ethnography in popular music studies, because the adoption of ethnographic methodologies have contributed to attach music styles and everyday practices, and identities to particular locations. As Connell and Gibson (2003) suggest, the recognition of the embeddedness of music in particular places is marked by the

increasing importance of ethnographic studies of music scenes (Finnegan, 1989; Cohen, 1991).

Many geographies of music have tended to locate analyses in more detailed local circumstances, generating place-bound theories and regional ethnographies of music scenes, audience cultures and experiences of place, ranging from ... amateur scenes ... sub-cultures and indie scenes in various world centres...

...music has been linked to place ... as cultural geographers and others traced links between music styles, subcultures and place (Connell & Gibson, 2003, p. 21).

The notion of local music scene therefore has to be understood by looking at ethnographic studies which have rooted music-making practices to the local level.

However for Connell and Gibson (2003) the emphasis given in the use of ethnographic methods to the localized practices can have some limits that need to be recognized:

Associated with this is a tendency to become too enmeshed in the detail of the local at the expense of recognizing how the local is constituted within wider flows, networks and actions ( Connell & Gibson, 2003, p. 21).

In the initial ethnographic studies of music scenes, the association of scene with localities was the main focus of attention. Choosing the setting where music was hosted implied that researchers no longer had to deal with the problem, as in the subcultural approach, of defining music affiliations but rather music affiliations were united because they were happening in the same setting. If from one point of view, this enables us to consider music affiliations and memberships as much more fluid, on the other side music practices stayed attached to a local context. And the role played by the subjective representations of the music scene by its members was crucial in defining the music scene and its attachment to the locality. This reference to the local was, in any event, the product of the emergence of place studies and of the stress placed upon locality in which the music scene perspective develops (Stahl, 2004).

## 2.4 Theorization Of The Music Scene Perspective: Music Scene Going Beyond Locality

Theorizations of the music scene perspective have tried to explain the term more rigorously and to challenge its attachment to a local context. These studies have tried to understand the local processes in their relation to “a vast complexity of interconnections” (Massey, 1995, p.124).

In one of the first theorizations of music scene, Straw (1991, 2001) develops a more multifaceted notion of the term and suggests how the scene needs to be understood by looking at the changing “status of the local” shaped by globalization. He later states, in relation to ‘music scene’ that:

the concept’s intermittent appeal to popular music scholars has stemmed from the sense that it will help to resolve a number of thorny questions, most notably that of the relations between the global and the local (Straw, 2001, p. 12).

Straw’s theorization of the notion of music scene is meant to challenge the “local uniqueness” and to overcome “the valorization of musical practices perceived to be rooted in geographical, historical and cultural unities” (Straw, 1991, p. 269). He explains this tendency which can be found in the common sense understanding but even in the academic debate as ‘music localism’. Against the idea of music localism, which has emphasized the importance of looking at the organic relationship between music styles and genres and places, Straw suggests the need of looking “at the ways in which local scenes have, informally and usually unknowingly, organized their diversity and their relationships to other localities” (Straw, 2001, p.350).

Straw provides some examples from the American dance and alternative rock music scenes to suggest how local music styles are articulated in relation to international changes.

Another important contribution to a new understanding of music scenes comes from Holly Kruse (1993), whose work is one of the first attempts to understand the importance of looking at music scenes as not only locally situated but even trans-locally interconnected. She recognizes that local music scenes are the first sites in which we need to look in order to understand the relationships between local music practices and the construction of identity, but at the same time she advocates the need of looking at how local and trans-local dimensions coexist within the music scene, suggesting that “the relationship between the local

and the trans-local in the construction of oppositional musical identities is an issue that should be addressed more completely in ethnographic research” (Kruse, 1993, p. 39).

Another theorization comes from Cohen (1999), which suggests, in a chapter dedicated to the theorization of the term ‘scene’ which is collected in the book *Key terms in Popular Music and Culture*, the need of using the term in popular music studies literatures. She emphasizes how scene has been used to indicate local music culture, even in her study of local music making in Liverpool, but she then refers to the need of re-conceptualizing music scenes as mobile music cultures, considering the globally interconnected dynamics of music practices. Similarly, Harris (2000, 2007) in his study of extreme metal music scene suggests that scene can be used as the analytical perspective to relate particular cases to global processes. In a globalized environment:

Scene connotes a more flexible, loose kind of space within which music is produced; a kind of context for musical practice. It assumes less about the homogeneity and coherence of its constituent activities and members (Harris, 2000, p.14).

Bennett (2000) in his ethnographic study across different local music cultures suggests that local music scenes are contested places, “crossed by different forms of collective life and competing sensibilities that the latter bring to bear on the interpretation and social realization of particular place” (Bennett, 2000, p.53). In all these studies there is a recognition of the importance of taking into account trans-local connections that music scenes are having. These studies have tried to “re-address the relationship between the global and the local” (Bennett, 2000, p.195), taking into account the existence of ‘local’, ‘trans-local’ and of ‘virtual scenes’, in the terminology used by Bennett and Peterson (2004), that will now be presented.



## 2.5 Music Scenes: Local, Trans-local and Virtual

Peterson and Bennett suggest, in the introduction to the book *Music scenes: local, trans-local and virtual*, that while local music scenes were traditionally studied as embedded in local cultures, scenes are now concerned “with the ways in which emergent scenes use music appropriated via global flows and networks to construct particular narratives of the local” (Peterson & Bennett, 2007, p. 7) and are connected with other scenes. In the introduction to the book, Peterson and Bennett (2004) present a trichotomous system to the study of music scenes. The authors propose a conceptual differentiation between these types of local, trans-local and virtual scenes, which they state are left distinguished for the sake of the discussion. Even though this distinction is conventional, it doesn't allow to us comprehend how practices are mobile and interlinked with both face to face and mediated interactions, which can't be understood separately.

When looking at trajectories and interactions, instead at the music scenes, we can see that practices can be locally and trans-locally based. Instead the definition of trans-local scenes seems to imply that trans-local music scenes are by themselves connected sharing common musical tastes, and not instead trajectories and interactions of the scene members.

Often the most self-conscious local music scenes that focus on particular kind of music are in regular contact with similar local scenes in distant places. They interact with each other...these we call trans-local scenes ... (Peterson and Bennett., 2004, p. 8).

Besides in the description given by the authors (Bennett & Petersons, 2004), the relationship between local and virtual scene is presented in quite dichotomous terms between a face to face communication and mediated communication.

Whereas a conventional traditional local scene is kept alive through concerts, fairs, festivals and events of various kinds where fans can meet and communicate face to face and strengthen their sense of belonging to the scene, the scene involves a virtual communication mediated between fans ... this may include the creation of chat rooms, mailing lists dedicated to the scene ... (Peterson & Bennett, 2004, p.11).

However, the analysis of several case studies in the book confirms that the dimensions of local, trans- local and virtual scenes tend to overlap, showing how the local- face to face and the virtual – mediated communications and interactions tend to coexist within the music scenes and how the interactions that take place on the web are in fact very similar to those of the local scene (Lee & Peterson, 2004). In this sense, no scene can be by itself virtual but

needs to be understood as embedded in local and trans-local networks of interactions. For example, in the book, Lee & Peterson emphasized the relevance of the moment when “virtual becomes local” (Lee & Peterson, 2004, p.196), showing that the relationship established online are very often turned into offline meetings as it is analyzed in the case of Twanfest festival generated through an internet community. In the different case studies presented in the book it’s possible to highlight overlapping correspondences that make the music scene a single entity that is supported by all three dimensions.

## 2.6 Critics To Music Scene Perspective

The distinctions between local and translocal music scenes have been sometimes criticized due to making scene a confusing term, suggesting at the same time a bounded physical place and global flows of music affiliation which are incompatible with each other (Hesmondhalgh, 2005).

As in Straw's definition:

Scene is used to circumscribe highly local clusters of activity and to give unity to practices dispersed throughout the world. It functions to designate face-to-face sociability and as a lazy synonym for globalized virtual communities of taste (Straw, 2001, p. 6).

In other words while in the traditional meaning scenes are meant to be locally based, being related to a certain locality, trans-local scenes are instead often genre-based being connected to particular music styles which go beyond particular localities. While studies of local music scenes are focused upon activities and identities in a locality, studies of trans-local music scenes are usually focused upon social groups in which music styles played a key role in identity formation, as in the case aforementioned of extreme metal scene (Harris, 2000, 2007). For this reason, Hesmondhalgh (2005) proposes that genre should be used in place of scene in the theorization of the relation between particular social groups and global music styles (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 32).

The point is that trans-local scenes are more often understood as global affiliations of music tastes than as a way of understanding complex mobile networks of people, as Bennett (2004) suggests.

While music scene has been theorized to be a much more fluid and flexible term than subculture to define music affiliations, when it comes to describing trans-local scenes the term comes to be used to define particular music styles and genres.

Besides there is another issue which needs to be emphasized. Scene, subculture and community are often used uncritically, interchangeably and in contradictory ways within popular music studies. For example Straw (1991, 2001) and later Kruse (1993) suggest that scene needs to be distinguished by community, which is a more stable, homogenous and bounded entity, which "presumes a population group whose composition is relatively stable" (Straw, 1991, p. 373) but at the same time Straw uses the term 'community' to describe scenes which are united by the same music styles, as for example in the quotation

aforementioned suggests, scene is “as a lazy synonym for globalized virtual communities of taste” (Straw, 2001, p. 6) and is “able to evoke both the cozy intimacy to notions of community and fluid cosmopolitanism of urban life” (Straw, 2001, p.248).

That’s probably due to the ways in which the term is still used in the academic debate which tends to overlap between theoretical perspective and vernacular term. For example in the book already mentioned dedicated to the theorization of the music scene perspective (Bennett & Peterson, 2004) it is surprising to find a chapter about the trans-local goth<sup>13</sup> scene (Hodkinson, 2004) in which Hodkinson stresses that he is not supporting the scene perspective but is instead referring to its common sense meaning used by the participants, while he is still using subculture as analytical tool. As he states in a footnote:

Elsewhere I have sought to emphasize the continued value of the notion of subculture to conceptualize groupings such as the goth scene ... I do not reemphasize that particular argument here and hence refer to the grouping with which I am concerned only as the goth scene. By doing so, I do not intend to imply any particular support for the notion of ‘scene’ as an interpretive device, but merely regard it as the non-academic way in which goths themselves referred to the grouping in which they participated (Hodkinson, 2004, p. 146)

In Hodkinson’s perspective scene can be used as a way of referring to the subjective representations of the scene members, rather than as a theoretical perspective. Besides it seems that in his approach subculture seems to be a more useful analytical framework because he is analyzing a subculture such as the goth which is still a highly structured and bounded collectivity “rather than assuming that one theoretical term can capture all empirical reality” as Hesmondhalgh (2005, p. 35) suggests.

Moreover Harris (2000; 2007), in his interesting study of extreme metal scene, emphasizes instead its use of the term depending upon two sources. The academic one which overlaps with its vernacular meaning, given by the scene members. As he points out:

In using 'scene' as my central unit of analysis, I am drawing on two sets of sources. The first is academic uses of the concept ... Although it is frequently used un-reflexively, various authors have used scene as their primary unit of analysis (Gaines 1994; Kruse 1993; Shank 1994). There have also been attempts to develop the concept at a more theoretical level (Straw 1991; Olson 1998). My use of scene also draws on everyday uses of the concept ... The most common use of it is to refer to local, face-to-face contexts of music-making and consumption (e.g., 'The Gothenburg Death Metal Scene'). This is similar to academic definitions of subculture. The concept is also used in ways that are similar to academic definitions of scene... 'The Extreme Metal Scene' connotes a

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<sup>13</sup> Hodkinson uses the term ‘goth’ to indicate a specific kind of grouping sharing a common fashion and music style which is characterized by dark sounds and styles (black clothing, make up and hair).

decentralised, global and diffuse network of producers and consumers of Extreme Metal. The concept of scene therefore allows us to define a unit of analysis that is emergent both from everyday reflexivity and from a more systematically theorised, academic space (Harris, 2000, p.14).

Harris seems to use the discursive constructs that scene members adopt to understand their scene membership, and on another level the theoretical perspective of the scene, but the two seem very much to be overlapping. Harris seems to look for correspondences or better for “homologies” between the academic and common sense meaning rather than identifying a different level of analysis given by the theoretical perspective.

One possible way of drawing connections between the incommensurable empirical and theoretical elements of the scene is to use the concept of homology. Homology connects to different things by suggesting that they are similar ... for example, the use of scene in everyday life and the use of scene by the researcher are homologous (Harris, 2007, p. 22).

In this way, Harris avoids any need to find a level of abstraction and theorization but rather he prefers suggesting a homology, a logic correspondence existing between common sense understandings of scenes and theoretical perspectives, which stand on the same level. Critics of the scene perspective have therefore emphasized the fact that the common sense and academic understandings of the meaning of scene have tended to overlap, largely contributing to make the term vague and slippery. Such criticisms are present in a debate in the *Journal of Youth Studies* about post-subcultural and scene perspectives, in which Blackman (2005) and Hesmondhalgh (2005) evaluate post-subcultural and scene studies.

On this concern, Hesmondhalgh (2005) referring to Harris’s position, suggests that the fact that scene is used even by the scene participants can be a disadvantage, “if such uses create further confusion around an already overly polysemic word” (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 29). For Hesmondhalgh (2005), the concept has been used in so many different ways that it has lost its usefulness, and that its rootedness in everyday use is not an advantage to social analysis.

Hesmondhalgh questions whether these different uses can be regarded as a “fruitful ambiguity or simply a confusion produced out of the over use of fashionable term” (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 32).

Hesmondhalgh refers to an explanation given by Straw (2001) who clarifies that it’s exactly in this “fruitful ambiguity” and contradiction that we need to understand the scene.

Scene serves to loosen up a sociological analysis rather than to give it form ... Scene is at the same time the more flexible term in social morphology (Straw, 2001, p. 9).

In Straw's approach, the importance of considering fluidity and dynamism that the music scene perspective enables needs to be emphasized. For Straw the scene needs to be understood as a metaphor for the fluidity and dynamism of urban life, where the scene is established. The city doesn't have to be understood as an insular and inclusive space but rather as the sites of interconnectedness of music practices. Straw realizes that the emphasis given upon fluidity contributes to make the term 'music scene' slippery, but in his theorization this slipperiness is part of its understanding. As Straw states: "the risk in speaking of scenes is that the word will become little more than the latest concept deployed to convey the messy indeterminacy of urban life" (Straw, 2001, p. 8). In Straw's perspective, "the semantic space occupied by the scene expands and contracts between two extremes in urban cultural analysis". It's exactly in this ambiguity that scene needs to be understood as both being able to give order and to loosen up social analysis (Straw, 2001, p. 9). For Straw (2001) the ambiguity can be fruitful and "the heterogeneity of the use of the scene concept facilitates the spatiality and holism" needed in the studies of music practices (Harris, 2007, p.21).

Harris (2007, p. 21) attempts to explain the different understandings of the scene perspective as either fruitful ambiguity or confusion saying that it's more a question of personal preference and what's meant as a fruitful ambiguity in Straw can be for Hesmondhalgh a confusion.

Therefore even for Harris: "it's exactly the ambiguity of the concept that allows for it to be tailored to the specific conditions of the phenomenon to which it applies" (Harris, 2007, p.21). That's even the position of Olson, who criticizes Straw's depiction of scenes as "merely empty vessels within which certain practices interact" (1998, p.271). Even though the scene perspective can be considered attractive for its inclusiveness, flexibility and multiplicity of individual practices, "such imprecision has prompted some to question the value of scene as a theoretical device" (Hodkinson, 2007, p. 10). The point is to question whether the music scene has any heuristic value more than its common sense meaning or rather being a purely descriptive term without explanatory power. As Peter Webb (2007) suggests in his theorization of the 'music milieu':

The problem with the use of term 'scene', as with the post-subcultural analysis of Muggleton, the neo-tribal analysis of Bennett and Peter Martin's postmodern analysis, is that the terms are fairly descriptive. Scene and tribe have become interchangeable with terms like post-subculture and community and have become quite vague and not illuminating in their ability to direct the researcher, theorist and writer (Webb, 2007, p.29).

Webb (2007) refers to his theorization of the music milieu, which draws upon Bourdieu's (e.g 1984) concepts of habitus and field going beyond the definition of music scene which is restricted to popular music studies. The question is, therefore, whether there is any peculiarity in music which requires a particular kind of analytical framework, different from the ones adopted for the study for cultural practices not specifically related to music? The problem with the definition of music scene is that its affirmation and development in popular music studies, has contributed to making the term self-referential to music practices. In this sense, as Hesmondhalgh (2005) states, referring to Anahid Kassabian's speech at a conference of the IASPM<sup>14</sup> in 2003, music scene is probably the only concept that flourishes within popular music studies and that popular music studies has made its own. Hesmondhalgh therefore questions whether there is any other usefulness in the term other than in its reference to music? This doubt comes in reading Harris's definition of scene which suggests that the only point unifying music scene is actually music. In being such a fluid concept, the definition of music scene seems to be in its relation to music, as in definition given by Harris: "it is but a short step to arguing that all music and music-related activity takes place within a scene or scenes" (Harris, 2007, p.21).

Harris (2007) states that to suggest that all music activities are by definition part of a music scene, seems to imply that what unites music scenes is only the relation to music. Therefore the point Hesmondhalgh makes is that scene has been used to "make studies of particular local sounds more theoretically innovative than they really are" (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 29). Since the music scene perspective has been developed only within popular music studies, this closure has inhibited the consideration of broader issues and theoretical frameworks which were developing outside of the music scene perspective.

A common critique of the scene perspective, and more generally to post sub-cultural studies, is the fact that it avoids consideration of social, political and economic influences that can affect the scene members. The emphasis that the scene perspective has traditionally given to

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<sup>14</sup>IASPM is the International Association for the study of Popular Music, aimed to provide an international, interdisciplinary and inter-professional organization for promoting the study of popular music (<http://www.iaspm.net>).

subjective understandings of scene members and to the importance of identity formation and sense of belonging to the scene has not allowed to focus upon processes of music production. As Strachan (2003) states, these studies have tended not to focus upon economic processes such as organizational and industrial issues and more broadly music production apart from the activities of the scene members.

Finally Blackman (2005) argues that the emphasis upon leisure and individual choices that we can find in post sub-cultural studies, including the scene perspective, has the limit of neglecting the still key role played by capital, structures and institutions. While the issue of the political resistance was at the centre of the debate in sub-cultural studies, it's underemphasized in the music scene debate. The music scene perspective has often avoided consideration of the external interactions the scene encountered with economical and political dimensions, without considering power relations that enable and constrain members within the scene.

The focus upon the micro-analysis of music-making practices didn't allow to take into account the influences and impacts of economic (organizational and industrial) and political issues. For this reason the next chapter will try to address this issue by analysing other perspectives which develop outside of the sociology of music.

## Conclusion

This chapter has tried to review the literature regarding the analysis of music scene, emphasizing how this perspective can't be understood without reference to post sub-cultural studies in which the music scene debate took shape. I have tried to suggest the ways in which the scene perspective develops in rejection to previous theoretical assumptions of the sub-cultural approach. This consideration enables one to point out that some of the assumptions and criticisms that we can find in the music scene debate are in fact rooted in its origins in the postmodern framework of post sub-cultural studies which were a response to criticisms of the structuralist approach to sub-cultural studies adopted by the CCCS. While therefore sub-cultural studies gave emphasis to structural constraints of class membership, and considered sub-cultures as a-priori bounded entities, post sub-cultural studies, in which we can include



the music scene perspective, considered music formations as by definition fluid and flexible and, as Blackman (2005) states, implied a celebration of localism. Besides the music scene perspective has its own genesis which is strictly related to its development only within popular music studies.

The term music scene remains a self-contained and self-referential notion to understand music formations without considering broader issues such as the external influences, structural constraints that can affect the scene members. Music scene doesn't address the problem of power relations and of constraints and competitive forces in the scene.

To these criticisms we can add that music scene is becoming a 'catch-all' term to describe local-based music formations and at the same time genre-based music formations at a global level. The confusion between the different understandings of the term is probably due to overlapping understandings between common sense and academic uses of the term.

The scene perspective includes a broad body of research which is united by the interest in locality and upon the subjective understanding of its members. These assumption have inhibited the development of a structured theoretical framework.

I will try now to summarize the different and sometimes contradictory strands of research previously analyzed which can be found in studies of music scenes.

As Stahl (2004) suggests, there is a need to put some limits to the music scene perspective considering at least two aspects in which the notion of music scene has been used.

There is at first a semiotic level of discourse in which the notion of music scene has been much more widely used, which is related to the association between particular music formations and particular music styles, a correspondence which is meant to be more fluid and flexible in music scene than in sub-cultural perspectives, and in the case of music scene has been more often embedded in the attachment to a locality (i.e. Seattle grunge music scene) rather than to particular music collectivities as in sub-cultural studies (i.e. the punks with punk music).

Besides, while in sub-cultural studies this correspondence between music styles and subcultures was the product of theorizations of sub-cultures, in the music scene perspective the subjective representations of the scene members, of the media and of policy-makers were often producing this organic relationship between place, music style and music scene. In these studies the role of particular music styles in creating a sense of belonging to a music scene was emphasized and the affiliation to a music scene was often meant as a resource for identity formation.

As Strachan (2003) states that much of the studies within the tradition of sub-cultural studies and which have used music scene as theoretical tool “have tended to be concerned with issues relating to identity politics with little consideration of how practices within those group cultures might be considered as ‘industrial’”(2003, p.12) and might therefore be related to music production.

Strachan doesn't underestimate the importance of identities and group cultures in the music scenes, but at the same time he suggests that “the fact remains that musicians and labels operating at a micro level are still engaging in patterns of musical and industrial production ...Despite the fact ... that small-scale cultural producers lie at the heart of these cultures, the industrial element of their practices is an area which has tended to be under-researched in work with a bias towards subcultural or scenes theory. Their relationship with the music industry has tended to be articulated purely as an ideological construct relating to shared values and their place within subcultural scenes and networks” (Strachan, 2003, p.35).

Exactly in the same perspective we can place Jason Toynbee's (2000) work on music-making and creativity and particularly his critic that those studies which have looked at youth involvement in music-making is purely an ‘expression and celebration of sociability’ (2000, p. 81) rather than a desire of having success in the music industry, and making a living from music.

Exactly what Strachan and Toynbee state allows to understand a level of analysis of music scenes which has been traditionally underdeveloped and which Stahl's (2004) research and this research suggest as a second level of analysis that needs to be developed. This second level avoids to consider the relation between music styles and music scenes, and the issue of identity and representation of the scene and looks instead at the networks of music production and consumption. Stahl suggests:

The broader scope of the term ‘scene’ would incorporate more effectively model of cultural productions, aesthetic strategies, kind and degree of social mobility, affective states and ideologies .... In a related sense, thinking of the scene as both a context for enactment and point of contact means that one can consider cultural phenomena generated at the juncture of various trajectories and vectors (Stahl, 2004, p.54).

This level enables us to understand how the music scene perspective can be more broadly situated within the analysis of cultural processes looking at the economic, political, technological and cultural networks which underpin the production of any cultural form. This analysis can be done by referring to a broader field of research than the one developed within

popular music studies, which has addressed the issue of cultural production more broadly. For this reason, other theoretical perspectives should be taken into account combining the music scene debate with other theoretical frameworks coming more from sociology of culture, and more particularly from the production of culture perspective (e.g. Peterson & Anand, 2004). As Hesmondhalgh (2005) has stressed in his critique of the scene perspective, there is instead a need to use new theoretical tools in order to better understand music formations.

The following chapter will therefore analyze Becker's art world and Bourdieu's field of cultural production, as two analytical frameworks which will enable us to better understand the complexities of music practices in the analysis of music production. Art World and Field, which have several similarities in terms of their approaches to the analysis of cultural processes, are very different in terms of the epistemological stances that they assert and this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. These two frameworks enable one to point out some of the issues which have not been addressed in the music scene debate. Particularly the application of Becker (1982) of the sociology of organization to the analysis of art world enables to better explaining the dynamics of music production, while Bourdieu's (1993) theorization of field enables to look at the power relations and the economic and political fields. Besides this chapter has tried to explain how the notion of scene and its development is intrinsically linked to a new notion of space which is not based upon self-contained and self-definition of space but rather refers to a contested definition of space, which takes into account the interconnectedness of individual mobile practices. That's why in the next chapter I will assess the usefulness of the notion of network in order to analyze the mobile and interconnected nature of social practices and to argue that the latter are reducible to the distinction between local, trans-local and virtual scenes. For this reason we need a more structured theoretical framework which enables on one side to include the influences of political, economic and technological dimensions and on the other to allow us to grasp the complexities of concrete interactions of scene members.

# 3. Art Worlds, Fields And Networks: New Ways Of Theorizing Music Scenes

## Introduction

In the previous chapter I have reviewed the music scene perspective, suggesting the need of adding to this perspective a broader and multi-layered theoretical framework which will better explain the complexities of circuits of independent music in Milan.

The main critics addressed to the scene perspective has been concerned to the absence of a clear theoretical framework which could go beyond the descriptive understanding of the term 'music scene'. Besides music scene perspective has been criticized for being analyzed as self-contained entity and for being studied exclusively within the framework of popular music studies.

For this reason in this chapter I propose that we instead need to come back to the theorizations of art and cultural formations diffused in the sociology of culture to better conceptualize the music scene perspective.

This chapter will therefore try to suggest other theoretical perspectives which develop outside of popular music studies, but which are highly influential in the sociology of culture, namely Becker (1982)'s theory of the 'art worlds' and Bourdieu (1992)'s theory of the 'field of cultural production'.

These perspectives can be considered complementary: on one side Becker's symbolic interactionist perspective stresses the importance of cooperative activities; on the other Bourdieu's abstraction theorizes fields as the places of competitive struggle for positions.

I think that the reviews of these theoretical frameworks, the analysis of their possible intersections, and of their adoptions in the analysis of music formations (Finnegan, 1989; Kruse, 2003; Webb, 2007) will help in explaining the impasse in which the music scene perspective falls.

After that I will suggest that even though Bourdieu and Becker's perspectives are very different, this doesn't mean that they can be combine in a productive way in order to better conceptualize the scene perspective.

I will therefore come to the notion of network which enables to have a meso-level of analysis. The notion of network is not meant to be used referring to its theorization in Social Network Analysis or in the theorization of network society (Castells, 1996) but rather at understanding how actions and interactions need to be understood in a mediated and mobile environment. This was another critic I have addressed to the music scene perspective, and to art world and field perspective, namely the impossibility of explaining how actions and interactions among members of the scene are much more mobile, complex and interconnected than what the music scene perspective allows to explain.

Finally I will suggest my understanding of a new theorization of music scene as incorporating the art world, field and network, and the ways they manage to address differently issues I'm going to tackle.

The chapter starts therefore by reviewing Becker's interactionist perspective, his understanding of art world, and his application of the sociology of organization to the study of work of arts.

## 3.1 Becker's Art World

I'm here going to review Becker's conceptualization of art world. The concept of 'art world' has been developed by Howard S. Becker in different articles, among others *Art as Collective Actions* (1974), and *Art Worlds and Social Types* (1976) and later in the book *Art Worlds* (1982, 2006).

Through the notion of 'art world', Becker's perspective was one of first applying a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of arts, pointing out the relevance of considering art works not as produced in a social vacuum but as collective activities of people working in cooperation and sharing conventions. In Becker's definition:

Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the productions of the characteristic works which world, and perhaps others as well, define as art (1984, p. 34).

In the preface to the book *Art Worlds* (1982), the author suggests how the term is commonly used "in loose and metaphoric way" (1982, p. X) to indicate group of artistic people associated with fashionable objects and gathering in artistic events. The use of the term in Becker's perspective is instead, as he explains, "more technical" and is meant to explain:

The network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that art world is noted for (1982, p. X).

In giving a technical definition, Becker is aimed at applying the sociology of organization and occupation to the study of art works. Becker's perspective contrasts with the one traditionally applied in sociology of art, which usually is concerned with the definition of art and of the artist.

For Becker instead his approach "doesn't attempt to develop a sociologically based theory of aesthetic" (Becker, 1982, p. 145).

A world consists of those whose activity is essential to produce whatever they produce. In other words, we do not start by defining art and then looking for the people who produce the objects we have thus isolated. Instead, we look for groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they, at least, call art; having found them, we look for all the other people who are also necessary to that production, gradually building up as complete a picture as we can of the entire cooperating network ... (Becker, 1976, p.2).

In this perspective, art worlds are defined upon the level of cooperation: “worlds vary in how much cooperation they require between the artists themselves” (Becker, 1982, p. 59). This definition has an impact on the distinction between the art world which is not based upon the different arts to which art worlds belong but rather upon the routine interaction which is “what constitutes the art world existence” (Becker, 1982, p. 162). In this sense Becker’s perspective seems to be focused upon social interactions and only after upon artworks which constitute the purposes of these interactions. Moreover Becker is aware that the definition aforementioned is purely descriptive and tautological, in the sense that his approach is not aimed at giving a “logically organized theory” but rather at exploring the collaborative activity of production and consumption of art works. As he states:

So I never intended to provide a comprehensive Theory of Art, the capital letters signifying unity, completeness, definitiveness. That has never been my idea of theory. To me theory is a more or less coherent set of ideas that tell me what to look for as I continue my investigation of a topic.... (Becker, 2006, p. XX)

Becker is meant instead to propose a “theory of process” (Becker, 2006, p. XII) understanding his study about collaborative activity in art as itself a process.

In considering collaborative activity Becker refers to Blumer’s notion of “joint action” (Blumer, 1969, pp.70-77), looking at “how people manage to coordinate their activity so as to produce whatever its result is” (Becker, 2006, p. XI). Besides the art world is not meant to be a structure or an organization, but “exists in the cooperative activities of those people”, and has to be understood as a “shorthand” of the notion of “networks of people collaborating” (1982, p.35). In this sense art worlds have no boundaries which can be identified by the researcher:

Art worlds do not have boundaries around them, so that we can say that these people belong to a particular art world while those people do not. I am not concerned with drawing a line separating an art world from other parts of a society. Instead we look for groups of people who cooperate to produce things that they, at least, call art” (Becker, 1982, p.35).

The definition of what has to be meant for art, and for being part of the art worlds needs to come directly from the participants, “by observing how art world makes those distinctions” (Becker, 1982, p.36) while it has not to be established by the researcher.

Boundaries in art worlds are difficult to be identified even because the connections with other worlds are very often happening. For this reason, Becker suggests that these interconnections

should be part of a sociological analysis. Besides Becker understands some problematic issues that this approach can entail:

The basic unit of analysis is an art world. Both the “artness” and the “worldness” are problematic, because the work that furnishes the starting point for the investigation may be produced in a variety of cooperating networks and under a variety of definitions...For all these reasons, it is not clear what to include in an analysis of art worlds and what to leave out (Becker, 1982, pp. 36-37).

Becker opts instead for choosing those cases not conventionally thought to be art worlds, in which the process of definition of art becomes pivotal. In this way the complex character of “artness” and “worldness” would come up in the course of the analysis by the subjective representation of the members of the art world. The interest is not in making aesthetic judgment about art works and in defining what can be regarded as art work but instead in considering these “aesthetic judgments as characteristic phenomena of collective activity” (Becker, 1982, p. 39). For this reason, Becker’s model of “conventions” become of great importance in describing people attachment to aesthetic judgments of art works:

Every convention implies an aesthetic which makes what is conventional the standard of artistic beauty and effectiveness....An attack on a convention attacks the aesthetic beliefs as natural, proper, and moral, an attack on a convention and its aesthetic also attacks morality...An attack on aesthetic beliefs as embodied in particular conventions is, finally, an attack on an existing system of stratification. (Becker, 1982, p. 305)

However for Becker convention is much more understood as a means of organizing coordinated activities rather than creating symbolic meanings. As he suggests in one of his earlier publications:

People coordinate their activities by reference to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in the artifacts of the world. (Becker, 1976, p.2)

Conventions can be regarded as implicit or explicit standards enabling the coordination of art world activities among their members (artists, support personnel, audience). Becker states that “a system of conventions gets embodied in equipment, materials, training, available facilities and sites, systems of notation...” (Becker, 1982, p. 32).

These conventions can be constraining for the artist but are needed for the coordination of the activity of an art work. Conventions are therefore both meant as ways of making sense of the



art world and of the art work, but more explicitly as ways of regulating the coordination of activity.

People who coordinate to produce a work of art usually do not decide things afresh. Instead they rely upon agreement now become customary, agreements that have become part of the conventional way of doing things in that art (Becker, 1982, p. 29).

Becker shows how, there are people in art worlds and in other social worlds who play central roles in the process of legitimization and standardization of conventions. These are usually people not directly involved in the production of the art work, but who are instead engage in supporting and legitimizing it.

Besides in some cases, members of the art world can refuse to accept the constraining conventions in the art world. Becker divides people in art worlds in four categories which are related to their relation to conventions: integrated professionals, mavericks, naïve and folk. The four typologies need to be understood as relational terms in the sense that they are not aimed at describing people “but rather how people stand in relation to an organized art world” (Becker, 1982, p. 228).

Firstly naïve artists who have never had access to any art world and consequently to art world conventions, and don't have any relation to art world resources:

Having had no professional training, and having no contact with the conventional art world, naive artists likewise have not learned the conventional vocabulary of motives and explanations of their work. (Becker, 1976, p.11)

Secondly folk artists but even support personnel who are engaged in producing work which can be regarded as artistic but which doesn't have art as their primary meaning. They have conventions from social worlds which are not the ones of other art worlds.

Folk artists (if we can speak of the community members who engage in these activities as artists at all) resemble canonical artists in being well integrated into a world in which the conventions of their art are well known and easily made the basis of collective action...

folk communities are not artistic communities. They differ precisely in that the activity itself has some other purpose than an aesthetic one, and none of the people involved are professional artists. . (Becker, 1976, p.14)

Then there are integrated professional, which accept conventions existing in the art world, have technical abilities and fit in standardized activities. To them we can oppose the mavericks who are those who fights against established conventions, because they feel the conventions to be constraining.

Where the integrated professional accepts almost completely the conventions of his world, the maverick retains some loose connection to that world but refuses to conform, thus making it impossible for himself to participate in the world's organized activities. (Becker, 1976, p.6)

Mavericks thereby lose or forego all the advantages the integrated professional more or less automatically enjoys. But they also lose the constraints associated with those advantages.

Participation in an art world makes the production of art works possible and relatively easy but substantially constrains what can be created. (Becker, 1982, pp. 236-237)

Maverickness enables Becker to point out how art world may be subject to changes, by overcoming conventional practices taking place in the art world. These changes are meant to affect the organizational structure development. Becker is anyway looking at changes which are taking place within the art world without considering how external forces can have a certain impact. The point which has been mostly criticized in Becker's symbolic interactionism is that maverick is such by individual choice, minimizing therefore overarching constraints that can affect structural changes within the art world. For example du Gay (1996, p. 31), in reference to work organization, criticizes this perspective of minimizing the importance of the question of power relation and structural inequalities.

Additionally only in one chapter of the book Becker looks at the relation between art world and the state, considering regulation and intervention of the state. The role of the state is analyzed in terms of impact over the production of art works but not really of possible interactions existing between art world participants and the state.

This is one of the main critics addressed to art world model, namely the fact of haven't considered the role of institutional and political forces in determining the interactions in the art world, and therefore of considering the art world members as individuals constructing relationships independently from any power relation and constraint. This issue is instead central in the theorization of the field of cultural of production of Bourdieu, that will now be presented.

## 3.2 Bourdieu's Field of Cultural Production

In Pierre Bourdieu's approach, sociology is considered as a way of thinking relationally. That's why for Bourdieu, as we could find in Becker's analysis, the analysis of cultural production can't be limited to the "charismatic ideology of creation" that "directs the gaze towards the apparent producer – painter, composer, writer – and prevents us from asking who has created this creator and the magic power of transubstantiation with which the creator is endowed" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 167). But differently from Becker's symbolic interactionist approach, which solves this issue only by emphasizing the need of looking at all the people involved in cultural production instead of the single producer (as we can see in the definition of art world aforementioned), Bourdieu's theoretical approach is meant at explaining relations in social reality by explicating the theorization of fields. The first definition of field has been given in 1966 in the article *Champ intellectuel et projet créateur*, and then extended in later publications, conferences and interviews, and developed with a special reference to field of art and literature and of cultural production especially in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993), which is a collection of articles previously published, and in *Rules of Arts* (1996).

For Bourdieu, a field can be defined as a configuration of objective relations between positions. In one of the definition given at the beginning of *The Field of Cultural Production*:

The literary and artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggle tending to transform or conserve this field of forces. The network of objective relations between positions subtends and orients the strategy which occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions (i.e. positions-takings), strategies which depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations (Bourdieu, 1993, p.30)

And again:

It's the field of cultural production, understood as a system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggle for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of art and belief in that value are continuously generated (Bourdieu, 1993, p.78).

From these definitions it's possible to point out how in Bourdieu's perspective the value of the work of art is not given only by the creator, and is not related to a charismatic vision of the artist but is instead dialectically constructed in the oppositional relations existing among the different agents, who are the members occupying different positions within the field (e.g.

art dealers, publishers, critics and the public). The structure of the field includes both the positions occupied by the cultural producers (artists) but even by those people involved in the consecration of art works (publishers, public, critics).

Besides the definitions emphasized how fields are understood as fields of power relations (*rapport de forces*) between agents. Being agent of the field means investing in the field (he talks about the *illusio*, namely the investment in the game) and competing for control of resources and interests within the field. In the case of the field of cultural production, competition is aimed at being legitimized and consecrated. The main purpose that guides the actions of agents is to acquire the authority to impose a dominant view for evaluating and understanding social reality within that particular field. Each agent in the field struggles to impose a vision to be recognized, considered and identified by other members.

The struggle taking place has an impact in determining the boundaries of the field which can be more or less porous, and the field of cultural production is the field having more permeable boundaries. The long quotation, which follows, makes clear that Bourdieu is not really aimed at defining the field as a bounded entity with a-priori established boundaries, but rather the boundaries of the field are instead stakes of struggles. In Bourdieu's position, the field of cultural production is the field where we can better analyze the interconnectedness with other fields. As he states:

The boundary of the field is a stake of struggle, and the social scientist's task is not to draw a dividing line between agents involved in it by imposing so called operational division, which is most likely to be imposed on him by his own prejudices or presuppositions, but describe a state of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents. One could examine the characteristics of this boundary, which may or may not be institutionalized, that is to say, protect by conditions of entry that are tacitly and practically required or explicitly codified and legally guaranteed. It would be found that one of the most significant properties of the field of cultural production, explaining its extreme dispersion and the conflicts between rival principles of legitimacy, is the extreme permeability of its frontiers, and consequently, the extreme diversity of the 'post' it offer why defy any linear hierarchization. It is clear from comparison that the field of cultural production demands neither as much inherited economic capital as the economic field nor as much educational capital as the university sub-field ... however precisely because it represents one of the most indeterminate site in the social structure, which offer ill-defined posts, waiting to be made rather than ready made, and therefore extremely elastic and undermining, and career paths which are themselves full of uncertainty and extremely dispersed, it attracts agents who differ greatly in their properties and dispositions but the most favored of whom are sufficiently secure to be able to disdain a university career and to take on the risks of an occupation which not a job (since it is almost always combined with a private income or a 'bread-butter' occupation) (Bourdieu, 1992, p.43).

Besides in order to take part in the symbolic struggles of the field, each member can rely upon capitals which are meant as the resource that each member can claim. Bourdieu distinguished upon three types of capitals: the economic capital which is made of the material resources held; the social capital which concerns the relations entertained; and finally the cultural capital which can be objectified (constituted by tangible cultural goods), institutionalized (given by institutional recognition such as the one of University or Art School) and embodied (given by the knowledge and skills acquired) (Bourdieu, 1996, p.47). To these Bourdieu adds the symbolic capital which is formed by the other types of capital and determines the social recognition in the field (Bourdieu, 1989). The possession of specific capitals enables to define the position occupied in the fields to which agents belong. In Bourdieu therefore all relations maintained depends upon the positions people occupy within the field of cultural production and are mediated by the field structure. This means that the objective relations contribute to the subjective representation which agents have of their position in the field. There is a difference in Bourdieu's theorization between the perception of each agent and the a priori objective relations which go beyond each member's actions and interactions. Bourdieu makes a distinction between "relations of interaction" and "structural interactions" or "objective relations" which constitute the field.

The polar individuals may never meet, may even ignore each other systematically, to the extent of refusing each other membership of the same class, and yet their practice remains determined by the negative relation which unites them. It could be said that the agents involved in the literary and artistic field may have nothing in common except the fact of taking part in the struggle to impose the legitimate definition of literary and artistic field." (Bourdieu, 1993, p.46)

For Bourdieu therefore there is a difference between the actual interactions happening between agents in the field, and the objective relations which characterize the structure of the field and which are based upon the different positions, habitus and capitals.

However the agent's actions and interactions are not only defined by the positions in the field. The notion of field can't be reduce to a deterministic structure, since through the notion of habitus, Bourdieu is aimed at reintroducing the importance of the agent within the field.

Bourdieu defines the habitus as a system of perceptions and dispositions which enables to live everyday life situations. The habitus is meant as "a kind of practical sense for what is to be

done in a given situation". (Bourdieu, 1998, p.25). The habitus is described by using the metaphor of the game:

Produced by the experience of the game, and therefore of the objective structures within which it is played out, 'feel for the game' is what gives the game a subjective sense ... a direction, a orientation ... for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake (Bourdieu, 1990, p.66)

However in using the metaphor of the game, Bourdieu explained how there is a difference between a game and a social field:

In a game, the field is clearly seen for what it is, an arbitrary social construct, an artifact whose arbitrariness and artificiality are underlined ... - explicit and specific rules, strictly delimited ... Entry into the game takes to form of quasi-contract ...

By contrast, in the social fields ... one does not embark on the game by conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game: and the relation of investment, illusion, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is (Bourdieu, 1990, pp.67)

This quotation emphasizes the dynamic relationship existing between the structure of the field and the habitus of the agents which enables to explain why, for the author, the habitus is not only made of the personal perceptions but even determined by objective relations existing within the field. The habitus is meant as a structure structuring and structured, namely is both related to objective relations in which agents are immersed and by the personal representations. It's structure structuring which organizes perceptions and practices, but even structure structured which incorporates objective structures.

Objective structures of reality and the subjective constructions live in a complex relationship, influencing upon each other. Bourdieu's position varies between emphasizing the importance of objective structures, which are meant as structures existing in the social world and not only in symbolic systems and pointing out that "there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought, and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields..." (Bourdieu, 1989, p.14)

That's why the author defines his theoretical approach as 'constructivist structuralism or structuralist constructivism'.

In this way Bourdieu's work is made in the attempt to overcome the sociological opposition existing between objectivism and subjectivism, between structures, representations and

interactions. As objectivism deduces actions and interactions from structures, subjectivism falls in the risk of reducing structures to interactions (Bourdieu, 1989).

To overcome this opposition, Bourdieu's effort goes in the direction of reconciling the subjective experience of the social world with the objectification of social conditions in which this experience appears. It is exactly in the complex relationships existing between the field and the habitus that Bourdieu tried to overcome this opposition, suggesting that the object of social science stands as a set of practices and social representations arising from the relationship between habitus and field. The relation between objective structures of reality and subjective constructions is to be found within fields.

However, even though Bourdieu tries to overcome the structure-agency dichotomy, his approach has been criticized to fall again into objectivism and determinism. The agents Bourdieu theorizes cannot in fact move freely through the fields; they are tied to their habitus and, their positions are determined by the capitals owned.

For these reasons, even though Bourdieu uses notion of the habitus as a way to overcome the subject-object dualism, many critics (e.g. DiMaggio 1979; King, 2000) have underlined that habitus falls in the objectivism Bourdieu wants to avoid.

Besides Bourdieu's approach is criticized for its immobility not considering the possibility of looking social change (e.g. King, 2000). That's again concerned with the theorization of the habitus which doesn't allow to consider social change, because "if every individual is constrained by his habitus, then the objective conditions will simply be reproduced (by the habitus) and no social change will take place" (King, 2000, p.428). King (2000, 2005) anyway suggests that in some of Bourdieu's writings we can find reference to the "practical theory" which can be regarded as an attempt to overcome the impasse of objectivism and subjectivism because it recognizes.

That's part of the complexity of Bourdieu's theorizations which are sometimes incompatible, oscillating between more objectivist and subjectivist positions.

## 3.3 Adoptions of Art World and Field in the Analysis of Music Production

It's interesting to look at how these two approaches have been influential in the sociology of culture and of music. There have been already some adoptions of Becker and Bourdieu in the study of music formations which have used their frameworks.

### 3.3.1 Finnegan's Musical Worlds and Pathways

Firstly the work of Ruth Finnegan (1989) makes reference to her adoption of Becker's art world perspective. In her study of music-making practices in Milton Keynes, Finnegan suggests how the use of the term 'musical world' has come up from the respondents themselves:

The idea of a music world partly arises from local participants own descriptions. Brass band involvement was a world on its own, and classical art music seen as a quite different from that of rock music. The term has also been used ... to refer to people's 'world view'... (Finnegan, 1989, p.31)

World is valid in itself, presented at least in part from the view point of the participant ... is necessary for understanding the conventions in these differing worlds in their own terms (Finnegan, 1989, p.31).

The distinction between different musical worlds comes up from common sense distinctions between difference music styles (jazz, brass band, country and rock) and conventions existing among their members.

Music worlds were not just different for the music styles but also by other social convention: in the people who took part, their values, their shared understanding and practices, modes of production and distribution, and the social organization of their collective musical activities. (Finnegan, 1989, p.32)

Besides Finnegan after presenting the worlds as "autonomous and separate systems", explains how these worlds "interpenetrated one another. Their boundaries were shiftable and were shifted by their participants" (Finnegan, 1989, p. 181) and were characterized by wider links outside the locality. In this situation she assess the need of reconsidering the concept of musical world "as a route to understanding the practice of local music" (Finnegan, 1989, p.



131), and of finding alternative terms, such as musical pathways. Pathways are aimed to describe local music-making practices and interactions. These are “a series of regular and known routes” which musicians follow and take for granted and which are “kept open and extended through their actions” (Finnegan, 1989, p. 305). People usually don’t follow only musical pathways but there are many more pathways intersecting in their lives. Pathways enable to take into account the collective character of music activities and the importance of social relationships :

Pathways of musical practice involve people in a series of cumulatively overlapping social relationships...these in turn relate them both to each other and through the series of personal networks, institutional links, and social order of space and time. (Finnegan, 1989, p. 188).

Finnegan uses pathway to give more importance to the fluidity of music-making practices, and therefore in the final part of the book she moves away from the concept of music world.

The flexibility and relativity of the local musical system- the very characteristic so well illuminated initially by the concept of world eventually get obscured if the term is pressed to hard (Finnegan, 1989, p. 188).

Thus she moves away in the final part of the book from the notion of ‘musical worlds’ “and to the somewhat static view that this perhaps implies” to focus upon the ways people “trode out their musical pathways” (Finnegan, 1989, p. 190).

Finally for Finnegan, the concept of world becomes to static and bounded term to describe social interactions among members of a musical world, which needs other analytical tools such as pathways. She doesn’t exclude the heuristic value of the notion of art world but she conceptualizes a multi-layered study in which networks of interactions are better understood by using the notion of pathway.

### **3.3.2 Kruse’s Notion of Scene and Field of Practice**

An adoption of Bourdieu’s theorization can be found in Holly Kruse (2003), in her work investigating the production of college music<sup>15</sup> in US. In *Site and Sound* (2003) the author criticizes Finnegan’s approach suggesting that Finnegan uses ‘world’ to describe both people

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<sup>15</sup> College music is a term Kruse adopts to indicate independent music, particularly gravitating around college radio in US.

interacting at a local level and “largely symbolic ties that link individuals across local boundaries by means of shared knowledge, taste and belief” (Kruse, 2003, 152). In this perspective the concept of musical world risks to become again slippery and problematic. For this reason Kruse suggests that the use of ‘scene’ is more appropriate and needs to be understood both as “geographical sites of localized music activities and the social and economic networks that exist within these context” (Kruse, 2003, 152). Kruse conceptualizes scene in a sophisticated way, by adopting Bourdieu’s theorization of the habitus and of the field of practices which better enables the author to study the situated practices of the production of college music. The use of Bourdieu’s theory enables Kruse to emphasize how music scenes are implicated in complex social and economic networks, that Bourdieu’s theory enable to explain. Kruse points out how in Bourdieu economic and institutional structures have an influence upon the “subfield of indie pop music production”.

Kruse recognizes the usefulness of different levels of analysis that we can find in theory of field, which is constituted by the (1) the position of the particular artistic field within the dominant relation of power in society (field of power); (2) the positions and characteristics of the agents within the structure of the specific artistic field; and (3) the cultural producers’ habituses. But at the same time Kruse stresses that:

While it is crucial to take into account the specificities of cultural, social and economic practices when studying indie music scenes, it is also crucial that these practices be understood within the context of the highly specific set of conjunctural relations (Kruse, 2003, p. 158).

By this, Kruse means to suggest that economic, cultural, social dimensions need to be situate in particular localities and particular historical moments. This assumption enables to understand how Kruse’s theory is grounded in the situated practices and within a set of political, economic, social and cultural relation that constitute the present conjuncture, and are therefore both theorized and empirically embedded in spaces and times.

Moreover her adoption of Bourdieu enables Kruse (1998) to reflect upon the intersections existing between popular music studies, music practices, market factors and state policies. These interconnections can be understood by looking in Bourdieu’s perspective at social space as made up by the intersections between educational field, field of cultural production and field of power. She criticizes Bourdieu of failing to consider the field of power as directly associated with the political power, which instead in Bourdieu’s theory stays on a side.

She therefore particularly emphasized how not only the way music is produced and circulated but even academic studies can be influenced by political and economical dimensions that need to be considered when looking at the music scene perspective. Kruse's theorization is very reflexive because her approach enables to situate even the researcher within the approach which needs to be applied.

We need to be much more self-reflexive about our acceptance and reproduction of generic categories, and about our positioning and roles in relation to the economic field, the field of cultural production, the educational field, and the field of power (Kruse, 1998, p.190)

### **3.3.3 Webb's Milieu And Field**

Finally Peter Webb's (2007) has attempt to adopt Bourdieu's field and habitus to his analysis of music milieus. As I have already mentioned, Webb criticizes music scene of being a "fairly descriptive term", used interchangeable with other terms such as community and subculture and "quite vague and non-illuminating in the ability to direct a researcher, theorist and writer" (Webb, 2007, p. 29). For this reason Webb suggests the need of developing another term, 'milieu', "that would more fully encapsulate the dynamic, fluid, and changing nature of particular types of music making and associations with it and fully reflects the networks of interaction, production and influence that music makes and actors in the particular music scene were involved in" (Webb, 2007, p. 29-30). Milieu is used as a "framework for researching the way in which particular networks of people and music cultures interact" (Webb, 2007, p. 30).

To the dynamic notion of milieu, Webb adds a structured theoretical framework based upon Bourdieu's notion of habitus which has for Webb a similarity to his notion of milieu, but it's even derived from the work of phenomenologist, particularly of Alfred Schutz (e.g. 1972) and Jorg Durrschmidt (2000).

Webb seeks to explain that the set of knowledge and dispositions which determined the milieu are not given but are instead determined by the life world of each individual, and affected by the locations, and cultural groupings. However for Webb "milieuex aren't just defined by their intersections with other individuals and life-world" (Webb, 2007, p. 33) as the phenomenological approach would suggest. To this idea Webb suggests that in order to include even broader influences of the environment particularly of the music industry, he adds the notion of field of cultural production of Bourdieu in its relation to the field of power, as a

combination of economic and political fields. The framework of the field is used by Webb to emphasize in Bourdieu's notion how in the field there's a struggle for legitimacy to gain symbolic power within the field.

Webb suggests, anyway that the use of the notion of field needs to be meant not in its structural terms considering the relations of taste with class but rather considering the notion of milieu. As he states:

If we start to chip away at a more formalistic reading of the fields one that links taste with class position and suggest that the rigidity of the notion can be replaced by a more fluid understanding of the acquisition of knowledge through immersion in particular milieu (Webb, 2007, p. 33).

The field of cultural production represents for Webb the music industry with its sets of laws (e.g. copyright and royalties), practices and "arenas for the acquiring of taste or knowledge of new music and cultural practices that go with this acquisition (e.g. concerts, fanzines) (Webb, 2007, p.35).

But in Webb's theory the field structure is malleable and is determined by the continuous negotiation between individual's understandings and the sets of laws, traditions, power hierarchies embedded in the field of cultural production, which for Webb corresponds directly to the music industry.

Therefore Webb considers in its relational theory, the existence of a third level which "looks at how the milieu of the individuals involved in the field of musical production interacts with other fields and milieu in a metaphorically dialectical way" (Webb, 2007, p.37).

What I'm suggesting here is firstly that we see the popular music scene as cultural field with the struggles that occur within it. Secondly within and at the heart of the field are the phenomenological selves of the individuals, their narratives and histories, which are constructed from interaction at the particular level and the particularly universal national/global level. The players in the scene battle it out, not always with each other but also with the wider music industry for recognition and finance ( Webb, 2007, p. 58)

The third level of abstraction is meant to indicate the dialectical relationship that can exist between milieu and field and that they have with other areas such as other milieus, local and national culture, politics and economy and finally global culture, economy and politics.

This multi-layered model enables Webb to combine at the same time a phenomenological level of discourse which is constituted by the life trajectories of people in the milieu, together with the structure of the field of music production. For Webb the objectivism/subjectivism

dichotomy is solve through this combination of theoretical perspectives and with this relational theory.

## 3.4 Intersections and Differences Of Art World And Fields

After reviewing briefly Bourdieu's and Becker's theoretical perspectives, and their adoptions in Finnegan's musical world and Kruse and Webb's field in the sociology of music I will try to point out intersections and differences to suggest the usefulness of these theoretical perspective for the analysis of the music scene.

I think that there are some issues that need to be discussed in order to understand the relationship between Bourdieu's notion of field and Becker's notion of world, and to see the relevance that these models can have to the study of music scenes.

In looking at the critics to these perspectives, it is possible to point out how Becker and Bourdieu models can be considered as complementary in the sense that while Bourdieu's approach has been criticized because of determinism and structuralism in his theoretical model, Becker has been criticized exactly for the opposite reason for its extremely non standardized approach. For this reason, while in Bourdieu, habitus is aimed at mobilizing the social structure of the field, Becker uses conventions as a way to regularize the art world. Besides while Bourdieu has been criticized for putting conflict at the core of the field, Becker has been criticized for being too optimistic toward collaborations among members of the art world.

For these reasons many have been the attempts of looking for the possible intersections existing between the two models.

The relations and intersections between these two theoretical and methodological approaches have been analyzed by the authors themselves too, and recently discussed by Becker himself (Becker and Pessin, 2006).

There are issues in which Bourdieu and Becker agree. Both authors emphasize how members of a field or of an art world don't live in a social vacuum but rather are embedded in social relations. They both go against the charismatic ideology which sees the artist as the only creator of the work of art, criticizing that tradition in the studies of art of history of praising the artist as a creative individual genius. For them, the value of a work of art is not intrinsic to the work of art itself but instead made of the complex relationships within which the work of art has been produced, distributed and consumed. They both regard the art work as a joint action and emphasize instead the importance of looking at relationships existing.

For these reasons many authors (e.g. Zolberg, 1990; Baumann, 2001; Alexander, 2003) have explored the possible intersections between these two models.

Baumann's perspective is an attempt to try to combine the perspectives, suggesting that "the differences between the field and world are differences of degree rather than of type" (Baumann, 2001, p. 405, quoted in Alexander, 2003, p. 135), and opting for an adoption of field and world interchangeably. In this approach both the art world and field perspectives give importance to the organizational and ideological element but only in different degrees.

However, looking at what Becker and Bourdieu said in defending their own model against the other, it's possible to point out how there's a substantial difference between the perspectives rather than one of degree.

Even though Bourdieu and Becker agree on the general conception of the approach to the work of art, they instead differ very much in many issues, such as the theoretical and methodological foundations of their work.

Bourdieu mentioned Becker's art world perspective, and suggests that "artistic field is not reducible to a population, i.e. a sum of individual agents, linked by simple relations of interactions" (1993, p. 34-35).

Bourdieu understands Becker's art world as the sum of people working together to produce an art work and points out how Becker fails to consider the existence of a priori level of abstraction and theorization which goes beyond the concrete interactions taking place in the art worlds.

On the contrary, Becker only mentions Bourdieu's first works in reference to the issue of class (Becker, 1982, p. 348) and in a later edition of *Art Worlds* (2006) the relation between art world and field perspectives is explicitly explained in a interview Becker gives to Pessin (2006), in which he criticizes those approaches using field and worlds interchangeably. Becker emphasizes how the field is used not as a simple descriptive term but as a metaphor coming from physics to identify a confined space which is based upon external forces. For Becker world is "more empirically grounded" because it's about "things we can observe-people doing things rather than forces, trajectories and inertia which are not observable in social life" (Becker & Pessin, 2006, p. 379). Becker therefore doesn't recognize the existence of a level of analysis different from the observation of the actual collaborative activities which constitute the work of art. As he suggests, the two approaches are incomparable because they ask different questions: respectively in the art world: "who is doing what with who that affects the resulting work of art? And in the field who dominates who, using what strategies

and resources, with what result? ”The different questions and the different answer make the two approaches “not reducible one to the other” (Becker & Pessin, 2006, p. 379).

Therefore even though I think that both the authors are in some ways misunderstanding or better exaggerating the other’s perspective, Bourdieu reducing the art world to a sum of people, and Becker reducing the field to a structured confined space of conflicts, it comes anyway clear that it’s not only a question of degree which makes field and world different.

Their perspectives are not only different because of the importance given to collaboration in Becker and to conflict and competition ( the *rapport de force* ) in Bourdieu. There are different epistemological understandings in Bourdieu’s and Becker’s perspectives which do not allow easy comparisons, as Bourdieu (1993) and Becker (Becker & Pessin, 2006) have themselves pointed out.

The difference is that while for Bourdieu “in short it is a question of understanding works of art as a manifestation of the field as a whole” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 37), for Becker it’s a question of understanding how art works are the products of collaborative actions.

For Bourdieu concrete social relations are governed by a set of objective social relations, while for Becker only the actual interactions need to be considered.

While in Bourdieu the reality that the sociologist is aimed at understanding is not reducible to immediate empirical data of the concrete interactions and the aim is to construct a system of intelligible relationships which can then explain empirical data (Bourdieu, 1996), in Becker’s interactionist perspective, the idea is instead of focusing upon the concrete interactions existing in social reality (Santoro, 2011).

These different perspectives imply a different theorization in the case of the two authors, Bourdieu having a structured theoretical model which is aimed at going beyond common sense discourses and concrete interactions, while Becker suggesting that his “analysis doesn’t come from the discovery of any hitherto unknown facts or relations. Instead it comes from exploring systematically the implications of the art world concept”(Becker, 1982, p. X).

Both perspectives have their advantages and disadvantages:

While the first is appealing because of its empirical strength and anti-determinist posture, the second looks attractive exactly because it promises to go beyond the visible and to capture the hidden logics at work, a promise clearly appealing for critical sociology (Santoro, 2011, p. 19).

The point is therefore not to combine the strengths of Becker and Bourdieu in a common model, “sprinkling a little Becker on Bourdieu to have a good sociology” (Becker & Pessin,



2006, p. 372) but rather to understand which are the consequences of some theoretical stances, not only on art world and field perspectives but even their influences upon the scene perspective.

### 3.5 Understanding Music Scene through Art World and Field

I think Becker's and Bourdieu's theories can give us some theoretical strengths for better conceptualizing a theoretical model related to music scene and at the same time for better understanding how the music scene perspective was born in rejection to the structuralist approach of sub-cultural studies. In its rejection of the structuralist approach of sub-culture, the music scene perspective focused upon subjective representations and discourses of scene members and upon the construction of identity and of a sense of belonging to the scene rather than focusing among the modes of production<sup>16</sup> and upon political, economic influences that can affect the scene. The music scene perspective has tended to leave organizational and industrial issues apart from the analysis of music-making practices. Accordingly Becker, in the critics to the sociology of art, suggests that this approach "treats art as relatively autonomous, free from the kinds of organizational constraints that surrounds other forms of collective activity" (Becker, 1982, p. 39). That's why Becker's application of the sociology of organization to the production of an art work can help in better understanding actions and interactions among scene members in the framework of processes of music production. For this reason Becker's perspective is considered to be crucial in the development of the production of cultural perspective (e.g. Crane, 1994; Peterson, 2004), which includes a body of research which has in common the focus upon processes of symbol production, and the use of tools of analysis developed in the study of organizations, occupations, networks, and communities (Peterson & Anand, 2004).

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<sup>16</sup> This critic has been analyzed in the final part of the previous chapter referring to Strachan's (2003) and Stahl's (2004) assumptions.

Becker's approach is aimed at describing how collaborative activities would perfectly produce together a work of art, by sharing common conventions which are understood as a means of organizing coordinated activities rather than creating symbolic meanings.

However from Becker, it's not clear how people cooperating to produce a work of art come together and how the selection of these people happens, and which are the power relations and hierarchy existing.

Bourdieu instead enables to understand how there is symbolic legitimization, that people struggle for, to achieve a position within the field of cultural (music) production. In Bourdieu the struggle among the agents has much more a symbolical role of being legitimized within the field than a practical mean in the creation of a work of art in Becker's perspective.

Becker's study enables to consider a phenomenological level of inquiry which looks at the practices and collaborations of individuals, and which emphasizes the importance of subjective understanding of art and art world. Becker's model of conventions is useful to describe how the coordination of art world activity is enabled through narratives and rules shared by the actors in the art world.

However as Bourdieu suggests in his critic to Becker's definition of art world (and as we could find in the definition of scene) there's a reduction of the concept to the sum of people and interactions that constitute it, and which exists because of the recognition by its members. For Becker: "art world consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world and perhaps others as well define as art" (1982, p. 34).

Bourdieu, suggesting that this level of inquiry is not sufficient for the social theory, enables to assess the usefulness of taking into account a more sophisticated and structured theoretical model which is the product of the researcher's abstraction rather than reducing a model to a fairly descriptive analysis of cultural practices, that doesn't allow to address broader issues and that risk to be flattened the perspective in the common sense discourses.

In both art world and music scene, we can often find reference to the need of distancing these notions from their vernacular use in order to legitimize the relevance as theoretical perspectives. As for example Becker states: "Art world is commonly used by writers in the arts in a loose and metaphoric way ... I use the term in a more technical way..."(Becker, 1982, p. X).

We don't instead find in Bourdieu reference to the need of distancing from the common sense understanding of the word 'field' because there is much more sophisticated theorization with

a different level of abstraction in Bourdieu that we can't find in descriptive and tautological definitions of the art world and in the music scene approaches.

To say it briefly, if there's no claim to provide a structured theoretical model, the risk remains of flattening the perspective only to the meaning of the word (i.e. scene or art world) and of confusing the notion with its common sense meaning.

The problem in having a term which is highly dependent upon its common sense discourses, it's that its development will depend upon its common sense representations and upon the awareness of its members which identify themselves as being part of a music scene or of an art world.

This is particularly true in the case of the music scene perspective which has been adopted by musicians, music journalists and policy makers and it's now difficult to separate their rhetoric around the existence of a music scene and the critical perspective as a way of understanding music formations.

If in the music scene under study there is a sense of belonging to a scene, a city marketing strategy promoting the music scene and an infrastructure supporting the scene, this can work perfectly but what happen if, as in my research, there's no a sense of belonging to a scene and a representation of the scene?

The problem of the art world and of the scene perspectives is that these concepts exist just because of the existence in the discourses of their members, flattening to a fairly descriptive meaning, which doesn't allow to consider different layers of analysis.

That's what we can find in Finnegan's approach to music worlds in which she adopts the term referring to the common sense understandings among the members, but she then realizes that the symbolic representation and distinction between different musical worlds is not able to encapsulate the complexities of music-making practices. Therefore she adopts the term pathways which enables to study individual trajectories which transcend musical worlds.

Similarly but from different perspectives, both in Kruse and Webb's adoptions of Bourdieu's notion of field there is a need to have multi-layered theorization which enables to include the abstract level of the field together with the considerations of individual actions and interactions, and subjective representations. For Webb there has to be a more phenomenological level constituted by the milieu which 'illuminates the notion of a network that has a particular density in terms of connections, relevancies, typifications, commonalities, and aesthetics' (Webb 2007: 30), to which he adds the theorization of the field. And at the same time for Kruse local and inter-local practices need to be understood within a set of

political, economic, social and cultural relation that constitute the present conjuncture, by using the lens of Bourdieu's field of practice.

Taking into account these perspective, I argue that there have to be two layers of analysis: one referring to the networks of people activities and another referring to the theoretical construct of the researcher which need to be used at a level of abstraction.

Bourdieu's conceptualization enables to consider this level of abstraction which is constituted by the field and by its interconnectedness with different fields and of the objective relations.

However Bourdieu's relational theory doesn't allow to consider the interconnectedness of concrete interactions in the different fields.

There has instead to be a recognition of the importance that situated interactions play together with a recognition of the role that power relations and structural constraints can play in affecting these situated interactions. The recognition of the importance of situated interactions is central to Becker's interactionist perspective, but art world doesn't provide a way of understanding these interactions more than in the descriptions and symbolic representations of its members. That's why I will not point out the importance of using the notion of network as a way of theoretically understanding concrete interactions.

### 3.6 Art Worlds, Fields And Networks

I have aforementioned the different levels of analysis that Bourdieu and Becker propose which don't allow to use field and world interchangeably.

However this doesn't imply that the two models can't be combined in a productive way by considering different layers of analysis that the two authors suggest, one referring to the theoretical space of abstraction of the field and the other referring to the concrete actions and interactions of individuals in the art world.

As I have mentioned, Bourdieu states that "field consists of a set of objective, historical relations anchored in certain forms of power (or capital)" (1993, p.56), and that structural relations are the product of the positions agents occupy in the field which are determined by the capitals owned, but it's not very clear how this structural relations are connected with the

concrete interactions. Bourdieu's theory does not provide a framework to understand the great variety of actions and of interactions taking place in the field.

Meanwhile Becker tends to flatten the level of discourse to the descriptions of the actual actions and interactions within the art world, without explaining how these interactions are enabled or inhibited by structural constraints and neglecting the emphasis to be given to the structural questions of power and resources (as I have discussed for the scene perspective). As Bourdieu suggests in his critic to Becker's definition of art world, there's a reduction of the art world to the sum of people and interactions that constitute it.

Besides both scene and art world are defined as fluid, flexible and with no boundaries, in order to encapsulate the complexity and mobility of individual practices. The point is that suggesting that scene and world are fluid and flexible by definition is a priori theoretical assumption exactly as saying that they are structured and bounded. Instead we could argue that people's concrete actions and interactions are usually flexible and mobile and can't usually be encapsulated within the music scene or the art world. Art world and scene, even though attempt to consider the mobile nature of interactions don't provide any tool to understand how concrete interactions work.

That's why we need a framework to better conceptualize concrete interactions. For this reason I suggest here that the notion of network has much powerful heuristic value to understand concrete interactions, because it transcends the level of those concepts which seek to explain collective entities, social formations.

For this reason, there has been a tendency in finding a meso-level of discourse in order to consider the actions and collaborations of the 'art world' debate and resources and forces of power of the 'field' debate. This has been a tendency particularly discussed in using the concept of 'network' and particularly of Social Network Analysis as a possible alternative to the art world or field perspective.

I'm here referring particularly to Crossley's (2009, 2011) article investigating the network dynamics of the post punk scene (2009) and his later publications which compare art world and field (Bottero & Crossley, 2011) and which theorize the notion of "relational sociology" (Crossley, 2011). In all these publication we can find reference to the relationship between Bourdieu's notion of field and Becker's notion of 'world' and to the need of integrating them with a meso level of analysis given by the network.

Crossley and Bottero (2009, 2011) suggest the need of using the network and particularly SNA in order to better conceptualizing both Becker's and Bourdieu's notions and in order to

understand the dynamics of formation of the punk music scene of Manchester. The authors point out how the study of networks have been underdeveloped in the art world and in the field approach. In Becker (1982)'s analysis, the notion of art worlds is based upon the centrality of networks of interactions but without really developing the concept. We can often find reference to the term 'network' in Becker's analysis who often defines art worlds as "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized by their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produces the kind of art works that the art world is noted for" (1982, p. x). However Becker never conceptualizes network as analytical tool and only considers actions and interactions of individuals cooperating within the fluid and flexible and no bounded art world. Becker uses conventions as a way of explaining how these interactions are coordinated, but never provides a clear explanation of how networks are enabled and inhibited. Becker reduces the constraints to the one given by the conventions and resources existing in the art world but neglects structural questions of power.

Bottero and Crossley (2011) criticize Becker (1982) of having not enough examined social relationships "because he does not focus on interpersonal interaction sufficiently systematically" (2011, p.106). For them, "Becker wants to avoid imbuing networks with a misplaced solidity, but the extent and stability of network interconnections are partly an empirical matter and one which SNA can address" (2011, p.106).

The authors (2011) apply SNA to Becker's symbolic interactionist perspective, reducing cooperative activities in the conventions which characterize the art world to the systematic network structure of SNA. I will come back to the critics to the SNA later, for now I will look at Crossley and Bottero's understanding of Bourdieu's perspective.

Considering instead the field approach, for the authors, Bourdieu (1993) distinguishes in field between the objective relations and the concrete relationships omitting the importance of looking at social networks (Crossley & Bottero, 2011). The authors suggest that it's not clear why Bourdieu makes this distinction and why Bourdieu rejects network analysis and symbolic interactionism because, exactly because they fail to distinguish objective relations from concrete interactions avoiding to consider the underlying forces (objective relations) which generate empirical social relationships. The authors criticize the level of abstraction of Bourdieu's model which implies that relations are not directly connected to concrete ties but to the positions agents occupy in the field.

The authors challenge Bourdieu by saying that he needs to take into account concrete relationships suggesting that "concrete relations and interactions, in the form of differential

association, form both habitus and the abstract social space of positions mapped by Bourdieu” (Bottero & Crossley, 2011, p.103). To the distinction made by Bourdieu, the authors oppose “the systematic analysis of empirical relations and interactions by means of SNA which allows us to derive a sense of social space and positions” (Bottero & Crossley, 2011, p.103). For Crossley and Bottero, there’s instead a need of understanding the dynamics of networking and of pointing out the importance of looking at the significance of networks as analytical tool to understand concrete relations. I agree with this point but the authors imply that this assumption directly means the adoption of SNA. The following paragraph will make some critics to the SNA approach and will later suggest an alternative use of the notion of network which doesn’t imply the use of SNA.

## 3.7 Social Network Analysis and its Critics

In the articles aforementioned, the usefulness of the network approach is supported by showing the results of a previous research about punk music scenes in Manchester and London in the 1970s and 1980s in which Crossley (2009) uses SNA together with qualitative methodology. By showing the example of the networks dynamics of the punk scene in two different periods, Crossley(2009) seeks to explain the usefulness of the SNA for understanding any kind of cultural practices.

Here I will try to present the critics SNA which can be drawn to SNA from the assumptions made in this study and in its attempt of using it for a better understanding of Becker's and Bourdieu's perspective.

The first issue is that, as the authors states SNA "identifies important structural properties and positions in networks" "gives us structure by way of interaction" (Bottero & Crossley, 2011, p.107). According to the authors, SNA is useful "to show how network analysis allows us to extract 'structures', 'positions' and 'relations' between 'positions', of the sort prioritized by Bourdieu, from data on empirical connections of the sort prioritized by Becker" (Bottero & Crossley, 2011, p.107).

That means that SNA is again falling in the risk of reducing the dynamism and flexibility of concrete interactions to a network structure which is constituted by the graphs.

As some authors have suggested (e.g. Barnes & Harary, 1983) SNA doesn't provide a theoretical perspective but is a methodology aimed at tracing graphically networks and, as Urry (2006) states, at assuming that social life is by nature networked. For SNA, all social activities can be incorporated in the network structure which can be studied by using a systematic quantitative analysis mapping the links between peoples, groups, places by using graphs as analytical tools. SNA has adopted the tools of mathematical analysis to the theory of graph to provide a theoretical structured analysis of the networks. According to this approach the behavior of individuals (network nodes) is interpreted in terms of structural constraints, where the actions and interactions of the actors are predetermined by the structure of the network rather than by the behaviors of individuals. This is an assumption we can reconnected to the Harvard structural approach (e.g. Wellman & Berkowitz, 1988), while other reflections can be drawn from the anthropological school Manchester to which Bottero and Crossley (2011) belong to. If the first concentrates more on processes in the micro and meso social networks, the second is characterized for the interest, primarily targeted to the



shape of the networks rather than to the internal dynamics of individuals. According to the Manchester School (Mitchell, 1969) behaviors of individuals are influenced by relationships within the groups in which they find themselves to act. In both cases, we can fall in the risk of reducing actions and interactions in the framework of the network structure.

There is another critic that can be drawn to the adoption of SNA in Bourdieu's model. Crossley and Bottero (2011) stress that Bourdieu's theory of the field is compatible with the methods applied by SNA. However in reviewing Bourdieu's theory, they criticize the level of abstraction that Bourdieu conceptualizes by stating that objective relations are constituted by positions people occupy in the field, which are determined by the capitals they owned. When they apply SNA to field, positions are reduced to the sum of links that an agent has in a network, while people in higher position of power are not for Bourdieu those who have a higher number of links but those who are symbolically more recognized (symbolic capital). In this sense, SNA dismisses the importance that in the field plays the struggle for the legitimization of the symbolic power. The question of power can only in SNA be traced by looking at the positions of the nodes in the graphs, but SNA cannot explain how power relations are discursively constructed.

That's probably the main limit of SNA, namely the fact of omitting to consider the importance of discourses in understanding interactions. And that's particularly evident if we look at Becker's symbolic interactionism and at his notion of conventions as ways of coordinating activities within the art world.

Conventions are used by Crossley (2009) as a way to overcome the impossibility of SNA of considering the narratives, rules and symbolic representations which affect and are affected by social interactions.

As the author (2009) himself pointed out, the problem with SNA is in dismissing the importance of the discourses and narratives which emerge around networks. He tried to solve the issue integrating a qualitative methodology by using archival resources, which tried to give an explanation of the discourses which gravitated around the processes of network formation. However as this quotation emphasizes qualitative accounts can only have in a second moment of analysis a deductive role in supporting what SNA is graphically showing

Combining this finding with a qualitative reading of the history of the scene permits the inference that that possession of scarce resources makes actors attractive which, in turn, tends to increase their network centrality (2011, p.112).

This means that qualitative methodology can be used in SNA to “permit the inference” rather to show how social discourses and social interactions are mutually related.

The importance of the narratives and the discourses which gravitated around networks should not be in second place, because networks emerge and are enacted through the discourses and through the self-descriptions made by their members, as Van Heur (2010) emphasizes. And probably this is even more true in the case of music or more generally art networks where the narratives around the aesthetic and around the difficult dichotomy art versus commerce, around the independency from the music industry (as I will show in the future chapters) play a central role in the actions and interactions of their members. This assumption suggests the need, when looking at people engaged in the production or consumption of any cultural form, to look at the overlapping or contradictory discourses and social practices which can strongly be related to their networks.

Another distance from Becker’s perspective is that SNA immobilizes networks, while in Becker social interactions need to be understood in progress. As a consequence, the last critic to SNA, which enables to introduce an alternative notion of network, addresses the issue of the mobile (multi-sited) and flexible (multi-tasking) nature of concrete interactions. The critic can be made by referring to this sentence:

More significantly, however, there is a tendency in each network for non-musical actors (actors with other resources than musical skill – e.g. money, management skills, rehearsal rooms, etc.) to score highly. (2011, p.112).

This sentence seems to imply that each node (agent) can actually be reduced to a single role that each agent can occupy (while I will argue later that the multi-tasking nature of music-making practices doesn’t allow this distinction) and at the same time SNA allows each agent to have a single resource or a single capital (either cultural or economic).

As many critics to SNA suggested (e.g. Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994), SNA could have some problematic issues in inferring from the linkages between the nodes the roles, the actions and interactions of individuals, which tend to be more flexible and dynamics than in the network structure. SNA immobilizes networks in a certain moment (the graph is a snapshot) which doesn’t enable to consider how social roles, actions and interactions, as Becker (1982) emphasizes social research, are in progress.

As Wittel (2001) suggests in his critics to SNA, we need to be interested in the making of networks, in networking as practices and processes, not in the networks themselves:

I'm neither concerned with networks themselves and with the mathematics of their formal properties nor with the uncovering of models of social relations, but rather with the making of networks, with networking as a practice. How do people build, maintain and alter these social ties? ... (Wittel, 2001, p.52)

Integrating the study of networks with studies of mobility reveals a different perspective from that underlies SNA. The next chapter will therefore analyze a new theorization of network in which networks need to be understood as way of explaining the mobile and complex nature of social interactions.

## 3.8 Looking at Networks as Mobile and Unequal

As I have suggested previously, we can apply the notion of network without implying the use of SNA. The notion of network enables here to better conceptualize the importance of technology and mediated communication in the understanding of social interactions, together with the need at looking beyond the physical space. As Wittel states in his definition of network sociality:

Network sociality is a technological sociality insofar as it is deeply embedded in communication technology, transport technology and technologies to manage relationships. It is a sociality that is based on the use of cars, trains, buses and the underground, of airplanes, taxis and hotels, and it is based on phones, faxes, answering machines, voicemail, videoconferencing, mobiles, email, chat rooms, discussion forums, mailing lists and web sites. Transportation and communication technologies provide the infrastructure for people and societies on the move (Wittel, 2001, p. 69-70).

Without overemphasizing the impact of technology and of the internet upon social interactions, I would just say that this issue it is not tackled in both Bourdieu and Becker, while it's of great importance in the re-conceptualization of the scene perspective. Both Bourdieu and Becker provides from different perspectives a relational theory but they don't enable to understand how concrete interactions are enacted in a mediated and mobile environment.

Besides, as the following quotation (Urry et al, 2005) enables to understand, on the contrary to Wellman (2001) and to SNA, the emphasis has to be given to different layers to consider how interactions are mutually interconnected to face to face and mediated communication.

From our viewpoint the main deficiency of Wellman's work is that he focuses overmuch on communications through the Internet and mobile telephony while neglecting travel (this is true of SNA more generally). communication technologies connect people in order to arrange future offline-meetings. There is no attention paid to how people attend such meetings, where they are located and how much travel they entail...How does travel produce far-flung networks? (Urry et al., 2005, p.26)

This point is important because it enables to understand a new way of looking at networks not as either online and offline interactions, as different experiences but rather as overlapping dimensions of a common experience, which can be understood looking at the mobile nature of social interactions.

Using network as analytical tool enables to take into account a mobile theorizing (Kesselring & Volg, 2004), which means mobility as a useful category to understand actions and interactions of individuals in our society. That's made by using the framework of the mobility approach, theorized by John Urry (2000, 2005) that "understands social networks as mobile and performed, having to be practiced to be meaningful as well as durable" (Urry et. al., 2005, p. 3).

For Urry (2000) "mobile sociology" is meant at overcoming the way society has been understood as a "uniform surface" failing to understand the intersections that exist between different layers and the individual trajectories of people. According to Urry:

There are crucial flows of people within, but especially beyond, the territory of each society, and these flows relate to many different desires, for work, housing, leisure, religion, family relationships, criminal gain, asylum seeking and so on (2000, p.186).

In the mobility approach, the importance is not given to number of links each individual has (as in SNA), but "rather 'meetingness' – talking, writing, emailing, travelling and visiting – is crucial to the nature of networks" (Urry et al, 2006, p.28).

This approach emphasizes how all networks are highly dependent upon intermittent meetings and 'meetingness' is crucial element for understanding people's networks.

Central to networks are the forms and character of the meetings and hence of travel in order both to establish and to nourish links or at least temporally cement them. *Instead of focusing upon the formal structures of the networks themselves, this mobility approach analyses the embodied making of networks, performances and practices of networking.* Social networks come to life and are sustained through various practices of networking through email, forwarding messages, texting, sharing gossip, performing meetings, making two-minutes bumping-into-people-conversations, attending conferences, cruising at receptions, chatting over a coffee, meeting up for a drink and spending many hours on trains or on the road or in the air to meet up, with business partners, clients, and displaced friends, family members, workmates and partner. (Urry et al, 2006, p.29, my emphasis)

This perspective is not interested at the network structure but rather at network practices, and at how, in a network society, people are continuously engaged in establishing and maintaining social ties. This idea has several implication both from a methodological and theoretical (Urry, & Buscher, 2009) and point of view, which enables to distance this approach not only from SNA but even from the traditional approaches to networks.

Firstly we can argue that, because of the importance given to practices of networking and not to the networks themselves, ethnographic research<sup>17</sup> can be perfectly used to analyze “networking as an accomplishment and practice, of building and maintaining social ties in mobile ‘network societies’” (Urry et al. 2006, p.29).

The authors present several case studies which suggest the importance of looking at network practices and at the ways of managing relationships through communication and transport technologies, as well as through face-to-face networking.

Secondly the emphasis given upon the mobile nature of network practices implies to distance this approach from the traditional theorization of the network society that we can find in the work of Manuel Castells (1996, 2000). As Urry (2003) mentions:

Although contemporary social-physical phenomena are undeniably networked, they should not be viewed merely as networks. Castell’s notion of ‘network society’ does not capture the dynamic properties of global processes (Urry, 2003, p.15).

According to Urry (2003), studying networks in terms of network structures provides an abstract and static vision of society which doesn’t allow to understand the micro dynamics of social relationships. Network needs instead to be understood associating the category of network to the ones of scapes and flows understood as “networks of machines, technologies, organizations, texts and actors that constitute various interconnected nodes along which the flows can be relayed (Urry, 2000, p.35). In this way, Urry’s approach overcomes Castells’ s network structure, looking instead at the continue and intermittent dynamic movement of social relationships.

On the contrary, Castells’s focused among macro processes applies a radical approach to network as a meta structure where networks pervade society and become foundational unit to understand society, but it lacks to understand people’s everyday practices.

Besides in contrast to Castells’s network structure approach, the perspective of van Dijk (1999) proposes a moderate approach to the study of network in which the basic social units

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<sup>17</sup> I will explain more in depth the methodology used in the methodology chapter. For now I just want to point out that the analysis of the network practices is made by using a qualitative methodology particularly by using participant observation in order to analyze networking practices during concerts, by using semi-structured interviews in order to analyze the life trajectories of my respondents and the ways they establish and maintain social ties and finally by asking my interviewees to draw their network of contacts. This is an alternative methodology to the one applied in SNA which better enables to investigate networking as a practices rather than network structures.

are individuals, groups and society and the networks shape the organization, facilities, connections (and separations) between these social units and not.

Even a totally mediated society where all relations are fully realized by, and substantiated in, media networks, where social and media networks equal each other, would still be based on bodies, minds, rules and resources of all kinds (Van Dijk, 1999, p. 131).

Van Dijk (1999) has a psycho-sociological perspective, and emphasizes the role of individuals in the network, which is the framework that we need here in order to better conceptualize social interactions.

From the micro point of view, Van Dijk (1999) notes that the network organization of social life is the counterpart of a trend towards personalization and individualization. Van Dijk, in postulating network individualization, allows to point out how networks are constituted by power relations and by tensions existing between individualist-competitive and cooperative forces.

Regarding the issue of social equity, van Dijk (1999) points out that networks have different structure and organization characteristics than the traditional hierarchical-organizations.

However van Dijk (1999) seeks to oppose his position to the common understanding of networks that suggests that networks do not possess a center of power and have a high level of equality between the nodes and connections. This morphology of the network is in fact in contrast to the commonsense view social networks as non-hierarchical and flat structures: networks contain in fact isolated clusters and nodes, and a division between those who can or cannot be part of the network, who is included and excluded. For van Dijk (1999) networks increase rather than decrease social inequalities, competitiveness and individualism.

This point enables to understand another characteristic which is crucial to the understanding of network practices, namely how network theorization has always been used interlinked to the tension existing between cooperative and competitive practices, equality and inequality, and that even though network is understood as flat there are in fact power relations and struggles for the position within the network. In other words, this debate enables to connect both the struggle of forces in Bourdieu and the collaboration of Becker. If in Bourdieu struggles for legitimization within the field are crucial, in Becker art worlds are supported by coordination and cooperation among its members. Competition and collaboration are understood here as complementary in the sense that even though networks have flat structures and favor networking and cooperative activities, exactly because of the absence of

hierarchies, these tend to be created in the struggle for positions and symbolic legitimization is possible through the recognition given by the others. Using the notion of network enables to take into account these tensions which imply a new reconfiguration of power relations, new definition of space, of distance, and of “meetingness”. Networks live in tension between mediated and face to face interactions, mobility and immobility, equality and inequality, competition and cooperation.



## Conclusion

In the previous chapter I have reviewed the music scene perspective suggesting the need of providing a multi-layered analysis which could at the same time analyze the interconnected, mediated and mobile nature of music practices, the social discourses which are influenced and influence actions and interactions and finally go beyond them, considering political, economic, technological influences and the power relations that can affect the scene members. My critics to the scene perspective were directed as follows: the music scene perspective is self-referential in the sense that it has understood music affiliations as enclosing and not encapsulating the complexities of activities taking place and it has not allowed to consider broader issues that were debated outside of popular music studies, especially in the sociology of culture and in media and communications studies.

For this reason, in this chapter I have drawn my attention upon other frameworks, particularly Becker's (1982) art world, and Bourdieu's (1993) field which have been highly influential in the understanding of cultural production, even from two completely different perspectives. I have emphasized how these two different perspectives can allow to overcome some of the problems of the music scene debate.

Particularly Becker is useful at a micro level of analysis for its emphasis upon cooperation and conventions, which are much more accurately analyzed than in the music scene perspectives. Becker's application of the sociology of organization to the study of practices of production of art works is very useful for better understanding how music activities need to be related to dynamics of music production. Besides Becker's symbolic interactionist perspective enables to explain how actions and interactions need to be understood with the social discourses gravitating around them.

Bourdieu instead enables to understand how there is symbolic legitimization that people struggle for to achieve a position within the field of cultural production. In Bourdieu the struggle among the agents has much more a symbolical role of being legitimized within the field than a practical mean in the creation of a work of art in Becker's perspective.

Besides I have tried to suggest that Bourdieu's critics to the descriptive notion of art world enables us to explain how even in the scene perspective we can find the same tautological level of definition and analysis which doesn't help in understanding music practices, but rather music scene perspective is flattened in its common sense understanding and in the subjective representations of its members.

For this reason, a multi-layered model should be able to consider the power relations that enable and constrain actors in the scene, and the interconnectedness of the music scene with a political, economic and technological dimensions.

I have taken here into account the interesting adoptions of art world and field in sociology of music: Finnegan (1989) in her idea of pathways, which enable to understand how individual trajectories cannot be encapsulated within musical worlds; Kruse (2003) in her theorization which grounds music formations to local and trans-local networks and in conjuncture to political, economic, social and cultural relations; and finally Webb's (2007) model which is aimed at combining the abstract level of the field with the notion of milieu which is used a framework for researching networks of people and music cultures.

I have suggested the usefulness particularly of Kruse and Webb which consider in their adoptions of Bourdieu's notion of field there is a need to have multi-layered theorization which enables to include the abstract level of the field together with the considerations of the networked nature of individual practices.

The notion of network is here used because it enables to understand how actions and interactions of the scene members need to be understood as mobile and intertwined with mediated communication. This is a issue that music scene, art world, and field have not addressed. Particularly, I have mentioned that distinction between local, trans-local and virtual music scenes (Peterson & Bennett, 2004) don't enable to explain mobile and mediated practices among scene members while the notion of network, in its mobile theorization by Urry (2000, 2005), seeks to take into account how networked relationships are enacted by distance and mediated interactions which make encountering, visiting and meeting crucial in networks. The interconnected, mediated and mobile nature of actions and interactions is crucial for its understanding. And the notion of network complements the music scene perspective because it enables to transcend the local dimension of the scene to include mobile and mediated music activities. Besides this interconnectedness needs to be understood not only at the micro level of analysis of individual practices but rather even in its interdependence to the social environment.

In the next chapter I will try to analyze the importance that notion of independence can play in understanding has played in the music scene perspective and how we can re-conceptualize it drawing on he assumptions made in this chapter.

# 4. Independent To What? Investigating The Complexity Of The Notion Of Independent

## Introduction

In the previous chapters I presented theoretical framework to analyze music formations, starting from the literature regarding music scenes, and then suggesting the usefulness of other perspective. I have left for the sake of the discussion the issue of the notion of ‘independent’ outside of the previous theoretical chapters, even though it’s extremely interlinked to the theoretical assumptions I have aforementioned. This is because independency-autonomy in music has always been connected to the theorization of the music scene. As I have previously suggested and as I will explain later in this chapter, the analysis of music scenes have been particularly focused upon grass-roots music music-making practices usually happening independently from the mainstream music industry.

I start by emphasizing that my analysis of the notion ‘independent’ is not aimed at providing a definition and is not dealing with aesthetic categorizations. As I have explained in the previous chapter, I’m not looking at correspondences between particular music styles and particular social formations, as in sub-cultural and music scene studies.

I’m not interested to give a definition to independent but rather to point out how the notion of independent needs to be considered as an intellectual and discursive construct which has largely shaped the academic debate around music production and which shapes the ideologies, the practices and interactions among musicians and music producers, and at the same time how the understanding of the notion of independent depends to its relation to the music industry.

I will argue that the definition of an independent sector depends not only upon the subjective representations of its members. The definition of independent also needs to be understood as a relational definition in the sense that it’s related not only to the oppositional practices and ideologies of the independents but also to its meaning in the interrelations with music and cultural production, distribution and with the environment. By this I mean that the independence is related to the characteristics of what it’s meant to be independent from,

traditionally the music industry. I'm interested in asking the question 'independent to what' rather than the independency in itself.

The chapter will start by reviewing how the notion of 'independent' has been differently theorized referring to the debate existing in popular music studies, but even to a broader debate existing in studies of cultural processes, mentioning how Bourdieu and Becker's theorizations of the autonomy of cultural fields and of conventions in art worlds can give us a framework for understanding the notion of independent.

## 4.1. The Complex Understanding Of Indie As A Genre-Based Category

As I have mentioned in the introduction, most of the theorizations of the notion of independent refer to its relevance in enabling aesthetic categorizations. Here I will not particularly focus upon the notion of independent for its stylistic features (e.g. guitar-based rock music in Bennett, 2001) as a genre-based category to define particular styles of music.

While in this work, I'm more interested in looking at the notion of independent in its relation to the production, distribution and consumption of music, rather than concentrating my attention upon genre and stylistic classifications.

From this point of view, I'm influenced by Becker's (1982) assumption that making aesthetic judgments and classifications is not allowing a better understanding of an art world but rather aesthetic judgments need to be understood as part of the collective activities and conventions of art world members. Besides for Becker convention is much more understood as a means of organizing coordinated activities rather than creating symbolic meanings.

I'm aware that avoiding to consider the aesthetic judgments and categorizations suggested by the notion of independent can entail some critics, the same which have been done to Becker's (1982) perspective and more generally to the production of culture perspective (e.g Peterson, 1976) namely the fact of "ignoring what's special about art; what distinguishes it from the production of automobiles or shoes" (Alexander, 2003, p.80). However there are many studies which provide genre-based analysis of independent music and which demonstrate how it's difficult to categorize and define independent music considering its aesthetics. Fonarow

(2006) for example tries to provide a set of elements which can categorize British independent music (indie) as a genre but she then assesses how it's complex since categories are changing over time and are very contextualized. She states that "writing about indie often seems like trying to hit a moving target: as soon as you hit one part, another part has already moved" (Fonarow, 2006, p.18). Similarly according to Toynbee (2000):

Increasing the amount of detail in order to specify genre only makes the definition more difficult. For as the number of required traits increases so the number of texts which conform ...will decline (Toynbee, 2000, p. 105).

However at the same time I agree with Toynbee's (2000) statement that music genres are crucial to music apparatus because they provide self identification by musicians and fans, classification and representation in the media and in the music industry. But genres need to be understood as processes, as way of doing things rather than as aesthetic classifications. As Toynbee states: "genre is also constructed through the structure of record labels, the layout of bins in a record shop, in the constitution of music magazines or radio station formatting" (2000, p. 154) and not only in aesthetic classifications. Therefore genre are not only understood in terms of musical forms and pure stylistics connotations but in terms of technologies, contexts, production, distribution and consumption practices.

As Hesmondhalgh (1996) suggests, the peculiarity of indie and independent as a genre-based category is that "no music genre had ever before taken its name from the mode of production of its recordings" (1996, p. 111).

Hesmondhalgh (1996) refers to the fact that what mostly characterized the traditional and vernacular understanding of the notion of independent music is its affiliation to independent record labels (the indies) which are opposed to the corporate music industry (the major recording companies Universal, BMG Sony Music, EMI and Warner).

The different notions of indie as aesthetics and independent as a set of production processes are absolutely intertwined in a vernacular view and fans and journalists tend to make several assumptions about their connections, for example assuming that bands which turn to a corporate major label will have more mainstream music styles than before. However it's not easy to imply correlations between aesthetics and institutional positions:

It is still difficult to describe these features as the political-aesthetic consequences of major/independent collaboration, as the outcome of a set of institutional politics...It is too simplistic to see the conservatism of

1990s indie as deriving solely from its institutional base in networks of collaboration with the major companies. This does not mean, of course, that aesthetics are autonomous of social forces as a whole; but we do need to be cautious in assuming that oppositional or conformist institutional politics lead to correspondingly oppositional or conformist textual forms (Hesmondhalgh, 1998, p. 60).

Besides it's interesting to notice that indie became a successful and established genre exactly when major companies realized that indie was becoming an important segment of the music market and therefore indie music was incorporated in the mainstream music industry. As Hesmondhalgh's (1999) refers in relation to the British market, when indie was categorized as an established global pop genre instead of referring to its independency to the music business, independent charts in UK started to "be based upon musical style, rather than on the basis of whether the distributor had ties to a major corporation (the definition of 'independent')" (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p.53). From this moment "indie was a term now generally used to describe a set of sounds and an attitude, rather than an aesthetic and institutional position" (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p.54).

This example makes clear the complex interplays of elements which need to be taken into account to understand the notion of indie or independent and which cannot be reduced to either aesthetic classifications or modes of productions. More than that moral values and ethical issues, which explain the oppositional relation to the music industry, need to be taken into account.

There are three levels of discourse here that we need to consider and that have been perfectly summarized by Robert Strachan (2003) in his work about independent record labels. He distinguishes among three main areas: industry, which refers to all the industrial processes such as production, distribution and consumption practices; ideology which refers to a set of values and beliefs, social discourses, ethics; and finally aesthetic which refers to stylistic characteristics.

Even though I assume the absolute importance that the third (the aesthetics) can play in the judgments of musicians, fans and music producers about their musical tastes, I will mainly focus upon the first two levels. A lot has been written to try to find correspondences or homologies between music styles and groups formations or modes of productions<sup>18</sup>. Therefore I won't deal with them and I will focus upon the interlinks that particular social discourses can have upon processes of music productions.

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<sup>18</sup> I'm referring to the sub-cultural theories I have talked about the previous chapters which were interested in finding homologies between music styles and class-based social formations.

The following paragraph will therefore examine the ways in which ‘independent’ has been analyzed referring to its narratives and to its modes of productions and looking at its interrelations with the music industry.

I will refer to this distinction made by Strachan (2003) between ideological and industrial dimensions as the key elements to take into account for the theorization of the notion of independent. For the sake of discussion, I will leave at the beginning these two elements distinguished, to underline how these elements belong to different academic traditions, and I will then try to look at the interplay between them.

## 4.2 The DIY Ethic And The Narratives Gravitating Around Independent Music

I will start by looking at what Strachan (2003) calls the ‘ideologies’ referring to a set of values and believes. According to Strachan, ideologies are

not straightforward truths, nor are they deceitful or cynical falsehoods, but they grow out of social relations in such a way as they appear helpful and explanatory’ to those individuals(Green, 1999, p. 4 quoted in Strachan, 2003).

Instead of using the term ‘ideologies’, I rather refer to the subjective representations, social discourses existing among music journalists, musicians and music producers which contribute to construct a culture of independence.

In this sense independent can be defined in terms of particular ethical issues and moral values which are especially referred to ‘what not to do’ rather than ‘what to do’.

Indie, by virtue of its very name, had a strong investment in difference, concerned with ‘what not to do’, and this was central to the ideological conflicts within the nascent genre between indie pop and rock, and with the maintenance of generic purity (Buckley, 2002, p. 78-79, quoted in Bannister, 2006, p. 58)

What needs to be taken into account in the definition of independent is its oppositional character which depends upon its relation to the mainstream music industry, which is traditionally constituted by the major recording companies.

In more general terms, this assumption calls back to a common critique to the music and to the culture industry against which we can position the notion of independent. According to Toynebee (2000), the discursive construct of the 'independence' can find its foundations in the theorization of the culture industry, and particularly of popular music, by the Frankfurt School, which has significant impact upon the common sense understandings about the relationships between the music industry and music-making practices.

In the assumptions Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) make around the role of capitalism in the culture industry, the authors stress the ways in which culture industry implies the standardization of culture to a commodity. According to their perspective, standardization represses the individual creativity of cultural producers. And more interestingly for our discussion, if culture is in itself autonomous, in the culture industry culture "abjures its autonomy" (1974, p. 127) or we could say its independency. Finally the last issue that I suggest here it's the emphasis given to dominant relationship existing between the culture industry and the public, which is considered a mass audience of passive consumers distant from cultural producers.

The pessimistic view of the culture industry given by the Frankfurt School has always been a point of departure for the following debate around culture industry.

However according to Adorno and Horkheimer (e.g. 1947), independent production would be included within the system of standardization of the culture industry.

A fundamental assumption to understand the existence of sector which is independent to the culture industry, is the point Morin (1962) makes to criticize Adorno and Horkheimer's (e.g. 1947) perspective: "An important principle is that the cultural creation cannot totally be integrated in the system of industrial production" (1962, p. 24). According to Morin, on the contrary of the Frankfurt School authors, cultural production can exist independently from the system of the culture industry.

It's anyway still important to point out that the assumptions Adorno and Horkheimer (e.g. 1947) make are particularly relevant because they provided a pessimistic view of culture and culture industry which is still very common today in the social discourses of the independents. Adorno and Horkheimer's (e.g. 1947) perspective is actually very present referred to the music industry from which the 'independents' want to distance themselves from.



The common sense dichotomies existing between art versus commerce and standardization versus creativity are still rooted in the social discourses gravitating in independent music culture.

These assumptions presuppose an understanding of the music industry as a structured and hierarchical industry in which standardized practices inhibit the creativity of the artists. As Strachan suggests:

There is a naturalized assumption that the recording industry is an inherently corrupting (set of) institution(s) where artists are routinely subject to bad financial practice and are necessarily restricted in terms of creativity. Those involved in the DIY independent scene seek to separate themselves from the corporate recording industry by attempting to establish an alternative, self-sustaining, autonomous network based upon ideals of collectivity and fair exchange. ( Strachan, 2003, p.17) .

The importance of these social discourses assuming the freedom and independence from the economic constraints of culture industry can be found in any kind of cultural production. For example Becker (1982) mentions the ways in which photographers, who do commercial work commonly perceive this commercial attitude to influence negatively their personal work. However in the particular case of music, the notion of independence has its own peculiarity and is much more rooted than in other cultural fields.

In the case of music, the independent music culture is particularly affecting social discourses and values which are constructed in opposition to a music industry. I will try to summarize briefly these characteristics which are entailed in the common understanding of independent:

- Independence from corporate control: independent is by definition explaining the oppositional relationship existing with the corporate music industry (the majors)
- DIY punk ethic: independent music sector relies upon a set of values which can be summarized in the DIY (Do it yourself) ethic
- Rootedness in local music scenes: independent record labels and artists are fostered by localized music scenes in which grass-roots music activities take place on a face to face interaction
- Innovation and originality: the fact that independent music is not constrained by industrial and economic processes allows to foster individual creativity
- Identification with an audience of experts: audience of independent music is meant to be highly committed to the ideologies of independency

In the case of music, the independence can be defined by reference to DIY punk ethic: the independent music sector relies upon a set of values which can be summarized in the DIY (Do it yourself) ethic which affect the narratives and practices among the independents.

The indie attitude originates in its grass-roots music production and in the non-professionalism of the punk Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethic of the late 1970s and early 1980s. In contrast to the mainstream rock, punk portrays as its ideological goal the DIY ethic, which means the possibility for musicians to rely upon themselves and to engage in the production and distribution of music without depending upon the standardized structure of the music industry.

As this definition suggests: “DIY is essentially the simple idea that you can do for yourself the activities normally reserved for the realm of capitalist production” ( Holtzman et al., 2005)

This independence enables to keep the artistic creativity autonomous from the commercial and industrial constraints of the corporate record labels. To the standardized and vertically integrated system of the mainstream music industry, the independents embraced the purity and the authenticity of grassroots music making practices. Music in punk has always been defined in terms of purity and authenticity in the sense that music which is ‘uncommodified’ by the market, tends to be ‘true’ to a particular social group (Bannister, 2006).

The notion of authenticity is crucial in the DIY independent culture because it’s connected to an anti-consumerism and anti-commercial ethic of punk.

Therefore in the ethic of punk, being unprofessional and without expertise it’s perceived as positive value, because it’s a sign of authenticity. This means that in DIY attitude there’s neither clear distinction between productions made on an amateur or professional basis, nor clear distinction between music producers (musicians and music producers) and fans, because they are all engaged in sharing common values related to the DIY punk ethic.

The closeness of fans and musicians is considered one of the crucial elements of the DIY ethic at a point that “spectators become fans, fans become musicians, musicians are always already fans” (Shank, 1994, p.31).

Being outside the economic constraints, the DIY ethic attempts to create a cooperative and friendly environment, in order to share a sense of belonging to the DIY independent culture, in which the identity is in opposition to the music industry. The sense of belonging to the DIY independent culture is absolutely crucial, but the independent music culture needs to be understood in relations to its modes of production.

## 4.3 Critics To The Social Discourses Gravitating In The Independent Music Culture

We can see how these assumptions which characterized the DIY ethic are actually the product of discursive constructs which are created by the subjective representations of the independents. As Kruse (2003) describes it, “the DIY universe was a mythic construct”. (Kruse, 2003, p. 11).

Many studies have therefore challenge the common understanding of the notion of independent and of grass roots music-making practices. According to Bannister (2006) there has been a tendency to describe the ideological construct of independent music culture in too celebratory ways:

The problem with many studies of independent or alternative music (indie) is that they treat it as if it really was independent. It is often represented as a relatively autonomous space, the product of isolated, marginal, local scenes, uncaptured by ideology, free of the commercial and other pressures that mark the mainstream, but also free of high culture elitism (Kruse 2003, p. 1 quoted in Bannister, 2006).

Besides Bannister (2006) emphasizes that for analyzing the notion of independent is crucial to understand how its definitions are the product of self-representations of those who embrace the DIY independent culture and are largely constructed by the media. As Bannister notes, many celebratory accounts of independent music formations “are directly written by fans and advocates of the scene, and thus tend to make absolute claims for the value of the music – that it is avant-garde, postmodern, subversive or radical”<sup>19</sup> (Bannister, 2006, p. 77).

Therefore, according to Bannister, “indie did not simply arise organically out of developing post-punk music networks, but was shaped by media (particularly print)” (Bannister, 2006, p. 78).

Besides the authors suggests that these representations have tended to celebrate the collective and collaborative environment promoted by the DIY ethic, without considering the power-relations existing, the fact that indie “was not just collective, but also stratified, hierarchical, parochial and traditional” (Bannister, 2006, p. 78).

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<sup>19</sup> Bannister (2006) mentions these authors, and particularly music journalists who have celebrated the DIY independent culture: (Reynolds 1990, pp. 11–13; Felder 1993; Arnold 1995, pp. 4–11; Gilbert 1999; Azerrad 2002, pp. 3–11; Harrington 2002, pp. 373–393)

These social discourses are assuming that independent productions are naturally better than the mainstream music industry because they are less bureaucratic, standardized and hierarchical organizational systems and therefore they can much better allow to discover music creativity and to be in touch with grassroots music making practices. There is in fact a common understanding that grassroots music practices are seen as more innovative and authentic and as anticipating popular music genres (Bannister, 2006) exactly because they are outside of the music industry, but grass-roots music making practices are in fact equally influenced by music produced in the music industry, and are not so spontaneous and authentic, as in the common sense discourses of independents.

In the construction through narratives, a music exists on the margins and is perceived by its producers/consumers/observers to be a true and “spontaneous expression of lived experience” (Frith, 1987, p.55, quoted in Kruse, 2003, p. 30).

## 4.4 Independent Music And Its Connection To Music Scenes

As I have already pointed out, Strachan suggests that there is a common assumption that grassroots music making practices are happening outside of the music industry and are instead fostered in local music scenes:

Such an explanation partly falls back upon a position which suggests that musical creativity at a grass-roots level occurs outside (or at least with minimal influence from) the wider context of popular music's production within an industrial nexus (Strachan, 2003, p 261).

These kinds of assumptions are not only part of the celebratory accounts that Bannister (2006) refers to but are even part of a certain kind of academic theorization which has distinguished grassroots music production from the music industry.

I'm referring to the theorizations that I have criticized in the previous theoretical chapters which were crucially based upon the micro-sociological analysis of music scenes and the subjective representations of scene members. As I have said at the beginning of this chapter the notion of independent is interlinked to the one of music scene. In these studies independent music is usually rooted within local music scenes, and most of the analyses of music scenes are referring to independent music and are entailing the ideological constructs of the DIY ethic.

For example Cohen (1991) in her study of the indie-rock music scene in Liverpool analyzes the grass-roots music-making practices of two bands in Liverpool, focusing upon their everyday life experiences from the point of view of emerging musicians. Cohen emphasizes how her attention is given to the "grass roots industry", to the grass roots music-making practices of local bands which constituted the local scene. Cohen suggests that too much attention has been given to the recording industry while there's a need of micro analysis of everyday life experiences of local bands. Cohen (1991), together with other authors I have aforementioned (e.g. Finnegan, 1989), have been connected to the ethnographic turn in popular music studies which has emphasized the importance of looking at the subjective representations of scene members and of studying collective identities in music scenes.

Another case, I have already mentioned, is the historical and ethnographic analysis of the music scene of Austin in which Shank underlines the importance of looking at "how the

performance of popular music functions as a process of identity formation...” (Shank, 1994, p. 17).

Shank makes reference to the importance that in the music scene is played by the system of trust and by the personal relationships which are believed to be in conflict with the corporate hierarchical system of the music industry (Shank, 1994). Shank refers to ‘sincerity’ or ‘buzz’ which “is enhanced by, and in turn enhances, the intimate emotional connections between musicians and fans” and enables “the construction of identity and community ... through an evident resistance of the disciplinary restraints of the dominant culture” (Shank, 1994, p. 15). In Shank’s perspective sincerity and buzz refer to the DIY ethics and are essential for understanding the sense of belonging to the scene in opposition to “the in-authenticity of the market place: the buzz becomes the guarantee of good music” (Shank, 1994, p. 34).

These two examples seem to exemplify that there has been a tendency in this literature to focus upon grassroots and authentic music-making practices taking place in local music scenes, to the sense of belonging to the scene and to the subjective representations of the scene members. While industrial and economic processes and the possible interactions with the music industry have been in some cases analyzed from the perspective of musicians, focusing especially upon social discourses gravitating around bands selling out because they sign a record contract. In the next section, I will instead suggest the importance of considering the modes of production, the organizational and economic processes which characterize independent music production in its possible relation to the mainstream music industry.

## 4.5 Independent Modes Of Production And Interrelations To The Mainstream Music Industry

Several academic theorizations of the notion of independent attempt in different ways to challenge these assumptions especially pointing out how the relations between independents and mainstream music industry need to be contextualized.

At first this relation needs to be contextualized because independent music is actually defined by its opposition to the mainstream music industry, and changes in the music industry will have an impact upon the independent music practices as well. As Kruse (2003) states:

Without dominant mainstream musics against which to react, independent music cannot be independent. Its existence depends upon dominant music structure and practices against which to define itself. Indie music has therefore been continuously engaged in a economic and ideological struggle in which its outsider status is re-examined, re-defined, and re-articulated to sets of musical practices (Kruse, 2003, p. 180).

The assumption enables us to understand how the definition of independent music is not only created in an independent culture by its members, but how it is dependent upon economic changes in the music industry, which affect a different definition of independent.

Therefore these authors challenge the common understanding not only of what it's meant for independent but much more of what it's meant for the music industry.

Many authors suggest that the music industry in singular form is in fact a misnomer (Toynbee, 2000) and that we could speak of music industries rather than the music industry as a whole (Cloonan & Williamson, 2007). Even though the music industry has always been defined as a cohesive entity, it has in fact a disintegrated structure: "music industry in its integrity is a discursive construct because its functions have never been together" (Toynbee, 2000, 19).

Additionally instead of depicting the music industry in oppositional terms to the grass-roots making practices, it's suggested how all these practices are incorporated within the music industry. As Frith summarizes it:

The music wouldn't exist in any forms we know it, if it were not for the industry. I think rock'n'roll, you have to view it as a, as, so wrapped up to capitalism that you can't separate the two...And so, you make records. And you sell records. It's a product. You turn into a music commodity. And the second you get onstage, you want to

get paid for being onstage and the second you want to make a record you're tied into that process (Frith, 1981, p. 34).

Several studies (e.g. Negus, 1992; Hesmondhalgh, 1996, 1998, 1999) suggest how the relations between independent music production and corporate music industry have not to be seen in such oppositional terms but rather there are different interconnections among them.

If in a common sense understanding independent music practices are perceived outside of the music industry and as being part of music scene, authors such as Negus (1992) point out how the music industry is instead made of a “web of major and minor companies” (Negus, 1992, p.17) and that what differ between them it's a matter of dimension rather than of ethics and attitudes. Negus (1992) points out the interlinks between majors and indies and analyzes the ways in which major labels in the 1980s created semi-independent record labels, in the sense that these were record labels which belonged to the majors but were producing independent music.

Negus argues that the distinctions between major and independent record companies are difficult to be maintained because of the interlinks with licensing and distribution deals, investments, buyouts of the company. Afterward in *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (1999), Negus explains the “tensions between indie and major do not so much involve conflicts of art versus commerce or democracy versus oligopoly (as sometimes portrayed) as distribution struggles - battles to get recordings to the public” (1999, p.58). According to the author, it's merely a question of distribution and licensing deals rather than one of aesthetic or ethic principles. Negus's assumptions are exactly oppositional from the one presented before, because in his perspective, possible distinctions between indies and majors are in terms of industrial and economic processes, of what Strachan (2003) names ‘industry’, rather than emphasizing the social discourses and ideologies of the independent culture. Besides Negus's (1992, 1999) analysis is focused upon the corporate music industry, which assimilates small independent organisations without looking from the perspective of independent labels which remain as such.

On similar positions, it's the interesting perspective of Hesmondhalgh (1997, 1998, 1999) who tries to give a different viewpoint from the one of Negus, but still considering the importance of looking at economic and organizational processes. Hesmondhalgh's (1997) analysis goes in the direction of theorizing the punk ethic looking at its modes of production. According to Hesmondhalgh (1997), the DIY ethic in the 1980s and 1990s attempts the



democratization of music production, in the sense that it was based upon values of access and participation, cooperation and collaboration.

By providing the examples of several independent record labels in UK (Rough Trade, Mute and Factory Records) the author addresses an important question: are these independent labels able to provide an economic sustainable alternative to the mainstream music industry? The issue is very important in understanding the notion of independent because it enables to point out how some ideological assumptions need to be negotiated in the practical conditions of an economic, political and cultural situation.

Hesmondhalgh (1997) explains in detail how the independent labels were differing from the major in terms of their organizational structures. Hesmondhalgh's approach enables to explain how the DIY ethic has some industrial and economic consequences. In order to guarantee egalitarianism indie labels were based upon a contractual system that allowed a 50:50 split of the royalties, on the contrary of the majors in which the artist was owner of the 19% of the royalties; this was not directly beneficial for the artists because in an egalitarian system revenues were equally divided between artists and staff. Secondly in order to protect the artistic autonomy and to avoid the exploitative deals of the majors, the artists were trading in short term financial security rather than the long term as majors. Contracts were usually not signed by musicians and records owner as a mark of trust.

In the attempt to democratize the music industry, the DIY ethic of the 'learn as you go alone' encourages access in the music industry of unskilled and untrained people in a mainstream music industry which was instead traditionally highly trained. This has consequences in terms of organizational and managerial skills. Hesmondhalgh (1997, 1999) leads back the financial crisis of some of these indies such as Rough Trade to organizational inefficiency at the label (1997, p. 267). As he suggests "their story indicates some of the problems associated with professionalization and growth in cultural institutions founded on an amateur ethos" (1997, p. 267). He finally suggests that post-punk ethic has failed in the democratization of the music production. The attempts of British post-punk independents to challenge the music business were haunted by conflicts, inefficiencies and contradictions, even though network of production, distribution and manufacturing was set up.

In following articles Hesmondhalgh (1998, 1999) shows how independent labels started with the 1990s to develop different strategies, and to interact with the mainstream music industry, therefore becoming more similar to the majors in terms of entrepreneurial skills.

He explains the way in which the major labels, understanding the creative value of independent (dance) music, started opening sub-labels hosting independent dance music, the 'pseudo-independents' (True, 1993, quoted in Hesmondhalgh, 1998), in order to compete with market of the 'real' independent labels. The author outlines:

The motives involved in such professionalization and partnership are more complex than is implied in two discourses which have been prevalent in the indie sector as a means of explaining these processes: 'sell-out', which assumes that independents abandon previously held political and aesthetic commitments for financial gain; and 'burn-out', which is slightly more generous to independents and which assumes that institutional alterity can only be maintained for a short period before human and financial resources run dry (1999, p.36).

According to the author, the discourses and ideologies gravitating around the indie sector are not able to explain the reasons of possible collaborations with the corporate music industry, which allow more professionalization, access to an international market, bigger economic rewards, possibility of dealing with risk rather than "a way of living which is difficult for many people to sustain: a constant existence on an impoverished margin" (1999, p.42). For Hesmondhalgh instead:

Countercultural discourse clearly overstated the opposition between the two ideal-types, majors and independents. Nevertheless, it is perhaps premature to dissolve the difference altogether.

The most important task in an era of unprecedented collaboration between small and large firms in the cultural industries, is to specify the relationships carefully (1998, p. 237).

These processes can't be reduced to the oppositional relationships between indies and majors, as the author states:

The processes at work here are more complex than those represented in the narrative with which many musicians and fans make sense of such dynamics: the familiar story of 'authentic' styles which are co-opted by Machiavellian capitalists (Hesmondhalgh, 1998, p. 27).

There are instead more issues to be taken into account, particularly the ways in which the ideologies and practices of music producers are affected by "wider economic and organizational factors... In other words, discursive, psychological and aesthetic factors were applied in circumstances delineated by the economic logics of the cultural industries".

This point is particularly important because it enables us to understand how the cooperative or oppositional relationships to the music industry can even be affected by broader economic, technological or cultural changes, and can't be understood in the ideologies indies versus majors. Hesmondhalgh (1999, 2002) for example makes reference to the fact that in a post-fordist economic environment, corporate cultural industries are much more networked to small cultural industries, and they are often outsourcing their production to them. I will come back to this issue later, but it's important to notice that the independence can be influenced by technological, economic or even political changes and, as both Negus (1992) and Hesmondhalgh (1997, 1998, 1999) point out, by a changing attitude not only of the independent sector but even of the corporate music industry.

## 4.6 Theorizing Independent. Looking At The Interplays Between Independent Cultures, Modes Of Productions And Relations With The Music Industry

Until now I have tried to look at the ideologies that constitute the independent DIY culture and how they have been criticized to be celebratory and to depict an oppositional set of relations between the independent and corporate music industry, while the relations between them are in fact frequent. There are two issues left out that contribute to emphasize the ambiguity of the notion of independent.

The first element to consider is that, from the picture I have until now drawn, it seems that, if we look at the industrial and organizational dynamics of the independent sector, the independents are inevitably either going to be incorporated in mainstream music industry or they're going bankrupt.

In this sense, Hesmondhalgh's (1997, 1998, 1999) and Negus's (1992) perspectives have been criticized because they seem to exclude the possibility of the independent sector of providing an alternative to the mainstream music industry. Both Strachan (2003) and Webb (2007) criticize the fact that these studies are not in fact looking at those independents who still manage to maintain an alternative production and distribution structure from the majors.

Other accounts have specifically focused on the independent sector, but again these predominantly allude to the impossibility of any long-term sustainability of independence and the inevitability of incorporation (Strachan, 2003, p.32).

According to Strachan (2003) and to Webb (2007), there has been in proportion an excessive number of case studies which have analyzed the relations between major and indie labels, without looking at those independents which were really staying as such. These studies (Negus, 1992; Hesmondhalgh, 1997, 1998, 1999) have overestimated the importance of semi-independents and have understood independents to be naturally involved in economic relations with the majors, if they wanted to avoid an economic failure.

there has been a concentration within these accounts (in terms of case studies, examples and general theorisation) on independent labels that have been party to the incorporation process. In other words, research has only been carried out on labels that have already been successful within the terms of the multi-national recording industry. What these studies omit are the numerous labels that operate (and have often operated for a number of years) at a small-scale production level without investment from or interaction with the multi-nationals.

By examining the contexts and ideologies of small-scale production, this thesis seeks to examine whether we can simply assume that these smaller labels should be viewed unquestioningly as failures within the popular music production process. Whilst it is true that they do not compete with the majors on their own terms (that is, with regard to the major companies' principle goals of achieving as many sales as possible and achieving the highest possible financial turnover), it should also be questioned whether these are actually the primary objectives of independent labels working at a different level. (Strachan, 2003, p.32)

According to Strachan (2003), this actually depends upon the different definitions of failure or success that these authors have given which cannot be limited to its understanding in pure economic and industrial terms in relation to the corporate music industry. If we look only in economic terms, there is a kind of presumption that labels working on a smaller financial scale are somehow failures in comparison to corporate labels.

Strachan is right in recognizing that the interrelationships between the independent and corporate music industry are not the only possible situations which need to be analyzed. Exactly as it's wrong to consider independent music as necessarily independent to the music industry, at the same time it's wrong to consider independent music as necessarily incorporated within the mainstream music industry.

Rather we could point out that there are more complex processes that need to be explained and which are connected to a broader understanding of the circuit of music and more generally cultural production. It's true that the processes that especially Negus (1992) described are the mutual interrelationships that can explain the circuits of culture.

A fundamental assumption, I have aforementioned, to analyze the existence of an independent sector to the culture industry, is contained in Morin(1962)'s critics to Adorno and Horkeimer's (1947) perspective. On the contrary to Adorno and Horkeimer's (1947), Morin (1962) suggests that the cultural industry needs an oppositional force: this oppositional force is the autonomy of the creative roles within the rigid structures of production.

This issue is tackled by Jason Toynbee (2000) who theorized that music production cannot be completely incorporated in the music industry but instead there has always been a certain degree of "institutional autonomy" (2000, p. 19) which implies that companies traditionally cede control over production to musicians.

These assumptions enable to better understand how autonomous or independent productions are in fact mutually interrelated to the music industry and need to be explained in their complex relationships.

As Colombo (2001) suggests in the book *I Margini della Cultura (Culture and its Margins)* there are four processes that enable us to understand the interrelationships existing between the cultural industry and its margins (or its independent sector). To understand these processes we need to look at their origins within or outside the cultural industry and to their developments within or outside of cultural industry. From this perspective it's possible to see the dynamic relationships that we can find in the independent music as regards to music styles and products, music producers, production systems, technologies and audiences.

The first process is the 'maintenance', which refers to music styles, music producers, audiences which have always been part of the cultural industry. This is not actually the case which I'm trying to talk about but it's the one of major labels with products specifically aimed for a mainstream market. Secondly we have the process that Negus (1992) and Hesmondhalgh (1997, 1998, 1999) have analyzed which refers to the incorporation or 'assimilation' of independent grass-roots music production within the mainstream music industry. This shift has several consequences in terms of organizational and commercial skills, modes of production, and market.

Then we have the process of 'rejection' which refers to the case of the music contents or music producers pushed out or pushing themselves out from the mainstream music industry. This process which has not been very much analyzed in the literature, it's was quite common in the life trajectories of my respondents who had signed with majors and then came back to independent production. The experiences in the music industry had an influence in their organizational skills, productions but even in their understanding of the relations majors versus indies<sup>20</sup>.

At last we have the fourth process of 'interdiction' or exclusion which refers to those music products, producers and audience which stay at the margins of the music industry.

It's important to notice that the marginality is not directly dependent from the lack of interest of the audience but may be due to production systems that reject in the media and cultural industry products and producers at the margins. Besides in this process we need to include those music producers who are not accepted in the industry but even those who decided to be outside of the mainstream music market. The margin can also be a conscious choice, as in the case of those music producers who develop their professionalism and their creativity outside of the mainstream (Colombo, 2001, p.31).

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<sup>20</sup> This issue will be developed in the next empirical chapter talking about independent music in Milan.

These four processes enable us to conceptualize the notion of the margin and of independent as a mobile and complex terrain. The author uses the metaphor of the water's edge in order to explain the fluid, changing and ambiguous nature of interrelationships between the culture industry and its margins in which the boundaries are continuously renegotiated and exist in a state of tension between different economic and organizational issues, modes of production and distribution, and a set of dynamics of the cultural industry<sup>21</sup> and of the socio-cultural context and finally the social discourses, values and beliefs, “the self-perception of the actors, who assign themselves social mandate and who want to defend, deny or determine a certain social membership” (Colombo, 2001, p. 41).

In this sense the terrain of the margins, which corresponds to the independent music scene, has to be understood as a dynamic and mobile space of interconnections, in which the discursive constructs of its members still play a certain role.

From this assumption, I will move to the second issue that I have left out from the previous analysis and that enables to better conceptualize the ambiguity and contradictions which are entailed in the notion of independent.

The second point, coming back to Strachan (2003)'s assumptions, is that, even though interactions with the corporate music industry take place, the independent DIY culture is still rooted in the social representations of independent music producers.

Even though the independent narratives are depicted in a celebratory ways and need therefore to be critically evaluated and pondered, it's important to point out that they still affect people actions and interactions.

Strachan (2003) suggests that motivations and expectations for remaining independent need to be understood in terms of the ideologies and in looking at the independent music sector not only from the perspective of musical production but even considering “the ideological construct relating to shared values and their place within scenes and networks” (Strachan, 2003, p. 33).

As Street (1993) explains it clearly, referring to the oppositions of a group of people against the closure of an independent music venue:

Whether or not indie music is truly independent, its rhetoric pretends that it is. And those who campaigned for a venue saw their music careers and their musical tastes as existing outside the national network or the

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<sup>21</sup> The author refers to a set of dynamics through which cultural products and producers, and audiences are integrated or rejected within the cultural industry. These are for the centralization and specialization of cultural production, organization of cultural products, the organization of cultural products in genres (Colombo, 2001, p. 30-40)

mainstream. Indeed the sense of otherness was crucial to the development of a sense of group identity, itself important for the creation of a group cohesion (Street, 1993, p. 50).

Street (1993) mentions the importance of the sense of belonging which is created in opposition to the mainstream culture.

The point is to try to understand why, even though the interconnections exist, independents give such importance to these narratives and to the opposition to the mainstream culture. Especially it's important to understand why in a situation of great interconnections between independent and corporate music industry, these interactions caused tensions in the independent sector.

We could say, following Becker (1982), that the independent narratives are valuable because they function as a set of conventions which are established in the independent music scene and which enable a better coordination of music production in the independent sector. Becker allows to understand how these conventions inform the way in which independent music scene members manage to produce music making sense of the art world and of the art work, and of regulating the coordination of activity. However for Becker is not clear why certain conventions and principles in different art worlds make this art world distinctive. On the contrary for Becker:

Art worlds typically have intimate and extensive relations with the world from which they try to distinguished themselves ... in some sense art worlds, worlds of commercial, craft, and folk art are parts of a larger social organization. So even though everyone involved understands and respects the distinctions which keep them separate, a sociological analysis should take account of how they are not so separate after all (Becker, 1982, p.36)

Becker enables us to consider how different art worlds cooperate but not why there are distinctive practices among them. It is not clear from this quotation if there are oppositional and power relations between one art world and another, but rather he seems to imply that there is a common agreement that other art worlds' conventions need to be respected.

What's left out from this explanation is the role that symbolic legitimacy and power relations can play in making the art worlds distinctive. I will now move to explain how Bourdieu's approach can help in understanding why oppositional practices serve as a symbolic legitimization of independent music.



## 4.7 Applying Bourdieu's Theory To The Notion Of Independent

Interestingly most of the assumptions made about the notion of independent have often referred to Bourdieu's (e.g. 1993) theorizations as a way of better understanding independent or autonomous music production. Many authors (Hesmondhalgh, 1998; Kruse, 2003; Webb, 2007) I have previously mentioned have analyzed the ways in which Bourdieu's theorization can perfectly suit to independent – alternative music production.

As I have explained, Bourdieu assesses that the field of cultural ( music) production is a field of forces in which power relations and hierarchies exist and are aimed at obtaining symbolic legitimacy, and prestige within the field.

Bourdieu explains that the field of cultural production is the site of struggle between two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle of hierarchization “favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically” and depending therefore to economic and political factors. In this case the legitimacy and prestige is measured in terms of economic success given by the public and prestige given by institutions. And secondly the autonomous principle of hierarchization which follows the principle of art for art's sake and therefore denigrates the economy and at the same time maintains a certain degree of independence from the power of institutions.

As he states:

the specificity of the literary and artistic fields is defined by the fact that the more autonomous it is, ... the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization, but also that whatever is its degree of independence , it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses those of economic and political profit. The more autonomous the field becomes, the more favourable the symbolic power balance is to the most autonomous producers and the more clear-cut is the division between the field of restricted production, in which producers produce for other producers, and the field of large scale production which is symbolically excluded and discredited” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 39).

Bourdieu refers here to the distinction between the fields of restricted production and of large-scale production. The field of restricted production is highly autonomous but not completely, and is a system producing cultural goods directed to a public of producers of cultural goods, while the large scale production is heteronomous so dependent but not completely to economic and political rules and is aimed for the public at large. This distinction clearly

reminds to the distinctions between the independent sector and the corporate music industry aforementioned. Even though as Kruse (2003) notices that Bourdieu refers to high or avant-garde art when talking about the field of restricted production, the concept of “production for producers” “ with a perfect circularity and reversibility of the relations of cultural production and consumption” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 118) fits with the independent music scene, as well as the celebration of non commerciality.

As I have already mentioned, independent grass-roots music production is often characterized in its main peculiarity by the closeness of fans and musicians at a point where “spectators become fans, fans become musicians, musicians are always already fans” (Shank, 1994, p.31). This assumption reminds to Bourdieu’s assumption of the field of restricted production as a field of production for producers.

Bourdieu makes clear that the autonomy in the field of restricted production depends upon its power to define its own criteria for the production and symbolic legitimacy independently to the economic and political field. And at the same time “the state of power relations among members of a field depends upon the overall degree of autonomy of the field, which manages to impose its own rules and values to the all set of producers including those who are closest to the dominant pole of the field and are more responsive to the external demands (i.g. the most heteronomous) (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 41).

This point allows us to understand that the autonomy or independency is a matter of symbolic consecration and legitimization within the field of cultural production.

The dichotomy between the two principles (the one based upon economic and political success and the other upon cultural prestige) implies a continuous struggle for hierarchization and symbolic legitimacy and this struggle explains the tensions and contradictions that we can find in the independent sector. As Bourdieu states:

Producers and vendors of cultural goods who ‘go commercial’ condemn themselves, and not only from an ethical or aesthetic point of view, because they deprive themselves of the opportunities open to those who can recognize the specific demands of this universe and who, by concealing from themselves and others the interests at stake in their practice, obtain the means of deriving profits from disinterestedness (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 75)

What Bourdieu means is that going commercial (or referring to the music industry selling out) is not only a matter of betrayal of ethical principles but rather it’s the loss of power and symbolic legitimacy within the field of restricted production in the long term. Hesmondhalgh (1997) explains Bourdieu’s assumptions by saying:

The danger for an independent in 'crossing over' is, in the terms of dance music culture itself, the loss of 'credibility': gaining economic capital in the short-term by having a hit in the national pop singles chart (or even having exposure in the mainstream or rock press) can lead to a disastrous loss of cultural capital for an independent record company (or an artist), affecting long-term sales drastically (Hesmondhalgh, 1998, p. 240).

Hesmondhalgh suggests that Bourdieu's theorization of the complex relationships between economic and cultural capital enables us to understand the contradictions amongst dance music producers between the discourses over the nature of the opposition to the music-industry. The contradiction stands in the fact that what is making the dance music scene economic sustainable is exactly what is in opposition:

Nevertheless, there are clearly contradictions at work here: the very form which sustains the independent sector at the heart of dance music's institutional challenge is widely felt to be a problematic one (Hesmondhalgh, 1998, p. 240).

Bourdieu enables us to understand the contradictions and tensions which we can find in a field of restricted production (the independent music sector) in which the symbolic legitimization is given by the possession of the cultural capital, but then music producers need inevitably to be engaged with the economic capital.

Besides Bourdieu's perspective explains why the incorporation of the autonomous-independent music production within the music industry can encounter many oppositions and tensions, because it's the symbolic legitimacy of independent music that it's at stake. Maintaining the social discourses gravitating around the independency from the economic and political fields allows to distinct the independent cultural capital and to maintain a symbolical legitimisation in the independent music sector.

As Magaudda (2009) explains referring to the institutionalization of independent music in Italy and to the incorporation of independent music in the national market, Bourdieu's theory enables us to point out how in the intersections between independent music and the mainstream music industry what is at stake is a symbolic struggle occurring between the symbolic legitimacy of cultural capital of the independent sector and on the other side the pragmatic tendency towards the integration of independent music in the national music industry. In this perspective he suggests: "the concept of 'independent music' is not a shared and historically static one, but rather constitutes a battlefield where different stake-holders

and interest groups confront each other on symbolic and industrial production levels” (Magaudda, 2009, p. 276).

From this perspective we can see that there is not a common subjective representation of independent but rather different people will have different definitions depending on their level of interactions with the music industry.

That’s why for Bourdieu the researcher is not aimed at imposing an operational definition of independent music but rather “to describe the state of the struggles and of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 42).

The narratives of the independents tend to overestimate the autonomy of the independent sector because it allows a process of distinction but in fact the independent music scene lives as a site of forces in the tension between autonomy and heteronomy from interconnections to the political and economic fields.

Bourdieu’s analysis is interested in pointing out different principles of hierarchization, and the struggles among them and the way they can caused tensions among the fields. And Bourdieu’s model is more interesting, as Kruse (2003) suggests, in the theorization the restricted field of cultural production is meant to be never fully autonomous from the economic and political fields, but always being influenced by them.

The strength of Bourdieu’s model is of having theorized interconnectedness of the field of cultural production with other political and economic fields. Bourdieu’s analysis enable us to look at the interconnections between different fields, and the level to which they are independent or autonomous from each other.

Bourdieu allows therefore to look at the notion of independent not only in the opposition between independent labels and corporate recording industry, but rather to look at how the independence can be seen in its tension with the economic and political fields. This enables to understand that the notion of independent is determined by the narratives gravitating around the independent DIY culture but at the same time the independent music scene cannot be understood without looking at what it portrays to be independent from.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to analyze the complexity of the notion of independent. I have not tried to give an operational definition of what independence means, but rather to look at the different and contradictory elements that allow to understand independent music. I have not looked at independent from an aesthetic point of view, as a genre based category. I have instead tried to analyze how independent is a discursive and intellectual construct which has been highly influential in the common sense representations, and in the practices of music production and consumption. My attention has been therefore given to the social discourses of the independent culture. I have seen how these social discourses depict the independent attitudes, emphasizing the opposition to the mainstream music industry and celebrating the cooperative, authentic and innovative nature of the grassroots activities.

I have then suggested that some of the assumptions about the notion of independent are related to its theorization especially in music scene studies. As Strachan (2003) has pointed out, these studies have looked at grass-roots music making as something disconnected from the music industry. I have instead emphasized that the music scene perspective has not investigated enough the modes of music production, and how the independent DIY culture needs to be understood by looking within the economic system. Following Strachan (2003) I have suggested that the focus upon the subjective representation and the sense of belonging to the DIY ethic is not sufficient because musicians and music producers are involved in music production, that's why: "a central crux in understanding the relationship between industrial practice and group identities again rests upon the interplay between the industrial and ideology" (Strachan, 2003, p. 35).

Looking from this perspective, I have analyzed the approaches of Negus (1992) and Hesmondhalgh (1997, 1998, 1999), that look at the interactions between independent and major labels.

These approaches have suggested that interactions between independent and corporate music industry are often happening in processes of incorporation and of licensing or distribution deals, or of creation of semi-independent labels. However there are independents managing to maintain a level of autonomy from the music industry. Therefore it's useful to look at indies versus majors not in pure oppositional terms but to see them in continuous process moving between the independency and the interdependency, in which the narratives gravitating around the culture of independent still play a crucial role.

It's exactly in the interplay between several ideologies existing in the independent music scene, and industrial and economic dimensions of the music industry that we need to situate the notion of independent

Besides this opposition between indies versus majors is understood in the strict sense in relation to the recording industry, while I think that the notion of independence or interdependence can be used to analyze the relationships in much broader sense to include the whole music industry, including the live music industry, but even other cultural industries, the media, and politics.

There's a need for a new conceptualization of the notion of independent which allows to take into account changes taking place not only in the recording industry, to which the traditional definition of independent is referred, but even to broader economic, technological and political changes that can affect the independent music sector.

The next chapter will try to conceptualize a model to understand how an independent music scene needs to be explained in the interconnectedness among different dimensions.

# 5. An Analytical Model

## Introduction

This chapter is aimed to present a new understanding of the notion of music scene and of its independent circuits of music production. In the previous chapters I have addressed some criticisms of the music scene perspective and to its rootedness in micro-sociological analysis of grassroots music-making practices. This kind of assumptions has been given in the following chapter showing the music scene perspective is interlinked to the notion of independence how the notion of independence is interlinked to the one of music scene. Relying on these assumptions, in this chapter I will consider how we can attempt to provide a model to overcome the critical issues of the music scene perspective, and of the traditional understanding of the notion of independence. The model is influenced by different perspectives which have tried to consider cultural production within the influences of the social environment. I will now try to look at several models and perspectives which have allow for the situation of cultural production in a broader social environment, and to consider influences, which I will re-apply to the specific context of my research about the live music scene in Milan.

### 5.1 An Attempt To Provide A Multi-Layered Model To Analyze Independent Music Scenes

I will now try to provide a multi-layered model which enables us to analyze the circuits of independent live music production. This multi-layered model draws upon several critics I made to the music scene perspective, and to my understanding of the notion of independent. My criticisms focuses on three main areas which are interconnected but which I will now try now to distinguish.

- 1) The first critic suggests that the music scene perspective has been particularly focused upon micro-analysis of grass-roots music making practices and to the issue of identity formation and sense of belonging to the scene, while the analysis of music production and how it's incorporated in the music industry has been absent in music scene studies. The grassroots music-making practices have been depicted as authentic and independent from commercial and industrial processes. This issue is interconnected with the understanding of the notion of independence, which implies an autonomy of independent music from the dynamics of music production, distribution and consumption.

As I have already pointed out, this criticism has been made by Strachan (2003) who suggests that music scene studies “have been concerned with issues relating to identity politics with little consideration of how practices within those group cultures might be considered as ‘industrial’”(2003, p.12) and that the analysis of music production has been an under-researched area in these studies. Even Toynbee's (2000) work on music-making and creativity has been critical towards music scene studies because of the focus upon youth involvement in music-making as purely “expression and celebration of sociability” (2000, p. 81) rather than upon music production.

To this traditional understanding of music scene, I instead suggest the importance of looking networks gravitating around music scene as part of circuits of cultural production (e.g. du Gay, 1997). The analysis of music scene as circuits of cultural production implies the interest in its mechanism of production and consumption together with its set of values, beliefs and conventions. I have therefore suggested that Becker's (1982) application of the sociology of organization, in relations to what he terms ‘art worlds’, can be a first suggestion to a new understanding of music production, in the analysis of coordinated work aimed at producing art works.

Besides I will show in the next chapters, this implies that the networks of live music share common characteristics that we can find more broadly in the analysis of cultural and creative industries. Even though the social discourses gravitating around the notion of independent music are still crucial in determining music practices, and in determining the oppositional practices against the mainstream music industry, at the same time it's important to consider processes of professionalization and institutionalization that affect independent music production. As I have mentioned, the distinction between the ‘independent’ and ‘mainstream’ music industry is not to be meant in such oppositional



terms, but rather the notion of the margin and of independent needs to be conceptualized as a mobile and complex terrain.

However this first layer enables only to explain how the different circuits of independent live music works within the music scene, but not how they are interconnected to a social environment.

- 2) And relates to the second criticism I address in relation to the music scene perspective which fails to take into account the complexities of external dimensions which can affect the networks of live music gravitating in the music scene.

The second criticism is instead aimed at underlining how the micro-sociological analysis of music scenes has not analyzed constraints and possibilities given by the social environment.

Particularly in my critics, I have looked at how the music scene is therefore justified by the subjective representations of its members and is depicted as a self-contained entity neutral to the question of political and economic forces. I have therefore suggested that to the micro level of analysis of the different networks gravitating in the music scene, we need to consider another level of analysis which looks at how the music scene is in fact rooted in a social environment and needs to be understood in its interconnection to external dimensions.

From this point of view, there have been many studies which have attempted to take into account the different external dimensions that can affect cultural production.

One good example of the possible interlinks existing between cultural processes and other external dimensions is the model applied in the extended body of studies united under the name of production of culture perspective (e.g. Peterson, 1976; Crane, 1992), which draws upon Becker's (1982) perspective and upon the application of the sociology of organization to the study of art and cultural production. This body of studies is united by the assumption that symbolic elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are created, distributed, evaluated, taught, and preserved. The focus in these studies is therefore given to elements of culture being shaped in the mundane processes of their production (Peterson & Anand, 2004).

In reviewing the production of culture perspective, Peterson and Anand (2004) introduce a six-facet model of production. This model is aimed to analyze six factors that constrain or facilitate cultural production, which include technology, law and regulation, industry

structure, organization structure, occupational career, and market. The six dimensions emphasize the influences that the sociology of organization has upon the production perspective, because a great emphasis is given especially to analysis of occupational, organizational and industrial structures, regulatory issues, and finally technology. This model provides a way to see how cultural production, distribution and consumption can be enabled or inhibited by external influences. Peterson (1990) first used the model to analyze the changing patterns of music productions with the advent of rock in the 1950s showing how changes in technology, in the industrial structures of the music industry and in the occupational careers had an impact upon rock music.

In the article aforementioned (Peterson and Anand; 2004) and in other articles such as Down (2004) applying the production of culture perspective to the sociology of music, the six-facet model is presented providing examples of studies which have looked at each of the six factors singularly, instead at underlining the interconnections among them. The authors suggest that this scheme is a good way of organizing the body of studies using the production perspective, and that even though most studies are mentioned in conjunction with only one facet, most are relevant to other facets as well, but these interconnections are not shown.

There are several examples referring to a single dimension and its impact on symbolic production: the technological influence analyzing the impact of digitalization upon music production; the regulatory and law dimension looking at the influences of copyright laws among publishing; the industry structure referring to differences in symbolic production in small competing firms or in few vertically integrated oligarchal firms; the organizational structure looking at the different organizations in cultural industries, with bureaucratic and entrepreneurial form; the occupational career dimension emphasizing the impact of forms of contracts and rewards upon artistic careers; and finally the market influence upon the structure of tastes and genres.

These are just some examples of the different analyses that studies using the production of culture perspective offer but in the studies it seems that the six dimensions and their influences upon symbolic production are treated separately.

As several authors (Hesmondhalgh, 2006) suggest, this model provides a list of the possible influences that can affect cultural processes but doesn't incorporate them in a systematic model. The several examples that Peterson and Anand (2004) provide are showing how different studies have emphasized the importance of different dimensions

but not how these facets are mutually related, and how they are all equally necessary to be considered. As Hesmondhalgh (2006) suggests “we are simply asked to choose from a menu of possible determinants, whereas Bourdieu theorizes structure and action in cultural production as part of a comprehensive social theory.”(2006, p. 217) Instead of the production of culture perspective, Hesmondhalgh (2006) comes to evaluate the usefulness of Bourdieu’s (1993) field model to the study of media and cultural production, considering the interconnectedness of the field of cultural production with other fields, the economic and political fields constituting the ‘field of power’, but also the educational and intellectual fields.

By identifying key fields within a particular social space, Bourdieu enables the theorization of the interconnectedness between different fields, and the degree to which they are autonomous or heteronomous from each other.

The great effectiveness of Bourdieu’s sociology of cultural production stems from the balance achieved between, on the one hand, the emphasis on the drive for autonomy characteristic of the field of cultural production from the early 19th century onwards, and, on the other, his stress on the interconnectedness of the field of cultural production with other fields, especially the economic and political fields constituting the ‘field of power’, but also the educational and intellectual fields. This emphasis on interconnectedness and power makes Bourdieu’s sociology of cultural production superior to the huge corpus of pluralist sociology of culture, represented at its best by ‘the production of culture’ perspective (Hesmondhalgh, 2006, p. 217).

According to Hesmondhalgh (2006) Bourdieu is useful for his theorization of the interconnectedness among different fields, but it has some limitations when it comes to analyze contemporary cultural production.

Hesmondhalgh (2006) refers in particular to the fact that what Bourdieu’s names the large scale or mass production, so cultural industries are left unexamined in his analysis of cultural production in field theory. And at the same time the impact of media is absent in field theory, and there are limitations on the value of field theory, for understanding contemporary media and cultural production.

Therefore in *The Cultural Industries* (2002, 2007), Hesmondhalgh suggests the importance of considering several dimensions in analyzing the influences and changes taking place in cultural industries. He points out that these changes cannot be reduced to a single factor, because this will imply a certain form of reduction or determinism. There has been mainly three forms of reductionisms in analyzing transformations in the media and cultural industries: technological determinism in which an excessive role is given to

the impact of technology, while technology should be seen in relation to other processes, as William has suggested (1974); a economic determinism which considers economic forces as driving cultural and social changes; and finally a cultural determinism which the author mentions quoting Neuman (1991, p. 17, quoted in Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p. 82) and which refers to a systems in which values and beliefs have casual primacy. To these forms of reductionism Hesmondhalgh instead tries, in order to analyze changes in cultural industries in the last 30 years, “to combine an analysis of economic, technological and cultural processes with other important dimensions, including politics, legal and regulatory frameworks, and internal dynamics of cultural-industry organizations themselves” (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, p. 83). In his conclusion, Hesmondhalgh (2002) suggests that he has taken into account transformations and changes more than continuities, looking at the macro-external factors to the cultural industries.

The author particularly focuses upon the Downturn in the 1970s, and its impact upon new regulations and economic system based upon neo-liberalism, the advent of a new flexible and networked organizational system, together with socio-cultural changes in the ways in which culture was becoming central to social life, and technological changes which are external to the cultural industries.

However what’s not clear about Hesmondhalgh’s (2002) and Peterson (1990)’s perspectives is how cultural production is in fact rooted in a social environment which implies structural constraints and possibilities. Their perspectives go in the direction of providing an historical account of transformations which can affect the cultural industries, but they don’t allow for an understanding of which dimensions contribute to enable or inhibit cultural production in given periods of time.

My perspective instead tries to point out how, in a given period of time, the circuits of independent live music production which constitute the music scene (which is the first layer of my analysis) are rooted in a social terrain which implies structural constrains but even possibilities.

This layer enables us to understand how actions, interactions and the narratives gravitating around independent music are not carried out in a social vacuum but are instead subjected to structural constraints (Bourdieu, 1989). This layer is the one missing from the interactionist perspective of art worlds and from the scene perspective.

From this point of view, Bourdieu's theorization of the field of cultural production as a field of forces between economic and political fields that can affect the field of cultural production is central in this discussion.

This second layer of analysis attempts to give account of how the circuits of independent live music need to be understood within a terrain which is meant as field of forces which stand in equilibrium.

My attempt is to theorize that the live music scene in Milan in the particular moment of my research is in rooted in a social terrain which lives in a certain equilibrium of different forces which can be summarized in different dimensions: media, politics, policy-regulations, economy, culture. As in Kruse's (2003) application of Bourdieu's perspective, the study of music production needs to be situated in the intersections of different social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions which stand in a sort of conjuncture. This conjuncture or equilibrium of forces is fluid, and depends upon the specific time during which the research that was conducted, that is, from January to July 2011, and this period has been characterized by particular economic, political, cultural, and technological contingencies which mutually influence networks of music productions. For now I will try only to present briefly the dimensions and I will especially look at what is more related to the specificity of my research objects, namely how networks of independent live music are inhibited or fostered by these dimensions: politics, policy-regulation, media, culture, economy:

- considering the media, I'm interested to include more broadly the role of digitalization and of ICTs upon live music and more generally the music industry, and especially the importance of SNSs and mobile technologies upon the interactions of music producers. But it even refers to the importance of critical relations that networks of independent production have with broadcasting networks.
- the economic dimension refers to the business models, market dynamics, financing mechanisms, industrial and organizational dimensions, and occupational careers as they have been largely theorized in the production of culture perspective (Peterson, 1990). Particularly I refer to an economic system which is affected by economic crisis and large unemployment of young people, to the crisis of the recording industry which has an impact upon the development of the live music industry, and

at the local level of the city it refers to development of a night life economy or more generally of an economy of events, and the competitions of other cultural industries which play a more important role than music in the economy of the city. But even to the broader development of cultural economy (Hesmondhalgh, 2002) and how this shift implies changes in terms of the advent of a new flexible and networked economic system.

- The institutional-regulatory dimension includes the principles, the laws, but also the real power relations in a given sphere and is instead looking at the specific regulations and laws but even policy making strategies which can inhibit or enable live music entertainment in a city. This implied the inclusion of other regulations and policies that may not have been made with the intention of affecting the music sector - interested for example in training and education, social welfare, tourism, licensing - but that may have a significant impact in production and consumption of music (Brown, Cohen & O'Connor, 1998).
- The political dimension is related to the importance of political and partisan distinctions play in different circuits of cultural production. The importance of politics was particularly crucial in the occasion of my research which was during the administrative electoral campaign, which had a strong impact in overestimating the importance of this connection.
- Finally the cultural dimension instead refers to a system of beliefs and values. It refers to the socio-cultural context in which certain cultural values can actually favor or not live music entertainment or consider it as a nuisance, a noise or as art, as a job or youth entertainment. More generally it can refer to the traditional distinction between high and popular music. All these cultural values can have an impact upon the live music production in a given environment, favoring or inhibiting its development. Particularly the identity and representation of a given context can be crucial in affecting the ways in which independent music production can be favored or not.

These are some of the features which characterized the complexities of intersections among these factors (media, institutional-regulatory-political, economic-organizational-industrial and cultural), which allow to situate the circuits of independent live music production in a momentary equilibrium of forces between the different dimensions. This

equilibrium is historically contingent and is depending upon the local peculiarities of each socio-historically context.

- 3) However the terrain of forces between these dimensions doesn't correspond to a physical space as in the traditional understanding of local music scenes. In the traditional perspective a local music scene was confined in a bounded physical space and was attached to localized music-making practices. This has been the traditional way in which music scenes have been understood in their correspondence to a physical space, traditionally a city (e.g. the Liverpool indie-rock scene, the Seattle grunge music scene). These studies have taken for granted a physically bounded and self-enclosed definition of space, which corresponds to the city and directly to the music scene. In particular, many ethnographic studies (e.g. Cohen, 1991) have emphasized that the involvement in a music scene was associated to attachment and identification with a particular locality. Here it comes the third critic to music scene perspective and to its incapacity of taking into account the networked, mediated and mobile nature of musical practices, which usually go beyond the locality. In this theorization, I'm here referring to Urry's (2005) mobility approach which enables an understanding of how all mobile networks are highly dependent upon intermittent meetings and 'meetingness' which is crucial element for understanding people's networks. The social environment, in which circuits of music production operate, transcends the dimension of physical boundaries of the city and is instead constructed in the networks of music-making practices. In the sense this territory has to be understood as a contested space of tensions between trajectories which remains in the local and which go beyond the local. This terrain works as a magnet in which centrifugal and centripetal trajectories take place and determined the mobile and mediated practices of the independents.

## Conclusion

In the chapter I have tried to provide a multi-layered analysis of the circuits of independent live music production. The attempt has been in the direction of creating a sort of tridimensional model which takes into account three different layers, which make reference to different critics I have addressed to music scene perspective and to the notion of independent. To summarize, the first layer allows us to consider at the same time the actions, interactions and social discourses among music producers, trying to consider them as situated in circuits of cultural production. Then we have a second layer of analysis which seeks to situate the circuits of cultural production within a social terrain, a field of forces, which can be summarized in the following dimensions: culture, economy, media, politics and policy-regulation. These forces make sense of how the music scene is subject to structural constraints determined by the social environment.

And finally this terrain, instead of being reduced to the physical space of the city of Milan, is meant as a contested space of interconnectedness, of flows and of centripetal and centrifugal practices that affect the circuits of live music production.

In the next chapter, I will present the methodology used in the research project suggesting possible intersections which the critics and assumption made in the multilayered model and after that in the next chapter I will try to look at these three layers separately, even though there will be many interconnections among them.



# 6. Research Design And Methodology

## Introduction

In the previous chapter, I developed a theoretical framework appropriate for the analysis of social relations, activities and networks in the independent music scene of Milan. In this chapter I will consider the methodological issues showing how the critics to the music scene debate entail some methodological challenges, that will now be discussed.

Given the object of study, the analysis of the interactions existing in the networks that comprise the music scene of Milan, a qualitative methodology is applied as this is suited to the exploratory nature of this work. The main aim of the thesis was to gain a better understanding of the actions and interactions in the independent production and performance in the context of Milan and this aim required the need of using a qualitative methodology which would allowed an exploration of networks of independent music.

In the thesis there is therefore a critical relationship between theoretical and methodological assumptions, which hasn't to be considered as an absence of initial theoretical assumptions but rather as the presence of "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer, 1954) which have helped in guiding but without determining my fieldwork.

In the chapter, I will therefore discuss some methodological challenges and issues of the research process such choosing the research questions, selecting the sample and the methods, my involvement in the field, ethical issues.

## 6.1 Research questions

As I have already mentioned, the main object of this thesis is constituted by the networks of independent music production and performance, in their interconnectedness to a media environment, a economic, regulatory, political and cultural context. The research was guided by an initial main research question which was followed by several sub-questions, which can be summarized as follows:

- Broad Question:

What are the dynamics and networks of the live independent music scene of Milan?

- Sub-Questions:

1. Narratives

How is the scene perceived by the different actors involved?

What's the value given to the scene independence or not from local state intervention and from the major music industry?

2. Actions

Who are the main actors and which roles are they playing? Which are the different level of commitment? Which venues and events contribute to create the scene?

3. Interactions

How are those networks taking place? How are the actors working together and how one can influence the work of the other and vice versa?

Who are the cultural intermediaries and which are the associations or collectives lobbying in the scene? Which dynamics of inclusions and exclusions are taking place?

How does the scene keep regenerating itself?

What is enhancing these interactions (e.g. multitasking roles, gigs exchange)? And what is instead inhibiting these interactions (e.g. lack of information, physical distance)?

4. Reactions

Which tactics and processes of negotiation are the actors adopting?

How are technological (internet) economic, institutional (regulations and policy making strategies and cultural affecting the live music sector?

These questions, which have been initially constructed, has guided the fieldwork, the selections of the sample and the methodology used.

## 6.2 Sample and Sampling

The construction of the sample was defined and adjusted during the fieldwork according to the flexibility of the “theoretical sampling” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) which enables the selection of groups or categories of people to study on the basis of their relevance for the analysis of music scene in Milan. As Mason suggests: “theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample, which is meaningful theoretically because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation” (1996, p. 93-94). Furthermore, I constructed the sample progressively because it allowed me to adapt it to the context and the situation (Bichi, 2002, p.80.) and to take into account different people involved who appeared relevant in the course of the investigation, and putting the different attitudes and experiences together. My idea was to create a high variability in the sample in order to understand the complexities and differences existing in the different circuits of independent live music. Of course considering that different people had different experiences and relationships, but also different points of view and opinions, enabled me to have multiple perceptions of reality, which I could put in a critical relation.

At the beginning of my fieldwork I relied upon the knowledge of my informants, who were able to understand the relevance of my research and translate it into their everyday experiences.

I realized that the choice of the informants and the entry point I would take were going to be very critical in determining the course of the fieldwork.

When I actually considered the most effective entry point for locating some useful informants, one common suggestion was to start from music development agencies, associations or organizations promoting local music or gathering information on live music venues and also musicians collectives at a local level. In the analysis of international studies about live music, it was common to find the existence of local organizations and bodies representing musicians and music producers, something that could not be found in the case of Milan. I could find only a few associations working at a national level aimed either at promoting independent record labels (MEI<sup>22</sup>, Audiocoop<sup>23</sup> and PMI, independent music producers) and or at gathering organizers and producers of live music performances (Assomusica), but including especially big operators with big acts (Live Nation was one of the partners). I started to

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<sup>22</sup> MEI (Meeting of independent record labels) is the Italian music expo of the independent record labels.

<sup>23</sup> Audiocoop is the association born with MEI, gathering some of the independent record labels. Its aim is of gathering and representing independent record labels internationally and at a institutional level.

consider that more informal associations and organizations should be a more useful starting point, or rather that I could rely upon informants not embedded in any institutional organization but anyway key players in the different circuits of independent live music.

More than that I have used a snowball technique which implied that most of my interviewees have been selected being recommended by other people I already interviewed.

By using a snow-ball technique, I selected new interviewees operating at different level in the live music sector in Milan (including musicians, venues managers, booking agents etc.), together with some respondents working outside of the sector but strongly influencing it, such as people working in the local state (consultants and politicians) or people involved in the music industry.

I would like now to summarize the possible disadvantages and problems entailed in relying upon informants and in using the snowball technique. Firstly informants had a key role in guiding me through the different live music circuits existing in Milan, but even other methods were used in order to avoid that their advices would play an integral part in my understanding of the field. The risk of interpreting the field as my informants described this to me was high, especially at the beginning when I didn't know that much about the field and I had to rely upon their knowledge. That's because these people had already developed a personal framework to understand the world I was aiming to study (Bichi, 2002). Another possible risk could be that my interviewees were either recommending people to interview, who were not related to the research object, or were presenting me so that the new interviewee would actually misunderstanding the significance of my research, which was something I could solve during the interview by introducing myself and my research project.

I even tried to address these challenges by using other methods more than the interviews such as participant observations and document analysis which especially at an initial stage played a key role in my understanding of the field. For example document analysis enabled me to understand which could be the people I could interview independently from the suggestions of my respondents.

Secondly one of the elements to be taken into account in the selection of the sample through informants and by using the snowball technique is that the construction of the network of interviewees can be influenced by the relations of friendship existing between people interviewed and people recommended to be interviewed by other interviewees. However, since these networks are based on friendship-type relationships, even in the case of the

professional relationship, it is difficult to think that the relationships made during the fieldwork were not based upon similar assumptions.

Otherwise in other situations the interviewees may suggest either people in higher positions of power or more famous in order to show their closeness and their good placement within the networks. All these statements are both important assumptions of research, but also factors to be taken into account to critically analyze how the sample was selected.

Considering instead the sample, it was constituted by the 45 interviewees to which the big amount of people with whom I had informant conversations needs to be added.

The choice of my respondents was not based upon socio-demographic characteristics but rather considering the roles these people were playing, considering the multi-tasking and multi-sited nature of activities and networks taking place.

I was trying to choose my sample selecting people depending on the roles they were covering and I was aimed at using this criteria of the selection of roles as a possible way of dividing my sample into groups (choosing for example a certain number of musicians, music journalists and booking agents, venues owners and so on). The point was immediately from the first interviews I conducted, that most of the subjects were actually playing many roles on a professional and amateur basis. Therefore I couldn't rely upon the assumption that each individual was only subscribing to a main role, since the main role played was in many cases not clear to the respondents themselves. Furthermore, it was not easy to define which criteria were determining the main role played: economic reward, personal satisfaction or artistic fulfillment?

It was instead in the complex mixing of tasks carried out on a professional and amateur basis, that were making individuals able to define their identity, and that were enabling them to make a living from music. Hence the multitasking nature of my interviewees had a strong impact even on the construction of my sample because I was starting to realize that the complexities of roles played were influencing people's actions and interactions, and therefore it was not something I could underestimate.

I had therefore decided to take into account the multiplicities of roles carried out, bearing in mind that I wanted to reproduce the various forms of activities taking place in the live music circuits in Milan. Besides the multitasking attitude was interlinked to the mobile nature of activities carried out, which couldn't be restricted to a single organization.

That's why the list of the interviewees is indicated in the appendix considering the roles carried on by the interviewee, and not their socio-demographic characteristics. For now I want

just to say that the sample has tried to cover most of the roles played on a more professional or amateur basis (musicians, DJs, promoters, music managers, music venue owners, music journalists, music publisher, record managers, artistic directors, press agents) in the independent live music circuits in Milan, trying again to take into account other people who could possibly be interacting with this sector.

I think that anyway it's interesting to start saying something about the socio-demographic characteristics of my respondents that I didn't directly ask but that I could reconstruct by looking at the different experiences and stories of my interviewees, and especially in the information I could find in the internet about their biographies.

Considering the age, I would say that most of my respondents were in the age group between 25 and 40. Only very few were younger, and the older were usually those people having more important professional roles in the music industry (such as a music publisher in a major, big promoters) or were covering institutional roles in some organizations, associations (such as the president of ARCI cultural association<sup>24</sup> or of MEI) or in the City Council or the Councilor of Trade or the Councilor of Culture).

As regards the gender as I expected looking at other studies about independent music scenes, my respondents have been mostly male, and of the only six women interviewed, three were contacted after having interviewed their partners, and in many cases they were working for or with the partner. Only white people have been interviewed and only white people have been met in the participant observations.

Regarding the education, I can say that my respondents were generally having higher education, but with a high number of people who withdrew from University before completion of their courses. But this characteristics will be detailed later on in the analysis.

Looking instead at their geographical location, only some of my interviewees were living in Milan. Some of them were living outside the city, some moved to Milan and some left Milan during the fieldwork. Some were temporarily coming to Milan.

From the beginning of the fieldwork and from the interviews, it was possible to point out the mobile nature of life experiences of people touring, people working in Milan without living here, people leaving or coming to Milan and so on. Therefore the sampling has not been restricted to people living and working permanently in Milan.

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<sup>24</sup> ARCI (Recreational and Cultural Association in Italy) is an Italian association of social promotion. It gathers local associations dealing with various topics: culture (art, film / video, literature / poetry, music, theatre / dance), tourism, human, social work, community service and international solidarity. Only in the Milanese area it gathers around 160 clubs, some of which are active independent live music venues.

Even though my research looks at Milan as major focus of attention, I have tried to take into account the different careers, relationships and interactions of my respondents which couldn't be restricted only within the city of Milan. I have done several attempts to restrict my field to a particular physical space but that was not enabling to understand the different circuits of independent music. That's why as the next chapters will show, networks of independent music production and performance cannot be restricted to the local context of the city of Milan.

## 6.3 Methods

On the basis of the theoretical assumptions and characteristics of the fieldwork, I have relied upon three types of methodological enquiry. The combination of interviews, participant observation of activities and document analysis provided ways of understanding the independent live music sector in Milan.

Additionally, I decided to use a visual help as an input in order to help the interviewees to work out and explain their relations by drawing and discussing their social networks<sup>25</sup>. Asking my interviewees to give a self-description of their networks was a way to understand how these relations were constructed and more specifically maintained both by face to face and mediated communication..

It should be suggested that instead of asking people to draw and talk about their networks I could rely upon more sophisticated methods offered by Social Network Analysis (e.g. Wellman, 2001; Crossley, 2007). I thought about the possibility but I finally understood that this perspective was not actually addressing my research questions, but rather was only graphically tracing the network of relationships considering its nodes and its links in a certain moment of the research. It was not instead taking into account how the networks were constructed, maintained or how were evolving and more specifically the multi-sited and multi-tasking activities, the values and beliefs which were determining these networks. For these reasons, I have considered the choice of using SNA unproductive and I have instead chosen to let my respondents represent how their network was shaped in order to let me reflect upon their relationships during the interviews.

### 6.3.1 Interviews

During my fieldwork I conducted 40 interviews<sup>26</sup> (with 45 interviewees because 4 interviews were conducted with more than more subject) lasting for about 1 hour and 15 minutes each. These were face to face interviews, happening in settings which were chosen by my interviewees, such as workplaces, bars, clubs, public spaces and only once in a private house. On two occasions I conducted Skype interviews. The choice of conducting Skype interviews has been developed during the fieldwork for practical reasons. During the fieldwork I have

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<sup>25</sup> In the Appendix there are some examples of drawings of network made by the respondents.

<sup>26</sup> The outline of the interview is contained in the Appendix.



found out that many people, while working in the music live in Milan, lived far away from the city and attended the city only for professional reasons or for the music entertainment. In some cases I managed to meet them before or after music events while in others it was impossible. However, the possibility of conducting interviews via Skype became quite important, especially when I related it with some reflections about the importance of mediated communication practices played in the practices of independent music producers. The interviews were conducted mostly between the period of my fieldwork which lasted from January 2011 to July 2011. 3 preliminary interviews were conducted before the fieldwork started, and 2 interviews were conducted in September 2011 with 2 people I didn't manage to interview before.

I used semi-structured interviews, meaning that a grid of relevant questions (which can be found in the Appendix) was used as a guide interviewees were given scope to elaborate on particular issues they considered to be important. This grid has been used as a flexible tool and has been adjusted and refined in the course of fieldwork when significant issues have emerged.

The interview usually started as a life story interview (Bertaux, 1976), since my initial input to my interviewees was: "I'd like you to tell me something about your story and your experience in live music in Milan...". This input enabled me to take into account a diachronic perspective, emphasizing the importance of looking at social relations, and logics of actions. The life stories are meant as "stories of practices" (Bertaux, 1976), and therefore serve as a way to find out practical knowledge, providing descriptions of personal experiences and their contexts. It was my starting point in order to explore people's backgrounds, life and career trajectories and personal and professional relationships. Interviewees often described important events, places or people, explained reasons why they changed jobs, why they came to or left Milan.

Hence, while in the initial part of the interview I encouraged my respondents to talk about their own experiences, later I tried to investigate the social discourses gravitating around the meaning of independent music. Talking about the narratives existing around the independent, DIY attitude enabled me to understand the relationships existing between the music industry and with the local state. In this way I wanted to bring out whether the narratives and discourses gravitating around the independency from a local state or from the music industry were still playing a pivotal role in defining the actions, interactions and non-interactions of the respondents. On this concern, one of the issues my respondents were more eager to talk

about was the problem the live music sector was facing in Milan, due to restricting measures adopted by the City Council. And as I have explained earlier, this topic became of particular relevance after the closure of several venues and because it was part of the political agenda of the electoral campaign of the left wing party.

In these sense I followed Howard Becker's (1982) idea that in order to study the conventions of an art world, which are usually taken for granted, the best way is to encourage people to complain about this world. Complaints are in Becker's idea the best way to bring out conventions.

The assumptions that rely upon this choice is that people are not always able to reflectively talk about their conventions which become customary, while they can be reconstructed by taking into account their complaints and the problems they see in the art world.

Therefore because of the great diversity of people I interviewed, interviews didn't work always in the same way but instead depending upon the interviewees.

For instance for the two Councilors I interviewed, the idea of using a life story approach was rather impossible, because of the little amount of time they could devote to the interview, and because of the institutional roles they were covering. I opted therefore for a more structured set of questions about the different projects and policies, and their opinions about the situation of live music in Milan. The outcome of these two interviews suggested to me that it was better to study institutional practices from document analysis rather than interviews in which these people were actually giving me a set of standardized answers. As I mentioned before, for example, participant observations I undertook in the municipal offices were of great help in understanding some regulations and bureaucratic constraints music producers face much more than any account I could have received from an interview.

Other methodological challenges in the choice of the interview as a method of inquiry related to the fact that some of the people interviewed were commonly used to the journalistic kind of interview, often being interviewed (especially musicians) or conducting interviews themselves (music journalists and radio speakers) .

Therefore I have to make some differences in the interviews I undertook considering the diversity of my respondents. Interviews worked well in the case especially of venue managers, promoters, and booking agents, people who were not commonly interviewed and who were eager to talk about the problems they were facing with live music.

On the contrary, it was difficult to conduct interviews with radio journalists. In this case of musicians instead, the most established, were commonly used to be interviewed by journalists

and I had therefore to differentiate my position from the one of a music journalist, explaining to them the different level of conversation I was trying to establish from a traditional journalistic interview, which is usually shorter and .

### **6.3.2 Ethnography: Participant Observation, Conversations and Document Analysis**

The ethnographic approach, in which participant observation is a main method, perfectly fitted in my research object and was used in order to analyze the actions and interactions existing among the members of the different circuits of independent live music in Milan, which were the central focus of my research.

In considering the relevance of observation I mean both the observation of social practices, and the observation of the products of these practices, following Cardano (2003) “the natural documents” which refer to all documents produced online and offline by individuals without any request by the researcher. In the case of my fieldwork these documents ranged from blogs, websites, letters, articles, flyers, posters, fanzines, songs, webzines to more official documents such as licences, regulations, and laws the City Council adopted in order to regulate noise emissions. It is important to note that in initial document analysis most of these materials were collected online (especially looking at webzines, music websites, blogs, web magazines). The corpus of documents at my disposal has been increasing in quantity and type during the fieldwork. The more I contacted and interviewed people, the more I started adding or being added in Facebook and I was added to their newsletters, and the more I came to know people and music events.

Besides I have always looked for information about the people to interview before the interview, and about things they suggested me after the interviewed.

To these documents, I also added reports and books, such as MeglioMilano report<sup>27</sup>, ‘The city of Music, a resource for Milan’ which contains expert interviews and which gives an overview of music production in Milan but with a larger focus upon classic music and mainstream popular music.. The report and the conversation I had with one of the researchers working on this project was of significant importance at the beginning of the research. And

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<sup>27</sup> MeglioMilano, a non-profit organisation, founded in 1988 with the aim of organising projects and investigations related to improving the quality of life.

secondly there has been a book *Suonare il paese prima che cada* (*Playing the country, before it falls*) published at the end of my fieldwork about the stories of established Italian independent musicians, which, together with the interview with the author and the book presentation, has given me some new insights regarding independent music in Italy.

Document analysis played a key role especially in the initial stage of the research when I was in exploring the field, but even in the final stages when I was analysing the interviews.

During the fieldwork, document analysis<sup>28</sup> has been accompanied by the participant observation<sup>29</sup> I undertook in several concerts, parties, and gathering moments. I conducted participant observations in music venues and during music events in order to grasp the different relations and networks characterizing the circuits of independent music.

However participant observations, even though at the beginning it was meant to be in music venues during concerts, finally happened to be in several settings where there was no music performed, such as pubs, clubs, bars. As I entered in the field I realized that there were gathering moments of socialization happening outside of live music performances that could be useful moment of observations.

Participant observations have therefore been crucial in analyzing practices of socializations taking place among the different circuits of independent music production.

The importance that participant observations have played depended upon a new understanding of mediated and face-to-face interactions, and of a new understanding of places which must be rethought as gathering spaces, as locations of intersections of activities, relationships and connections (Massey, 1995). Therefore, for example, participant observations taking place during concerts served as a way of analysing how activities, relationships and networks manifested themselves in a physical space (the music venue), which is something different then observing subjects in their natural settings for a prolonged period of time as traditional ethnography does.

What I'm suggesting is that the ethnographic studies of music scenes (Cohen, 1991; Finnegan, 1989) have analysed the localized nature of music making practices without considering the great mobility of activities and relationships.

To give an example, when Cohen (1993) describes the meaning of ethnography in its strict ethnographic sense she points out that ethnography (1993, p. 124) traditionally includes

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<sup>28</sup>Document analysis included the consultation of many music websites, webzines, web-blogs, webpages of the independent bands, records labels, promoters, music events, festivals, fanpages, facebook pages (the list is included in the bibliography).

<sup>29</sup>The list of participant observations and of the observation grid is included in the Appendix.

“prolonged face-to-face contacts with members of the local group”. In this definition the prolonged face-to-face interactions are probably meant to replicate the prolonged face to face interactions that people under enquiry have, because they live in physical closeness to each other. But this was not really the case with my respondents in Milan where the great mobility and fragmentation of their activities and social relationships was often forcing them to communicate and interact on a mediated basis and then to find some social gathering moments to meet up. The assumption that interactions were not given only by a face to face communication but even by a mediated communication have changed the methodological tools useful to understand activities and networks of live music.

This point is made by Strachan (2003) in his study of micro independent record labels in UK in which he suggests that prolonged face-to-face interactions were actually unfeasible considering the decentralized nature of the scene he wanted to study. In his case (Strachan, 2003), as I will suggest in mine, people’s interactions were facilitated by mediated communication, and were sometimes accompanied by face-to-face interactions especially taking place during social events, such as concerts or parties. In some cases these were the only occasions when people were able to meet and up. As Strachan pointed out, quoting Leedy and Ormrod (2001, p. 157), ethnography traditionally requires that ‘intense time is spent in the group’s natural setting, allowing the researcher to observe and record processes that would not be observed otherwise’. Since my interviewees were multitasking and were often collaborating to different projects, with different people and in different places, the possibility of finding a ‘natural setting’ was very complicated.

On the contrary, as I have suggested, the multi-sited and multi-tasking activities of independent music producers have made participant observations even more crucial, because participant observations have allowed to investigated the importance of gathering moments.

Besides during participant observations I was usually involved in casual and informal conversations. In most of the cases these conversations were of great help in allowing me to get to know more things about how live music works in Milan.

The participant observations and the informal conversations I undertook served as a starting point for interviews. That’s why the interviews started by the end of January after having an exploratory period lasting a month, in which I have tried to attend several concerts to meet people I knew who could introduce me to other people. I soon realized that it could be easier if I was meeting the possible interviewee, having a conversation and asking directly for an email contact to organize the appointment.

And after the interviews I usually tried to meet my interviewees again going to concerts, and places where I could meet them again, or where they invited me. This was a very useful tool to gain access to the field and trust from my interviewees. My fieldwork became a process of “gradual building up of trust” (O’Reilly, 2009, p.175) and friendship. Attendance of several concerts, music events and festivals together with meetings and social events, friendships established with some of the members, became actually part of the research I undertook. This is because, as I started to go to get in touch with people, I realized that the importance of rapport building was crucial not only for my ethnography (Madden, 2010) but especially for the world I was studying which was actually based on a system of reputation and trust and of friendship.

## 6.4 My Involvement

I will now try to reflect upon the ways in which my involvement in the field could have influenced my research. As I have explained in presenting the above discussion of my research approach, I think that questioning my position as an insider or outsider to the field can actually be an interesting source of data in itself.

As Bennett (2002) suggests, in studies of music scenes there is little work done reflecting critically upon the use of insider knowledge and upon its methodological implications and its impact upon the research data.

I did not begin this research from the position of an already established insider, as it often happened in researches about this topic (e.g., Hodkinson, 2000). Surprisingly for popular music studies, I was not even a musician and I was not involved in any kind music activity. I say surprisingly because when I approached popular music studies, I noticed that most of popular music scholars especially those studying music making practices in local contexts were very in some cases musicians by themselves (e.g. Bennett, 2000) and were pointing out the easiness they encountered in having access and in understanding the field, because they could rely upon all the knowledge and the relationships they had before starting the research or being musicians they could better be introduced to musicians because there was a communality of interests and practices. At the beginning of my research I therefore thought that the position as ‘outsider’, being involved neither as musician nor as music operator, could limit the possibility of studying music making practices in Milan, negatively affecting my fieldwork. This idea came back many times during the research because people tended usually to ask me: ‘Are you studying music in Milan, so what do you play?’, taking therefore for granted that my study would be from the perspective of a musician. Or in one case I received this advice from one of my first respondents:

*There’s no better way to study this world from the inside, you should start a record label or open a music venue and then see what happens . This could be an interesting thing to do. (7)<sup>30</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> Respondents are indicated within the dissertation with a number which refers to the number of the interview, or with a (x) in the case of comments which come from the ethnographic field notes. The list of interviews conducted during the research project can be found in the Appendix.

I thought about this advice and I later tried to give an explanation: the fact that this world was based upon tacit knowledge which was not easily transferable implied that as people were learning by doing I might need to research by doing.

Anyway if at the beginning I found that it could be a big drawback studying live music without being a musician or a music operator, I finally realized that there were many advantages.

Firstly I could much better reflect upon the ways in which I had been involved as a fan and as a researcher, and how I had gained access and acceptance. The process of access and exploration of the different circuits of independent music became reflexively part of my research data.

Before I started having the idea of researching music in Milan (which happened in September 2009), I was not even a fan of Italian independent music. I was a great fan of Anglo-American music but I was not used to listening to Italian independent music. Anyway I started to know something about independent music in Italy thanks to two friends who introduced me to many bands and invited me to many concerts.

My involvement as a fan was much more related to social and contextual reasons than to the music itself.

This account allows the highlighting of some features of independent live music, such as that relationships between independent music producers have a strong impact on the appreciation of the music itself. But this account at the same time enables me to emphasize how my involvement as a fan and as researcher has gone forward together.

A second advantage was that my position as researcher has been much more easily identified without being confused with other possible roles I could play already as musician or music operator. Being identified as a research has allowed my respondents to speak more freely, speaking ill of other people, making gossip, because they perceived me as someone outside their networks of friendship. However the more I started to know people and to be involved, the more people were actually understanding that they were talking about someone I could know and therefore they tried to be careful in their judgments. Obviously this account explains how my position changed in the course of the research.

Besides I need to emphasize how my position couldn't be the one of a 'outsider', because there is always a certain kind of involvement and commitment in what I was aimed at researching, especially related to the research setting chosen. My attachment to Milan, as the city where I was born and where I have lived for a great part of my life, and mostly my



personal interest in wanting a vibrant music entertainment in the city was crucial. Before any research interest, there was my personal desire to improve the situation of live music in the city, which has influenced my commitment and my practical involvement in the field. It's therefore important to point out that complete critical distance from the research setting was something impossible to achieve. I think that the periods I spent abroad (as visiting research student at Liverpool University and at Griffith University in Brisbane) during the PhD have contributed to providing me a degree of critical distance from the my research setting, comparing it to other cities where researches on my issue had been already done. Besides the fact of entering in the field after coming back from Australia enabled me to have a certain detachment from the setting I was aimed to analyze before the fieldwork started.

I think anyway that neither a position as insider nor as outsider can be useful to the research. Being an insider implied the risk that I could be involved too much in practical activities, forgetting about my research focus and about the need of maintaining my critical detachment to the field. While being a complete outsider was almost impossible, because a certain involvement and attachment was absolutely needed to gain access and to be accepted. As I have already explained, since the networks were constituted upon ties of friendships, it implied that I should try to construct an informal relationship with my interviewees. Moreover the ways in which I was easily involved in the committee pro live music and in several activities said probably something about the volunteer work structure of their practices, and about the need they have of finding a coordination. On this concerns I think, quoting Bennett (2002), that what Thornton (1995) says about her research of contemporary dance music with participant observation taking place in clubs doesn't fit to my fieldwork:

I was an outsider to the cultures in which I conducted research for several reasons. First and foremost, I was working in a cultural space in which everyone else (except the DJs, door and bar staff, and perhaps the odd journalist) were at their leisure (1995, p.2).

I instead think that in each situation in which I conducted participant observation and I had informal conversations, all the people I was interested in analyzing were in fact engaging in a working leisure activity of observing and networking, as I was doing in trying to have conversations with people and to be introduced to new interviewees. Even though my activity as a researcher was obviously more reflexive and critical than the one of the researched, I think that the distinctions between research, leisure and work were not so easily defined, and Thornton's account was in my case not a justification for being an 'outsider'. My personal

involvement with the music and the people as a fan was not something to underestimate but rather to critically reflect upon, instead of assessing that I was an ‘outsider’.

Just to mention as my position as a fan could have a role in determining relationships with the respondents, I’d say something about the importance of the gender issue. I have already mentioned and it has been often emphasized (e.g. Cohen, 1991) that independent music circuits are male-dominated, and I encountered very women I encountered playing roles as musicians or music producers. The influence of gender, from a fan perspective, has been in the course of the fieldwork an element I had to take into account in sampling and in conducting interviews with musicians I was fan of.

These accounts wanted to show how reflecting upon my involvement, my engagement and my curiosity in the field and my relationships with the respondents can give interesting research data. I think that the question Silverman (2000) makes “can I learn anything from the relations with subjects in the field?” became of primary importance within my fieldwork.

The more I was progressing in my fieldwork, the more I was discovering new and unexpected ethical dilemmas, which are likely to arise during the course of the research (Silverman, 2000) which were very often linked to my involvement with different subjects, informants who were asking me a more active participation. This happened in the case when I was involved by one of my informant, the president of ARCI to take part to the committee to present a list of guidelines to the City Council, taking part to several meetings to draft the document and to organize the formation of the Committee (which I will better explain in the next chapters).

This participation has obviously created some problems for me regarding the choice to be actively involved or not. In this situation the interesting thing is how I managed to position myself as a researcher thanks to the help of my informant, who played a key role in legitimizing my position as a researcher and an ‘expert’ in the issues of live music.

Finally my involvement entailed a double involvement both from the City Council and from the live music producers which needed to be considered, and which could be used as an interesting source of data to analyze the interactions existing between them.

## 6.5 Research Ethics

In the fieldwork, I tried to follow some ethical producers. At first subjects were always informed about the research purposes and about the use of a recorder before the interview started. This happened anyway on a more informal basis without asking for any written consent.

Regarding the participant observations and the informal conversations I undertook, when my role was more active and participatory, I tried to make the research nature of the relationship clear from the beginning.

More generally I have tried not to be covert in my research approach and as I started being involved in the Milan indie scene, my position as researcher was generally known. But it happened that in many situations, such as in the informal conversations I could have during concerts, I didn't remind each time to the people I knew about what I was doing. In the participant observations the use of recording or video-recording has been avoided. This happened both for ethical and practical reasons. Since my subjects were not always informed I considered ethically correct not to record them without their agreement, and besides since most of my conversations took place during concerts or parties the recording would be surely covered by music and noise. I therefore opted for writing field notes, which I could usually take not during the participant observations and the conversations but immediately after.

Besides I have decided to protect the anonymity of my respondents by concealing their names.

Therefore even if I didn't have to follow any formalized ethic review procedure, I have always tried to give my respondents a verbal explanation of my research which enabled a "negotiated authorization" (Howitt & Stevens, 2005), instead of using standardized consent forms.

On this regard, I have to say that this freedom became a positive element of my fieldwork, since there might be several disadvantages of the standard ethics review process especially for ethnographic researches where the construction of an informal relationship between the researcher and the respondents is of great help. For instance Granovetter (1985) points out that institutional arrangements do not facilitate trust, while informal relationship established with the people to be interviewed or observed can facilitate to be accepted.

In my case trust of my respondents arose from within relationships at a personal level (Blake, 2007) much more than from the institutional power of my University. This is because most of

my interviewees were often unaware about what a PhD research project could be and were in some cases prejudiced towards the Italian academic system.

However I didn't conceal that I was a PhD student coming from the Catholic University, I mentioned it each time in the email I sent to my respondents to organize the interviews, but at the same time I understood that I couldn't count on the institutional power of my University and upon academic ethic procedures, but rather upon the relationships I could establish with my respondents, relying upon the ways I was introduced my other respondents or informants.

## Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to explain the ways in which the research was conducted and the methodological challenges which were encountered.

I have started by presenting the research object and questions, and the difficulties in the dealing with the fragmented nature of the different circuits of independent music production. Secondly I have focused my attention upon the methodological challenges entailed in the sampling, particularly referring to choice of several informants who have guided me in the different circuits of independent production. I have then emphasized that the multi-tasking and multi-sited nature of actions and interactions of independent producers in Milan had to be taking into account in the choice of interviewees, which were selected bearing in mind the multiplicity of roles that they were performing.

Concerning the methodology applied the chapter has analyzed the choice of semi-structured interviews, and the usefulness of participant observations in analyzing social gathering events taking place.

I have then mentioned some ethical issues which were related to my involvement in the field. As I have pointed out, my active participations in several initiatives in the course of the fieldwork created several ethical dilemmas and was not something to underestimate but rather to critically reflect upon, in order to consider my position as insider or outsider in the research.

Finally I will want now to focus upon some methodological challenges that the conduction of the research has encountered and that are interlinked to some of the theoretical assumptions I have exposed in the previous theoretical chapters. Particularly I have referred to the importance that mobile and mediated practices play in networks of independent music production which have a relevance in a new theoretical and methodological framework. In the next chapter I will present the empirical finding of the research considering the richness, complexity and mobility of the independent music-making activities gravitating around the city of Milan, without being restricted to its physical boundaries.

# 7. The first layer of the model: The Circuits Of Independent Music Production

## Introduction

In the previous chapter I have presented the methodology used for the empirical research. In this chapter I will present the first empirical results of the research, based upon three layered model, which is used to analyze the complexity of the various circuits gravitating around independent music scene in Milan. As I have already presented, the model comprises three levels of analysis, one concerning the need to analyze the music scene for its productive and organizational characteristics, the second one refers to the relationship with the media, economic, regulatory, political and cultural environment and the third level that seeks to analyze the complex nature of the terrain in which such practices take place which cannot be restricted to the city of Milan.

In particular, the first layer, that will be analyzed in this chapter, will enables us to emphasize how a music scene is not regarded as a cohesive entity but rather as a set of different circuits and networks of cultural production that differ in the varying degrees of professionalization and institutionalization and in a diverse re-definition of their independence from the market, and from the music industry.

In this chapter I will therefore analyze how the notion of independence, applied to the specific Italian context, is a contested and unstable definition and a result of an ongoing struggle of different perspectives, in which processes of professionalization and institutionalization may face tensions within the various circuits.

Besides the chapter will attempt to explain the importance of looking networks gravitating around music scene as part of circuits of cultural production.

## 7.1 The Contradictory Understanding of Independence

As I have previously pointed out, in my perspective, the notion of ‘independent’ is contradictory and contested. The different and contested definitions of independence can be reconstructed by analyzing the social discourses, and by looking at the life trajectories and music careers of independent musicians and operators.

In this section I investigate how ‘independent’ was variously used and meant in the social discourses of my respondents, and how at the same time the relationships with the music industry were differently perceived in pure oppositional terms or in possible dialogue, and how there was a recognition of the different dynamics of incorporation of independent music to the music industry.

The main assumption is that the independent music scene is in fact a mobile and complex terrain in which different circuits of independent music production struggle for a different definition and legitimization.

At first, it appears that the notion of independence cannot be understood in a strict sense, in the opposition between independent and major labels.

My interviewees have often pointed out that bands traditionally considered independent in their attitudes have in fact many interactions with the music industry especially through licensing and distribution deals with the mainstream music industry.

By looking at the life trajectories of my interviewees, it appears that music careers of musicians and music producers seem to imply that there are exchanges and interactions with the mainstream music industry, and at the same time that there are mobile processes of integration and expulsion of independent music in and away from the corporate music industry.

At the same time, as Magaudda (2009) and my respondents have described, especially in 1990s many independent bands (such as Subsonica, Afterhours and many others) started to obtain a certain commercial success not only within the independent music circuits. In these years, there has been a process of integration of independent music in the mainstream music industry, as the one Hesmondhalgh (1999) explains in relation to the independent music market in UK. The music industry started to be interested in independent music production, and to integrate independent music by creating ‘semi-independent’ labels, which were labels producing independent music but being affiliated to the mainstream music industry.

*The majors started to open their sub-labels: in 1994 Polygram decided to open inside fake indie label, the Blackout, and begins to put under contract groups of the independent scene, Casino royal, Africa Unite... there were the majors trying to develop these semi-independent labels, but at the same time the independents arose and became powerful. At the same time in those years there was the label Mescal which signed Subsonica and Afterhours, but it was an indie label that was then distributed by the majors, with an indie status, but was placed in a mainstream market. (36)<sup>31</sup>*

It is interesting to point out how these interactions between independent and mainstream music production have been possible through the transitions of some professionals from the independent sector who have been recruited into mainstream industry.

*In the majors there were people like us many people like us, I remember the first record producer of Blackout who was a alternative rocker, who invented the Blackout for alternative bands. So it was a person working in a major, but having an alternative know-how and therefore enabling to develop this new reality in the majors. (36)*

At that time there were some professional figures who worked as intermediaries between the mainstream and independent market, as the interviewee suggests:

*In 1995 we had the idea of producing bands and sell them to the majors. We did talent scouting on the bands, the first band we discovered was Scisma, and therefore we invested in a demo. So we did it and we took the band to sign a publishing deal, so we were holders of the copy-rights. We produce the demo and then we went around to majors record companies to see if anyone was interested to make the record. I went to the majors because they had more money, which allowed you to do something better. I have never been against majors, I'm against majors as soon as a major forces you to do certain things, but it has never happened to me. (36)*

Besides even today, as respondents have suggested, the independent economy is often kept alive by the system of publishing and distribution, since the most established independent bands are often signing distribution and licensing deals with the corporate music industry. As for example Hesmondhalgh (2007) emphasizes, small and large companies are often inter-independent, being involved in networks of licensing, publishing and distribution:

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<sup>31</sup> As I've already mentioned, respondents are indicated within the dissertation with a number which refers to the number of the interview, or with a (x) in the case of comments which come from the ethnographic field notes. The list of interviews conducted during the research project can be found in the Appendix.



Even in an era in the recording industry when major and independents were seen by fans, musicians and critics as polar opposites, in truth they were often linked in licensing, financing and distribution deals. (Hesmondalgh, 2007, p.176)

It happens therefore that established independent music bands, are often signing record deals with major labels, especially as regards licensing and distribution deals.

*Publishers are those who finance independent records now. Music publishing goes hand in hand with the copyright which goes half to the artist and half to publisher and the publisher earns for 75 years on the sale of that albums and concerts. Publishers are more enlightened than record managers because they can work over the long term. With that money now people make records, because the publisher gives today the money to make records so without that money records wouldn't be done. Without records, concerts wouldn't be done, so the publisher is essential to the independent sector. (29)*

*It's not a coincidence that the only independent label that is having success today, La Tempesta, is the one which is interacting with the music industry in terms of licensing deals (32)*

These interactions need in any case to be understood by looking at the music careers of these bands, and at the personal attachments to particular people, as in this case of this band which decided to follow the manager in a major label:

*We have always played gigs in our own town, but once we came to Milan to play and it was full of record producers and managers. The day after they contacted us and we decided to follow Robert Trinci, who was working at Aspirine record label. Then he went to Sony BMG Ricordi and we followed him there, then he went to EMI, and now we have EMI Publishing. Now we have our own record label, La Tempesta, which is much more like a music collective because we gather friends-musicians playing. (27)*

As the respondent and others suggest, it seems to happen quite often that today that independent bands are no longer tied to major recording contracts but instead these bands have their own record labels, here defined as a “music collective” (27), which serves as a way to ‘protect’ their DIY attitude and identity, while economic rewards come from distribution and publishing deals signed with major labels.

As the following chapter will explain, the crisis the recording industry has brought some changes in the interactions between major and independent music industry, which make difficult a definition of the independence.

Besides all these different level of interactions contribute to make the notion of independent even more ambivalent and contradictory. As Kruse (2003) explains, once the boundaries of what constitute independent music tend to expand, it appears difficult to define what fits and what does not fit in ‘independent music’, as many respondents have suggested :

*The concept of independent has no meaning: we're not at the time of punk that people played because they had nothing. If a major label comes knocking at the door, anyone will accept the money! All largest independent bands have contracts with the majors. (24)*

*There is no independent circuit, because bands as Ministri signed on to Universal major record label but Ministri are independent but still they stay on Universal. But I would say that they are independent and then you see that independent does not make sense. Or for example Amor Fou, Alessandro Raina is on EMI major label but at the same time he follows 327 auto-produced projects. It is a hyper-independent, however, he has signed to EMI, but he is an independent. (7)*

*I do not like to use the term indie, it's more a brand that we use for understanding each other. Indie is a wrong term, you could say independent music but then this is wrong again because some groups sign to majors. (35)*

*Independent scene is a complex definition because it was born when there were bands who had not any help from the record companies and were able to do things by themselves. Then of course this thing has been lost. And then there are groups which play indie, and sign to majors. There is no more precise definition to understand it. (27)*

The interactions with the music industry are often justified by the impossibility of maintaining an independent production autonomously from the mechanisms of the music industry, considering the small market of independent music production in the Italian context. The independent music scene in Italy is a very small circuit which is mainly constituted by music producers, as in the definition of Bourdieu (1993) of restricted field of cultural production, of a field of producers for producers, which doesn't provide a enough big market to make a living from music.

*To make independent music means today doing things that like very much to a limited expert and professional or semi-professional audience. (27)*

*At concerts you see always the same people, operators those that do business at a professional level and those who are amateurs and not professionals. I got the idea of the so-called independent scene as being composed*

*only by operators and in small part by a real audience of people that come just because they like the music. In this way there is no market. (29)*

There is therefore the awareness that circuits of independent music are still a very small market, and that therefore there is a need of interacting with the mainstream market in order to allow to make music projects economically sustainable. The issue here is whether the independent sector enables to provide an economic sustainable alternative to the corporate music industry. This can happen in contexts where the market of independent music is big, as in UK and USA, but in the case of very small markets as the Italian one, it's difficult to maintain a complete autonomy from the music industry and at the same time make a living from music. If a independent sector is not able to provide an economic sustainable infrastructure alternative to the mainstream music industry then interactions with the mainstream industry become more frequent.

*The market is not big enough to grow... so you produce records that do not sell enough to make a living from them. So you realize that you can get some money through publishing deals and so where do you go to sell your publishing deals? To a major label, because they are the only ones which can do it in a serious way. And so you crash with being independent (31)*

*In other countries being independent means to compete with labels that have more chances, because there is a different market . But if you have a larger market you can be independent and make money . (37)*

*And then it depends very much upon the county: in Us a band with a niche market, has a much bigger niche, while in Italy if you are an independent group, you limit yourself to a very small portion of the world market. If you make a record that appeals to 10 thousand people you are a minor celebrity, but because the proportions are reduced. It is a more difficult step. What is the difference between being famous in Italy, and remain unknown in Italy. (27)*

However these assumptions don't want to imply that the interactions with the mainstream music industry come without critics in the independent music scene. On the contrary, it seems that these interactions are usually increasing the tensions between different circuits of independent production.

Even though independent is understood by the interviewees as an unstable and problematic term, many oppositional discourses to the mainstream music industry, I have analyzed in theorizing the notion of independent, are still present in the narratives of the interviewees.

In this perspective the common critics to bands 'selling out', signing to major labels or becoming successful are still strongly rooted in the social discourses of the respondents:

*But unfortunately, especially in these circuits when the music exceeds a certain level of underground, people will start to criticize ... so you need to be careful about what you do (21a)*

*EMI has proposed a record deal to this band ... And this deal with EMI is backfiring because there is their fanpage which is connected to the alternative world in which they got many critics. (32)*

*When music gets to a certain level, people are already starting to say it sucks ... just because it starts to be successful. As with Le luci della centrale elettrica, when they came out with the new record, everyone starts criticizing that it was starting to be commercial, even though it was exactly the same of the one before. (8)*

Besides several assumptions of the respondents have implied sometimes an understanding of the music industry as inhibiting the creativity of the artists. The common reference to the rejection of the constraints that the processes of industrialization and standardization have upon free creative expression is still present in the discourses of many interviewees:

*majors lose their time to cash up and then their only primary purpose is to cash up. While the independent label is more courageous, thinks in the long term, major companies work for 3 months on a record and then abandon it. I have never understood what independence is ... but if we want to say that the indie label allows the artist to do a job more culturally, perhaps it is true. (29)*

*For me independent is who puts the artistic project before any commercial use. The reality is this. Because here in Italy there is a big difference: either there is the artistic logic of independent label as La Tempesta or there is the Universal, and for them if you make the best record ever or the worst ever, they don't care; they see what they can sell and if the worst record ever sells more, they produce that. (7)*

The main assumption that is made is that independent production allows to invest in the long term on more innovative and creative music, while the mainstream music industry is mainly affected by commercial interests and is looking for short-term successful music products. This assumption has not restricted to the distinction between independent and major labels, but could be applied at the independent live music sector. For example independent promoters were interested to interact with music venues, able to understand their innovative and artistic music projects, while they were criticizing the commercial attitudes of club entrepreneurs, who were instead interested in a short term economic return in their clubs.

*Because the music projects I bring as promoter are not commercial, I need partners who understand! And I want to have a long-term, constructive dialogue. While many times this type of relationship is like ok come and do what you want and pay me the rent. For example the Alcatraz club in Milan is very professional but you always have the impression that they don't care about what you do, they just care about making money. For certain types of music you need the other person to understand which language you speak and what you are doing and this is possible with some music venues such Magnolia: they understand independent music you want to bring, with other venues instead is much more difficult. It is a question of attitude and then there is a very big difference between an entrepreneur who has opened a business called club in which he cares about making profit and instead who has opened a cultural association and cares about the music you bring. (40)*

At the same time the DIY (Do it yourself) ethic of auto-promotion and auto-production has often been claimed by most of the interviewees as an important value and as an important element to define their independence:

*To be independent for a band today is much better, you can do more because you can do what you want to do and not what you have to do to make money for someone else who is allowing you to do so. (32)*

*The difference between being independent and commercial products, no matter what you sell and with whom you have signed, is, if you have someone working for you, you are no longer independent. The independent band for me to do things by its own. We as a band, as artists, we believe in the attitude of punk rock, of Do it yourself. If you move away from this attitude, I think that it is not worth calling you independent. (21a)*

*The difference between being an independent artist and not being an independent artist is that the independent artist knows the value of self-made, which is a value. Knowing how to do things on your own, knowing how to delegate to whom can complete your lack of knowledge is one of the great discoveries of recent years. (37)*

Therefore it seems that the social discourses gravitating around the autonomy from the music industry are still strong and at the same time they generate processes of distinction and fragmentation within the circuits of independent music. What's interesting to notice is that the independent music scene is not meant as a cohesive entity, but it's constituted by fragmented circuits which have a different understanding of their independence.

As I have aforementioned referring to Magaudda (2009)'s application of Bourdieu's (1993) notion of field to the independent music production in Italy, there is a symbolic struggle occurring between on one side the legitimacy of the independent sector and on the other side the more pragmatic tendency towards the integration of independent music in the national music industry.

The different discourses gravitating around the production of independent music meet oppositions and clashes, which show the conflicting and contradictory nature of this term.

If on one side interactions with the music industry have favoured processes of professionalization and of entrepreneurship within the independent music circuits, on the other side it's possible to see how many independents are still attached to grass-roots informal-based modes of productions, and are still claiming their opposition to the music industry.

These processes of professionalization and of institutionalization of independent music have created some tensions within the different circuits of independent production.

According to Magaudda (2009), it is possible to analyze how the process of institutionalization of the field of independent music generate cultural tensions. With institutionalization, Magaudda (2009) means to indicate that, as a result of the creation of several institutions and organizations, independent music has been legitimized as a sector in the music industry and has become integrated with market mechanisms.

These processes of institutionalization of independent music has encountered many critics especially addressed to those institutions that are intended to represent symbolically, politically and economically independent music. In particular I refer to MEI<sup>32</sup> (Meeting of Independent Labels), perhaps the only body representing independent music, as well as PMI (Independent Music Producers). MEI was born in 1996 and in the first editions it has been crucial as informal and small gathering place for several independent music producers, in the last years it has become a big trade and has tried to play a political role lobbying with several institutions. MEI aims to represent the independent music sector in the media, in the music industry and in political institutions.

In many cases interviewees have shown their detachment from MEI because MEI has often lobbied with political institutions in the attempt to institutionalize the independent music sector. According to many interviewees, MEI aims to interact with the mainstream music industry and to support cultural policies of institutionalization of independent production, without having any real understanding of dynamics of production and consumption at the micro level.

*People in MEI are politicians in the bad sense. They don't care about music, they care only about having visibility... and about getting public funding that will be thrown away because they do not help the music,*

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<sup>32</sup> As I have aforementioned, MEI (Meeting of independent record labels) is the Italian music expo of the independent record labels.

*because these people don't know anything about music. We are no longer interested to be confused with  
MEI.(11)*

*MEI is just bullshit! Because it is not representative of true independent labels. In fact, the proof is that many  
bands such as those from La Tempesta record, who have won the prize, they have never gone to pick the prize  
because MEI is not credible. And then because they often invite big names that have nothing to deal with  
independent music! There is no coherence. (8)*

*MEI is a expo which is done without a minimum of music culture that is not just about music but also know how  
it is sold, distributed, produced. People working in MEI don't know about that! So what i sit for? (31)*

For these reasons, the respondents have shown their detachment from MEI but also very often even from the way in which MEI tries to categorize independent music. In other words, in the process of institutionalization that MEI wants to achieve, independent music becomes a brand that is better identifiable for the institutions and the music market but that does not allow to understand the peculiarities of the production at the independent level.

What's interesting to notice is that those criticizing the institutionalization and commercialization of independent music tend often to reject their identification with the notion of 'independent' because this term comes from a categorization of the music industry:

*I have never dealt with indie music, even the song-writing ... I know very little and I have few relationships, and  
has never ever been my approach. I have ever attended the circuits of independent music. It has never been my  
attitude.(14)*

And at the same time, these respondents have distinguished themselves, claiming the purity and the authenticity of grassroots music-making practices and their autonomy from the music industry.

*The music we make is truly underground, truly independent! I'm not talking about those bands who release a  
record in Polygram, a label which belongs to Sony, and that pretend to be independent. All the groups were not  
independent and there was nothing of the independent. There was no room for the real underground music. (39)*

As Kruse (2003) suggests, it happens therefore that when independent music becomes crossing over with the mainstream and becomes a more professional and entrepreneurial activity, more marginal and oppositional groups feel threatened and tend to adopt several tactics to distinguish themselves as real and authentic independents and to redefine

themselves in opposition to dominant practices. In this sense the interactions with music industry tend to increase the tensions between those who define themselves as marginal and truly alternative and authentic, and those who instead allow a dialogue with the market mechanism.

One example of this case in my fieldwork came from the analysis of the case study of Rockit, the first and largest webzine-website dedicated to independent Italian music. Rockit has been important in creating a culture of Italian independent music, and has become highly influential, playing a key role of gatekeeping and therefore determining the success of many independent bands. Rockit and the festival Rockit organizes, MiaMi, have been criticized because of the support and consequent success given to several artists. Besides, there has been in Rockit an openness towards commercial and mainstream mechanism. For this reason a group of people, mainly constituted of music producers, has created a Facebook page, named “I don’t read Rockit and I don’t go to Miami” in which Rockit is criticized for being “driven only by commercial and market logics” and for being “the multinational corporations of ‘independent’ music”<sup>33</sup>.

In some occasions, many interviews have criticized Rockit of being sided with the commercial music industry, and of becoming a sort of “mainstream of the independent” (28):

*If you have a website such as Rockit and you impose some aesthetic standards in the independent music sector, what it is happening is that you reproduce what’s happened in the world of the mainstream in the independent world ... website such as Rockit promotes its own standards of what it’s cool ... These things happen and then you realize that it is not different to the mechanism imposed by the mainstream ... I instead have an idea of independent as different from that (28)*

*And a number of situations, events, websites have ruined this independent attitude, and the necessity of having a music apprenticeship. Miami and Rockit, have ruined everything. They applied commercial rules to music which has to remain independent. Miami favors those artists around which are famous for one year and then disappear, Miami applies commercial logics to all that independent music. (33b)*

Therefore within the independent music scene there are more authentic independent circuits and at the same time the “mainstream in the independent” (28) which is more open to market mechanism and to the dialogue with the corporate music industry.

The dialogue with the corporate music industry can favour processes of professionalization and entrepreneurialism of the independent music scene.

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<sup>33</sup> The links to these website pages are contained in the Reference at the end of the thesis.



However this process of professionalization can encounter many tensions in the independent music sector, and can create fragmentation within the different circuits of independent production. As Hesmondhalgh (1999) points out, the professionalization can be understood as “a dilution of earlier, amateur ideals. The core of punk’s democratization efforts were decentralization and access based on sub-professional activity; entry into a more established, parallel industry involves compromise. Such purism often sees the process of professionalization as a sell out: the abandonment of idealism for financial reward” (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p. 89).

Particularly the distinction seems in many cases to be upon the level of professionalism. More marginal groups tend to defend the non professionalism of the DIY punk ethic, other groups tend to claim a new definition of their independence which allows auto-promotion and auto-production through the dialogue with the music market dynamics.

In this situation there are different circuits either claiming an authentic and spontaneous grassroots production against any commercialization, professionalization:

*Each music venue has its own attitude, we are proud to be very grass-roots. In the sense that in Torchiera squatted social centre, it is always a chaos to put on a concert, the warehouse with all the instruments and the cables is a mess and then every time you have to assemble the system is impossible, and so every time I say it's a miracle we manage to put on a concert ... it's a chaos but we are all voluntary without payment. It's not like in Magnolia music venue which is much more professional and they have everything in order. But I prefer to organize concerts in a squatted social centre rather than in a professional venues because we do what we want, but we don't ask anybody, licenses, time closure, volume... In a squatted social centre ... you have a freedom that you enjoy and that people around you enjoy .... (38)*

*The indie music industry is worsened, in the sense that it is becoming a much more structured business, but which takes away all that aspect of grass-roots apprenticeship which is essential. For my own personal experience as a street artist I prefer much more a night at in a small place that we are a much more naïve community but with more passion. Instead there has been, what I call a 'berlusconization' of the indie scene, in the sense that the indie scene is much more entrepreneurial. A music venue as Magnolia is a very good and professional place with the best technical conditions; however the entrepreneurial approach has for me some drawbacks... If at Magnolia music venue Gogol Bordello or another famous band is playing, it is ok that you have to approach this band professionally, but if I'm playing, and I'm much less famous I have less needs ... Instead they do things in a direction of professionalism that are excessive to me ... they raise the level of professionalism too much without any need. So I think that there are different circuits because there are different attitudes in doing things. Mine and the one of many songwriters is bizarre, disorganized and not structured ... that if we do not have the guitar amplifier at*

*45 degree angle to the stage it does not matter. For us it's okay if we do not do the sound-check before playing. Instead, the way people like those of the Magnolia venue work is much more structured. What interests me is that there are both things, but the less structured and chaotic circuit belongs to me much more. So I think this is the distance, a problem of different attitudes which produce different circuits. (26)*

On the other side, there are other circuits which have claimed a more professional music production criticizing the other circuits of being not professional, as in the case of this respondent:

*There is this circuit which organizes just some concerts ... in the attempt to promote some artists who are nothing, these artists do not represent anything because they don't have an audience except for their friends... those artists are marginal artists who do not work professionally, who have no job title, who have not released records, there is a very low level of professionalism. Those are not professionals, those are artists who attend music venues and so sometimes they manage to play in these venues but this does not mean that they represent something. (29)*

*I have the impression that some people do not want to take seriously and professionally what they do ... and that they are always doing things for their friends. And so no matter if the biography on the website is full of typos, no matter if the day of the concert on Facebook is wrong because only friends will come and for them it's fine! This approach creates niches not because there are niches in music genres but because these circuits are exclusive because these people do not know how to work professionally and to open their projects to a wider audience. (31)*

Those more professional circuits have tended instead to claim that it's not excluded that independent production can be a more professional and organized music activity, as the quotation suggests.

*There seems to be a dichotomy in independent music production: music production professionally well done is usually devalued from an artistic point of view while a recognition from the artistic point of view goes beyond money and market logics. I instead try to keep these two binaries together. (31)*

However the process of professionalization of independent redefines its boundaries and its relations to the music industry, and does not come without tensions in the independent music scene, which is in fact constituted by fragmented circuits which struggle for a different definition of their independence, as this respondent describes:

*There are very exclusive underground circuits which are mostly connected to some squatted social centres and which are not interested to come out and to have success, because they see success as a bad thing. When music gets to a certain level, people are already starting to say it sucks ... just because it starts to be successful... There are actually many envies and rivalries between the different circuits. More the scenes are independent and more there are envies. Instead of doing things well, people start looking how you do and if you are going commercial!*

*The envies are at all levels, including magazines, including certain types of bands and others, including certain types of circuits and others. I try to attend more or less all the circuits, and to go out with many established musicians of the independent scene (Enrico from Tre allegri ragazzi morti, Dell'Era, Il Genio and Dente) and they always go to the Casa 139 to get drunk. But at the same time I also know Dautau which is a music collective connected to Leoncavallo social centre and those that hang out there, plus all the things of Hundebiss which is a very underground circuit.*

*I try to go around and to see a bit what's going on but it is difficult to put in connection with each other all these circuits, because each is suspicious and doesn't know anything about the other .... Putting things together which are actually so different is difficult! That's why everything is so fragmented because any single organization is suspicious about the other, because doesn't know the others. (8)*

As this quotation emphasizes, there is a strong fragmentation in the different circuits in which an element of differentiation is defined by the varying degrees of independence and professionalism perceived in oneself and in the others. What's interesting to notice is that the independent music scene is not meant as a cohesive entity, but it's constituted by fragmented circuits which struggle for a different position and definition of their independence.

This mechanism generates envies and mistrusts among the different circuits, making it difficult to manage the compatibility between being independent and being able to live of music. The next section will consider how these processes of professionalization allow us to look at independent music making-practices as circuits of independent production.

## 7.2 Looking at Music Scenes as Circuits of Cultural Production

In the previous section I have tried to analyze the contradictions which are entailed in the notion of independent music in the context of the research. As I have finally suggested, independent music production is undertaking a process of professionalization which redefines its boundaries and its relations to the music industry, and which generates cultural tensions within the independent music scene. I will now try to point out how music production and performance at a local level has become a more professionalized and entrepreneurial activity, in which interactions between circuits of independent production and the mainstream music industry are often happening.

According to Hesmondhalgh (1999, 2002), these continuous interactions are very common in today networked and flexible environment, in which corporate cultural industries are much more networked to small independent cultural industries, and they are often outsourcing their production to them.

Ties existing between more spontaneous small-scale music organizations on one side and the more structured and organized music industry on the other have actually favoured processes of professionalization of the independent music sector, as this quotation emphasizes:

*Leoncavallo squatted social centre was very 'old style' then we started to collaborate with booking agencies, with the 'commercial' side. We had to demonstrate to them that we were not four inexperienced guys. When you enter in the commercial dynamics you find a world that doesn't fit with us but we are forced to interact with them, because we can't go anymore directly to the artists as before, artist need to be protected, they all have a deal with a booking agent now. (33b)*

In this case, the interaction existing between a professional music agency and a squatted cultural centre forced the latter to professionalize the activity of the artist director in order to be able to compete in the market with professional music venues and booking agencies.

At the same time bands which had signed with majors and which then came back to independent auto-production have explained that they could anyway profit from having acquired some managerial and promotional skills for their experience of interaction with a major label:

*We did two records with record companies, one was a major, the BMG Ricordi, and finally it has been useful to get to know the rules of discography. From our experience in a major we have learned some useful tricks! For example that music promotion is easy. You just need to know the right magazines, TVs and radios. (27)*

Therefore, as I have previously explained, the common sense binary structure existing between bands signing a record deal and therefore selling out and bands keeping their punk DIY real doesn't anymore enable to describe the frequent tactics independent bands tend to apply in order to make their music a living. This point is perfectly summarized by Angela McRobbie:

The most politically relevant point is surely that music today is also a place of employment, livelihoods and labour markets. This fact is obscured because being creative remains in our collective imaginations as a sort of dreams world or utopia, far apart from the real world of making a living (McRobbie, 1999, p.134).

What I point out is that it has often been underestimated the importance of looking at music production as a more professionalized activity which needs both entrepreneurial skills and economic rewards in order to survive.

As I have previously suggested following Strachan(2003) and Toynbee (2000), the analysis of small-scale independent music production has been an understudied area of research:

The organization of the production of popular music within an industrial framework takes place across a variety of levels and in relation to a number of differing economies of scale. However, the small-scale industrial production of popular music has been relatively ignored within the field of popular music studies (certainly as an industrial process). (Strachan, 2003, p.3)

There has been a tendency in analyzing economic and organizational issues concerned with large scale music production, while grass-roots independent music-making has been analyzed in the music scene perspective as occurring outside of the dynamics of industrial and economic processes. I instead suggest the need of looking at the characteristics and peculiarity of the circuits of small scale music production.

The fact that interactions with the music industry happen doesn't imply that the circuits of independent music production are adopting the characteristics of the corporate music industry but rather there is a specificity in the organizational and economic processes of micro independent music production, which needs to be analyzed. There are many differences between micro-independent circuits of music production and mainstream music industry, in

terms of modes of productions, organizational and business processes. This was a clear difference I could find from interviews conducted with music producers working in the corporate music industry and independent music producers. For example I interview a publisher of a major and the owner of the most established independent label in Italy and I couldn't avoid to notice the differences. To interview the publisher I went to the headquarter of the major and I had to pass through four different receptions before getting to his office, and when I entered I realized that my appointment for the interview was planned in the agenda of the day which was on his table. This was a completely different experience from the one I had with many others independent music producers, even from the most successful and professional. In the same day I interviewed the owner of the most established independent label in Italy, we had lunch together in a bar because he explained me that his label had no legal office except his home. This was just one of the possible examples that enable to show the big differences in the modes of productions between corporate music industry and small-scale independent practitioners and organizations, as this quotation suggests as well:

*On one side you have the major and on the other the chaos. In the sense that the most important independent labels have not an office, while Universal has a ten floors skyscraper. There is the music industry and the chaos but this chaos is important because sometimes some independent bands sell much more than a band in a major.*  
(7)

My fieldwork depicts a rich networks of small-scale music producers and organizations constituted by small enterprises, no-profit cultural associations, free lancers which constitute different circuits of small scale music production and which often interact with the music industry.

According to Hesmondhalgh (2002), micro independent cultural producers are acquiring crucial role, and that they are usually working in networks with other companies. And as the author later suggest (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010), the principle of autonomy and independence has come to structure cultural production.

Leadbeater and Oakley (1999) suggest, in a seminal research analyzing micro cultural producers and organizations named *The Independents*, that, apart from large scale music production, cultural production is constituted by a rich network of small-scale independent operators and organizations, self-employed, freelancers and micro-business. In their perspective, these cultural operators opt for independence because it allows them to work an organizational and artistic autonomy while they maintain interactions with bigger

organizations. The characteristics of independent cultural producers and organizations can be summarized in the following elements

- Unstable, unpredictable and risky environment
- Importance of networks
- Blurring distinction between work and leisure, consumption and production
- Multi-tasking roles and self-exploitation
- Individualistic-competitive and at the same time collaborative working

These characteristics can be found in the analysis of circuits of small-scale cultural production in Milan. Independent music production in Milan, especially considering the live music sector, have shared many characteristic with networks of creative and cultural production.

The circuits of independent production develop within a volatile and competitive market in which there are low entry costs, and there is no need of particular skills but at the same time there are instead many difficulties in entering the networks which instead are crucial for developing an artistic and professional career in the independent music sector.

At first it's important to point out that small scale music organizations are not based upon the possession of intangible assets to start an activity, and therefore there is no need of high economic investments at the beginning. This is confirmed in my case study by looking at how many projects were born with the investment of small amount of money to start, but thanks to relationship of friendships, to common interests and passion in music.

*if you and I get together and we open the 'I don't know' Records then I take a guitar and play a song, this is a record label. You don't need anything else. (7)*

*We have opened a cultural association to organize cultural events. To open a cultural association means that you don't need money at the beginning, and there's no business model behind. It's just me, and two other friends, and we share our skills, I play as DJs and they organize events. (x)*

*The history of Rokit at the beginning is very much amateurish. It's only an hobby during University. All founders of Rokit were at University, much free time in the afternoon, much passion for music and concerts ... we decided to make an association, to try to be more structured and organized ... . At the time, we should become an enterprise or an association. It was still an hobby for us, anyway ... we did not expect to earn money from that, so we opted for the association because you can handle things much more lightly... otherwise with the enterprise you need to gain money. But we were not business oriented and we were not forced to make money. So we started the association at each of us we were 7 putted 500 euro. (10)*

Interestingly in the Italian context, many of these grass-roots music organizations take usually the shape of non-profit cultural associations which allow to start any kind of music related organization much more easily without having the economic constraints of a more structured for profit enterprise.

According to many respondents, it have appeared that what seems instead to matter is the possibility of being rooted in a network of relationships and of acquiring relational capital or, following Bourdieu's (1986), social capital as a set of resources linked to the possession of a network of relationships.

As a matter of fact relational capital is crucial in the circuits of small scale independent production, which are based upon an economy of relationship and reciprocity and upon team working between different actors. For example, live music performance implies the interconnectedness among different players who are responsible for the different steps namely planning, publicity, and production. These circuits of independent production are constituted by informal ties between their members who are usually attached by relationships of friendships, of kinship and of connoisseurship.

An economy of relations is constituted as such because what distinguishes the cultural production from other kind of productions is that there are no professional standards for evaluating the competence of work done and professional and artistic skills cannot be determined in advance, but they are instead based upon a network of relationships and upon the creation of a system of trust and reputation.

These informal networks are made up by friends, fans and even relatives turned into entrepreneurs. There have been different examples in the fieldwork of fan and friends who became managers of a band. One interesting example to present has been a manager who started as fan of a band, selling their records and merchandising during concerts, through them she got in touch with their management agency and started working with the agency and finally she became the manager of the band. She has anyway pointed out that she was one of the few people in the sector having a higher education degree in Economics which enable to give her some entrepreneurial skills, such as reading a contract, which were more often acquired by personal experiences.

*You can learn this job only with the experience but there is a reason if there's an institution called university. I learned how to read a contract in my Economics degree, and when I started my internship in Metatron Agency I was the only one able to read a contract. I interact with many people who don't have a professional formation,*



*and who don't know how to read a contract. Most of the artists have relatives or friends as their manager, and this says a lot about how this sector is structured. (24)*

By following the life trajectories of my interviewees it is possible to see that many of them withdrew from University before completion of their courses. The research has highlighted the distrust of many respondents towards academic institutions and towards the possibility that higher education in universities could contribute to the improvement of music sector. Many respondents have suggested that higher education was not able to provide the skills needed that had to be learnt 'on the job':

*I have done a master about music communication. We were 25 students, and only 2 people are still working in the music sector. The master didn't serve so much, only some basic knowledge about what's a label ... but who cares! You have to learn everything on the job!(17c)*

This is due to the fact that, as the professionalism of the independent music sector is based upon field experience, there has been a general mistrust towards any kind of educational institution, except the widespread practical courses directly organized by music producers. However this trend seems to contribute to an impasse in the growth of the independent music sector, which is based upon tacit knowledge which are acquired in the field experience and which are difficultly communicable.

*I learn how to be a tour manager by looking at other tour managers coming here at Magnolia music venue, and then I have been a tour manager in Italy, and looking to music venues, I understood what's good, what works in a venue and I replicate it here in Magnolia. (25)*

*The mistake of many guys is that they think they got prepared by university but in fact to work in the music sector graduated have very few advantages compared to non-graduated. Instead it's better to attend practical courses that prepare for this world. There are courses such as first aid, bar tender courses. So someone who wants to approach this world will not learn that much from a course in a Master in Events management. Instead if you attend a course in first aid or fire risk ... you learn a lot of regulations with respect to public entertainment and emergency exits. Then in this work you learn something new any single day!*  
*I learn how to be a tour manager by looking at other tour managers coming here at Magnolia music venue, and then I have been a tour manager in Italy, and looking to music venues, I have understood what's good, what works in a venue and I replicated it here in Magnolia.(25)*

This last quotation suggests that in many occasions skills could be acquired only through experience and by following advices of other colleagues. However some interviews were

complaining of the lack of entrepreneurial and management skills of many colleagues, which was leading to an organizational inefficiency.

Any kind of professionalism is always mediated by the creation of friendship ties which allow to get in touch with new people and to acquire new skills:

*I found myself to do accounting for the band without any kind of specialization, but I learn everything through experiences... We have to be 'accountant musicians' as in the song from Afterhours. And there have been several people who have given advices about organizational issues...For example ...Eugenio Cervi of Venus distributions was important for us. He was the first that when we started making records alone, he introduced us to a method to have royalties in advance. He pretends to sell a thousand of records, he gives us the money as if he had already sold them and with that money we do the record. And we still use this method now! (27)*

Many respondents have emphasized that they have managed to start their music careers thanks to their relationships, and especially thanks to a friend who introduced them to other people and who enabled them to establish a network of contacts in the music sector.

*Surely I owe a lot to Enrico Gabrielli who lived in Padua, my hometown, for a while. And he invited me to play in Milan and in many situations of concerts. He has been the most important person for me to create a network of human relationships of musicians and music producers. (28)*

*The way I got to know people here in Milan was like wildfire. You know a person who introduces to another person, who presents you to others, and so you enlarge your network of professional relations. And I started with my band, Mariposa. From Mariposa, I got to know the songwriter Marco Parente, who is a close friend of Morgan's sister ... Morgan, the famous musicians, and Morgan named me as clarinetist for his new album ... but he has been useful because through him I got to know the band Afterhours. Then while I played in the Afterhours I deepened the knowledge with Tommaso Colliva, who first worked as a sound technician to the recording studios Officine Meccaniche, and with him we formed a new band, called Calibro 35. (37)*

These examples suggest that, in the circuits of independent music, there are crucial people who play a role of gatekeeping and who enable other people to be introduced within the networks.

Besides building relationships is therefore crucial for artistic and professional careers, which will tend to increase by enlarging the network of contacts. The relationships are aimed both at cooperating and at gaining a symbolic legitimization.

As Bourdieu (1993) emphasizes, it's important to notice that what's at stake is a the struggle for symbolic legitimization, and therefore relationships are used as a way to acquire a consecration with the field of cultural production.

The recognition of talent and symbolic legitimization is acquired being embedded in dense network of relations. From this point of view, social relations are used for the construction of personal careers and the preferred channels to recruit new talents and to search for new jobs is word of mouth which is facilitated by frequent interactions.

The recognition of music talent is mediated by the word of mouth between gatekeepers which allows to increase the visibility of certain musicians and music projects, and at the same time to consecrate the importance of certain opinion leaders within the networks .

Besides, since the work of musicians and music producers is usually organized upon individual events or projects, it is therefore essential to rely on a vast network of relationships to maintain continuity of work and able to move from one engagement to another.

The networked nature of the independent music productions has several consequences in terms of organizations of activities and creations of a system of reputation and trust.

Networks of music production and performance are constituted by informal ties which imply skills of networking and of selling the self as this quotation by an venue manager emphasizes:

*An artist has to be good at all levels not only from the point of view of artistic quality, but even having communication and PR skills. Artistic quality is not enough! (5a)*

The networking activities are therefore fundamental, and interviewees realize that the lack of networking skills can be a drawback for the development of an artistic and professional career in the music sector:

*I'm not such a friendly and diplomatic person, and unfortunately my character has not helped in my artistic career. I am not able to be the kind of person who goes in places to show up, and to be smart and nice with everyone, to be finally a poser. I don't care about that, I care about playing.(26)*

*It's not just the concert, there is also the place of the aperitif, the bar ... certainly here in Milan there is so much the chat just for chatting, and especially the attitude always to be smart, something in which I'm not very strong. I'm not good to be a phenomenon during the aperitifs... I'm not mine this kind of attitude, at times it bothers me because I realize that it is also a limitation for my artistic career. (28)*

Respondents have emphasized how, in certain situations, networking skills become more important than professional and artistic skills:

*Sometimes you can see these kinds of dynamics, you see that someone arrives without being anybody but just because he's nice, smart and good in networking, ... After a while you see that the band Afterhours call him to play together not because they like him and what he does but only because they got drunk together At night I always see how people try to show off, and I'm so upset. (26)*

Besides in these kinds of circuits, gathering moments and networking events play a crucial role in maintaining and developing relationships. As I have aforementioned, Urry (2004) emphasizes the importance of “networking as an accomplishment and practice, of building and maintaining social ties in mobile ‘network societies’” (Urry et al. 2005, p.29), and of ‘meetingness’ as crucial element for understanding people’s networks.

The importance of networking events has been particularly analyzed by Wittel (2001) in his theorization of the network sociality. Wittel (2001) describes how networking events provide informal settings for the commodification of relationships for professional purposes. In some situations, people tend to criticize how networking tend to favor a commodification of relationships:

*A big slice of working relations are in fact human relations or working relations pretending to be human relations. I give you an example to explain how these relationships work. In the past years I used to organize the Thursday night at venue Casa 139. There was a whole audience of insiders, of music producers who were in fact ‘hunting’ new talents, there were musicians who pretend to be your friends because they wanted to have me as promoter, there were record managers who were there because they knew that all music producers were there, so people were there because they knew they had to be there ... So I often got the impression that in that music venue there was a good chunk of audience that they were there just because they had to be there, but they didn't care about the music!(40)*

In the case of live music, networking events are usually constituted by concerts. According to my interviewees it appears clearly that in many occasions people tend to follow several concerts more to meet up people than for live music performances themselves. Many respondents tended to emphasize that concerts were usually attended much more by music producers who were interested in networking rather my a traditional audience.

Attending concerts enables to maintain and develop relationships within the circuits of live music production and at the same time in a system of reciprocity it allows to perform music in the future.

*If a guy sends an email asking if he can play in our music venue, we just delete the email, we don't care about emails! If you really want to play in a scene, you must try to enter in that circuit. You cannot bring us your record and then run away to bring the same record to another music venue, because it is obvious that there are many musicians like you that bring me their records, but I cannot care about all these people. These guys are not smart, you should understand that it is obvious that if you start attending my music venue, you enjoy about being in my music venue then it turns out that you are a musician and you play...Then you will have much more chances to play! You cannot have the arrogance that you want to play, and you don't go to other concerts because that means that in fact you do not care that much about music! Instead, we reward people who are part of the our music venue... there's a guy here who is a singer, who is always here ... He is very good and now we'll let him make the opening act of the band Amour Fou!(5b)*

Attending or performing concerts as networking events usually don't have an immediate professional return, but instead enable to create a system of trust through face to face interactions. The creation of a system of trust is needed for developing a artistic and professional collaboration together. As this example emphasizes:

*I'm resident at Rocket club and once I hosted a Belgian DJ... so you play together and you meet up people... then those are situations where there is mess and noise, so you do not manage to make your business in a club, but those are situations to give a pat on the shoulder and to have fun together, have dinner together... then the day after I send you an email with all you have to send about business, money and so on. The nights in the club are times of party, so you cannot sit at a table and sign the contracts, but you need to have a face, a real presence. (32)*

There is another consequence: since networking is an essential task in today economy, and networking events happen usually during concerts, it's interesting to notice how the distinctions between leisure time and work, between consumption and production tend to blur. As Wittel suggests in events where work and play are blurred: "working practices become increasingly networking practices" (Wittel, 2001, p.53).

According to Leadbeater and Oakley (1999), the fact that the demarcation line between consumption and production and between work and non work tend to blur is one of the central ingredients of small scale circuits of cultural production. The fact that careers in the independent music circuits develop from a passion for music make difficult to consider them as professional activities:

*It's from 1996 that I play professionally in my band and then we started the experience with La Tempesta records, but I have to admit that I still don't consider it as proper job! (27)*

At the same time, respondents have pointed out the difficulty they have in distinguishing between professional and private relationships. On one side respondents seem to suggest that it's necessary to have good relationships of friendships to have good artistic and professional collaborations:

*I cannot work with people that I don't like and this penalizes me a lot. I confuse my work with my life and I'm not able to separate them. Sometimes I think that it's work so in working relationships you should have a degree of hostility and instead I have to work with people I like, in a nice environment. Because then I always work so I wasn't my life and my work to be ok. I do not like sharks, the careerists, the artists who think they are gods and so I often say no to some jobs just because I don't like the people. (24)*

*You must have some feeling to be able to collaborate musically. You must be able to establish an intimate relationship to work together. (19)*

*I cannot separate the human and the artistic point of view. I have many friends who suck musically with which I cannot do anything and other people that I love musically but then there are assholes and I cannot anything either. It's crucial for a label to work with people with whom you have an kinship. (17c)*

*This band ... they are at first good friends, so we made their records for personal knowledge. It never happened that we got a demo from a band and we produce it ... we never did a thing without knowing personally the musicians. It is not a matter of records, we also made some records that we don't like, we like the person! It is a matter of feeling, of human relationship. (27)*

As Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2010) suggest, it would be cynical to discount all the positive experiences of friendships in which people are engaged in these kinds of works, and to think that every kind of friendship brings to a commodification of relationships. The difficult conditions can bring to friendship that allow to face the precarious and unsecure situations. However on the other side, respondents are aware of the need of distancing professional and personal relationships:

*Now I have fired myself because I'm the girlfriend of my manager and we have a different approach professionally speaking, we began to disagree and this was a problem for our personal relationship. (24)*

*With Fiz, who is a great friend of mine, we tried to never work together. So I try to keep work and friendship separately! Obviously you can become friend with your colleagues, but I never go out with my colleagues. (7)*

Besides since it is difficult to maintain the distance between private and professional relationships and between private life and work, respondents have in fact emphasized that any occasion can become a professional opportunity. This is even true because respondents were particularly attached to the ideals of self-realization that a career in the independent music sector allows them to achieve, and to the assumption that they were particularly lucky in working in a such desirable sector. The pleasure they were feeling in music-related work they do, that was perceived as a passion usually favoured forms of self-exploitation (McRobbie; 2002; Baker & Hesmondhalgh, 2010).

In the case of live music sector, the level of high working and stressful conditions was in fact in proximity to the organization of a large musical event:

*You cannot imagine the level of stress and effort, both physically and psychologically that organizing a event like this implies. I came out completely destroyed ... yes yes. Romantic relationships ... destroyed! life completely changed. Oh ... and yes, from there on, my life has not been the same, but it was absolutely beautiful and positive, absolutely. (10)*

For some people it seems that the choice of dedicating themselves to music-related activities implies that these activities will tend to occupy all personal spare time:

*I have taken away the social life, my family, my friends. For me it was more important to do this job and I could not give up music. So after 10 hours in the office as radio speaker I go to the rehearsal room and then maybe I go to see a concert ... I'm destroyed but I never wanted to give up live music, ... but I did not want to miss, so I have given up social life, friends ... (17a)*

In many cases professional activities were not justified by the economic revenues but rather by the passion for music. Respondents have explained that in many situations they have worked without getting any economic revenues because at the same time they were interested in acquiring new artistic experiences:

*Nobody pays me to play in their records, but I have a lot in terms of human experience and I do it to learn something from the people I'm working with. Then I earn money from live performances and from other projects. (37)*

Besides the need of acquiring new professional and artistic skills and of enlarging the network of relationships involves that the continuous involvement in free labour and volunteering are

absolutely needed as a way of developing personal contacts in the network of music productions, which will be necessary for developing a career in this field.

*It was volunteering, but it allowed me to know so many people in the backstage and to expand my contacts with promoters, booking agents and media relations and any type of contact that then has simplified things a lot for what has become my job. (32)*

In a lot of situations, volunteering is essential at an initial stage for starting and developing a music project, and in some case people manage to transform volunteering into a more professional activity with possibilities of employment :

*For a while we were all volunteers, yet now there is still a part of volunteering, but then there are people who are paid with a monthly salary. A lot of people have participated in the creation of Magnolia ARCI venue ... The thing that Magnolia should remain as laboratory where you can spend a period of training is crucial because the goal is to promote the professional growth of people who want to work in the music sector and so people can do volunteering in order to become professional. I think that is important rather than say always volunteering. This is great confusion which we see in no-for-profit organizations!(25)*

However it seems to happen that small-scale music organizations and especially no-for-profit organizations can be economically sustainable only thanks to volunteering and free labour<sup>34</sup> (Terranova, 2004). And volunteering becomes a common practice for people not only at the early stages. There is a vicious circle in which a broad range of independent music production is finally constituted by volunteering and free labour.

*It's possible than in 10 years I'm the only person being employed! People need some social security in life, because one cannot claim that a person can stay in a squatted cultural center without a contract for 30 years, as if everything could remain as volunteering. You can do volunteering when there is a part of the job which is already covered but you cannot always be a volunteer! (33)*

In some situations, many interviewees have suggested that in circuits of independent music production sector only people who have previous economic income can afford to survive in this low paid or paid economy. Looking at the life trajectories of my respondents it was possible to see that many of them left a previous job which left them an economic security, while other respondents were complaining that many people can afford to keep continuing

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<sup>34</sup> Terranova (2004) uses the notion of free labour to explain how the internet has developed thanks to forms of unpaid work, but the concept can be applied to look at micro independent music production



with volunteering and free labour thanks to a sort of ‘familiar welfare’, so a help coming directly from parents:

*Make a certain type of music is difficult because many who do have the ‘back covered’ in the sense that they have parents helping them to do what they are doing! The more you are ternate in Italy the more you need a financial support from your parents otherwise you cannot do certain stuff! (28)*

Volunteering and free labour are linked to people’s desire of broadening personal contacts in their networks and of acquiring a legitimacy within the circuits. Often rewards become the offer of free tickets to events, free CDs, and relational rewards as invitations to parties which are all proofs of being embedded in the networks, rather than direct economic revenues, and the possibility of acquiring new expertise for free.

Besides self-exploitation attitudes can be a response to a risky economy; these micro circuits of independent production tend to be characterized by unstable, unpredictable and risky economies, in which people are often in the situation of directly investing their time and money on a project without having any kind of job security:

*And so I have always been a super precarious worker, always everything at my own risk, and sometimes goes well, sometimes goes wrong. (39)*

With flexible working arrangements of freelance or short term contracts, people are involved at the same time in several paid or unpaid jobs which serve as a way to mark their position within their network, and of acquiring legitimacy and visibility. Besides there is a tendency even to broad their possibility outside of music-related activities. In the trajectories and careers of the respondents it was very common to analyze that activities were very often not only music-related but more broadly related to cultural production (particularlry film-making, arts, photography, comics). Due to the instability of the market, music producers were stimulated to be always looking for new collaborations, and, consequently, to feed network of contacts even outside of the music-related circuits. Besides musicians emphasized that they were often in the condition of being forced to play in live music venues and music events for free because they were interested in being legitimized within the circuits of live music performances in Milan.

The desire of making a living with music requires these people to be extremely multitasking and interconnected in a network based upon a strong system of reputation and trust where interactions play such a central role for future jobs and careers.

Several studies (e.g. McRobbie, 2002) have pointed out that these micro practitioners are usually multi-tasking in the sense that they are usually performing many roles as a way to “ducking and diving” in a risky and flexible environment, instead of being specialists. As McRobbie (2002) explains:

Young people whose portfolio careers increasingly mean not serial jobs but multi-tasking. The latter becomes necessary partly because there is no cushion of welfare to cover periods between jobs, also because labour costs are falling in the cultural sector, and finally because creative work, as various studies have shown, is simply low pay work except for those at the very top (2002, p. 523).

The choice of performing different roles allow to survive in a risky, oversupplied and turbulent environment.

In many occasions the absence of organizational and entrepreneurial skills which allow to manage a risky and turbulent economy is solved by performing different roles. At the same time however this tendency towards multi-jobbing can avoid to develop particular skills and expertise which are necessary to thrive (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010).

In a highly competitive environment, in which music trends and technologies can change rapidly the choice of performing many roles enables to overcome possible crises in one of the activities performed and invest in the others. Performing different roles is a way to survive and to overcome the risky economy.

*Then the fact of doing many things at once is an help. We are at the same time records label, artistic directors, booking agency and in this way we manage to get by. (5b)*

Almost all my respondents were performing different roles within the networks of live music and this tendency was making difficult for them to explain if they were musicians, music agents, journalists, booking agents because they were engaged at the same time in many music-related roles. The different tasks which were performed on a professional and amateur basis enabled them to acquire economic revenues, personal satisfaction or artistic fulfilment.

*When I was 23 years old, I was already doing these things as hobbies, then t has become more and more a professional activity. Hence what has become a sort of hobby-profession or professional hobby ... but I do*

*many things to get by and instead of thinking to start a 'serious jobs', I have kept being musicians and music journalist together and all these things together have become my job. (11)*

The multitasking attitude is connected to a DIY (Do It Yourself) attitude of auto-promotion and auto-production which, as I have explained before, it's a common feature in independent music production, but at the same time it's enabled by a networked system of production. Interestingly the multitasking attitude was favouring the networked nature of the circuits of independent music production.

*I want to dedicate myself completely to everything gravitating around music, because things are extremely interconnected ... Because if I organize a concert, I get in touch with some people, and these people will probably invite me to play with my band. This system is leading to the creation of a network of people playing and simultaneously organizing concerts in squats, music venues, ARCI associations ... And this creates links to all these levels, you know other people who are at the same time musicians but organizers of concerts, and maybe owners of a record label ... It is a particular thing which is happening now that people are performing two or three different roles, and this system creates a large network of relationships. It happens automatically because if I play and organize concerts is obvious that if you come to me to play at my events and you're in the same situation, if I know that you organize concerts in Rome I will call you to play and then you'll probably invite me to play in Rome. It's different if I'm only an organizer of concert and you are only a musician. There is a different relationship because you come, you play and that's it! There's no a system of reciprocity. While if at the same time I play and you organize, we create a much stronger link between us!(38)*

As this quotation suggests, the multitasking attitude is not only allowing to make a living from music, but it is especially creating an economy of reciprocity, because reputation and symbolic legitimacy within the networks is acquired by the different roles you performed. Performing different roles enables to acquire much more importance and power within the networks because the position in the network can be spent in different ways. Besides it allows to invest more deeply and broadly in the relational capital, because different relationships can be maintained and developed in different roles.

However some respondents have emphasized that in the system of reciprocity, the multitasking and multi-skilled category of professionalism implies that in many situations performing different roles can create 'conflicts of interest' between them:

*And it was incompatible to be a manager of a band and at the same time working in communication and marketing agency, there's a huge conflict of interest in the sense that I couldn't do the best thing for the band and for the agency. I was working for a multimedia department and we produce this website for the band which*

*was a shit, but on the other side I was the manager of the band and so I had to say that the website sucks but there is a conflict of interest because how do you tell to your company that the website sucks. You cannot do too many thing because one will hinder the other! (24)*

Besides the system of reciprocity, that multitasking role tends to develop, favours the closure of networks and the formation of small circuits. It's interesting to see how as small scale producers or organizations tend to have different activities they tend to collaborate continuously with the same people without allowing the entrance of new people:

*But this system of performing different roles has become very common now and there are many music venues which are at the same time management, booking agencies and record labels such as Bloom, Magnolia and Tambourine. The problem is that this system creates a sort of lobby. Because it happens that... if Magnolia is the booking agent and manager of ten bands, and so it calls other music venues whole over Italy and says: every Thursday my bands will come to play in your venue but every Friday your bands can come and play in my venue and this system creates a network which is in fact a lobby. And so it happens that the events calendar of a music venue is locked by the booking agencies who place their artists regardless of the music. And if you are a musician and you don't have a booking agency, or your booking agency doesn't belong to this 'lobby' you will remain outside the network and you will struggle to play at good conditions of cachet. (26)*

According to this musician, the fact that many live music venues are at the same time record labels, management and booking agencies tend to create a system of reciprocal relationships between these actors while inhibiting those who are not so networked, multi-skilled and multitasking from entering in these networks. People who perform different roles are even those who are in a position of power because they can much more profit of their relational capital and of the system of reciprocity. In other words the networked system of the circuits of independent music production tend to favor those who have relational capital within the network and therefore networks tend in themselves to create isolated clusters and nodes, and a division between those who can or cannot be part of the network, between those who are included and excluded. As I have aforementioned citing van Dijk (1999)'s theorization of networks, networks increase rather than decrease social inequalities, competitiveness and individualism.

This assumptions suggest that these networks are not only highly collaborative and friendly environment as we have seen in the music scene and art world debate in the previous chapters. On one side it could be argued that relationships serve at cooperating for music production and performance, as in Becker's (1982) approach in the application of the sociology of organization to the study of art world.

*We are not at war with the other music venues but we cooperate especially with Tambourine and Bloom music venues. If you have a big artist tonight, I do not put another big one. With the music venue Bloom and with Carroponate, we try to coordinate each other with the concerts. And especially international promoters offer their artists to all the music venues ... so we try to coordinate between the different venues. We call each other and we say: you want to do this artist this month, ok then I'll do next time. Or for example once there was a group that we wanted and Carroponate venue wanted, but they have made the offer much before, so that's fine, because if we compete between venues, the promoters will raise the prices of the artists and it would be worst for anyone! So it's better to collaborate! (12)*

But on the other side it is instead important to point out that networks are constituted by power relations and by tensions existing between individualist-competitive and cooperative forces. If superficially it may seem that networks are open, instead people within networks do not share information and tend to mistrust people outside their network:

*People have difficulties in trusting others, unless there is the mediation of someone who introduces you to someone else and so if a person is introduced from someone you already know this person acquires a little more value even if you I had already heard about this person. It's a shame sometimes, but often you end up like this. Sometimes you have the wrong idea about certain things just because you don't know them. (8)*

Therefore this system leads to a fragmentation which does not enable the different circuits of independent music to communicate between each other, as the respondent emphasizes:

*In the music sector each one cultivate its own backyard. There's a such a fragmentation and a lack of dialogue ... if you just look at the events calendar in Milan, there are so many events overlapping because everyone has to step on the toes of someone else. It means that there is no dialogue! (24)*

In some situations there are attempts of networking between different music organizations, gathering different venues and operators, but this kind of activities are only extemporaneous and do not allow the creation of a stable circuit of collaboration.

If on one side small scale music productions are based upon a system of trust between their members, and upon networks of collaboration which allow to overcome the risky economy (Banks, et al., 2000), on the other side it's possible to see the power relations and individualist attitudes existing in the different networks in which people are simultaneously interested in enlarging their networks but at the same time at defending their position within these networks. As this respondent and as Leadbeater and Oakley (1999) suggest, independent

producers tend to develop collaborative and net-worked environment, but at the same time they tend to defend their individualistic values:

*It's always better to be very few people at the core of a project. Then now we have a lot of ideas, and friends, with whom we collaborate. But it's better that everyone does its own thing without impinging too much with what we are doing ... we interact with others but just in terms of temporary collaborations but nothing more than that!(17c)*

As van Dijk (1999) suggests, competition and collaboration are understood here as complementary in the sense that even though networks have flat structures and favor networking and cooperative activities, exactly because of the absence of hierarchies, these tend to be created in the struggle for positions and symbolic legitimization is possible through the recognition given by the others.

# Conclusion

This chapter has tried to analyze the independent music scene in the context of the research, by considering the and social discourses and experiences of independent music producers.

At first the chapter has emphasized how the notion independence in the Italian context implies a contested definition of independence in which processes of professionalization, commercialization and institutionalization can create tensions in the circuits of independent music. The application of Bourdieu's (1993) notion of field to the context of the independent music production in Italy has enable to explain how there is a symbolic struggle occurring between on one side the legitimacy of the independent sector and on the other side the more pragmatic tendency towards the integration of independent music in the national music industry.

Besides the chapter has been an attempt to re-conceptualize the understanding of music scene as circuits of cultural production. Analyses of music scenes are traditionally focused upon grass-roots music making practices, and don't consider how these practices are instead rooted in organizational and economic dynamics which characterized today cultural economy. As I have suggested, referring to Hesmondhalgh (2002) and Leadbeater and Oakley (1999), independent music producers share common characteristics that we can find more broadly in the analysis of micro independent producers in cultural and creative industries. This characteristics can be summarized in the following elements. At first I have pointed out the importance played by relationships in which there is a blurring demarcation between personal and working relationships, between leisure and work. Besides I have showed that these networks of independent production live an unstable, unpredictable and risky environment. Several practices are adopted in order to overcome this risky economy, such as performing different roles, and the attitudes of self- exploitation. Finally I have tried to suggest how independent producers tend to have simultaneously individualistic- competitive and collaborative attitudes. Using van Dijk (1999)'s theorization, it is possible to argue that the tension existing between cooperative and competitive practices, equality and inequality is a common feature of networks. This assumption enable to consider independent music scenes not as cohesive entities characterized only by collaborative and cooperative relationships, but in fact as fragmented and competing networks characterized by power relations and struggles for positions and symbolic legitimization.

The next chapter will consider how these fragmented circuits are rooted in a media, economic, regulatory, political and cultural environment which inhibits or enables independent music production and performance.



## 8. Second layer of the model: The Five Dimension of the Social Terrain

### Introduction

In the previous chapter I have tried to analyze the circuits of independent music production, particularly emphasizing the importance of the social discourses gravitating around the independence and looking at the subjective experiences of musicians and music producers in the circuits of music production. I have particularly looked at the importance that networks of relationships can play in live music production and performance.

In this chapter I instead try to look at how these subjective representations and experiences need to be understood by considering systematic constraints and possibilities that can structured them.

This is the second level of the model I have attempted to theorize previously which aims to look at how the circuits that comprise the independent music scene, I have described in the previous chapter, are in rooted in a social terrain which lives in a certain equilibrium of different forces which can be summarized in different dimensions: media, economy, policy-regulations, politics and finally culture. As I have aforementioned, some of the references to these theorization are Bourdieu's (1993)'s analysis of the interconnectedness among fields and Kruse (2003)'s application of Bourdieu's perspective, who emphasizes how the study of music production stands in a conjectural intersection with social, cultural, political, economic dimensions. This conjuncture depends upon the specific context and period of the research (from January to July 2011), characterized by particular economic, political, cultural, and technological contingencies which mutually influence networks of music productions.

Therefore in this chapter I will not try to reconstruct the history of independent music scene in the Italian context but rather I will try to analyze its specificity in the context and period of the research, relying upon the assumptions made by the respondents. The independent music scene has its own specificity in the Italian context and cannot be simply restricted in the opposition of independent versus corporate recording industries but instead stands in the interplay between a media environment, an economic context, regulations and policies, a political and cultural context.

## 8.1 Media Environment

Talking about the media, I mean to focus upon the role of digitization and of ICTs upon the circuits of independent live music production. At first it's important to point out that the digitization of music, and particularly online piracy, has completely reshaped the ways of producing, distributing, sharing and promoting music (e.g. Blackburn, 2004; Oberholzer-Gee & Strumpf, 2007).

It is worth to highlight that because of the digital revolution the relationship of the recorded music and live music sector has changed and this has an impact upon independent music scene as well.

I will tackle this issue in the economic dimension looking at how the digitization of music has completely changed the economies of the music industry, which are not any more related to the recording industry but rather to the live music sector.

In this chapter I will instead concentrate the attention upon the importance that the internet and SNSs have in changing interactions of music producers in the circuits of independent music and ways of producing and promoting music and music events.

The internet has been welcome for its possibility of democratizing the production and distribution of music, allowing even grass-roots music producers to have unprecedented opportunities to reach a global audience. As Zimmer (2008) for example emphasizes, “the rhetoric surrounding Web 2.0 infrastructures ... promises to empower creativity, to democratize media production, and to celebrate the individual while also relishing the power of collaboration and social networks” (2008, 34).

Digital recording technology has generally allowed to make much more easily and cheaply professional recording with high quality without having to rely upon the costs of paying for studio time, but instead favoring the spread of home recording (Connell & Gibson, 2002, p. 258).

For many of the respondents the internet allows a new conceptualization of the DIY (Do It Yourself) attitude of auto-production, and but even of auto-promotion which is allowed by digital mediated communication. Internet has been particularly welcome in the independent music circuits because traditional media, including TVs and radios, have not been channels of promotion for independent music.

*To make independent music means today doing things without the need to use the conventional channels of promotions that until recently were TV, radio and print. (27)*

There is in some ways a process of rejection or interdiction of independent music, as we have defined it (Colombo, 2001), from the Italian mass media, which usually accept preferentially mainstream music products. As many of the interviewees have emphasized critically, most of the new successes of mainstream music production in Italy come directly from Talent Shows<sup>35</sup>. As two music producers working in majors have explained, Talent Shows have become the main source of income for the mainstream recording industry.

*Talent shows have been a godsend at a time of crisis of the music industry, because you produce artists who have already become successful through the TV and so you don't have to spend money on the promotion because these artists are already famous (x).*

*The alternative world is the one in which I grew up, but over the years I have had to crash with the other world... If I could be the publisher only of alternative music I wouldn't be in a major. I published a lot of pop music, and for example now the artists from Amici are the my main source of income. (36)*

On the contrary independent musicians and music producers tend to distinguish themselves from the choice of bands of participating to talent shows in TV. This opposition was, in some cases, highlighted in relation to the opportunity to participate in talent shows, which are perceived as precisely placed in a mainstream logic and especially as allowing a visibility which is not directly connected to music quality.

*As they see that you are a songwriter and you have some catchy songs, the first thing they ask is: why do not you show up to X-Factor? It is not the only way that, absolutely not. We must present a credible music project: 20-30 songs, and then you can try to promote yourself, but first you need to have some music. Television programs, are only a springboard for your name ... not for your music!(x)*

As the quotation suggests, there is a tendency of emphasizing the possibility of finding alternative ways of promoting music to the one of mass media. Concerning radios it's interesting that some respondents suggested the difficulty in being broadcasted in commercial national radios. From a certain point of view therefore the attitudes of independents towards traditional media seem to be quite contradictory since many artists feel the need of radio, press and TV to reach a wider audience, but on the other side they seem to criticize these media of being promoting only mainstream music products.

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<sup>35</sup> The most successful talent shows in Italy are from 2008 XFactor and from 2009 Amici di Maria de Filippi (Friends of Maria de Filippi).

For these reasons, the internet was even more welcome as a new source of auto-promotion alternative to the one of traditional media. This is especially true because on the contrary to independent producers, the major recording industry has failed to exploit internet technology, being incapable of reacting to the changes of digitalization upon music, especially in terms of promotions and publicity:

*The major record companies do not realize the potential of the web, especially in terms of circulation of opinions. Although music blogs are followed by a niche, they act as opinion leaders upon music products. They replace what in the 1990s was the word of mouth. Record companies do not understand the web. They do not understand the importance of the word of mouth. Just think that majors still prohibit streaming of a full albums because for them it helps to develop the illegal downloading. (29)*

On the contrary this music operator working in the corporate music industry seems to suggest that the music industry has not yet been able to understand how to make money from the web, and therefore it is still attached to the traditional recording industry:

*The web is a place which is not so organized to make money, so in these years we produce music for a more adult market because the adults are still more tied to the purchase of records. Or there is the market for teens with parents who buy records for their children. In between the young unfortunately do not buy. The audience in between is digital. There was a technological tsunami and discography was on the shore. (36)*

Independents have been able much better than majors able to profit from the possibilities of the internet, by allowing often free downloading of music<sup>36</sup>.

This is suggested even in other studies (Kembrew McLeod, 2005) which point out that differently from major labels, independent record labels do not see peer-to-peer file sharing of music as problematic but rather as a good way of promoting music. For example this interviewee, owner of an electronic record label and DJ, who is very enthusiastic about the possibilities given by digitalization, pointed out that internet allows to be truly independent, and at the same time to reach a larger audience:

*The internet is the soul of the label, we could not do anything without the Internet, in the sense that it allows the distribution of music projects, now we do not print except few records, because records do not sell anymore.*

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<sup>36</sup> For example Rockit and other music blogs, the biggest webzine of independent music in Italy I aforementioned, offer free streaming of albums of independent bands.

*The Internet has become the distributor of our music products, it allows us to be in digital stores around the world completely independently, we are very independent, we have no one to finance the label and tell us, what to do, we are independent. The Internet allows us to have our products all over the world, allows us to dialogue with artists, blogs, websites. For example Titan who is a dj from Roseto degli Abruzzi, had contacted me to let me hear his music ... then I listened and we made an EP... That is to say that a label from Cremona with no budget can get into contact with different people and produce their music! the internet can change things. We started by exchanging contacts with other DJs and have a good mailing list also with dj super stars around the world, and we had a feedback from Steve Aoki and from Vicsmag that is the most important magazine for house music. At any moment you receive an email from your bedroom from a major label that says that one of the most influential figures of this scene would like to include the track of a dj from Roseto degli Abruzzi in his album!*

*Without the internet we would still be thinking about how to do!  
That's why we put our music in free downloading as much as possible!(32)*

Besides, one of the potentialities of the internet which is related to the creation of an online word of mouth has been traditionally used as the main way of auto-promotion in the independent DIY attitude, as for example Shank (1994) underlines in suggesting the importance of the 'buzz' for the diffusion of music in the music scene of Austin.

Many studies (e.g. Lee and Peterson, 2004; Hodkinson, 2006) have in fact underlined the potential of the Internet in contributing to the development and reinforcement of the music scene, focusing on the analysis of groups of fans in their relationship with the artist. A large number of online fan clubs dedicated to artists, bands, genres have flourished in the web. They seem to respond to a need of exchanging information and music contents, which is central to the success of the scene. Most of these studies, including for example Cavicchi's (1998) analysis of Bruce Springsteen's fans, have particularly analyzed the importance of the internet to give rise to new strategies for the articulation of fandom and the creation of fan discourses, while here my attention is not instead focused to fan-based communities but rather to the role of the internet in the music making practices, in the relationships between music producers, and in the auto-promotion of music.

Obviously, mediated contacts and exchanges of information, gossip and word of mouth were very widespread in music scene, even previously to the advent of the Internet. As pointed out by an analysis of English labels (Strachan, 2007), contacts and exchange of knowledge among members of the independent scene also occurred by postal mail system, and through a series of communication channels, including fanzines. However the internet and especially music

blogs and Social Networking Sites (SNSs)<sup>37</sup> have surely contributed to a democratization in the diffusion of music, and have offered an alternative channel of auto-promotion for emerging and independent artists.

Particularly digital communication has favored the democratization of the writing about music, which has characterized the styles of music blogs and webzines. This new style is based upon a more personal and enthusiastic writing about music, which is opposed to the more professional and distanced writing of music critics.

*Then there was a process of personalization of critics is linked to the advent of blogs, where you could make your review, and every opinion was legitimate and respectable. I noticed this difference from music magazines.*

*There is this idea that in the internet the writer expresses himself and is much more smart, intelligent and consider old critics as archaeological ruins. (11)*

*Another cool thing we did and have begun talking about music and writing music in an absolutely personal in a way that was not there before, from a certain point, from the blog onwards it is normal to speak something in a personal way. And this thing was, it was powerful because it has done so much in content, level of empathy with the musicians, in terms of credibility and exchange. In fact, another thing that comes out is that of participatory critic, in saying that while you write a critique of an album, you're participating in the construction of all the project and the band. (10)*

Besides the spread of SNSs such as MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter and of music blogs has been particularly significant in increasing online interaction between musicians, music journalists and music producers.

The internet has played a key role not only in the grass-roots distribution and marketing of independent music but even in the coordination between musicians and music producers, and for example in the organization of concerts as Kruse (2010) enabling to “find gigs, places to stay, and people to whom to sell tickets and merchandise” (Kruse, 2010, p.632).

In the case of my research, some respondents have exaggerated the benefits of the internet, others have been more careful about its possibilities, emphasizing instead the problematic issues. In other words, even though there is a common rhetoric around the possibility of the internet of allowing Do It Yourself auto-promotion, in fact this rhetoric needs to be challenged. As Kruse (2010) suggests quoting Mosco's (2004) idea of the “digital sublime”, there are

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<sup>37</sup> According to the definition given by boyd and Ellison: Social Network Sites are “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 27)

several myths surrounding the internet as the “impossible dreams of democracy and community” (2004, p. 30) that need to be challenged.

On this concern, as many respondents have referred to, MySpace has been crucial in the initial stage of SNSs because it was a music related SNS, which allowed contacts between music producers and musicians:

*MySpace was so cool because it was only for music producers, you were writing to music venues and they responded right away because they knew that you were a musician. (26)*

*There was the happy period of around 2006 with myspace where everyone could upload the music... you could publish something on myspace and a person from another band could listen to it and say: ok cool music! Let's meet and we can seek a concert together, without knowing each other. (35)*

The strength of MySpace<sup>38</sup>, which was generally at the time of the fieldwork no longer used by the interviewees as a proper SNS but only as a site to upload music, was of having been a SNS with an high musical characterization which has given the possibility of allowing an exchange of very specific music contents and information. According to the respondent, until MySpace has been used by a limited number of music producers it worked, now the widespread use of SNSs particularly of Facebook<sup>39</sup>, that at the time of the research was the most commonly used SNS, has made communication less effective.

On the contrary, as boyd and Ellison (2007) suggest, “SNSs are primarily organized around people, not interests...Social network sites are structured as personal (or ‘egocentric’) networks, with the individual at the center of their own community” (boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 24).

The use of Facebook as a SNS which is much more concerned to the presentation of the personality and the maintenance of the relationships have some negative implications in its use by musicians and music producers for the diffusion and publicity of music:

*The promotion in Facebook is very strange, you need to consider that the other people will have at the same time in their wall news about a future war in Iran, a post about a friend who broke up with the girlfriend and finally an event invitation to my concert! It's very confusing! (27)*

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<sup>38</sup> Obviously these assumptions cannot be restricted only to MySpace but must be extended to other SNSs, considering the complexity and diversity of uses people made of the different SNSs.

<sup>39</sup> I will particularly focused upon Facebook because at the time of the research was the most widely used SNSs within independent music producers.

In the period of the research, Facebook was widely used by independent music producers, particularly musicians and music organizers, as a useful tool of promotion of live music events.

Particularly there was an ever increasing number of events advertised. Even though event page about future concerts were increasing, some respondents were quite skeptical about their usefulness:

*The event system on Facebook does not work because you get too many invitations, and therefore it is not reliable. My booking agency makes the event page for me, but I do not invite most of my contacts, I post the event on my wall and you can see it, and if you want to come, you come. (26)*

Event invitations in Facebook were particularly unreliable, being not locally specific but instead advertising events happening at a national and international level. Sometimes it was possible to find posts like this: “If you are from Varese, share this event invitation! Otherwise I’m going to send 4500 useless invitations all over Italy”. The same kind of problem was evident from this interviewee who suggests that even invitation were not addressed to a precise target:

*The promotion in Facebook is very strange. On the fan page of ‘I tre Allegri Ragazzi Morti’ band , we have 30 thousand members, so it is a good distribution channel but it is not entirely true. Because if we are playing in Cagliari, all these people are not of Cagliari. It's all a bit ...it is not targeted. (27)*

For the more professional music producers, Facebook was allowing a communication which was not focused, not targeted and not reliable:

*Often internet data are inflated and do not reflect what actually happens, for example, respondents cite the views on YouTube and confirmations of participation in events. They create the hype which is not effective (33)*

*People behind these things is not prepared and professional. Facebook is a useful tool but it can give you a wrong feedback. If you create an event and you invite on Facebook 100 000 people, and many people accept your invitation and you think that those will really come, in this way you fail because you need to know that it is so easy to click yes to your invitation. You must know how to use these tools to get a return in your communication. (24)*



For this manager, the lack of skills is negatively affecting the wrong use of SNSs as tools for communication and promotion of music and music events:

*There is also to say that in a site where you communicate so much, at last you do not communicate anything. But even because it is used badly, because if music producers have had a notion of what communication is, they would have know that it is useless to post something every single hour because you would know that it creates an over information and I will not read anymore. I have blocked the pages of many bands because they were sending me hips of notifications every day and it was too much. (24)*

This respondent emphasizes the wrong uses of SNSs which were often affecting many independent music producers.

This lack of digital skills and particularly of communication and marketing skills in the use of SNSs for promoting music and concerts was evident through the observation of the profiles of the respondents. In some cases, especially less professional operators, there was an excessive but at the same time not strategic use of online communications. In some cases it was possible to see as an inability to use the Facebook, which was demonstrated for example by general mistakes such as opening multiple pages for the invitation to the same event, mistakes in the timing of the invitation to event on the evening of the concert, typos, mistakes in the data of events, which then turned into frustration for some of the non-success of a musical event. Also on one occasion I went to a meeting<sup>40</sup> between some music producers of several social centres and music venues, in which it was pointed out that the underground had not quite grasped the importance of communication and therefore it was suggested the need for a workshop about the Internet to learn the correct use of SNSs. Obviously there were differences depending on the different circuits and different levels of expertise but there was sometimes a common perception that the SNSs allowed grass-roots auto-promotion with a easy use but in fact, the management of publicity in SNSs needed certain skills.

These assumptions enable to point out that on one side SNSs do not allow a completely grassroots auto-promotion but instead require strategic skills to obtain an effective communication. And on the other side that the unreliability of Facebook does not allow to focus only on this type of tool as a source of publicity and promotion of music and concerts.

As the most professional artists and operators have noted:

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<sup>40</sup> I've referred to this in the methodological chapter when talking about one of my informants who introduced me to some of the circuits associated with social centres of Milan, such as Leoncavallo and Torchiera and to a collective of artists, called Trok, who in the course of research organized Miland, a week of music events and a meeting with some musicians and operators to talk about the problems of music in Milan in which I took part.

*To be sure you have done a good job, you should be everywhere so in posters, newspapers, television and the internet. But to be in Facebook is not enough! (27)*

*The communication should be viral, Facebook is ok but then you need to send press releases then radio interviews, newspapers, magazines ...you have to create the hype because this is a market of over-abundance (5)*

These quotations seem to point out that in the over-abundance of information in the web there is a need of cross-media presence and of relying upon opinion leaders.

According to Baym (2008), since the internet and SNSs have become mainstream sites, the problem becomes that “at the same time, since so many musicians and labels have access to the internet, it is more challenging than ever to rise above the din to gain attention”( 2008, p.5). On the contrary to the mythical rhetoric, which has welcome the internet for its possibility of democratizing the production, distribution of music, and allowing grass-roots promotion, it’s possible to point out that in the amount of information, a series of hierarchies are established around certain music websites, music blog, and Facebook profiles and pages. There is therefore a complex hierarchical system, where hierarchy is primarily determined by access to information and the visibility of contents.

The internet allows to increase rather than limit the processes of hierarchies within the circuits of independent music, by the creation of new hierarchies which are based upon the power of new gatekeepers who work as opinion leaders. As Kruse (2010) suggests:

Connell and Gibson (2004) contend that, with the advent of music distribution on the internet, “unless musicians could generate significant links from other websites, or could mobilize audiences for self-promoted materials, their sounds were likely to be lost in a ‘sea’ of digital noise” (2004, p. 261). Indeed, despite the great optimism about the ability of the internet to circumvent gatekeeping apparatuses of the mainstream industry, many music listeners may be turning to other gatekeepers ... (Kruse, 2010, p.635)

This process of gatekeeping serves to overcome an over-abundance of information which makes difficult for people to select the right information:

*Yes before there were the first fanzines, but you had to print them and distribute them to create your circuit. With the internet it seems easier but in fact it is more difficult because there are so many things that one must be educated to filter them and understand them, not only according to personal taste, but depending on what it is around us. And sometimes you take big blunders. (8)*

*In the chaos of information, you end up to trust only as couple of music blogs or music websites (x)*

*I get all the inputs from Facebook because my networks of fiends share interesting things to discover. I have interesting friends on Facebook, which in fact are all music producers or fans of music. Some of them for me are opinion leaders ... I like what Andrea Girolami posts, then Rockit, but I usually go directly Rockit website. Then*

*I have the Facebook page of the main music websites such as Rockol, Xl and Mucchio, and I consult them through Facebook.*

*The kind of network that I have created in Facebook which is mainly made by music producers, management and booking agency and record labels, cultural associations, music magazines, radios and TVs.(22a)*

From the last quotation, it appears that people directly make reference to certain music producers or organizations which are perceived as opinion leaders. In the last chapter I mentioned the analysis of the case study of the webzine Rockit, which has become highly influential playing a key role of gatekeeping in determining the success of many independent bands.

*For example the problem is that we now regard the band I Cani as great artists just because Rockit is always talking about them, and because they have many views on Youtube but this is not being successful. (29)*

As I have aforementioned these processes of gatekeeping do not come without tensions between independent music producers, because the opinion leaders will be responsible of symbolically legitimizing, of increasing the visibility and of creating the hype which is crucial for the diffusion of music.

Besides gatekeepers allow their own circuits to be auto-referential, favoring therefore the closure of this circuits from people who are external to them, and therefore favoring as well the fragmentation between different circuits of independent production. These processes of inclusiveness are favored by Facebook which is traditionally aimed at relational maintenance for those who already know one another (Baym, 2008).

*The same people who are always at concerts are also the same people who have hundreds of friends in common on Facebook, we are always all there. Social networks make music content and news of gigs easily accessible, but at the end is a place where you meet always the same people, even if the network has wider potential. (29)*

What I'm saying it is extremely interconnected to the assumptions made in the previous chapter about the nature of networks of independent music production. All the networking practices wouldn't be possible without considering the importance of digital communication.

The analysis of the use of the Internet and in particular of SNSs and music blogs, and music websites allows to emphasize the contradictions that have been touched in the previous chapter in the analysis of small scales music circuits.

In particular, it emerges that in SNSs there is also an emphasis upon the social capital that results in terms of number the contacts that are added on Facebook. People with higher visibility were actually those with higher number of contacts that often exceeded the threshold of 5000 contacts and forced them to open a public profile<sup>41</sup>.

In some cases, respondents pointed out that there were certain profiles which acted as opinion leaders. Interestingly, the wall of these profiles which had a high number of contacts were full of posts and events advertisement from other people. In other words people were strategically using the Facebook page of people with an high visibility, which was translated in terms of Facebook contacts in order to reach an higher audience:

*A sort of hierarchy of Facebook is created, hence there are certain profiles that have become wall of opinion leaders. If you post something there you are sure that many people will see it. I'm organizing a Festival 'Parola Cantata' with the famous musician Giovanardi.*

*The other day I open the event page of the event and I got 20 friends request, then I have put Giovanardi as administrator of the page and in a minute I got 200 friend requests just because of him. (24)*

There is a consequent issue that I have touched in the previous chapter, mainly the blurring demarcation between private and public figures which in the case of artists is particularly strong. As Baym (2010) suggests, “when friends in a SNS can be strangers, admirers, confidants, co-workers, family, and a host of other relationships types, yet all be called the same thing on one site, it triggers inevitable confusion”. (Baym, 2010, p. 145)

SNSs allow experiences which perfectly suited to the relationships of music scene members who are engaged in relationships in which the distinctions between friends, operators, fans tend to overlap.

At the same time, according to Baym and Burnett (2007) digital communication allow to blur the distinction between production and consumption. All what I have said before about the issue of self-exploitation and upon the blurring demarcation between production and consumption, leisure and work would be not understandable without considering the impact of the internet in allowing a direct involvement of fans in music publicity.

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<sup>41</sup> At the time of the research, Facebook allows to have maximum 5000 contacts in the private profile

In other words gatekeeping is made even by fans who “serve as publicists and filters, steering other audience members towards (or away from) bands and labels” (Baym and Burnett, 2007, p. 24).

*There is this mechanism within the music blogs, which are many by young fans of this music who open their blogs and then step by step ... the article ... the review, they give mp3 downloading and they create a word of mouth becoming speakers of the strong resonance ... so we send our music to bloggers and the ep is amazing how they are followed.(32)*

Baym and Burnett (2007) name “amateur experts” those fans who are particularly involved and committed to the Swedish independent music scene. These kind of people work for free promoting bands, labels and concerts especially by highlighting their music on news sites, archives, blogs and offline by booking them (via the internet) to play in music venues. These efforts to improve the visibility, accessibility, and comprehensibility of Swedish indie are buttressed by many others fans’ minimalist practices.

As I have emphasized in the previous chapter involvement in free labour and volunteering are used as a way acquiring knowledge about music and of developing personal contacts in the networks of music production which will be necessary for developing a career in this field.

The internet and especially social media contribute to develop voluntary practices which don’t provide an economy reward but which allow to obtain visibility and a position within the network. I will now talk about the economic dimension which will suggest how the economic crisis had an impact upon the success of free labour practices.

## 8.2 Economic Dimension

In the previous section, I have considered the importance of the media environment and of digitalization upon circuits of independent music. In this section I'm going to look at how digitization has an impact upon the economies gravitating around the music industry, and therefore upon the independent music production. At first I start by considering more broadly the economic situation of crisis which affected the context in which independent music practices of this research took shape.

The economic crisis has largely affected the Italian economic system, particularly the level of unemployment of young people which has been higher than the European level<sup>42</sup>.

In this situation interestingly unemployment of young people might have favored the increasing numbers of people working in small scale independent cultural and music production as musicians or music producers. As Cohen (1991; 2007) refers to talking about unemployment in Liverpool due to the de-industrialization crisis affecting industrial cities in UK in the 1980s, such situation of crisis increased the number of people dedicating their lives to music-making practices. As Cohen points out (2007) in the absence of occupational possibilities, there was a vibrant culture of rock music-making in which music at the time was seen as the only way out.

Even in a completely different situation, it is possible to see, analyzing the life trajectories of some interviewees that the choice of trying to develop a career within the independent music sector came in an conjectural moment of economic crisis and of downsizing in many organizations.

*I did not like the routine of the work as warehouse man and then for the labor crisis they started to downsize dismissing many people. They were about to dismiss a man with family and children, and therefore I said to my boss to fire me because I already had the idea of taking over the management of the Casa 139 ARCI venue with my sister, since the owner had gone to live in Brazil. So I started working for this cultural association without working during the day and only working with the association as president.(16)*

*I come from an unexpected sector because before I was a manager in a fashion firm, and I ran all the informatics of the company.*

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<sup>42</sup> In Italy the rate of youth unemployment is at 27.9%, well above the weighted average of the OECD (16.7%). This was reported in its OECD Employment Outlook 2011, based on data from the end of 2010. The share is growing by over 9 percentage points since the beginning of the crisis, in 2007, when youth unemployment was 20.3%.

*At some point with my friends I started to organize parties, I have always been interested in art, entertainment, music. It has always been part of my life ... Then at some point a friend of mine came and told me: there is a person who wants to create a ARCI music venue ... the idea was of creating a venue with wide range of music genres...*

*They asked to put 300 euro to start and I accepted. At first I decided to keep it as a second job then I was unhappy with my work in that period, there were the first signs of economic crisis in one area of development in which budgets were cut. My company gave incentives to exit quietly, I did it and I threw myself in this adventure.*  
(12)

From these examples, it seems that in this situation of economic crisis and in the absence of stable working opportunities, these people prefer to engage in activities which might be less profitable but more culturally rewarding and fulfilling. In a situation of economic crisis and insecurity, many people find more attractive the self-employment in the cultural and music sector rather than working for a large impersonal organization. As I have aforementioned according to Leadbeater and Oakley (1999) the crisis of employment in large organizations make self-employment and entrepreneurship in the cultural sector becoming a more realistic and attractive option. And it makes common that a large amount of people working the cultural and specifically in the music industries is constituted by micro-business, constituted by a rich network of small-scale independent operators and organizations, self-employed free lancers and nonprofit organizations (Leadbeater & Oakley, 1999).

Besides Hesmondhalgh (2002, 2007) provides several reasons why independent cultural production is today very common in a networked and flexible cultural environment. These features are affected by, as Hesmondhalgh (2002) argues, by broader development of cultural economy and how this shift implies changes in terms of the advent of a new flexible and networked organizational system.

The development of cultural economy has stressed at the same time the high desirability of working in cultural and in this case music production, making this field characterized by an oversupply of artistic and professional labour which takes the forms of various reservoirs or pools (Miege, 1989, p. 82-83).

This context favors the emergence of professions who live in the multi-tasking and in the fragmentation of time and professions, which are common features of circuits of independent music I have previously analyzed. I have already explained in the previous chapter the main characteristic of circuits of independent production. Here I again stress the need of considering how these activities are characterized by a high level of precariousness, job insecurity and self-exploitation which are compensated by the high level of desirability and of

self-realization that working in the independent music sector allow to achieve. According to Gill and Pratt (2008) “the figure of the artist or creative worker has been emblematic of the experience of precarity: negotiating short-term, insecure, poorly paid, precarious working conditions of structural uncertainty” (2008, p, 37). It is essential to point out the increased importance in the economies given to immaterial production (e.g. Scott, 2000), as well as new forms of flexibility and precariousness related to the reorganization of labor relations (e.g. Sennett, 1998).

There are besides other economic contingencies which need to be considered to understand the conditions of circuits of independent music, and in particular the specificity of the independent live music sector in Milan.

At first, as I have already pointed out, the digitalization of music and particularly online piracy (e.g. Blackburn, 2004; Oberholzer-Gee & Strumpf, 2007) has been responsible the crisis of the recording music industry and has completely reshaped the economies of the music industry, which are not anymore coming from the recording industry but rather from the live music sector.

These changes had an impact upon independent music production and upon the possible interactions with the corporate music industry. There seems to be an opposite mechanism which is connected to the crisis of the recording industry due to the digitalization of music and which has largely affected the relations between mainstream and alternative music production. This issue allows to understand how the boundary that separates the music industry is a shifting boundary subject to constant changes not only depending upon oppositional resistance of the independents, but also by the market conditions.

The crisis has led to a closure of the music industry towards independent music production. Some of the bands that were signed on major labels found themselves in difficulty at a time of crisis in the music industry and in many cases came back to independent production by creating their own independent labels.

*The majors used to put under the contract all the artists, but them because of the crisis they had not followed them and so many bands such as I tre allegri ragazzi morti realized that it was more important to have their own label. (35)*

In a moment of crisis in the music industry the concept of independence becomes even more complex. As Farinotti (2010) mentions talking about independent cinema in Italy, the cultural and, in the case of this research, music industry in times of crisis tends to reject all the



alternative music productions that are not immediately compatible with its mainstream standards, determining in fact an extension of the independent sector, in a system without consistency and without compactness. Paradoxically, in this situation most of the musical production could fall into this category of the independent music sector.

*Many indie bands including ours do in fact pop, lights song which could fit in the mainstream music industry. However the dynamics of popularity are different. (27)*

If there is not a strong music industry, any type of music that comes out of some standards of immediate economic return ends up back in the independent sector, and is not incorporated in the music industry. At the same time, because of the crisis of the recording industry, it becomes not profitable for an independent to pass to a major.

*Being independent can mean being out of the major mechanisms, while being part of the mainstream music industry means being part of a machine that must or should make money. Although this machine is sinking. And until few years ago for an independent to move to a major label could be a good jump because the major had more powerful means. We are at a paradoxical situation that for a band that does a certain type of music and that is part of a certain type of scene is counterproductive to be under contract with a major label. (21)*

Besides, in a period of crisis of the recording industry, the oppositional relationship of the independent music scene is redefined and is more generally addressed to the music industry, and especially enlarged to the live music industry. The ever increasing role played by live music implies that being signed to a record label is today less important than performing in major music events and festivals (Webster, 2011).

The crisis of the recording industry has completely changed the economies of the music industry, which are not any more related to the recording industry but rather to the live music sector.

In this situation live music performance becomes the only revenue for musicians and music producers since revenues from records are declining and therefore live music is becoming crucial for the music industry (Frith, 2007).

The conventional argument in rock analysis has been that live concerts exist courtesy of the record industry: their function is to promote records, to which they are subordinate. But this argument no longer seems valid. (Frith, 2007, p. 5)

Indeed, if the live performance was a corollary to the record, now it becomes central to the economic return of any investment. In other words “new record release acts to promote a new tour rather than vice versa” (Frith, 2007, p.5). At the same time in this situation, since revenues come only from the live music industries, this system has led to a reconfiguration of the relationship between live and recording industry. Particularly in this situation, live music revenues become a source of revenue even for the recording industry. In this situation the importance of the live music sector is understood by the fact that record labels are interested to obtain the so-called ‘360 degree deals’ which means that recording deals include part of the revenues coming from live music performances, merchandising and publishing. As these respondents suggest:

*It is true that the economy of an artist is based on 95% on live performances. But at the same time without records you can do a concert, and without the promotion of records nobody comes at your concerts. (29)*

*More and more labels have a person who manages the live, more and more often record deals include merchandising and live because records do not sell anymore but it's the label that pays the record, the producer, the distribution but if the band becomes famous but the records do not sell because of free downloading; then there is a problem that the label spends money to produce a record that nobody buys, the band becomes famous with the live and merchandising. It ends up that whoever puts the money earns nothing. the management of the bands have adapted to this situation, because if there is no money in the labels there will be no money to have a cool producer, to do a cool mixing ... it has become clear that somehow the labels must get money.*

*It is a sort of royalty on the contrary, the labels do not recover money only from record sales but even upon these things. Hence there is a new professional figure usually called global manager, who is involved in determining a strategy for the live performances, of course, dealing with the agent who has the exclusive on the sale of the concerts. So he says the record will be released in that day so we start the tour here, then the festival here, there are analyzes of market flows, which serve to maximize the live dates in one country. (31)*

It is possible to notice how this situation has brought to an ever increasing market of big major acts, and reunion gigs by many bands which can be an explanation to the fact live performances are today much more profitable than record sales.

Webster (2011) for example mentions that in UK most of the music venues, music events and festivals are dominated by very few international corporate operators which are becoming

very powerful and which are responsible for increasing prices of tickets for concerts which “are being priced more like single-market monopoly products” (Kreuger, 2006, p. 26).

In this context in which live music economies are concentrated in multi-national promoters, it is possible to see how this situation can have a negative impact upon small-scale music producers.

The development of the field of live music has led to an increase number large concerts that come alongside and in competition with the network of small-scale organizers of concerts in the area.

Besides in this system where the only source of revenues is all concentrated in the live music business, the actors involved tend to profit, usually claiming prices for artists higher than average. In the absence of any kind of mechanism of market control, there can be situations that live music business is not regulated but rather the same concerts can be sold in many different prices and are usually managed by few “sharks” promoters:

*Some promoters say that the date costs so, then you discover other costs .. And then when it happens, we don't usually collaborate anymore with that people for years. (12)*

*There are old fool promoters who speculate and sell at twice the cachet of the bands! And at last you discover this kind of things. It happened that I paid 10,000 euro for a DJ and then I said to him: 10,000 euro is too much And he says it, but in fact I'll take 5, 000, and then 5,000 go to the agency! But in this way you break the market because I cannot organize anything else, because there are no more money. Then the problem is that things pass from an agency to another and each agency wants a percentage, and to me it comes 5 times more expensive ... (39)*

*If you ask an artist for a concert, they tell you incredible prices without thinking that if people would be so smart to cooperate, all artists would profit, and we would all work. For me the problem is that there is no agency of control. When you put an artist like Nina Zilli three times her cachet ... And then another artist will not play because there will not be money for that. There is no body of control and everyone does what he wants. We are fraudulent and unprepared, because with 20000 euros you can make a festival with Nina Zilli, Nicolò Fabi and Perturbazione and you'll make work 4 artists, sound engineers, managers, promoters and the mechanism works but we cannot do it, we are a gang of sharks unable to handle something that has a value which we do not perceive. If you could spy on the budget of an artist you would notice that the artist is sold at different prices depending on the place. ... So if you do not have a control system that will manage the cachet of the artists. If you sell an artist to an higher cachet you send someone in bankruptcy ... You cannot ask 30000 euro for the Afterhours because ... it means that the organizer will not do anything else and you broke a virtuous cycle. But this mechanism is rewarding for those who are already famous, not for those artists who need to play*

*to acquire visibility. It is not true that there is no space for live music in Italy. The problem is that it is in the hands of 5 sharks and it remains a small slice for others. (24)*

According to the last respondent, this context tends to inhibit small organizers and small artists, in fact, money are spent entirely for big events and no room is left for smaller initiatives with small artists.

*With the vertical drop of sales of albums, the artists have placed primary emphasis on the live music which is legitimate but at the same there is a growing economic appetite of the artists towards live led to higher costs and lower the revenues, and make it increasingly difficult to invest in new artists because big artists have become larger and more expensive, and thus it becomes difficult to have the opportunity to invest upon new artists. (30)*

*The question of the rights of musicians is complex. The cachets are very low, but even small music venues are not in good times. Many booking agencies have raised their cachets, and so the bands having an agency will have higher cachet, and if a venue will be at a loss because of the high cachet, there won't be money for smaller musicians. Because the musicians are hungry to play, they're going to play for free and then there begins a vicious circle. We should change the relationship between local musicians. (26)*

As the quotation finally suggests, this system which is based upon the 'super-star' effect (Connolly & Krueger, 2004) tends to overpay big artists, while limited or null remuneration is offered to musicians at the small-scale level who accept poorly-paid working conditions.

The fact that for musicians live music performances are absolutely needed as a way of acquiring visibility, force them to play music at underpaid or unpaid conditions.

It has often happened that musicians have criticized music venue owners and event organizers of underpayment and exploitation;

*Playing live is crucial to obtain visibly...the point is that it's not that simple because venue owners tend to ask you how many people will come... (x)*

From protect themselves from the risk of failing small music venue owner tend to adopt the policy of paying the artist depending upon the tickets sold. As this owner of an ARCI venue explains:

*Artists complain a lot because they do not have cachet. I adopt the best policy: if an artist asks you 250 euro per evening, I do not give this money to him, I use a policy that all people who come to the concert pay an admission*

*ticket. Otherwise I cannot even afford as an association to lose money. I offer a space, and give you the money for the subscriptions. So the artist has to do some publicity if he wants people at his concert... (16)*

However at the same time some musicians have recognized that small event organizers and music venue owners have to afford many further costs than the simple cachet to the artist. These costs are mainly related to the payment of SIAE<sup>43</sup> copyright, from which small independent authors do not benefit.<sup>44</sup> In Italy during live performance acts any musician, even an emerging artist, is compelled to fill a form called Borderaux SIAE which includes the list of songs performed during the event and this form must be paid by the event organizer or the venue owner. This system however does not favor very small and independent musicians because most of share of the payment is redistributed among the artists usually already most successful. In addition, the organizer of the concert is also required to pay to ENPALS<sup>45</sup> the social security funds for artists. In this situation, it becomes almost impossible for small venues and organizers to be able to have an economic return from live music.

That's why, as some respondents suggest, the copyright system and the obligation of payment of several taxes indirectly contributes to develop in the live music sector a black market because it often becomes difficult for small producers to make economically sustainable the organization of a concert in these conditions.

*When I play as a DJ I fill out the BAURDEROT, that makes no sense, only in Italy we can have something so stupid! For 10 years I played around, and it happened very few times to have paid invoices, VAT, ENPALS. And this is decided by the club owner. As long as they are small organizers or clubs everything is actually all black market, but it's a common agreement between musician and organizer. (17a)*

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<sup>43</sup> As SIAE website states: "SIAE is a point of reference for authors and publishers, as well as for those who operate in the entertainment industry. A society that issues thousands and thousands of licenses for the uses of each work, thus facilitating the payment of royalties by the users and protecting the authors' works. Authors, publishers, and other right holders adhere voluntarily in order to economically protect their works". SIAE adopts a different policy depending upon the event: if the concert has entrance fee SIAE charges 10% of the ticket, if the concert has no entrance fee SIAE charges a fixed amount depending upon the capacity and the size of the venue.

<sup>44</sup> As SIAE website states: "The DJ or musician who performs music of any kind must complete before or immediately after the execution, the list of all music executed and deliver it to the Office in charge of collecting the copyright (Article 51 of Regulation implementation of the Law on copyright).

The music program lists the songs performed during the music entertainment - live or by mechanical devices - and constitutes the basic document used to give to those entitled the SIAE copyrights for the use of musical works. However a change in the law which happened in 2006 implied that only 25% goes to the copyrights of the artist, the other 75% is subdivided between artists among a statistical division which depends upon the 1000 inspections SIAE makes per year happening in big venues. The membership to SIAE costs 221, 20 plus 94, 50 euro per year, so most of the small, independent musicians are not usually members of SIAE because they know that they will not recover the membership fee. However artists who are not members of SIAE and so who don't have copyrights, are anyway obliged to fill the Borderaux and the money will go for 100% to major artists.

<sup>45</sup> ENPALS is National Agency for the social security for workers in the entertainment sector.

At the same time, the promoters were actually showing how their job was inherently risky and precarious and in black:

*For many years I have managed my own agency for events of DJs and I had people working form but I admit, everything was in black And now it's a problem, because If I had been regularized in 1994 now I would have the insurance contributions.*

*And so it has always been a super increasingly precarious, and I was risking myself too much, you were not working on behalf of others, it's hard to find someone to tell you that I give you money and you organize something, it's everything at your own risk and sometimes it goes well, sometimes it goes wrong (39).*

At the same time, as venue owners and promoters suggest, to exacerbate the problem of music venues that want to offer musical entertainment, the changing nature of the city of Milan and especially of the real estate market with prices of properties and of rents which have increased particularly in the central areas of the city.

*It's getting very hard to in Milan, because the spaces are very few, and expensive to rent, and so it's difficult or almost impossible to have profits. We has millions of ideas however, only lowering costs for the organizers. Because if I lose 10,000 euro in an event I can only organize few events, because the risk I am taking is too high. (17b)*

Interestingly the urban economy and particularly the housing market, in the relationship between rising prices in the real estate market, changes in localization of the productive sectors of the city have an impact upon the music activities and upon music venues.

According to the respondents, the high rents are inhibiting the organizations of events, but at the same time many live music venues have moved outside the city.

Besides the period of the research, it has also assisted to the closure of many music venues for the economic crisis but also to problems of rent increasing. Many live music venues have been converted into other more lucrative activities.

The musicians rarely mentioned music venues in Milan, but rather placed outside the city boundaries:

*One thing I noticed is that in Milan there are just only big music venues where we'll never manage to play while in the province there are some nice clubs, but smaller, but more available. (x)*

This system also tends to favor the organization of musical events rather than investing in the long term upon live music venues to promote live music. This element is mainly due the change in the conception of leisure time which is related to growth of the economy of experience (Pine and Gilmore 1998) in which events become a central marketing strategy.

The economy of independent live music has seen the development of economy of the cultural events that are often supported by private sponsors. Sponsorships has become a common way for making economic sustainable many independent music events and festivals.

Finally it's important to point out that the micro circuits independent music actually come in competing and cooperating relations with other economies that characterize the urban area, particularly around the growing urban sector of the economy of night-time entertainment. As in many occasion live music venues and organizers were trying to defend their distinction from other clubs and bars which were not performing any kind of music. However it's important to notice that live music venues are often kept alive thanks to the consumption of alcohol, and that live music needs to be understood in relation to the live time economy.

The live music of the city doesn't come however without tensions in the city, and it is instead related to a regulations of the night-time entertainment.

## 8.3 Regulations And Policies

The circuits of independent music could not be understood without considering their rootedness in a regulatory and political context which can enable or inhibit the production and performance of music. As I have mentioned before, circuits of independent music, and especially those related to the live music sector, are interrelated with other economies of the city such as night-time economy and the economy of events which are therefore regularized by the City Council.

Rutten (1993) has accordingly pointed out that the analysis of music policy and regulations has to be taken up broadly, because “each branch of music policy is based on a specific conception and is thus articulated to the varied and often contradictory discursive domains (such as considering music as being a problem or a solution to social issues, as being a cultural issue or an economic issue) in which popular music is situated” (Rutten, 1993, p. 37). In the case of the City Council of Milan, it is important to notice that there has been a contradictory tendency in the ways in which the local state has dealt with the live music sector, which has been on one side extremely regularized and often repressed and on the other side exploited and used as a marketing tool for reimagining the city as vibrant and music-friendly.

Considering the first element, it's important to point out that live music and more generally night-time entertainment have always been considered as an object of regulation, as problem rather than a possible resource:

...all these explicitly or unconsciously incorporated the idea of the nightlife of the city, a realm of play, of socialisation, of encounter and of evasion associated with the night-time. Yet as an object of cultural policy it has been strangely marginalised. It seemed that this nightlife was not a legitimate object of attention other than as something to be regulated and contained. Despite its inextricable link with the image of the vibrant city it was primarily an object of attention for agencies concerned with licensing, health and safety, planning and policing. It was a heavily regulated zone of space and time; a location for transgression conceived in terms of social dysfunction. In short, a problem. (Lovatt & O'Connor, 1995, p. 130)

Besides the regulations towards night entertainment, and live music have often been articulated in relation to the creation ‘moral panic’ meant as a process whereby a “condition, episode, persons, or group of persons emerge to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests” (Cohen, 1972, p. 28). According to Homan (2003) moral panics had an impact in shaping live music practices, as in the case of Chevigny (1991) who analyzed how New



York jazz scene experienced a series of limitations and bureaucratic constraints which has a series of impact upon its venues. Live music, differently to the recording industry, has always had different consequences in terms of noise emissions, health and safety, but it always be connected to the consumption of alcohol (Cloonan, 2011).

These kinds of assumptions also include live music, which is not usually regarded in the regulations for its cultural and social value but simply as part of the night entertainment, as something which needs to be contained and repressed. The regulatory scope of the live music at the local level is mostly made considering the aspect of social impact, especially in terms of noise nuisance.

Live music is included in all forms of noise and disorder characteristic of night entertainment, including the public nuisance due to the chatting of people, the background music and finally live music. If live music is not recognized for its cultural value, live music only becomes an issue of public order and of managing the problem of noise impact. In this perspective live music can become a bigger problem than background music. This problem is related in particular to higher volumes of sound that live music requires comparing with background music. As the person in charge of issuing the licenses for music in the City Council of Milan explained me:

*For live concerts we are more careful in issuing licenses because in concerts there are highest volume and the bass is the most annoying instrument. Therefore we are very careful(x)*

In order to organize a music concert, or in order to obtain a license to play live music within a venue, a music operator needs to pass a long bureaucratic process in ‘*Ufficio Licenze Spettacolo*’ (Office for Public Entertainment License)<sup>46</sup>, which is the office in charge of issuing licenses and permits to perform live music in small medium size venues, which is known as the license for ‘*concertini*’<sup>47</sup>.

Concerning the permanent license for live music<sup>48</sup> in a music venue, this license is distinguished from the common license for background music.

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<sup>46</sup> This office which belongs to this Council deals with business sector, crafts, agriculture and public entertainment public service entertainment. The Council which at the time of the research was the Council of Trade, business, big events, fashion and design (Assessorato al Commercio, attività produttive, grandi eventi, moda e design).

<sup>47</sup> "Concertino" is the name given in these regulations to music performances happening occasionally, as a secondary activity, in conjunction to a main activity (drinking or eating), for entertainment of customers.

<sup>48</sup> It's interesting to notice that it is necessary to indicate in advance the type of instruments that will be used and in some situations the Office gives the permission only for acoustic setting.

These kinds of licenses are particularly strict in terms of fire-security measures<sup>49</sup> and noise emissions that must be maintained below the threshold of 80 decibels<sup>50</sup>, which different licenses issued by different offices.

As a matter of fact, once providing a technical report of the electrical and soundproofing system, the license to perform live music is highly dependent upon where the location of the venue or the setting of the music events.

As a music organizer confirmed, Milan, in comparison to other Italian cities, has many bureaucratic constraints (such as the needs for multiple permissions and licenses issued by different offices) which don't facilitate the organization of music events.

*Milan is a hard city: here you need a license for the occupation of public space, and license of public entertainment. Even for stupid things they want to issue permissions. In Bologna you don't have to ask for licenses, you just present the project and in the morning of the event, they come for inspection, they check and they give you the green light. That's it. Here there's too much bureaucracy. (x)*

After passing this costly and time consuming<sup>51</sup> bureaucratic process, it is then not guaranteed the possibility of performing music. In many situations, respondents have pointed out that, after obtaining the licenses and permits needed, licenses were revoked before the music event.

*the other things is that there is a need to make life easier to music operators. Today the organizers of a concert of any kind must deal with 6 or 7 offices of various kinds, from municipal licenses, police which are often in conflict. In fact often the person who organizes the events is always afraid of not being legal and in place despite having done everything to be legal. (29)*

*In Milan you can organize concerts in a legal or illegal way as in the 90s for the raves. Because it may happen that the offices will give the permits and few days before the event they revoke the permissions as it happened to us at Bicycle Film Festival for issues dealing with the capacity and public order. (15)*

*Motel Connection did a concert on a terrace, but they were fined the same day as firemen removed the permit with their usual method ... people organized everything, and the day before the event authorities withdrew all the permits ... (17c)*

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<sup>49</sup> Fire security measures are related to the capacity of the venue and to the fire- exit doors

<sup>50</sup> The levels in the noise impact are determined by another office, the ARPA (Regional Agency for the Environment) which is responsible to assess the acoustic conditions of the site of the live music setting. The law about noise pollution which fixed the decibel limitation to 80 is the n. 447, 26 October 1995.

<sup>51</sup> The procedure can take at least 40 working days.

As the respondents suggest, it often happens that firemen, municipal policemen, who are in charge of controlling music venues and events, are even those who have the power of fining and revoking the licenses to issue live music.

*Since 2006 I have a license for live music. But if an officer tells you that in that music venue there are too many people dancing, there is no possibility of appeal, so it is a very strong tool. Because now officers and municipal police can shut down your venue and make the capacity of the venue smaller and revoke the late-night license, without possibility of appeal. (15)*

In this situation, music producers are not prepared to deal with the complexity of rules and bureaucracy that these permits and licenses require, and very often they are not in the conditions of knowing in advance which are the implications of certain regulations, which can involve different bodies:

*In license for live music is written that you need to obey the rules and standards of safety, but if I do not know what the law 81 is ... the office gives you the license for live music, but they do not come to check before issuing the license ....*

*They issue the license and then you invest in your music venue, you start in your activity and then after a while the firemen will come to tell you that you cannot do it. (15)*

*I wish there was a method whereby you can have a municipal officer who tells you: ok what do you want do? Live music, DJ set, food and drink, and dance. And he tells you, ok to do all these things you have to do this and this, or in this venue you will never be allowed to do ... live music. So knowing these things in advance I'll then decide whether to invest or not on this venue. Instead they give you all licenses, I invest the money and then they can come and remove them. Who gives me back the money? Because I made that investment, because if you revoke the live music licenses you take away the essence of my investment. My idea was to open a space for live music in Milan. 6 months after opening you take away my license! I should quit, but those investments of money ... so I must re-invent my club with economic problems, and firing my staff! (17b)*

*And we would need a commission not only capable of controlling you and of shutting down your venue and of giving you the license, but even of giving you advices to say: things are done well and if it's not then you do not open your venue. Any type of music entrepreneur, even in the no-profit, also needs to be sure! One cannot spend thousands of euro, cachet of the bands, staff, and then without being sure that of being able to make the event because then the location will be finally no longer adequate. It's necessary to know in advance and to get some help to develop a project, which means giving the chance to work legally, without leaving in the mystery... than you can see only after if you are legal or not... The legislation about public entertainment are really messed up, referring to different decrees, laws and licenses... there is no clarity at all!*

*What amazes me is the number of closures all at the same time. At one point it seems that they have noticed that all the premises were not regular. If you realize that it is a situation that involves all premises of the city, perhaps they need to intervene to help the premises to observe the rules but keeping them open, otherwise you take an economic sector and you close it. 32 premises were closed and has not found a solution to keep them open. The solutions are painful, but necessary if you think that these places have a value, maybe you can help premises in soundproofing, but instead they have argued if you are not ok you have to close down. (25)*

In many cases it appears that the mismanagement of the night-time entertainment and the mistakes made in the City Council in issuing an excessive number of licenses falls within the responsibilities of the different premises. This problem is particularly evident in the context of the area of the Columns of San Lorenzo, Via Vetere and the Navigli district, which is characterized by an high density of residential buildings and of premises:

*We has so many complaints in Via Vetere, because there are too many people in the street, however, these people come with the machine, with music and they brought from home the bottles, and then the complaints are no longer applicable, we always have these complaints pending that no one knows what will happen. The problem is unsolvable, if a street is so busy and there are so many people coming at night, the club cannot do anything about it. We must find other ways to solve this problem...The problem originates before! If the City Council has given all those licenses then you cannot fight against these premises, you should not give licenses from the beginning. (17b, c)*

*In the Navigli district there has been a gradual replacement of historic craft workshops with clubs ...This process of conversion of a quarter to a quarter of night entertainment has meant that in 2008 we have counted 240 were between venues, restaurants, bars in a neighborhood with many residents. For the noise is a mess because if you release 240 licenses then you cannot revoke these licenses ... From the general point of view, the City cannot release licenses in these neighborhoods but should try de- locating the nightlife...(20)*

At the same time respondents criticize that these regulations are not specifically made by people with skills and expertise in the live music sector, who therefore are not able to deal with the complexities that live music production requires:

*A municipality should have more competences to deal with live music because these are complex worlds, to obtain a license is complex ... they should know all the complexities of a music venue and of organizing a concert. Usually who acts from a legislative point of you is always someone who doesn't know anything about us and so he makes mistakes. (25)*

As the respondents point out, those regulations and controls don't consider the economic investments that music producers and music venues owners have to do in order to organize live music events and to develop a business project related to music. These regulations towards live music entertainment can have an impact upon any level of the live music production, from the artist to the promoter, the sound engineers. In this situation live music is not considered for its economic value, but it is only seen as a problem of public order and noise impact, which needs to be regulated and repressed.

*These problems with venues being closed have resulted in a series of problems that involve all music producers that is, when Casa 139 ARCI venue was closed, for me as a promoter it was a big issue because I had 4 gigs in this venue already organized! (40)*

*Live music is treated if it were not a job!*

*And we work with sound engineers, musicians, promoters and we give job to all these people. I talked to a guy that does the sound engineer at BITTE music venue and he says that he is forced to do the work of 3 people underpaid, because there are no money. If BITTE music venue has 30,000 euro a month of rent, and policemen have reduced the capacity of the venue there are no money left!... At some point I have to pay in black, and this creates an illegal situation even though we all want to work for our peace of mind to have everything legalized. Even for the staff... I cannot employ 40 people thinking that maybe my club will be shut down by the police in a month. This system is precarious and feeds a black market not only for music. (17b)*

*This system has suppressed grass-roots activities, because there was the fear of opening an activity linked to the music but those who work in a music venues are not having fun, they are working. (25)*

This system helps to foster the insecurity and to make an already risky economy even more risky. In this situation people tend anyway to adopt several tactics in order to overcome the problems of licenses, trying for example to soundproof their music venues in order to avoid issues of noise emissions. In other case the economical infeasibility of proper noise isolation, forced many previously-active venues live music entertainment they used to have.

In other cases, it's possible to notice how there has been an increasing number of music events named secret concerts or house concerts organized in private houses in order to avoid the need of asking permits for live music settings.

Finally it's important to point out that the uncertainty and insecurity of organizing live music in the city had the direct impact of discouraging many music producers to fully invest upon live music venues:

*If we start looking in Milan at all the music venues which were shut down, the situation has been impoverished.  
If I were a music entrepreneur who wants to open music venues in Milan for live music, I think he needs to  
reflect a lot about this choice! (40)*

This situation prevents many music producers to invest in a music venue but on the contrary music producers are now more often involved in the organization of music events. Even in this case, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, the precarious and risky economy that regulations and controls towards live music entertainment tend to increase, favor the attitude of many music producers of performing different roles in order to invest in different music businesses.

The municipal administration meets with serious difficulties in being able thus to mediate between the restrictive rules regarding the decibels limitation, with the will of representing Milan as a city of culture and music. And here comes the second side of contradictory management of this City Council in relation to live music.

At the same time however it is possible to analyze that the City Council is in using music events as marketing strategy aimed at promoting an attractive image of the city. As many authors suggests (e.g. Homan, 2003) music activities become increasingly important to the branding strategies of cities.

In the literature there are different case studies of cities using music as a marketing tool. For example Homan & Gibson (2004) analyze a policy initiative intervention aimed to respond to the demise of music venues by funding some free live music performances in open spaces. As Homan and Gibson suggest, these initiatives address the problem only in the short term period, and try to re-brand and to keep the quarter still vibrant and attractive to private investments, contributing again to process of gentrification. The choice of adopting rebranding strategies by using music events as an instrument to promote the city as a vibrant realm has been used as a way “to put the city on the map” (Brown, Cohen & O'Connor, 1998), and to give cities a competitive advantage in a global music market.

As many authors have pointed out (e.g. Scott, 2000; Evans, 2003) cities invest in special events as branding strategies in order to re-imagine themselves as ‘creative’(Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002) and ‘music cities’<sup>52</sup>. The level of efficacy of these rebranding strategies

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<sup>1</sup>The term ‘music city’ has been used to describe cities renowned internationally because of their music heritage and tradition, traceable to a particular music style (e.g. Grunge as the 'Seattle sound') or to a famous band (eg Liverpool for the Beatles), so as to underline the association between specific localities and specific music styles, to a special “Sound City” (Cohen, 2007), and to emphasize the presence of very active music scenes. Besides it should be pointed out that the term ‘music city’ has been adopted by UNESCO to identify those cities that meet certain requirements: being recognized as centers of music production and creativity, hosting festivals,

through events needs to be discussed and evaluated as “investing in events can lead to sustainable practices if the process is embedded within a consistent approach to cultural policy” (Garcia, 2005) and in the specificity of each context.

Besides it’s important to notice that the direct organization and promotion of several music events have always been the main feature of cultural policies at the local level in Italy.

As Bloomfield (1993) refers to in a seminal book about cultural policy in Europe (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993) and particularly about cultural policies in Bologna, all Italian cities have been largely influenced by the new cultural policy developed in Rome in 1977 by the left-wing Councilor of Culture, named *Assessore alla Cultura*<sup>53</sup>, Renato Niccolini, whose policy intervention, named *L’Estate Romana* (Summer in Rome) was aimed at revitalizing the city of Rome at night for those people who were in the city for holidays, and for tourists. The aim of this cultural policy, as Bloomfield (1993) and others emphasize, was not really meant to promote culture, art for art sake, but instead at promoting social gathering moments for the citizens and tourists, in a city which was not used favoring. The events organized were labeled as ‘ephemera’ by many intellectual which criticized the absence of any cultural relevance. And as Bloomfield (1993) suggests: “ the weakness of ‘ephemera’ in Rome was not the attempt at social animation, but the failure to link it to a more enduring strategy of cultural production, particularly in its divorce from the cultural industries, notably the film industry, Cinecittà” (1993, p. 94).

Many years have passed but the legacy of this kind of cultural policy based upon the organization of big events, and upon the non involvement of music industries and of the circuits of independent music production is still strong in the policy making strategies of many Italian cities, including Milan.

It was interesting to see the priorities the Councilors<sup>54</sup> in Milan were giving to live music in the city. One of them was emphasizing his efforts in bringing big names and in organizing big events as a way to mainly attract tourism in the city.

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promoting local music industries, having music schools and conservatories, being equipped with infrastructure aiming at promoting local music abroad, and finally having indoor and outdoor venues dedicated to music production and consumption. These are the criteria needed for a city to enter within the ‘music city’ network, joined by Bologna, Ghent, Glasgow and Seville.

<sup>53</sup> As Bloomfield explains the meaning of Councilor doesn’t perfectly coincide with the one of Assessore, that’s why the author leaves Assessore in the Italian version.

<sup>54</sup> At the time of the research the Councilors who were mainly dealing with music was the Councilor of Culture, which was mainly focus upon classical music, the Councilor of Commerce, Big Events, Fashion and Design and finally the Councilor for Sport and Leisure.

As a Major's consultant suggested in an interview, City Council is still stuck to the idea of using big events and of just attracting big names as main music policy strategy to re-imagine the city and to increase tourism:

*The concert in San Siro<sup>55</sup> is a white elephant, you turn on the lights for an amazing night and then ... the drama is this. The Council looks for the event, but it doesn't go beyond that trying to look for the everyday art. (1)*

In particular some respondents have referred to 'Niccolismo' (from the name of the Councilor of the 'Estate Romana') or 'eventism' to point out the still key importance that events play in the cultural policies of Milan municipality.

*It is the 'eventism' in its own sake ... The problem is that they do not realize ...perhaps the single councilor knows that and tries to do things ... I think that Terzi, Councilor of trade and before of Youth Policy and sport, he understood the importance of our spaces for music. The problem is that now you do something as a councilor to obtain visibility. And the municipality becomes an organizer of events by itself, and this generates two kinds of problems: the first one is that the City Council organize an event without initiative without looking at grass-roots initiatives, but rather choosing its partners, bypassing a number of music producers, music organizations and institutions that we have in Milan and that promote music and then the City Council kill the market, because if the City Council organize Algida Festival in Piazza del Duomo, then all the sponsors are there and have no interest in doing an event of another small-scale music organizer of the city, the sponsors give a sponsorship to the event organized by the Municipality to obtain more visibility and to make friend with the Councilor. (6)*

*It all started from the eventism and the niccolism!  
I cannot hold any more this word, the event and the eventism led to huge wastage of public and private money, free accessibility to fake free concerts! and no serious investment in the infrastructure. So free concerts in the cathedral square in my view should be something exceptional related to events that have cultural, religious and political roots. When it becomes a habit and abuse is a waste of money and public money comes from taxes, nothing is free, so these concerts are all fake free because we pay them with taxes. Instead of having the services of a school that teaches music, facilities for listening to music properly, instead of all this that is the basis of a society that wants a future. Instead of all this we have spent money to pretend to give to people concerts for free.  
The continuity consisted of the lack of planning, lack of respect toward the contemporary popular music, in unconditional support for the old institutions as La Scala, which has excessive contributions. (30)*

Most of the respondents were very critical towards music events directly organized by the City Council.

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<sup>55</sup> In the summer time, San Siro stadium stages many big concerts with national and international stars.



*So many mistakes: starting especially from the choice of funding so many ephemeral events such as concerts in squares, and with the same money you could fund a year of classes in a school of music. The priority for me has to be given to education and formation for those who work in these sectors.*

*So I do not understand why the public administration finances concerts that promoters should do. (25)*

More generally music events funded by the City Council were criticized for a number of reasons: firstly because this was seen as an unfair competition of a political institution in a market of the live music sector already highly competitive, and in which, as I have aforementioned, all the economies of the music industry are today concentrated and secondly because these kinds of public events were organized using public funding and private partnerships with several sponsors. As some respondents have suggested these sponsorships could be used by private music organizers. There was then a third element which is concerned to the fact that those live music events were not directly organized by the City Council but were outsourced to concert promoters often without an official competition but simply by delegating to those who had greater ability to lobby with the municipality. The issue that was most largely tackled is that the same money used for organizing music events could be used in order to create an infrastructure which is particularly lacking in Milan<sup>56</sup>.

Therefore what is mostly criticized is that the City Council is finding easier to fund music events, instead of helping to create an infrastructure or just instead of facilitating the already existing grass-roots initiatives.

As some respondents refer to, there is a need of creating a concert halls and music venues, instead of organizing events. There are interesting examples of the creation of venues dedicated to music, municipally owned but managed by other operators, showing that the role of the City Council is in providing public spaces, but not in directly organizing events. As this example from a successful case of a public space located outside Milan shows, the role of the Councilor of Culture is not anymore of funding music events but rather letting public spaces to organize music events:

*The interesting thing now in a time of economic crisis like this is which are the policies that the local can put in place to favor and enable the work of others. From our experience of the music venue called Carroponete, We do not gain, the gain is to bring in the territory cultural events and aggregation that does not cost anything to the*

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<sup>56</sup> A classic example that my interviewees have often referred to is the Mito Festival, a music festival taking place in September with different showcases of different music genres, which costs to the City 3 million a year. Besides the festival cuts to the system resources that you might be invested in infrastructure.

*City Council by letting others organize music events. What is the richness of the Administration: it is of providing an area which is beautiful, evocative, beautiful.*

*This I think is the way in which cultural policies will go in the future considering the economic crisis... I talk about opportunities in the area where a municipal authority arises not so much in terms of what it earns, but what I do not invest in economic terms and what I must not lose ourselves, we gain only to make a policy like this. (9)*

On the contrary in the City Council of Milan the only public policy initiative aimed at fostering grass-roots initiative was an event in the subway station of the city centre of Milan, named LiveMi,<sup>57</sup> which was mainly a showcase for emerging musicians, organized by Red Ronnie who at the time of the research was the mayor web-marketing consultant, and who was a famous music journalist in the past well known to be the ‘godfather of Italian emerging music talents’. This consultant was actually trying to put emerging music into the policy agenda as a strategic tool to rebrand Milan and the mayor as music-friendly and ‘young’. LiveMi ended up being only a small part of a broader marketing strategy by the advisor-organizer aimed at re-imagining the city and the mayor in view of the 2011 electoral campaign. Emerging artists taking part to the event perceived positively the initiative as organized by someone who had been always involved in supporting new talents. The presence of this figure helped the initiative being legitimized by the musicians, as one of musicians taking part to the event pointed out:

*The difference here is in the organizer. He is a “manna from heaven” for emerging artists. He is the godfather of emerging music. (x)*

However the initiative was highly criticized by musicians and music producers of independent music circuits, who considered Red Ronnie an old music journalist, not anymore in contact with the independent and emerging music.

*Yes the thing made by Red Ronnie was bullshit because he is not anymore able to promote a competition for emerging bands ... ok many years ago he was a good music journalist and in his TV programs he hosted many bands but now he cannot still believe to be the godfather of music. (7)*

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<sup>57</sup> LiveMi took place between march to may 2010 and it was part of the pilot study I conducted in the research

Besides respondents were generally critical towards events organized to support emerging music because these events were mainly meant at supporting music activities as a form of social welfare towards the youth:

*To promote emerging bands only for the sake of promoting emerging bands is just a very silly logic which makes no sense to me. It seems a misunderstanding as trying to solve a social issue of young people, using music as a means, not as the end. I do not understand! It is just a way of manipulating emerging artists. Doing these things like, only to facilitate emerging music, creating rehearsal rooms in the suburbs for young musicians is not enough! (11)*

This mechanism of initiative such as LiveMi merely made politically easier for the city council to patronize music events, instead of helping to create an infrastructure or facilitating the already existing grass-roots music initiatives.

At the same time some respondents have shown their concern towards funding aimed at fostering music production and they were often in contrast to a direct intervention of the local state in trying to develop the music system. As this music producers suggests:

*But in Puglia Sounds<sup>58</sup>, there is a continuous injection of money, you understand the purpose but is not the right the way. You continue to dope the system and continue to give the illusion to young people who become engineers, tour managers, back-liners in a music system that has no market in Italy and that it is in crisis.*

*The system is doped, continues to get money, but when this injection of money, investment, ideas, will finish, what will happen?*

*Because until you have been accustomed to not necessarily have to depend upon you revenues because the money came from institutions, and system is based not get public funding, what happens when there are no anymore public funding? The system collapses! (22b)*

On the contrary to the direct intervention in the organization of public music initiatives, independent music producers don't want to receive directly public subsidy but instead they are more interested in a City Council which enables rather the inhibits their initiatives:

*ROCKIT wanted to be a third way, that was not based solely on public funds and when state funds end up ROCKIT ends or on commercial sponsors that it's the same if they end ROCKIT ends.*

*Instead we are managing to create something by ourselves... succeeding little by little a bit more space, ... to have the credibility of the people and then have people appreciate you, that is, precisely the people who come to*

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<sup>58</sup> Puglia Sounds is a initiative to promote the local music industry of the Puglia Region. Puglia Sounds is financed by the European Union extraordinary funds called ERDF - European Regional Development Fund.

*the festival, pay the ticket ... that means that people appreciate, and care about what we are doing because it is not free. But the City should not look to organize these music vents, we are against the welfare state ... but at least it should not put a spoke in the wheel ... and should favor things that can happen in Milan. (10)*

This kind of assumptions reminds to the comparative studies made in UK (e.g. O'Connor, Cohen & Brown, 2000) which pointed out the mistrust the local music industry had toward City Council intervention in music but suggested the need of considering policies and regulations much broadly than in the simple direct intervention in the music sector. As the study suggests referring to the idea of Tony Wilson<sup>59</sup> of the possible intervention of local authorities in the local music industry:

Wilson would want Manchester to keep its hands off policy whilst 'removing barriers'. This includes flexible planning and licensing regulations; it means organizing public transport and other traditionally 'non cultural initiatives'... This despite being couched in iconoclastic anti-policy language, is in fact cultural policy. But in the end the anti-policy language has undermined the evolution of such a policy ... (O'Connor, Cohen & Brown, 2000, p. 448)

As the quotation suggests, the City Council should at least create an infrastructure with for example an efficient public transport management, which could enable to make the attendance of concerts easier:

*The fact that there are no transport at night in this city ... you ask me what to do for music? The music comes from socialization, and in this city there is so much music. If municipality would put the metro 24 hours a day, night buses..., the music comes out and there is no need to finance it. If I can go in the evening to a concert, go to rehearsal rooms or get to Magnolia ARCI music venue with a shuttle bus, the problem would not exist. There is so music and there have never been so many people playing as today. (7)*

*And then the main problem is of all this wrong way of funding music production is that there is a problem of infrastructure! You can fund and make such a cool festival but if there are no taxes, no buses, no sidewalks, the festival doesn't work! this is a problem! (22b)*

This situation calls instead for adopting a coordinated approach to development of the music industry with the inclusion and consideration of other policies that may not have been made with the intention of affecting the music sector - interested for example in training and education, social welfare, tourism, licensing, transport management - but that may have a

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<sup>59</sup> Tony Wilson is a an English record label owner, founder and manager of The Hacienda nightclub, and founder of Factory Records in Manchester.

significant impact on production and consumption of music (Brown, Cohen & O'Connor, 1998).

It emerged the clear need of a shift in the city council role: from being a direct organizer of music events (while hindering existing live music events and venues) to being a facilitator to the operations of the live music sector by simplifying bureaucratic constraints. Also horizontal coordination among different departments appears necessary, integrating policies, regulations and licenses directly or indirectly affecting music production and consumption. Until now security measures, public transport management, licensing and regulations about alcohol and smoking, and real estate businesses have influenced live music in Milan much more than any music-supporting policy mechanism. The choice of organizing public funded initiatives in order to answer to the decline of nightlife cultural entertainment of the city centre, works in the short period term but it doesn't solve the problems of creating an infrastructure for circuits of music production.

In the next section I'll try to consider how these policies and regulations cannot be considered without looking at their political influence and impact.

## 8.4 Political Dimension

It's important to notice that music policies and regulations adopted by the City Council of Milan could not be understood without considering their strong political influences.

This assumption is based upon the fact that the Italian cultural system is heavily dependent on a matter of politics or better of ideological contrast between right-wing and left-wing parties. Particularly independent music production in Italy has to be understood considering its rootedness in an oppositional discourses against the cultural industry, and its attachment to peculiar sites with a strong political connection. In the Italian context this oppositional tendency toward the culture industry has been particularly strong and highly politicized, as many left-wing intellectuals turn to the ideas of Frankfurt School as a way of understanding cultural changes<sup>60</sup>.

The distance or oppositional resistance from the music industry in Italy is often meant as an ideological and political statement. In the last decades, this tendency has been strengthened by the peculiar conjuncture that media and cultural production had with the political system of at the time of the research Prime Minister Berlusconi. Being oppositional to a certain kind of cultural and political values of the right wing party means even adopting an alternative to this cultural system, which is supported by the left wing party.

Traditionally in Italy, the left has sustained forms of grass-roots music production, through the direct support and organization of events<sup>61</sup> but also through an extensive presence in Italian territory.

In addition other actors and institutions which, even though not directly connected to the left-wing party, have been ideologically and structurally closer to left-wing cultural and social issues, have favored the development of grass-roots music production in Italy.

According to the interviewees, in the 1990s independent music could circulate thanks to an alternative channel of distribution which was constituted by the national network of the social

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<sup>60</sup>In the Italian context Antonio Gramsci (e.g. 1947) in particular has been highly influential for his theory of cultural hegemony, and for his way of tidying his assumption about culture to his political action in the Communist party. Besides other intellectuals who contributed to an oppositional discourse against the culture industry have been Pierpaolo Pasolini (e.g. 1975), whose work has been against mass culture, but his popularity comes from his presence in the mass media through his work in filmmaking and journalism. Finally Umberto Eco (e.g. 1964) whose work has been addressed against the music industry and to “the effort to construct a critique of ‘gastronomic music’, or ‘consumption song’” (Eco 1964, p. 11).

<sup>61</sup> Particularly ‘Feste dell’Unità’ are music and cultural events organized by the left wing party in which grass-roots music production was particularly supported.

centres<sup>62</sup>. Social centres conducted political activities along with leisure activities (Ruggiero, 2001) and they were the most important sites of consumption of that music, alternative to the one of controlled by the mainstream music industry. These were and still are squatted places organized at a grass-roots level in forms of voluntarism and of strong involvement in a culture of political opposition. In absence of other music venues dedicated to grass-roots music production and of support from the local state, these places were particularly active in promoting music at a local level (Mitchell 1995, 1996, 2002; Anselmi 2002).

In the narratives of the interviewees social centres have been crucial in creating an environment for spreading alternative music to a wider audience of an underground niche.

*Until the 80s and 90s there was only the mainstream and the underground with punk and hardcore. The underground was extremely closed and highly ideological circuit. The fact that it was against the music market implies that there was no kind of openness, exchange and comparison. There was a self-enclosed circuit but a 'normal' person was unlikely to come into contact with certain types of experiences. The 90s brought a break in this combination because this new Italian music, these new groups ... Marlene Kuntz, Subsonica, Modena City Ramblers ... have brought fresh air in this circuit and have attracted many people into alternative music, that means having just an alternative to the official vision of society. It has been very strong for me in terms of imagination, because you could still go to concerts for 5000 liras and was the first time this happened. You should go in social centre such as Leoncavallo or Bulk and you should find music and fanzine that you couldn't find anywhere else (8).*

*In those years there were the social centres, in which you could find experimental and alternative music. If you wanted to dance trip hop, there were no official clubs for that but you would find it in local social centres, squats which were well organized at the same time accessible to any kind of people. They were not only underground people but any kind of people was going there to listen to good music.*

*And to play at a social centre such as Leoncavallo was a great success for an artist because these places were always full. Dj Graf, Casino Royal, and many musicians were living in social centres and became centers where they generated new types of music. (36)*

Social centres are described by some of the respondents as cultural hubs of music innovation and experimentation, and at the same time as point of departure to develop a professional career in the independent music sector:

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<sup>62</sup> Instead of squatted cultural spaces, or squats, I leave here 'centri sociali' following Tony Mitchell (2002), to emphasize their peculiarity in the Italian context: "Underground occupied social centres developed indirectly from the Italian Communist party's case di lavoro, community centers and functioned as a more than simply music venues, providing nurturing places for the development of posse, as they became widely known, adopting the Jamaican sound-system" (2002, p.197) but even of other music

*Not only musicians, but a lot of people who are now professionals have been trained in the social centres. I think about Mamo who is light engineer of the Bloody Beetroots who started at Leoncavallo social centre. But even many audio and sound engineers and many others started working in the underground scene and then developed their own careers. That place was crucial for all, even for bands who grew here, as Afterhours and Subsonica. All the underground developed here and then developed following different trajectories. (39)*

These elements are important to understand the attachment of independent music to social centres, which as I have described have been pivotal for the development of Italian independent music production.

However in 2001 the riots happening during G8 in Genoa, to which Milanese social centres took part, had a strong impact upon the future of social centres in Milan and especially upon their importance for future independent music production and performance:

*The division in social centres happened 10 years ago when we returned from Genoa g8 completely destroyed, after that 3 years of total desert followed, Genoa was just too strong for all ... there was not even more participation for 3 years, we stopped to do concerts, there was a desert. You could no longer work. So instead that period there was a peak of memberships to the associations such as ARCI. (33)*

*Genoa has counted a lot in my choice to leave Leoncavallo social centre, because it has been a great watershed for many people. There was generational change and people change and therefore the Leoncavallo who was already in decline going ... gone a lot of people. They stayed in a few and old, and I am one of the last to get out because I believed, I thought that this was an important place. (39)*

In this period, many social centres closed down and even though some remained active, the circuit connected with ARCI<sup>63</sup> started to become crucial for independent music.

*For ARCI the G8 in Genoa was an important moment, in fact all the young people who have seen the social centres closing down they came to us to find a space to play, to organize concerts ... the artistic directors, and young people who organized the cultural events. young people have learned after the tragic events of Genoa that the ARCI was also a place for young people, because in Milan many music venues began to emerge which were in between a pub, a cultural association and that had almost all be founded by musicians. And an explanation of this is that in Milan at that time if you wanted to play your music, there were no spaces to play! There were some clubs and some social centres which were becoming to closing down There was a need in the city, so ARCI, I realized that there was a need for spaces to play live music.... (6)*

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<sup>63</sup> As I've aforementioned ARCI (Recreational and Cultural Association in Italy) is an Italian association of social promotion. It gathers local associations dealing with various topics: culture (art, film / video, literature / poetry, music, theatre / dance), tourism, human, social work, community service and international solidarity. Only in the Milanese area it gathers around 160 clubs, some of which are active independent live music venues.



The ARCI is a recreational not-for-profit association, which is traditionally connected with left-wing movements. With the loss of importance of the social centres<sup>64</sup>, ARCI has developed a greater focus on music and youth that led to the creation of many music venues and clubs that have become central for independent music in Milan.

*By 2000s it began to emerge, especially in Milan a new type of ARCI, which replaces the value of social centres...*

*We had a major response from the public because the public told us that in Milan there was not such a thing, and we opened a new phase of 'ARCI. A new generations of 'young' ARCI started, it was not anymore a recreational center for old people drinking wine and playing cards in the afternoons as everyone thinks ARCI, but Magnolia and Casa 139 started something else. They were founded with another intent. We have turned ARCI into a very structured and very professional music venues. We have very professional technical facilities, a good treatment for artists, professional staff... (12)*

In the case of live music, some of the most successful music venues in Milan are affiliated to ARCI. ARCI venues are particularly successful because they are embedded in a network of ARCI venues with which they can collaborate. Besides ARCI for example provides an help for those members who join the association in terms of legal and relational support.

*I have always had the support of ARCI and I have never felt alone. If you are a commercial music venue instead, you are alone. (39)*

*Networking is much easier for us, because we are embedded in the circuit of ARCI. ARCI helps you with many legal issues such as gaining permissions and licenses, and at the same time you are within a network of music venues affiliated to ARCI. (5a)*

However ARCI venues have often been criticized because while ARCI venues are successful in terms of revenues and of activities they organize, they can profit of tax reductions being no-for profit cultural associations.

*Here I manage to make play emerging artists because I have not huge costs, I do not pay taxes and the guys who are here are volunteers, there is also to say that we do not recover the VAT. What the president of ARCI always tries to explain to managers of clubs is who are against ARCI because they say that we make them unfair competition, that we do what we do, but without taxes. But we pay our taxes, but we pay taxes to an extent for a*

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<sup>64</sup> There are still today some social centres in Milan such as Leoncavallo S.P.A, Cox18, Torchiera, Cantiere Delirio.

*cultural association. And then you must consider the fact that we do not recover the VAT on everything we spend, I pay the 20% VAT but cannot retrieve it. This is what venue owners fail to understand. (16)*

This system engages in a vicious circle in which it becomes increasingly difficult, problematic and risky to invest in a live music venue and few venues which enable to survive are often ARCI venues which then become the ones extremely controlled.

*Lately I have seen growing very much the number of people who attend my ARCI club. I understood why: it's not because I am better than others, but because for economic and legal reasons they continued to close other premises. My club has remained one of the few where people enjoyed to come. But this has annoyed many. And so the numbers of controls have increased checks on me. (16).*

The position against ARCI venues has been certainly radicalized with the municipal administration (that was at the time of the research, April-June 2011) of the right-wing party which was particularly repressive towards night entertainment, as I have illustrated in the previous section. This position against the night entertainment was not fully supported by the City Council, but there were various interests involved, which generates a confusion in the position adopted by the City Council in relation to live music entertainment. Especially the Councilor (of trade, big events, fashion and design) has been open towards the night-life and live music in the city, trying to defend the closure of many premises and the organization of music events.

On the contrary, the vice-mayor, who at the time of the research was even Councillor of Security, has focused his administrative and political activities to the control of forms of night entertainment, as one of the problem to deal with in order to defend public peace<sup>65</sup>.

*I spent years reading the newspaper with De Corato (Councilor to Security) saying to stop and repress the nightlife, and Terzi (Councilor of trade) saying that the nightlife cannot be killed. The same municipal officer Crescenzi, who is responsible for the noise emissions, explains to us: "we are in complete confusion to the City Council, because one day they said to us to control all the premises, and the next day they say no ... we can close any premises. There is no criterion ... (17b)*

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<sup>65</sup> The Councilor to Security in an interview made in 2011 declared: "The fight against the outlawed decibels and wild nightlife that does not meet the safety requirements - continued De Corato - goes on unabated, as it always has done. Far this year, rising to 20 the total seizures carried out. Not to mention that autonomously 'Food Board has conducted 819 inspections in 2010. Among these well have affected 115 clubs, with 14 violations of regulations and a complaint. Other violations were noted at 53 bar and place of public entertainment activities have resulted in 15 complaints. While 197 inspections private clubs have resulted in 57 administrative violations and 180 reports to the court. Approximately 170 controls were then involved the noise complaints were triggered by 3. (<http://www.milanotoday.it/cronaca/sigilli-discoteca-club-71-corvetto-skate-park.html>)

However this situation has led to an attack more generally against clubs and music venues but more precisely against the ARCI venues because these venues have been more generally affiliated to the left-wing.

*Then we faced the reality of the ARCI that were not tolerated at all by the municipal administration and so they have closed our ARCI club for a year... There has been a political and ideological attack against ARCI and ARCI did not know how to defend themselves. ARCI have underestimated the importance... To make us closed, there has been a loose connection between municipal policemen, and the city council...(39)*

*I have the impression that for the City Council of Milan any gathering space that could be culturally associated with the left had to be repressed. Over the years I have seen change music venues that Milan has to offer in a whole series of events. When I started to organize concerts there were Rolling stones, Rainbow, Transylvania, Monluè ... All these places have been disappearing for different reasons, as well as the coincidence that they are all gone at the same time. In this situation ARCI venues have been increasing. I worked with a number of these ARCI venues .. what I saw it was that in Milan the repression against them was made in a way that was not done in any other part of Italy and to a point that has been evident that there was a design to hinder these places. (40)*

*All this success of ARCI is bothering me, because ARCI is growing so much, and the number of membership to the association is growing (120 thousand members), thanks to the work done on young people and by transforming traditional ARCI bars into ARCI music venues and clubs. With the problem that the maximum visibility leads to a political problem with the City Council, especially with some parts of the City Council who do not see positively this growth of ARCI Milan and so they try to hit us in all ways. (6)*

In particular this condition has been exacerbated when one of the most important independent music venue, belonging to ARCI, named Casa 139<sup>66</sup> was shut down because of a police control. This episode activated a debate within the public opinion, which brought to the creation of a committee ‘Milano l’è bela<sup>67</sup>, guided by ARCI Milan and gathering for the first

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<sup>66</sup> Casa 139 was one of the most established ARCI venue performing independent music in the city. Being a no-profit association, ARCI is subject to less restrictive regulations ( especially in the safety measures to be adopted) but needs all the people going in its venues having enrolled a ARCI membership card. This membership needs to be subscribed at least a day before going to the venue. The policemen have instead found out people which were subscribing to ARCI on the same night. Therefore for the policeman this venue could not be considered as an ARCI, and was subject to the same regulations of a normal commercial venue. Casa 139 was not actually shut down but closed with the pending trial. Finally after 8 months, the venue manager decided not to re-open the venue, at least in the same place.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Milano l’è bela’ (which means ‘Milano is beautiful’ in the Milanese dialect) committee gathered for the first time several musicians, artists, comedians, music producers, club owners, ARCI venue owners. The committee was created to organize the demonstration and to write the guidelines for the politicians, but after this the

time, musicians, club owners ARCI owners and much operators, to promote music and cultural entertainment in the city. The committee organized a demonstration to which many musicians and music producers in the sector took part.

*After the closure of the Casa 139 we had this idea of doing something together. Our initial idea was not to create a committee, but to gather a crew of artists-friends, to go in front of the Town Hall with a guitar to make flash-mobs but then we started involving many people and we realized that even people who have never been interested in what was happening in the city, started to be interested in defending the Casa 139. So the number of people has expanded and we have left the older people to keep the line even for a matter of greater authority.*

*There was some difficulty to understand that our drive was not so much the Casa 139, that was the straw that broke the camel's back but we wanted more generally to defend music and cultural entertainment in the city. So we finally organized the demonstration to explain that it was something for Milan, which involved ARCI but even many more people. We succeeded in the demonstration because after 48 hours we had a meeting with Councilor*

*Terzi and candidate Boeri. (26)*

The demonstration allowed to open a debate between some representatives of the music sector, a Councilor<sup>68</sup>, and a candidate to the future administrative elections, who was going to become the Councilor of Culture. Particularly there was a negotiation with these candidates of both right and left parties upon regulatory issues related to live music.

In this situation the candidates asked the music producers to write a list of issues about live music in the city, which were subscribed by two candidates. The issues that was tackled in this document ranged from the institutionalization of a negotiating table between the municipality and music producers; the necessity of creating a unified office to deal with all the licenses and permits necessary to organize legally a music event; to more efficient transport management in the late hours; the creation of a public concert hall; the reuse of disused spaces for music production and performance; economic support to start-ups related to music production.

This document was named 'Decalogue' and was signed by the two Candidates and by many musicians and music producers; the meeting was important because it allowed for the first time to unite music producers, venues owners and ARCI venue owners that before had always been fragmented. At the same time it is important to emphasize that this meeting was arranged by the two candidates because the issue of management of the live music was

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committee tried to become an association to promote culture in the city. But because of some organizational problems, and because of some clashes between the members, the association ended.

<sup>68</sup> This was the Councilor of f trade, big events, Design and Fashion who has been more open towards the issue of live music.

starting to become an important issue of the future elections. However people who signed this document however did not explicitly show their support to one candidate but rather the document was done in order to put the issue of live music in the policy agenda of the different candidates.

The occasion of the administrative elections has surely radicalized the political debate between left and right but it has as well allowed to discuss a policy agenda related to live music and to the role of public administration in promoting cultural activities. The issue of live music and more broadly of night entertainment had become pivotal in the political agenda of the city for the future elections. As this representative of a resident committee suggests, candidates realize that the issue of night-entertainment and more particularly of music entertainment was crucial to obtain electoral support.

*The candidates have realized that the issue of the nightlife has become crucial for the elections, and that they have to be on the side of young people but I think they need to respect the other interests of residents, venue managers and patrons. The candidate Boeri who signed with the Councilor Terzi the Decalogue and he seems to be the person who wants to keep the city alive until 3 in the morning but at the same time he says that he is against the wild nightlife. But then he says that the premises can stay open until 3 am! (20)*

In this situation music producers have demonstrated more clearly that in the other Committee ‘Milano l’è bela’ their endorsement towards to left wing candidate and during the elections, a pressure group, called ‘Che la Forza sia con te’<sup>69</sup> (May the force be with you) was formed to promote the election of left-wing candidate. In particular, this group joined by several music producers and music venue owners of the independent music scene, promised its support to the left-wing candidate, in exchange of a support to several requests, above several issues which were not specifically linked to the live music sector, but regarded more generally to issues such as the creation of start-ups and young enterprise, social housing, public transports in the night-time and development of bike viability. As one of the member of this group suggests:

*We had written a handbook along with 30 other associations, which was called “La forza sia con te” (May the force be with you) that was sign by the candidates of the left-wing party. (25)*

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Che la forza sia con te’ united some of the clubs, music venues, record labels which have been united by the support to the left wing candidate

It is interesting to notice that in the occasion of the elections while the more professionalized sectors of the 'Che la forza sia con te' group felt the need to lobby with the left-wing candidate, the committee of 'Milano l'è bela' ended up to be an artistic collective which didn't want to deal with the political issue of the elections, wanted instead to defend the independence from political issues, and decided to remain outside from the political issues on the elections.

*For me the Committee Milan l'è bela doesn't represent a movement, but it represents a desire to defend music but... to me everything is fine but there is nobody in the committee able to face such a problem in terms of knowledge of the problem. I talked to the guys and the committee Milan l'è bela. I followed them but I still felt that they had not understood anything of what was happening. In fact, in these assemblies they did, I was in contrast with them because they tried to keep their collective outside of politics, as apolical... they did a mistake because they did not understand that Casa 139 was the first victim of the campaign of those on the right-wing. After two days from Casa 139 was shut down, in an interview the Councilor of Security De Corato who boasted of having closed so many venues. (29)*

The group of 'Che la forza sia con te' understood instead the importance of lobbying with the candidate of the left and supported through the organization of a concert that involved a lot of independent artists. In particular, one of the organizers of the concert subsequently became assistant of the future Councilor of the culture, demonstrating the utility of the lobbying operation. That concert was remembered by many respondents as a turning point for the victory of the candidate of the left.

*I have participated to the organization of the concert 'Milano Libera tutti' which we have organized putting together the expertise of different music producers, in exchange to the support of our request ... (25)*

*The group we created to organize Milano Libera Tutti gathered 10 different music organizations ...  
The staff of the candidate Pisapia asked us to organize this concert. We accepted and we manage to organize an event with so many people. It was a way to demonstrate that we can do the concerts professionally. (29)*

*My experience in the campaign of the candidate Pisapia was that me and other young music producers have been called by two left-wing candidates, Pisapia and Boeri, who have shown their attention to issues of social and music life of the city. They called us to organize a concert, with the aim of raising awareness of going to the polls. It was obvious that the message was to vote Giuliano Pisapia, and election results have shown the support by young people. So this openness of mind of the candidate towards music entertainment makes you understand how this can be virtuous desire to make concerts more accessible. Pisapia has made the music entertainment of the city his own manifesto! (23)*

There are several studies which have analyzed the use of famous musicians and the organization of big music events as a way of attracting young people to vote. The most significant example is probably the case of *Rock the vote*, analyzed by Street and Cloonan (1998), which significantly affected electoral campaigns in the Anglo-American context and which emphasized the changing nature in the use of music events in the electoral campaigns. As the authors suggest, *Rock the vote* was, for the first time, directly initiated by the music industry, which understood the importance of lobbying with a candidate, because of political but even economic reasons. In the same way, the interesting element in the case of the fieldwork was that this concert with independent musicians was directly thought and organized by independent music producers, which were particularly interested in supporting the left-wing candidate.

On the contrary, the right-wing party tried in the same way to use music as an instrument of political campaign, but with disappointing results in terms of audience and with a limited support of musicians and especially of the music industry. The repressive attitude of the right wing City Council has inhibited the support by musicians and music producers and has made not credible in the electoral campaign the idea of rebranding the Mayor as music-friendly.

In the electoral campaign there has been an attempt by the mayor web-marketing consultant, who has been previously appointed to organize the aforementioned event for emerging artists named LiveMi, which ended up being only a small part of a broader marketing strategy aimed at emphasizing the attention of the municipal administration to the problems of youth and live music and at re-imagining the city and the mayor in view of the 2011 electoral campaign. In the proximity of the elections, the web marketing consultant have tried to organize other initiatives for emerging artists which have been perceived as instrumental by the artists. Besides the right-wing party organized a concert for the campaign election in which artists and musicians from Milan did not participate, and Neapolitan musicians who was supposed to play decided finally not to participate due to some intimidations received.

The absence of support from musicians and artists to the right-wing candidate has been a proof of the difficulty of managing music of the municipal administration.

The advent of the new administration opened up possibilities for dialogue between the world of independent music and City Council, particularly with the Councilor of Culture, that could lead to a more beneficial environment for the independent music scene.

## 8.5 Cultural and Social Context

As I have mentioned previously, the regulatory and political system is largely affected by the cultural and social context. The degree of development of the circuits of independent music production is highly dependent upon the attitudes of the social and cultural context towards music and upon the existence or not of a musical culture which can enable or inhibit music production and performance.

Although in the social discourses, the independents tend to proclaim their autonomy from a dominant cultural model, in fact the circuits of independent music are embedded in a social and cultural context to which they are attached. Independent music producers perceive themselves as distant from the dominant culture,

*The problem is that in Italy the majority of people watch TV and talent shows, because if they did not watch TV and especially talent shows, they would buy records and go to concerts. (7)*

*It sounds strange but apart from the world that follows this music there is a giant 'real country'<sup>70</sup> that still has no idea who these musicians are ... in independent circuits if you name Vasco everyone means Vasco Brondi<sup>71</sup>, for many others Vasco is Vasco Rossi.... We are a completely different world, and it's difficult to see it from inside (35)*

Besides it is also interesting to see how the social and cultural context perceives independent music production as part of the counter-culture. In particular, referring to live music production, there is a common tendency to consider forms of production of live music as any form of night entertainment. An analysis of some social discourses appeared in newspapers showed that there is an opposing view against any type of night entertainment, including live music, that is perceived as a threat, a nuisance and as form of counter-cultural production.

Interesting in the social discourses, appearing in the media and especially in local newspapers, it was possible to see how the various forms of live music and night entertainment were generally called rave parties or more often 'wild movida', that it was common term to indicate an excessively noisy night-life.

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<sup>70</sup> 'Real country' (Paese Reale) is a quotation from a song from one of the most established independent bands, named Afterhours which exactly explains the existence of what is in real Italy outside of the independent music scene.

<sup>71</sup> Vasco Brondi is the singer of an independent band named Luci della centrale elettrica, while Vasco Rossi is one of the most famous pop-rock songwriter of Italian music.



*When we went to the resident committee LaCittadella, they showed us a video about our venue with a band playing and around 200 people in the audience, and they titled the video: 'the rave party'! so for them we do rave party... (17b)*

Particularly it's important to notice that the critics to the night entertainment were addressed to the issue of public nuisance and of noise, in which live music was specifically involved. As I have aforementioned referring to the regulations against live music entertainment, the main issue that needs to be considered is the way in which music is regarded as a noise.

Live music was therefore regarded not for its cultural and social value but simply as part of the night entertainment, and it was more generally compared to any other kind of noise such as chatting of people. As Homan (2003) suggests, considering the noise regulation in Australia:

A popular music struggles to retain its place in the city, it is clear that in many cases government actions derive from the principle that live rock, jazz, or blues acts produce 'noise', not music (Homan, 2003, p. 20).

The issue of noise emission became particularly strong after residents' complaints for noise disturbance, which was in many cases related to live performances. These complaints were coming from the pressures of the powerful residents' committees lobbying against night entertainment and against live music. These problems were particularly affecting those residential areas nearby the Arena and the Stadium which are used during the summer time as open air concert halls, and in the Navigli district, a night entertainment district with a high concentration of residential buildings. Because of the narrowness of streets and of the closeness of apartments to clubs and music venues, residents are complaining about music which seems often to be confused with any kind of noise.

*There is a problem with music and live music is regarded as disturbing. There is a mentality that fundamentally wants to take off every music initiative, and so you can put into question the concerts at the San Siro stadium, because the resident committee of 40 families questioning the concerts is considered much more important their opinion with respect to the disturbance of their peace compared to the collective good of the concert.(14)*

*The issue of decibel is a cultural problem ... the issue is that of tolerance, even by citizens. Those who live close to San Siro stadium know that the concerts serve the whole community... We have tried to offer them free tickets for the concerts, but the next day they were complaining again ... I have been summoned by this committee because of decibels. (2)*

As these quotations suggest, the issue of noise is a cultural issue, and what is perceived as noise is very much a matter of cultural identity and representation of the city.

It is important to emphasize that music as noise or music as a cultural and economic resource is an issue that is highly dependent upon socio-cultural context. In fact, in the context of Milan independent music is not perceived as a resource of identity of the city. There has been many studies (e.g. Cohen, 1991, 2007; Finnegan, 1989; Shank, 1994) which have particularly emphasized the importance that music can play in the representation and identity of a city. Cohen (1991, 2007) for example investigates the way in which the city of Liverpool is strongly linked to its music culture, and the impact that music identity and heritage has upon the representation of Liverpool as a music city.

On the contrary Milan in its own identification and representation has its excellence in other cultural industries such as fashion and design. The fashion and design industries contribute much more in the Milanese context to its representation and identity than music.

*It is no sense that during the fashion and the design week, Milan seems to be the best city ever just because people accept the noise, the traffic and whatsoever and the day after these events I can be fined if I play my guitar in a park.(17c)*

As the respondent points out, people are generally willing to tolerate the discomfort of the fashion and design weeks, which caused a serious of problems in the terms of traffic and public nuisance, because they are perceived as an important moment for the city's economy.

Milan instead invested in other economies such as fashion, design and football of which the noise and the discomfort are perceived as negative externalities, but as a return for the city in terms of economy and identity. Many respondents pointed out that whereas when there is football matches, there are no specific complaints, while complaints are often happening in the case of music events.

*It's so strange that residents living nearby the San Siro Stadium go on complaining for concerts, while when there are people shouting during the football matches, nobody complains. (6)*

Conversely, as noted above, music is not perceived as being an economy of the city.

From a certain point of view Milan can rightfully be considered the Italian music capital, due to the presence of major and independent record labels, radio stations and international-level concert halls and arenas, and especially with respect to classical music, hosting the famous La

Scala theatre and a prestigious Conservatoire. However Milan does not have in its culture and identity and representation in the city an identification with the music, except from classical music and La Scala. This importance is due to the still highly different cultural value that in the Italian is given to high music instead of popular music (e.g. Fabbri, 2010).

*The lack of respect toward the contemporary popular music has only brought to an unconditional support for the old institutions such as La Scala...(30)*

However from an economic point of view, Milan is a city that is not economically investing upon the economies of music, and especially upon circuits of independent music, and that it is not considering music as a professional activity, as a job. As the quotation suggests, this again has an impact upon the noise issue.

*But if a fruit and vegetables shop pulls up the shutters at 5 am you cannot say anything because this is work, while those who make music are not regarded as working people. The music is not regarded as an economic and professional activity. (14)*

A further element in the representation and identification of the city is the imaginary of the city as ‘Milano da bere’<sup>72</sup> (Milan to drink), which means to indicate how the city is attached to yuppie night entertainment of drinking in trendy and fashionable clubs and bars. This imagery differs significantly from a series of values and attitudes of independent music producers who want to detach themselves from the image of Milan as ‘Milan to drink’.

*In Milan there are very commercial discos, and there are many areas with clubs which are dedicated to a yuppie entertainment but then there a few places for live music. (7)*

In this situation circuits of independent music are therefore embedded in a cultural and social context which is not fertile to their production and performance. In the chapter I’ll develop how even for this reason networks of independent music are characterized by mobile trajectories.

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<sup>72</sup> Milano da bere (Milan to drink) is an expression which has been largely used as journalistic expression to define the city of Milan during the 1980s, a period in which Milan was characterized by widespread prosperity, the upstart of yuppies and to its image as fashionable city.

## Conclusion

The chapter has analyzed the different and overlapping dimensions in which the circuits of independent music need to be situated, considering the media environment, economic context, regulations and policy making strategies, politics and the cultural and social context.

For each of these dimensions I have tried to focused upon particular elements emphasizing how each of them has its own specificity in the context and period of the research.

It is possible to notice how these dimensions, even though they are kept distinguished, are in fact extremely interconnected and it's therefore interesting to look at their intersections and their interrelations to the trajectories and networks of live music production in the music scene.

For example I have tried to investigate how the intersections between the media and the economic dimension enable to understand the impact that digitalization has upon the crisis of the recording industry and the resulting success of the live music industry. The changes have serious consequences upon the production of live music in music scenes at a local level. The digitization and file-sharing have led to a rearrangement of relations with the production and distribution and consumption of music that lead to redefine the relationship with the music industry. And this intersection includes even the role that SNSs and digital media have upon the development of independent DIY music production and distribution.

This is just one example that enables once again to understand the complexities of intersections among these factors (media, economic, institutional-regulatory, political and cultural), which allow to situate the circuits of independent live music production in a momentary equilibrium of forces between these forces. This equilibrium is historically contingent and is depending upon the local peculiarities of each social context. In the next chapter I will try to understand how we can attempt to re-conceptualize the context in which circuits of music production take place which cannot be reduced to their locality but instead need to be understood in the complexity and mobility of their trajectories.

# 9. Third Layer: mobility and space in independent music production

## Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have analyzed how independent music scene needs to be understood in the interdependence to a terrain of forces, of structural constraints and possibilities articulated in the 5 dimensions (media, economy, regulation-policy, politics, culture).

I will now try to suggest how this terrain doesn't correspond to the physical space of the city of Milan, as in the traditional understanding of local music scenes, but instead it is articulated in a contested definition of space, which takes into account the interconnectedness of individual mobile practices.

This chapter will therefore provide a critic to this traditional definition of local music scene, which is connected to the third level of critic, proposed in the model.

The third critic to the music scene perspective is connected to failure of taking into account the networked, mediated and mobile nature of musical practices, that it's not reducible to the distinction between local, trans-local and virtual scenes (Peterson & Bennett, 2004).

I will therefore try to relate my understanding of networks of independent music to Urry's (e.g 2005) mobility approach to try to understand the importance of considering the continue and intermittent dynamic movement of social relationships.

As the chapter will show, the circuits of independent music in Milan and in Italy live in tensions between trajectories which remains in the local and which go beyond the local.

## 9.1 Investigating The Mobile Networks Connections Of Independent Music In Milan

In the chapter referring to the literature of the music scene perspective, I have already pointed out that early studies of music scenes (e.g. Cohen, 1991; Shank, 1994) have been focused upon the importance that particular places can play in creating specific kinds of music associated with that particular location. This has been the traditional way in which music scenes have been understood in their correspondence to a physical space, traditionally a city (e.g. the Liverpool indie-rock scene, the Seattle grunge music scene).

These ethnographic studies (e.g. Cohen, 1991) have emphasized that the involvement in a music scene was associated to attachment and identification with a particular locality, and how music scene can reflect social, cultural and economic characteristic of these places (Cohen, 1999).

Cohen (2007) points out that, even though this identification between music and locality needs to be challenged, it is anyway interesting to notice how in Liverpool musicians tend to connect their music to a specific local sounds and to certain features of the urban environment.

In all these studies therefore there is a reference to the ways in which locality and local sounds can be a source of identity. However Kruse (2003) for example has been critical towards the analysis of a local sound suggesting that “local sound” is an ill-defined concept and that “the assertion that a local sound exists leads one to listen for the similarities between [and among] bands within a locality: those who seek to find a local sound therefore tend to find it” (Kruse, Site 133).

This is what Straw (1991) defines as “musical localism” which means to emphasize the organic connection existing between sounds and local spaces in which these sounds are produced and consumed.

In other words there has to be then a process of “urban mythology” (Bennett, 2002) in which music plays a central role in constructing narratives of the local. Musicians, music producers, fans and the media contribute therefore to create a representation and an imaginary of a local music scene and of its rootedness in a particular locality.

The creation of a music scene depends therefore upon the collective representation of its members who identify with a particular locality.

There has to be a process of representation and of identification with the city, that in the case of Milan happens in oppositional ways. As I have pointed out talking about the cultural and social context in which independent music scene in Milan takes place, it's important to suggest that in the case of the research there was not an identification with the city. On the contrary, musicians and music producers of the circuits of independent music tended to point out their opposition to the traditional representation of the city as work-alcoholic and characterized by yuppie night entertainment. There are many independent music songs which emphasize the opposition to common characteristic of the city<sup>73</sup>.

Besides it is important to notice that, while the traditional literature of music scenes has always sought to emphasize that in local music scenes there was a strong identification with the city, the previous chapter has instead sought to show that the environment may also have structural constraints that inhibit practices of production of independent music.

Therefore instead of considering the city as the site of situated and localized music-making practices, as the traditional understanding of the local music scene tends to suggest, my understanding of the city is meant not as un-contested and bounded place but rather as being formed out of stretched out social relations (Allen & Hamnett, 1995). In my perspective, a city needs instead to be understood as one of the possible hubs of networks of music activities and not as the only setting of the circuits of independent music production.

What I'm suggesting is that early ethnographic studies of music scenes (e.g. Cohen, 1991) have analyzed the localized nature of music making practices without considering the mobile and interconnected nature of social practices. Later studies have attempted to challenge this rootedness in the locality, by suggesting the existence of trans-local and virtual scenes (Peterson & Bennett, 2004). However this distinction between local, trans-local and virtual scenes, as I have aforementioned and as other studies suggest (Kruse, 2010), doesn't allow to understand the mediated and mobile nature of independent music-making practices.

My assumption is instead to challenge the traditional definition of place, to look instead at how my research couldn't be restricted to the physical boundaries of the city of Milan.

Even though Milan is the major focus of attention, the different careers, relationships and interactions of my respondents couldn't be restricted only within the city of Milan.

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<sup>73</sup> For example looking at the lyrics of many songs of independent artists it's possible to notice the opposition to the city. For example: *Milano non è la verità* (Milan is not the truth) is a verse from a song of Afterhours called *L'inutilità della puntualità* (The the uselessness of punctuality) which refers to the work-alcoholic attitude of people in Milan; *I Milanesi uccidono il sabato* (Milanese kill the Saturday), a song of Afterhours, *Sushi and Coca* (Sushi and Cocaine) is a song from Marta Sui Tubi which refer to the opposition to the yuppie night entertainment of Milan.

Milan was therefore not considered as the only place of localized music activities but as one of the node of intersection of different flows of music-making practices.

The social environment, in which circuits of music production operate, transcends the dimension of physical boundaries of the city and is instead constructed in the networks of music-making practices. In the sense this terrain has to be understood as a contested space of tensions between trajectories which remains in the local and which go beyond the local. According to Sheller and Urry, “places are thus not so much fixed as implicated within complex networks of which hosts, guests, buildings, objects, and machines are contingently brought together to produce certain performances in certain places at certain times. Places are indeed, places of movement” (2006, p. 215)

This perspective allows to understand how there were centrifugal and centripetal trajectories, to which corresponded attractive and repulsive dynamics to and from the city of Milan.

The previous chapter has described how the media environment, the economic, regulatory, political and cultural context tend to favor practices of moving away from the city.

For example I have suggested that the high rents of music venues and a regulatory system, and a social and cultural context which were not particularly supporting live music entertainment, has tended to favor a displacement of music activities outside the city boundaries. On the contrary Shank (1994) for example suggests that the scene in Austin enables to foster thanks to infrastructure supporting this scene, and by the presence of structural elements such as the many possibilities of playing and the low cost of rents which attracted many musicians. Instead in my research, of the most significant live music venues, the respondents rarely mentioned live music venues located within the city boundaries, most of them were instead in the outskirts of the city.

*There are no more music venues in Milan, only if you get out from Milan. There is Magnolia that has prospered even too much in the absence of competition of other venues in Milan and Magnolia is not in the municipality of Milan, it's in Segrate. There is the Carroponte but it's again located outside the city limits because it's in Sesto San Giovanni. And then there a lot of small ARCI venues and cafes such as Locomotiva in Vimercate, Ortosonico in Pavia and Tamburine in Seregno, so all outside Milan. (35)*

*We are in a space which is outside of Milan, in the municipality of Segrate and with the City Council of Segrate we always found a good relationship of respect of our activities, they are strict in enforcing the rules but have a willingness to make the our venue Magnolia existing.*

*We have rules to control decibels but there is an administration that tells us that we can exist and there is a closure in advance, as it happens in Milan. (25)*



At the same time organizers of music events, promoters and booking agents were more often moving outside of the city to organize music events:

*I'm trying to work much more outside the city boundaries because other municipalities are much more open towards music entertainment, for example from a couple of years I organize a music festival in Vigevano ... so one hour from Milan. (30)*

Besides, the existence of a very small market of independent music implied the need of moving away from the local and national level. In this situation, as I have already pointed out, the internet has been welcome because it allows to remain “truly independent” (32), and at the same time to reach a larger audience internationally.

*We are a truly independent label, which is based only on its own resources, self-financed ... I say that not to show off but usually to have a minimum of feedback you need to come to terms with the devil, hence with the music industry or you still remain too small. I think that opening yourself at the international level is the only way to survive in the independent sector because you understand that the independent scene is very limited in Italy made of few thousand of people. (32)*

Several studies have tended to overemphasize the role of the internet can play in independent music production and promotion suggesting how the internet has allowed flows of music in different localities, and favoring to “de-link the notion of scene from locality” (Connell & Gibson, 2002, p.107). The internet plays undoubtedly a crucial role not only, as I have mentioned, in the production, promotion, dissemination, and consumption of independent music and even in favoring trans-local connections (Kruse, 2010). According to this respondent, the internet has allowed to have a international promotion, and to reach without passing through the traditional channel of the mainstream music industry larger possibilities:

*The Internet allows us to have our products all over the world, allows us to dialogue with artists, blogs, websites.*

*For example Titan who is a dj from Roseto degli Abruzzi, had contacted me to let me hear his music ... then I listened and we made an EP... That is to say that a label from Cremona with no budget can get into contact with different people and produce their music! the internet can change things. We started by exchanging contacts with other DJs and have a good mailing list also with dj super stars around the world, and we had a feedback from Steve Aoki and from Vicsmag that is the most important magazine for house music. At any moment you receive an email from your bedroom from a major label that says that one of the most influential figures of this*

*scene would like to include the track of a dj from Roseto degli Abruzzi in his album! Without the internet we would still be thinking about how to do! (32)*

In particular the internet is considered crucial for its possibility of decentralizing the production and distribution of music independently from the centers of the music industry:

Hypothetically, we may thus be looking at a world where a radical decentralization of music production and distribution is imminent. A musician living in the mountains of Tibet could access the same information technology and channels as one located in Los Angeles or London, and his/her location would be, in theory, of little or no importance. And certainly this is happening to some extent, allowing distant artists operating outside the mainstream music and media industries to reach audiences all over (Kruse, 2010, p. 634).

However at the same time the role of the internet in allowing trans-local connections cannot be overstated and need to be assessed in the different circuits of independent music.

The level of internationalization depends upon several features of the different circuits of independent music. For example the electronic music circuits seem to be more open to internationalization, and to the use of digital technology in promoting music to a broader audience, as even other studies have suggested (Straw, 1991, 2001; Cohen, 2000). For example Cohen (2000) points out that “Liverpool’s contemporary scene, like the North American dance scene that Straw discusses, has a sense of affinity with scenes in other places and cosmopolitan outlook that makes it attentive to music activity elsewhere” (2000, p. 245). Even in the Italian context the electronic music circuit is perceived to be more inclined in exploiting the potentialities of the internet and in the internationalization. As the interview has stressed, the choice of opening an electronic label has been linked to the desire of opening up to an international market:

*We have always had an idea of being an international independent label, we were interested to a certain point because we saw bigger potential for activity, so we started to think about new methods of distribution and dissemination of music. And the scene, when we were looking to look using the internet as a primary source of distribution and promotion, the scene which is more receptive is the dance, electronic scene. (32)*

Moreover the Italian electronic dance is constituted by many DJs who are famous internationally:

*A certain type of music, especially electronic is now widely famous ... an example: Congo Rock and Bloody Beedroots, the Crookers that are so successful now and they have played at the Coachella, the famous electronic*

*music festival! Or for example the guys of Reset, they now play in the major circuits and they are on world tou*  
(15)

The opportunity to open up to an international market is facilitated by knowledge of electronic circuit of the Italian artists who have become famous internationally. Therefore it is important to notice how trans-local connections are always mediated by already established connections in the local context:

*We had the good fortune of being friends of Bob of the Bloody Beetroots, and we got in touch with him before he got very famous and through him we saw that there was an undergrowth from France, from Germany, from UK of young people exchanging music for free through the Internet, with whom it was possible to get in contact immediately with no costs.* (32)

*We started to get foreign bands wanting to come to play here, initially through Massimo of the band Zu, who had this booking agency for international band playing this music of music which is very experimental ... so we got the band from New York, then the bands come back home and say that there is a cool place to play in Milan. And there's the word of mouth ... The fact of internationality, I often find myself on the other side, searching on the internet music venues where a band I know which plays almost the same kind of music has played, so you try to contact the same venues and so on... In the case of bands such as mine which play a very experimental and underground style of music, I know where there people playing the same kind of music.* (38)

As the last quotation suggests, trans-local connections are made possible even in the case of experimental underground circuits which are connected internationally with people playing the same kind of a very music specific music. As in the case of the respondent, this kind of music was very limited in the context of Milan, and was only performed in a squatted social centre. The same kind of assumption can be made in the case of the goth-metal scene in Britain, analyzed by Hodkinson (2004). In this case, trans-local connections between musicians, operators and fans of the goth metal were made possible because these people were referring to a niche sector which was not able to survive on a local level and therefore was sharing information across localities about events, bands, and places at a international level. As Kruse (2010) points out: “because goth is largely a style-based subculture, it is not surprising that Hodkinson finds a particular trans-local internet effect to be the transmission and discussion of information on style and shared sub-cultural values” (2010, p. 632).

However in the context of Italian independent music, opening to the international market is more generally very limited. As this respondent suggests, even though internet should offer possibilities for internationalization for independent music, these possibilities are not always

exploited by Italian independent music producers, who tend to close themselves to the Italian market:

*La Tempesta record label, in 2011 it is the most successful independent label in Italy because it is the label where alternative successes of the year are released. The problem is that La Tempesta is already on the maximum of what it can do, because it is a label that manages Italian products. It can only be confirmed at the same level year after year, it can begin a dialogue with Universal for distribution ... but better than that, it is difficult to become more successful. It cannot become a point of reference for independent music in the world. So it is a limited potential. Instead I'm trying to get feedback from more than possible audience, internationally. We have the internet which allows us to communicate with people across the world, I do not see why I should limit myself to Italy, it seems limiting. (32)*

On the contrary many independent music producers have linguistic problems in dealing with an international market. The circuit of the independent Italian songwriters is much rooted in the local context and particularly in the network of ARCI music venues. As many respondents have pointed out in the Italian context it is hard that Italian bands singing in English have success, and therefore the choice is either of singing in Italian and remaining in the Italian market or singing in English and opening up to an international market but then relocating abroad.

*For me there is no opening internationally. there was an opening in the 90s because there were certain groups singing in English, as Giardini di Mirò did a good job but nothing more than that ... If you are in Italy and you want to sing in English you have to go away from Italy. We started singing in English, but then people did not understand what we were saying. Gigi and I wanted to sing in Italian and we have convinced our singer to sing in Italian and he would never go back now. It's a little exotic folklore the case of a Italian musician who goes abroad and gets famous and then he comes back... it works if you go away Alessio Natalizia alias Banjor or Freakout who has made a record for the Memphis Industry! So very good! But it makes sense that he makes that in English living in London because in Italy he wouldn't reach this result! (11)*

Moreover, as Kruse (2010) suggests, the assumption that the internet allows the decentralization of music production and promotion is again part of the myth characterizing the internet which needs to be critically challenged because independent music circuits are rooted in local and national constraints (such as the linguistic constraints) and because finally there always has to be a movement back to the local:

the internet, and the transference of aspects of music scenes to it ... make problematic assertions about the net's ability to provide local music, including indie music, with vast new and trans-local audiences (Kruse, 2010, p. 634).

Even though on one side the internet fosters the development of mediated communication which transcends the physical closeness, on the other side the internet tends to increase the occasions of face to face interactions.

*At the same time we get visibility into the club scene in Milan ... for two years I have been resident dj at Sottomarino Giallo club, Magnolia club and Rocket club and so I had the chance to host many International DJs I got to know through the web. (32)*

The digitalization of music and the subsequent importance that live music economy plays in the music industry is a further evidence of the fact that the Internet favors rather than inhibits the face to face meetings. The importance of live music, even in independent circuits, has made travelling and touring at a national and international level a much more common and frequent activity, which can become the most important resource for independent artists to make a living from music.

*Independent bands which manage to be musicians full time are those who are always on tour, those who are always on move and which make at least 100 concerts per year. (35)*

The need of touring and of moving outside of the city characterized the mobile trajectories of people in the independent music circuits, not only of musicians but even of all the operators working in the live music sector. The mobile nature of life experiences of respondents touring, working in Milan without living in the city, coming from and to Milan, and leaving Milan to come back to their hometown was a common feature of independent musicians and music producers.

As Kruse (2010) refers, touring often enables to enlarge national and international connections. But at the same time international connections are maintained and fostered through mediated communication.

The internet plays a key role in the coordination between musicians and music producers, and for example in the organization of concerts as Kruse (2010) enabling to “find gigs, places to stay, and people to whom to sell tickets and merchandise” (Kruse, 2010, p.632) and therefore

the internet has proven an extremely useful technology for increasing face-to-face opportunities.

As this respondent suggests, the internet enables to get in touch with bands from abroad but it allows to create a system of reciprocity which will enable to create future occasions for touring and therefore future face to face interactions.

*We have not had to research bands, because people know there's a place in Milan ... this is true for both Italian and foreign groups. This is the best thing that ever since the first year we started to do concerts at Trok we started to get foreign bands wanting to come to play here...*

*Many of our tours in England were born through these contacts that were created in Trok. This also served to us individually as a band. The Trok was crucial for us as a band because we have been inspired by bands coming here to play not only musically but even as an attitude, and for practical things especially the American groups, the instrumentation. (38)*

This idea relates again to the economy of reciprocity and to the multi-tasking nature of independent activities, which I have previously described mentioning that musicians being at that the same time organizers of music events are allowed to invite bands from abroad to play and at the same time to have contacts to arrange tour abroad.

This system which has been defined as the “exchange of gig date” (5b) (which means to indicate the possibility of exchanging concerts between artists leaving in different contexts) is allowed by the existence of economy of reciprocity developed through multi-tasking and multi-site nature of music-making practices in the circuits of independent music.

*It happens automatically because if I play and organize concerts is obvious that if you come to me to play at my events and you're in the same situation, if I know that you organize concerts in Rome I will call you to play and then you will probably invite me to play in Rome. (38)*

Besides the mobility tend to favor processes of interconnectedness between bands, and at the same time the interconnections with international bands, music venues and music events tend to favor processes of mutual influences. As many respondents have suggested, experiences made abroad have greatly influenced their work from an artistic and professional way. Experiences made outside of the local context are always considered a great resources for acquiring new competences and expertise:

*I learn how to be a tour manager by looking at other tour managers coming here at Magnolia music venue, and then I have been a tour manager in Italy, and looking to music venues, I understood what's good, what works in a venue and I replicate it here in Magnolia. (25)*

*ah, because then the MIAMI festival started because I have lived in Paris for a year and a half and I returned to Italy with this desire .... that is just not possible that we cannot have these things in Italy ... I was in Paris and I saw ... there were, at La Villette there were electronic afternoons ... with DJ sets on the grass in the park ... Likewise, the big festivals, the Rock En Sein in Paris, these festivals worked very good and so you start to wonder why you cannot do the same thing in Italy. Why not?*

*How important is being international? It means to be lucky to see what's out there. That is a great fortune, that is, to live and come into contact with foreign situations has always been important to the exchange of cultures ...*

*We have the luck to live in a historical moment in which Erasmus programs, low costs flights allow young people to travel a lot, and have many friends abroad, and therefore to have the opportunity of being in contact with so many experiences and with many situations and I think this was essential, even for the birth of ROCKIT our website, absolutely. The fact that you have also had experience outside has been critical, because you realize that anyway you can do many things, and you can bring them in Italy. (10)*

These examples tend to emphasize that experiences made outside of the locality are absolutely crucial for developing a career in the independent sector.

However it is important to notice that, even though respondents tend to emphasize the importance of their mobile experiences, at the same time they feel the importance of being rooted in localized network of relationships. A tendency to move needs to be balanced with a need of staying attached to a certain place, which is important from a relational point of view. As Urry and Sheller (2006) points out “mobility is always located and materialized, and occurs through mobilizations of locality and rearrangements of the materiality of places (2006, p. 210). The local context is important not in its physicality but because “places are about relationships, about the placing of peoples” (Urry & Sheller, 2006, p. 214). According to Urry (e.g. 2000) it is exactly in the complex dialectic between opposing trends of mobility and immobility that the connectivity of the network society is based. The dialectic is between being rooted in a local relationships and being mobile but with the risk of losing local relationships.

In addition to these centrifugal practices of moving away from the city, the analysis shows that in fact people feel a dependence to the physical context not as such but as the relational context of the city. Even though respondents try to maintain their relationships with friends, colleagues, musicians but even with fans online, particularly through SNSs, when they are not

in Milan, they then feel the need of face to face interactions in Milan to maintain their positions within the networks of independent music.

*I use SNSs to keep alive my relations, but that's not enough. I see ... in April and May I have not been in Milan, and in a city like this, if you disappear for a month, it does seem that you don't exist anymore. For example a person who knows me organizes a series of concerts with many musicians playing together, a sort of jam session ... so I asked him why I was not invited and he told me that he didn't see me in Milan and then he thought I was no longer living in Milan, and then he putted me in the program of the music event. It was enough that I was not in Milan for three weeks and I was not in that venues for some nights and for that city I could be dead! ... these things happen, so you can try to use Facebook for that, maybe?*

*Then surely the thing that I heard is that living in a place guarantees a network of situations and things that otherwise may not grow when I'm away because I was not in Milan in May, I returned in June and went for a walk, I met an another organizer of a concert and he said to me: well you're here so I'll call you to play! (28)*

*And I have realized that being no longer in Milan means that you don't exist anymore. It is a city that has a system in of multiple circles. Once you're out of the circles you are no longer here, you don't exist anymore, especially in terms of social relationships. (37)*

*Sometimes I hear people saying that they go abroad and then they come back ... that's risky to me ... it's not that people will be waiting for you coming back ... there's such a competition between musicians ... operators that if you go away, when you come back, you have lost all your contacts and so you have missed the train! (x)*

The importance of being in Milan is strictly connected to the relational capital of the city. Local spaces continue therefore to provide the infrastructure for music scenes (Kruse, 2010), which is particularly based upon the soft infrastructures constituted by the networks of people involved in the music sector. These “soft infrastructures” are constituted by social networks, connections and human ties encouraging the exchange of ideas between people and institutions. On this concern, Triglia (2007) names “local relational capability” the set of cultural, institutional, territorial, favoring or not the emergence of social relationships and of social capital.

For these reason Milan attracts people from whole over Italy, because people perceive the importance that Milan can play in terms of contacts, which can become useful to develop a career in the music sector. Several people feel an attachment to the city for the importance that Milan plays in terms of “human structure” (10):



*I started to attend Milan a dozen of years ago, I am from Padua and I have always worked there in the field of art. Then at some point I decided to move here, even became difficult to do what I wanted from far away. I began to weave my life with that of people who lived here...*

*I came here because I needed to surround myself with certain people who work in the same sector, while in my provincial town there are no people with whom I could confront my works.*

*It was very natural: you play in a music venue, you get to know a person, and by virtue of the fact that people like what you're doing then maybe are keen to give life to your project. And then the circuit of clubs, and especially of ARCI venues, that I have attended, where there are always the same people ... then you know the artists, collaborations are born ... this happens to me and to others. The fact that it happens in Milan has a different meaning than if it happens in other cities ... In Milan there are plenty of people doing certain things that gravitate around a larger circuit. Easier that if you do an event there are people, if you're in Padua, it's rare that events become engines for other situations. (28)*

*Milan is the only city in Italy in which you can try to build a musical project, that is the only city in which you can think of making a job your passion for music ... if you want to play, organize events, Milan is a city where there is a human structure where you can have people able to speak the same language, with all difficulties of this place that is small, and with a fairly narrow market, and with all the problems of this city ... However it is the easiest place in which converge from all over Italy to make any kind of business in the music sector. So many people converge in Milan, the best youth ... who has ambitions of projects ... is necessary to pass from Milan, it's a hub! (10)*

However, as the following quotation suggests, Milan is not always important for working in the independent sector because many independent organizations are more often decentralized from Milan, and are even located in provincial towns of Italy:

*I am here from September but I did not come to Milan for an artistic and professional necessity. I did not come here because here you do things better, we have done for so many years things in the same way. I came to Milan for an opportunity of living. A friend of mine has found a home at a decent price and I came to Milan. There is no business connection, because I have always worked from the province. The work of the band has always been in Pordenone, rehearsal room and everything, and the recordings were made in Ferrara but we have come to Milan to play or for promotional issues, but we managed to do everything in a provincial town. (27)*

In some situations during the research, it appeared that independent record labels, independent booking and promotion agencies were decentralized in small towns around Italy, such as Ferrara, Bologna, Pordenone, Brescia and many others.

As Kruse suggests, there is often “the conscious geographical and ideological positioning of the peripheral local sites and practices of independent music production and consumption in opposition to the centres of mainstream music production” (Kruse, 2003, p.1). That’s

probably the case of Milan, which is the Italian city of the recording industry where all the headquarters of the major labels and of the biggest radio broadcasters are settled. According to Kruse's assumptions, it could be argued that independent music producers are in some situations located outside of Milan but still often in quite easily reachable places from Milan. Even though many record labels, booking agencies and promoter in the independent music sector are decentralized from Milan, and usually located in several provincial towns, Milan still plays a crucial role for "promotional issues"(27) and for getting in touch with people. As the same respondent has told, a concert in Milan has allowed his band to have a good record deal:

*We have always played gigs in our own town, but once we came to Milan to play and it was full of record producers and managers. The day after they contacted us! (27)*

Many independent music producers were therefore living and working outside of Milan and then they were coming to Milan for its networking events, which are crucial for stay in that with contacts in the music sector:

*For my mental health, I have been positively influenced in not being located in Milan! Milan to me is big slice of working relations which are in fact human relations or working relations pretending to be human relations. Milan has always been lived by me in a hit and run. But at the same time I have to maintain my presence in the networks of contacts which Milan allows to have. I manage to maintain these contacts through the concerts that I organize in the city, because in concerts there are always insiders, music producers I'm interested to meet up. Then I live an hour by car from Milan, and so I can reach Milan very easily. And so I can manage to maintain the networks of contacts during the concerts, and then organize some meetings in the office hours and so I come to Milan once every two weeks and this has never caused problems in my work. (40)*

Therefore Milan becomes important for the networking possibilities that enables:

*Milan is a city that is seen and in fact is ugly so it forces to be productive in the human relationships. (37)*

*I do not know how to put it but Milan finally serves in terms of public relations ...PR, meant as possibilities of social networking, meetings ... (28)*

As I have already quoted, Urry (2005) suggests the importance played, in mobile and mediated networks, by "meetingness" which are meant to be crucial element for understanding people's networks. Urry's mobility approach (e.g. 2005) enables to understand how all mobile and mediated networks are highly dependent upon intermittent meetings and

“‘meetingness’ – talking, writing, emailing, travelling and visiting – is crucial to the nature of networks” (Urry et al, 2005, p.28).

The mobility and fragmentation of the activities and social relationships is managed through mediated communication but at the same time needs some social gathering moments to meet up. Mediated communication is used as a way to manage the fragmentation of the independent circuits not only at the international level but even at the local level, giving the possibility of organizing and coordinating actions and interactions and of managing and maintaining relationships, but finally there is always a need of face to face interactions.

Besides Wittel (2001) emphasizes the key role played by networking events as crucial feature of contemporary “network sociality”.

In these kinds of scattered and mobile networks of independent music, gathering moments and networking events play a crucial role in maintaining and developing relationships.

The importance of Milan is felt in the networking events that the city provides which are felt to be necessary to keep the contacts. In this situation some music venues and some events become crucial because they are felt to be important to maintain and develop social relationships. Concerts become therefore important not only as occasions of leisure and music entertainment but especially as gathering moments between music producers and musicians who are usually dispersed. Milan in this concern provides perfect occasions for developing occasions of networking, during concerts, but not only, as the quotations point out:

*It's not just the concert, there is also the place of the aperitif, the bar ... certainly here in Milan there is so much the chat just for chatting, and especially the attitude always to be smart, something in which I'm not very strong.*

*I'm not good to be a phenomenon during the aperitifs. For some it matters most what it is organized during an aperitif than during a concert... This year I have been in Rome and I have come across musical jam sessions with a spontaneity that I have not found here. It also seems a waste because people who have some background, vision, capacity, and you waste your time at drinking when you may well produce something musically. (28)*

*Often bands coming from Milan are a bit showing off, and there is always something wrong because they always seem a little recommended, because the city offers more contacts etc..*

*So I, but also all the people who are passionate about music believe in a romantic purity to which it is easier to believe if you know that the band comes from Pisa ... I know you understand their need for more music-making with respect to a group of Milan, who thinks who knows how many contacts they have. It seems easier, then it is not so in reality it is even more difficult because the city is very distracting. With us there is nothing to do then playing becomes a good pastime, what do you really believe a little 'more. But inspiration is in a different place from here. Here there is always a little risk of losing you focus in music. (27)*

The circuits of independent music maintain therefore an attachment to the local context because of the need of relations in direct contact of co-presence, with places and events that need to be attended. As Urry (2003) suggests, face to face interactions acquire a different importance in the networked and mobile practices of the respondents because they are felt a key occasion for networking.

However respondents tend therefore to live in a problematic way their staying in the city which offers good possibilities in terms of contacts and occasions of networking but then not in terms of real possibilities to perform and to produce music.

*There is always the risk of losing yourself and your projects staying here. I see there are many, even very established, musicians that come here and play every night for different situations doing cover songs. There are my friends and they try to involve me in these jam sessions. But I don't understand. They do it for fun and networking, but the problem is that there is a risk of losing your way and your project as a musicians doing like that. I don't have fun like that. I want to create my own music project. (27)*

There is therefore a tension between on one side the need of staying in the city and being rooted in its relational network and on the side of moving away from the city but with the risk of losing the network of contacts. It is always in the “combinations of presence and absence of peoples” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 222) that the mediated and mobile practices of independent music networks need to be understood.

This implies a new way of considering place no longer as a unique, self-contained and enclosed entity but as a mixture of different physical spaces and of networks, in which attractive and repulsive dynamics of moving in and away from the city are common practices of independent music scenes.

## Conclusion

This chapter has tried to look at the mediated and mobile practices which characterized the circuits of the independent music scene gravitating around the city of Milan. The attempt has been of considering Milan, not as the site of situated and localized music-making practices, as in the traditional understanding of the local music scene, but as one of the possible hubs of the multi-sited and multi-tasking practices of independent music producers.

As I have tried to point out the re-conceptualization of the music scene perspective is intrinsically related to a new understanding of space. Space is in fact understood for its relational value as a social space, as a complexity of social relations stretched out and meeting and intersecting with each other. The importance of social spaces consists in the networks and in the interconnections among them. (Allen & Hamnett, 1995).

The reference to the mobility approach (Urry, 2003) has enabled to understand the importance of looking at networks of music production and performance in the intermittence between absence and presence from the city of Milan. As the research has tried to emphasize, the music scene gravitating around Milan is important for its networking events which enable to foster relationships in the circuits of independent music but which are at the same time maintained and developed through mediated communication.

Similarly, however, music trajectories and careers of independent musicians and operators tend to push away from the city of Milan because the city is not particularly favourable to developing music projects, especially in terms of economic, cultural and political context.

This has brought to a new understanding of a music scene in which music producers live in tension between trajectories which remains in the local and which go beyond the local.

# 10. Conclusion

*The world may never have been freer, but it has also never been so interdependent and interconnected*  
(Mulgan, 1997)

This study has tried to analyze networks of independent music production, suggesting the interconnectedness or better interdependence that these networks entailed with a terrain which has been field of forces and of repulsive and attracting trajectories which move in the local and beyond the local context of the city of Milan.

To conclude, I propose a summary of the project, in order to briefly re-explain the main issues that the research has attempted to tackle and to re-present the multi-layered model. I then suggest the weaknesses of the research, which have been mainly connected to contingencies in which the research was conducted. And finally I attempt to suggest how the multi-layered model that I have theorized, even though it has been applied in the thesis to the contingency of the research and of the context of the city of Milan, can be considered a useful analytical tool and can in fact be applied to the analysis of networks of independent music production.

## 10.1 Summary of the project

This thesis has been an attempt of providing a new analytical framework for the study of the actions and interactions of small-scale independent music production and performance. The starting point of the project has been the literature connected to the music scene perspective (e.g. Peterson & Bennett, 2004), which comprises a wide range of studies sharing a common understanding of scenes as either genre-based or locally specific. In my point of view, scene perspective has some problems when it comes to be used as an analytical tool able to guide the researcher into the analysis of the complexity and mobility of music-making practices. I have argued that music scene risks to be a fairly descriptive term which has been used in ethnographic studies (e.g. Cohen, 1991) and which refers to the common sense understanding of the scene members, rather than providing an analytical framework. In proposing Becker (1982)'s interactionist perspective and Bourdieu's (1993) field theorization I have tried to point out the need of two layers of analysis: one referring to the networks of people activities and another referring to the theoretical construct of the researcher which need to be used at a level of abstraction, and which refers to level interconnectedness that circuits of independent

production entail with the environment, which could not be reduce to the physical space of the city.

I have proposed therefore a multi-layered model which has sought to take into account these different levels of analysis.

The first layer has looked at social discourses and social experiences of the independents. This layer consider how the notion of independence is still crucial in defining people actions and interactions and especially their position within the different networks of music production. Besides this layer has sought to challenge a traditional way of studying music scenes considering them as part of the circuits of cultural production. Analyses of music scenes have been traditionally focused upon grass-roots music making practices, without considering how these practices are instead rooted in organizational and economic dynamics. Instead my attempt has been to analyze how circuits of independent production are characterized by several features which can be more commonly be found in small-scale cultural and creative industries. I have therefore particularly focused upon the importance of relational capital and at the same I have suggested how the multi-tasking nature of their activities allows to develop an economy of reciprocity.

There have been some interesting results that have allowed a new understanding of the scene. The social discourses, actions and interactions among the independents generated fragmented networks of music productions which are characterized by different level of professionalization and openness to interactions with the music industry. This assumption enable to consider independent music scenes not as cohesive entities characterized only by collaborative and cooperative relationships, but in fact as fragmented and competing networks characterized by power relations and struggles for their definition and symbolic legitimization, as in Bourdieu's (1993) understanding of field.

Afterwards the second layer of analysis has played a central role in my re-theorization of the music scene. This layer has attempted to overcome one of the main criticism I have pointed out in the music scene perspective, which fails to take into account the complexities of external dimensions which can affect the actions and interactions of music scene members. This layer has been used to explain how circuits of independent music live in fact in the interdependence or interconnectedness to social environment. This social environment has been defined as a terrain of social forces which inhibit and enable actions and interactions in independent music production and performance.

This layer has drawn upon Bourdieu's model (1993) of the interconnection upon field, and upon its adoption in Kruse (2003). Kruse (2003) analysis has been particularly sophisticated in trying to theorize how music scenes live in a conjuncture of social, cultural, technological and economic dimensions. My assumption has been that the different circuits of independent music live in an historically contingent equilibrium of forces which can be summarized in the following dimensions: media environment, economic context, regulations and policy making strategies, politics and the cultural and social context. These dimensions have been therefore understood as systematic constraints and possibilities that can affect circuits of independent music production. For example, regarding the media environment, the internet has been particularly crucial in affected not only the production and diffusion of independent music, but more significantly in creating new hierarchies of symbolic legitimization and in shaping how independent networks are constituted. Considering the economic environment, it has been noticed how the economic and cultural importance of the live music sector (Frith, 2007) today has been crucial in reframing the economies and hierarchies gravitating around independent live music production. Besides I have pointed out how the live music economy, the economy of events and the night-time economy have become competing and collaborating industries to the circuits of independent music. The model has then given a particular attention to the ways in which a regulatory system of licenses and control have affected the ways in which independent live music can be produced and performed in Milan. The regulatory system has been connected to the political dimension and to the ways in which the Italian system of independent cultural production is strongly rooted in political beliefs, and to the ways in which different political agenda can enable or inhibit live music, as it has happened in the case of the research. Finally the cultural and social context, in which circuits of independent music are rooted, can be crucially in favoring or not the development of independent live music entertainment.

However the socio-cultural context in which practices of independent music production were situated have not been reduced in the fieldwork to the geographical boundaries of the city of Milan. In the traditional perspective a local music scene was confined in a bounded physical space and was attached to localized music-making practices. On the contrary the third layer of the model has attempted to provide a new understanding of the mediated and mobile nature of the circuit of independent music. In the specific case of the fieldwork, Milan has not been regarded as the site of situated and localized music-making practices, but as one of the possible hubs of the multi-sited and multi-tasking practices of independent music producers.



The mobility approach (e.g. Urry, 2005) has been used to suggest the importance that in networks is played by “meetingness” of networking events in maintaining and developing relationships. Besides the analysis of the case of Milan has suggested how the city provides many occasions for networking and for developing contacts in the independent music scene. At the same time the research has shown how independent music producers develop attractive and repulsive dynamics of moving in but even away from the city. These assumptions have brought to a new understanding of space as site of tensions between trajectories which remains in the local and which go beyond the local.

## 10.2 Weaknesses In Research

As I have suggested in presenting the three-layered model and especially the second layer, the analysis of the networks of independent music production needs to be understood in an equilibrium between these five dimensions (media, economy, regulations, politics and culture) which is historically contingent and is depending upon the local peculiarities of each social context. I have pointed out, mentioning Kruse’s (2003), that this equilibrium or conjuncture depends upon the specific time during which the research that was conducted, that is, from January to July 2011, and this period has been characterized by particular economic, political, cultural, and technological contingencies which mutually influence networks of music productions, and by the specificity of the Milanese and Italian context.

Besides for each of these dimensions I have tried to focused upon particular elements emphasizing how each of them has its own specificity in the context and period of the research.

A study based on qualitative research such as mine is interested in pointing out exactly the peculiarity of the case study without the aim of providing results which are generalizable to the entire population and to other contexts, different to the one of the research.

I think that it’s exactly in the peculiarity of location chosen for my fieldwork that I can find a strength of my research. The choice of Milan has allowed me to focus on a specific local context that is quite different from the English speaking countries which are more frequently analyzed in studies of music scenes. Milan, and indeed Italy as a whole, are very much under-researched area in research about independent music production.

Most of the research (e.g. Cohen, 1991; Shank, 1994) on music-making practices taking place in urban contexts have given emphasis to ‘music cities’, which are well known for their vital

music scenes and where the music industry plays a key role in the cultural economy of the city or has played a key role in processes of economic regeneration, while this is not the case of Milan, which is instead commonly well known for other creative industries other than music, notably its fashion and design industries. A choice of a location such as Milan has allowed to emphasize how local factors, such as the economic, cultural, political and regulatory system can strongly affect live music in the city.

However I'm aware, at the same time, that the specific context of study together with the limited amount of research data is one of the inevitable weaknesses entailed in the choice of a case study research. The peculiarity of the data makes difficultly any kind of comparison without other cities, and therefore there is a risk of focusing too much upon the local specificity instead of searching for generalizations. Even though my work is focused on a single city, Milan, I have tried to overcome this weakness by trying to compare my work to similar studies previously done on this topic and in particular to the issue of local state regulations (e.g. Homan, 2000) and policy making (e.g. Brown, et.al, 2000).

Besides the weakness of my research stands as well in the contingency of the specific period in which I have conducted the fieldwork, which has surely impacted upon the research findings. I realize that that the role played by politics depends even upon the period in which my I conducted the fieldwork. The fact that my fieldwork has been conducted during the administrative electoral campaign has heated the political debated even on the issue of the live music entertainment in city, which has become part of the policy agenda of the elections. However at the same time this doesn't exclude the importance that political issues can play in affecting policy strategies. I think that it's again part of the contextual and contingent nature of the data in qualitative methodology and its implications need to be taken into account and addressed.

### 10.3 Suggestions For Future Research

At the same time the fact that I have considered only a case study still enables me to work on a theoretical generalization and on the construction of a model. As I have previously mentioned in the conclusions, one of the main critics made to the music scene perspective was exactly the impossibility of providing analytical tools to the direct the research. The construction of the multi-layered model has worked in the direction of providing exactly an

analytical framework useful to the analysis of circuits of independent music production, and more generally of cultural production.

This is true especially for the second layer of analysis which is meant, as I have explained, to analyze how network of music and cultural production are interconnected to a set of forces (media environment, economic and industrial system, regulations and politics, and cultural context) that can inhibit or enable cultural production. This layer of analysis, I assume, it's probably the one that can be more productively applied to other similar studies, and that can be transferable to the analysis of other circuits of music and cultural production. Besides the 5 dimensions allows to apply a multi-disciplinary approach which seeks to point out the interconnections that music and cultural production can play with a given environment, which implies structural constraints and possibilities. What is important to notice is that the theorizations of a terrain of forces, of the 5 dimensions, can allowed the researcher to reflect upon his or her position within this terrain of forces. The perspective of the research can have impact upon the importance that one of the dimensions can have in comparison to the others. For example, in my perspective, I started my research with an interest in policy making strategies, which has guided my focus on the issue of live music in the city of Milan, and at the same time my media background has directed my research interest towards the mediated and mobile practices of independent producers. As Kruse (2003) points out in the application of Bourdieu's (1993) idea of the interconnections among fields of cultural production and field of power, there is a need of being more reflexive and of situating even the researcher within the approach which needs to be applied.

We need to be much more self-reflexive about our acceptance and reproduction of generic categories, and about our positioning and roles in relation to the economic field, the field of cultural production, the educational field, and the field of power (Kruse, 1998, p.190)

I think that spelling out the perspective and the position of the researcher in relations to the 5 dimensions is a good point of departure for future research in the field of independent music production, in order to allow a detachment in such involving and interesting topic of research.

# 11. References

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## Websites used in the document analysis

### **Music Venues and Clubs:**

ARCI Tambourine - <http://www.tambourine.it/>  
ARCI Scighera - <http://www.lascighera.org/>  
ARCI Carroponte - <http://www.carroponte.org/>  
ARCI Cicco Simonetta - <http://www.ciccosimonetta.org/>  
ARCI Bitte - <http://www.bittemilano.com/>  
ARCI Casa 139 - <http://www.lacasa139.com/>  
ARCI Magnolia - <http://www.circolomagnolia.it/>  
Leoncavallo - <http://www.leoncavallo.org/>  
Conchetta - <http://cox18.noblogs.org/>  
Salumeria della Musica - <http://www.lasalumeriadellamusica.com/>  
Nibada Theatre - <http://www.nidaba.it/NIDABA/Home.html>  
Le Scimmie - <http://www.scimmie.it/>  
Nuovo Live Club - <http://www.liveclub.it/>  
Bloom (Mezzago) - <http://www.bloomnet.org/>  
ARCI Agorà - <http://www.agoracircolo.it/>  
Tunnel - <http://www.tunnel-milano.it/>  
Live Forum - <http://www.liveforum.it/site/>

### **Associations, organizations, agencies and record labels**

PMI Produttori Musicali Indipendenti - <http://www.pmiitalia.org/home.php>  
SCF Società Consortile Fonografici - <http://www.scfitalia.it/>  
MEI - Meeting degli Indipendenti <http://www.meiweb.it>  
AUDIOCOOP - <http://www.audiocoop.it>  
Coordinamento dei Festival Musicali per Emergenti Italiani - <http://www.retedeifestival.it>  
Amici della Musica - <http://www.amicimusica.org>  
WIN - [www.worldwideindependentnetwork.com](http://www.worldwideindependentnetwork.com)  
CYC PROMOTIONS - <http://www.cycpromotions.com/>  
DNA Concerti - <http://www.dnaconcerti.com/>  
METATRON - <http://metatrongroup.com/>  
SAPHARY DELUXE - <http://www.godzillamarket.it/>  
TROVAROBATO - <http://www.trovarobato.com/>  
VIA AUDIO RECORDS - <http://www.viaaudio.it/>  
VIRUS CONCERTI - <http://www.virusconcerti.it/>  
SPINGO - <http://www.spin-go.it/>

### **Events:**

Pugliasound - <http://www.pugliasounds.it>  
Festival Evento Musical Milan - <http://miland.noblogs.org/>  
MIAMI – Musica Importante a Milano <http://www.rockit.it/miami/>  
Bloom Live Festival Rock <http://www.bloomriot.org/>  
Milano Jazzin' Festival - <http://www.ahumjazzfestival.com/>  
Mito – Settembre musica - <http://www.mitosettembremusica.it/>  
MOA - <http://www.moaonline.it/levento>

**Blogs:**

Music Blog Polaroid - <http://polaroid.blogspot.com/>

Marina Pierri Blog - <http://www.marinapietri.it/?cat=12>

**News:**

Closing of La Casa 139: [http://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/11\\_marzo\\_10/casa-139-chiusura-circolo-arci-proteste-190196212142.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/11_marzo_10/casa-139-chiusura-circolo-arci-proteste-190196212142.shtml)

Against MIAMI and Rokit: <http://ilmucchio.net/showthread.php?t=9586>

<http://www.indie-zone.it/r.asp?id=215>

**Laws and regulations:**

<https://www.facebook.com/notes/umberto-palazzo/class-action-contro-la-siae-come-vengono-ripartiti-i-proventi-dei-border%C3%B2-e-come/10150524040435826>

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/118715268157536/>

[http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi\\_per\\_Studenti/OrdinanzaSiae2009.pdf](http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi_per_Studenti/OrdinanzaSiae2009.pdf)

[http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi\\_per\\_Studenti/OrdinanzaSiae2007.pdf](http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi_per_Studenti/OrdinanzaSiae2007.pdf)

[http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi\\_per\\_Studenti/RapportoSiaeMusica2002.pdf](http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi_per_Studenti/RapportoSiaeMusica2002.pdf)

[http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi\\_per\\_Studenti/LeggeDirittoAutore.pdf](http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi_per_Studenti/LeggeDirittoAutore.pdf)

[http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi\\_per\\_Studenti/RelazioneFUS2004.pdf](http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi_per_Studenti/RelazioneFUS2004.pdf)

[http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi\\_per\\_Studenti/Decreto\\_Riparto\\_FUS\\_29\\_3\\_2010.pdf](http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi_per_Studenti/Decreto_Riparto_FUS_29_3_2010.pdf)

[http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi\\_per\\_Studenti/Economia\\_della\\_musica\\_2010\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.francofabbri.net/files/Testi_per_Studenti/Economia_della_musica_2010_WEB.pdf)

[http://sistemacultura.it/economiadellacultura/images/stories/Metropolises\\_of\\_Europe\\_Rapporto\\_Roma.pdf](http://sistemacultura.it/economiadellacultura/images/stories/Metropolises_of_Europe_Rapporto_Roma.pdf)

[http://www.oecd.org/document/46/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_33729\\_40401454\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/46/0,3746,en_2649_33729_40401454_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<http://www.enpals.gov.it/wcmqs/>



## List of songs mentioned

Afterhours, “Il Paese è reale”, in “Il Paese è reale”, Ac Europe Records, 2009

Afterhours, “I milanesi ammazzano il sabato”, in “I milanesi ammazzano il sabato”, Universal Music – Casasonica, 2008

Afterhours, “L’inutilità della puntualità”, in “Non è per sempre”, Mescal - Mercury Records, 1999,

Marta sui Tubi, “Sushi & Coca”, in “Sushi & Coca”, Tamburi usati, 2008

# 12. Appendix

## 12.1 List Of Interviews

Here follows the list of interviews conducted during the research project. For each number, there's reference to the main professional and amateur roles played by the interviewees. In the case of interviews with more than a respondent, different respondents are distinguished by a letter (a,b,c). The quotations which come from ethnographic conversations are indicated in the thesis with (x)

<b>Identification number of interview</b>	<b>Description 1</b>	<b>Description 2</b>	<b>Description 3</b>
1.	music journalist, consultant		
2.	councillor		
3.	President of MEI		
4.	event organizer		
5.	a) ARCI venue member, record label owner, booking agent, musician	b) ARCI venue member, record label owner, booking agent, musician	
6.	president of ARCI Milan		
7.	journalist		
8.	music journalist, record label owner		
9.	councillor		
10.	music journalist, festival organizer		
11.	musician, music journalist		

12.	ARCI venue member		
13.	music press agent		
14.	Musician		
15.	music venue owner, event organizer		
16.	ARCI venue owner		
17.	a) bar owner	b) music venue owner record label owner	c) dj, record label owner
18.	secret concerts event organizer, dj		
19.	musician		
20.	resident committee member		
21.	a) presenter at a national radio, amateur musician	b) blogger of a tv program, presenter in a web radio, amateur musician	
22.	a) press agent, project manager;	b) owner of a booking, management, marketing agency	
23.	event organizer, music manager		
24.	music manager and event organizer		
25.	artistic director at ARCI venue, event organizer		
26.	musician		
27.	musician, record label owner		
28.	musician, painter		

29.	owner of a press, marketing and management agency		
30.	event organizer		
31.	press agent, event organizer		
32.	mj, record label owner		
33.	a) responsable of a social centre	b) artistic director of a social centre	
34.	radio speaker, amateur dj		
35.	journalist and writer		
36.	publisher		
37.	musician and music arranger		
38.	musician, event organizer		
39.	artistic director of an ARCI venue, dj booking agent		
40.	promoter, event organizer		

## 12.2 Structure of The Interview

Starting by giving explanations about the nature of project, type of questions

Input: I'd like you to tell me something about your experience and your story as...

(Exploring the life trajectories which have brought to do what you do: relations, contacts, events, informal-formal mediations)

### 1. ROLES AND ACTIONS

What's your background?

How have you started? How have you been involved?

What do you do? What's your role?

How do you survive? Is music your main- second job or an hobby?

### 2. RELATIONS

Who are the "strategic people" you have met? Who are the people you interact with the most? Who are the people you share info, advices with?

### 3. Which kind of ties do you have with them (physical closeness-distance, face to face)

### 4. How and where have you got in touch with some "strategic people"?

How you enlarge the network of people you know?

(Asking to draw a network of relations and to describe it)

### 5. NARRATIVES

How do you define yourself and your job and how could you define your sector? How do you perceived it?

What do you mean for independent music?

### 6. PLACES, EVENTS

Which are the main venues, record labels, studios and music events?

### 7. PEOPLE

How many bands, promoters, booking agents, festival directors, venue managers are involved? Who are the key bands, key promoters, key booking agents, key festival directors? Who are the collectives and organizations?

8. BOUNDARIES, INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS

Do you facilitate or obstruct people to enter?

What emerging musicians should do to be involved?

9. TRANS-LOCAL

Are there many not local musicians and music makers coming in the city? Do you usually working in Milan or outside the city?

10. CITY COUNCIL

Which are the benefits and constraints-difficulties do you see the most?

11. What's your relation and collaboration with the City Council?

What is and what could be the role of the City Council in this sector?

What's your consideration of this City Council's action?

12. MEDIA & INTERNET

How do you get to know about music events, bands, music venues? Who do you have on your Facebook page? Do you use Facebook as a source to know about things? How do you keep in touch with your friends?

Asking for new people to interview

## 12.3 List Of Main Events, Meetings, Places Attended For Participant Observation

<b>Name</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Typology</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
“La leva cantautuorale degli anni zero”	LaCasa139 - Arci	Concert of collective	Milan	03 <sup>rd</sup> January 2011
Perturbazione concert	Fondazione Pomodoro – Museum	Concert of band	Milan	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
Elena Grazi birthday	Metatron indipenden music label’s office	Party	Milan	25 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
“Made on ViaAudio”	Circolo Magnolia - Arci	Concert of collective	Segrate – Milan	13 <sup>th</sup> February 2011
“Notte della Locusta”	Circolo Magnolia - Arci	Concert of collective	Segrate – Milan	17 <sup>th</sup> February 2011
Alessandro Grazian concert	Cicco Simonetta - Arci	Concert	Milan	22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2011
Perturbazione concert	Salumeria della musica – music hall	Live Radio program	Milan	7 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
“Milano l’è bela”	Fontana Square	Public demonstration with artistic performances and music exhibitions	Milan	19 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
Arci meeting	Arci Milan headquarter	Meeting with music producers	Milan	04 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
Meeting with candidates Giovanni Terzi – Stefano Boeri	Terzi Council office	Meeting with political candidates about live music problems in Milan	Milan	08 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
“Milano l’è bela”	Arci Bellezza	Committee of independent artists	Milan	16 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
“Milano l’è bela”	Derby theatre	Committee of independent artists	Milan	19 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
Authorization Service Bureau	Council of Milan	Authorization for music live	Milan	23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2011

		exhibitions		
“La Musica Dove Non Te L'aspetti”	A private office	Secret Concert	Milan	28 <sup>th</sup> April 2011
Trok meeting	Leoncavallo Social centre	Meeting of independent artist	Milan	05 <sup>th</sup> May 2011
Social gathering night @ Zog	Zog Pub	Social gathering night with independent artist	Milan	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2011
“Suonare il Paese prima che crolli”	Santeria exhibitions space	Book presentation	Milan	01 <sup>st</sup> June 2011
“MiAmi, musica importante a Milano”	Circolo Magnolia	Festival	Segrate – Milan	06 <sup>th</sup> June 2011
“Put a flower in your hair”	Circolo Magnolia	Jam session between famous independent artists	Segrate – Milan	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2011



## 12.4 Participant Observation

1. Structural elements: where
  2. Behavioural elements: what
- 
1. Places: Venues or open spaces
    - Location in the urban fabric: relation and distance from other places, easiness or difficulty to reach the place
    - Place designed for the stage and its centrality or periphery within the place
    - Presence of barriers and obstacles to take part to the event (queue, tickets), or some exclusive areas (privè)
    - Points of entrance or exit, of transition and aggregation
  2. Human social and cultural activity
    - Main participants involved: focus on socio-demographic variables and roles (musicians, organizers, venues managers, journalists, audience)
    - Group behaviours and dynamics: Are participants standing, walking, dancing, lying down? Are they participating to the performance? Are they close or distant to each other?
    - Social interactions: Are there social divisions? Are those interactions gendered? Are there age groups? Are there social divisions? Are musicians, organizers and audience interacting? Are there observable codes?

## 12. 5 Some Example Of Drawings Of The Networks Made By Respondent

Figura 1: Respondent n° 37

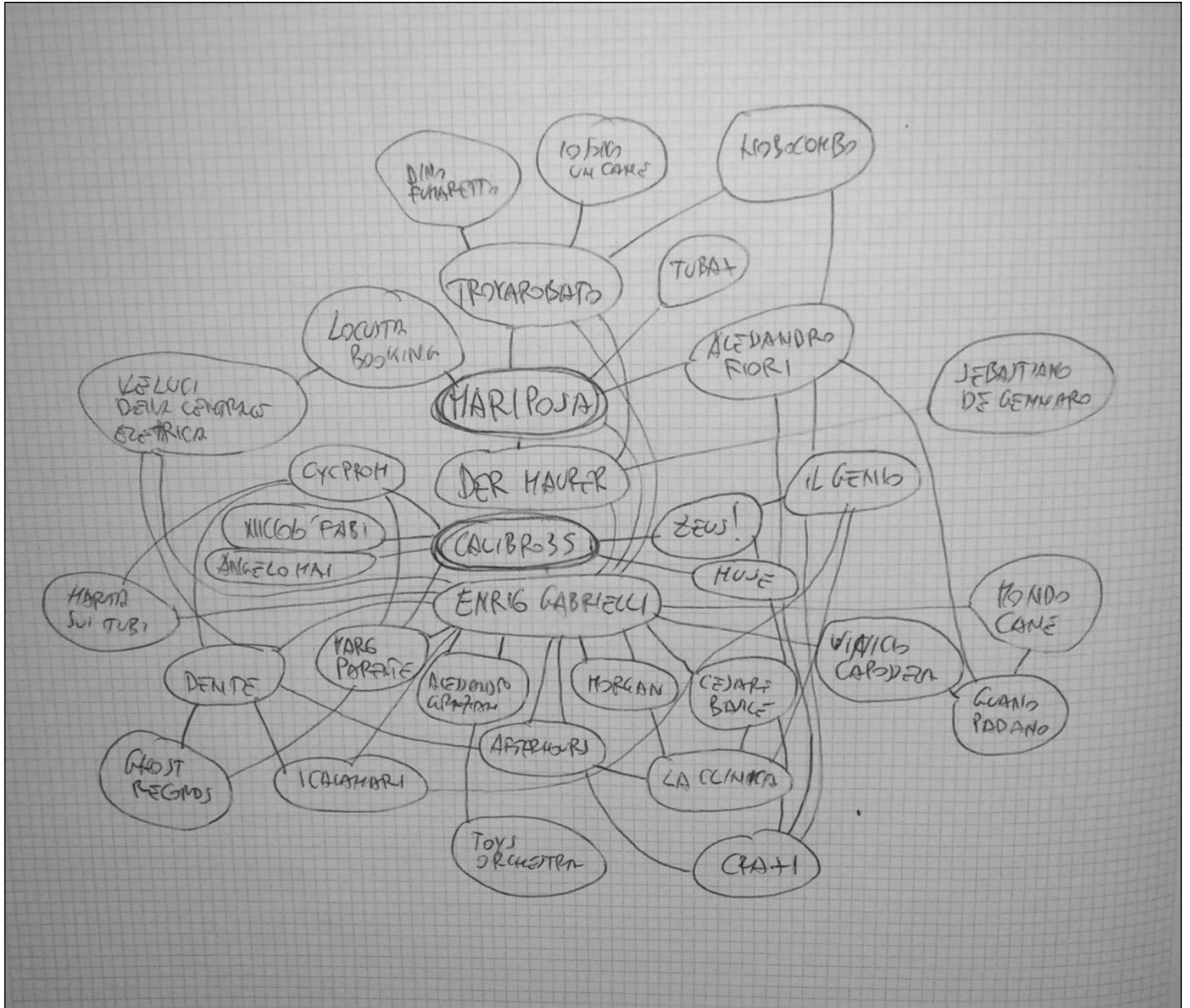


Figura 2: Respondent n°24

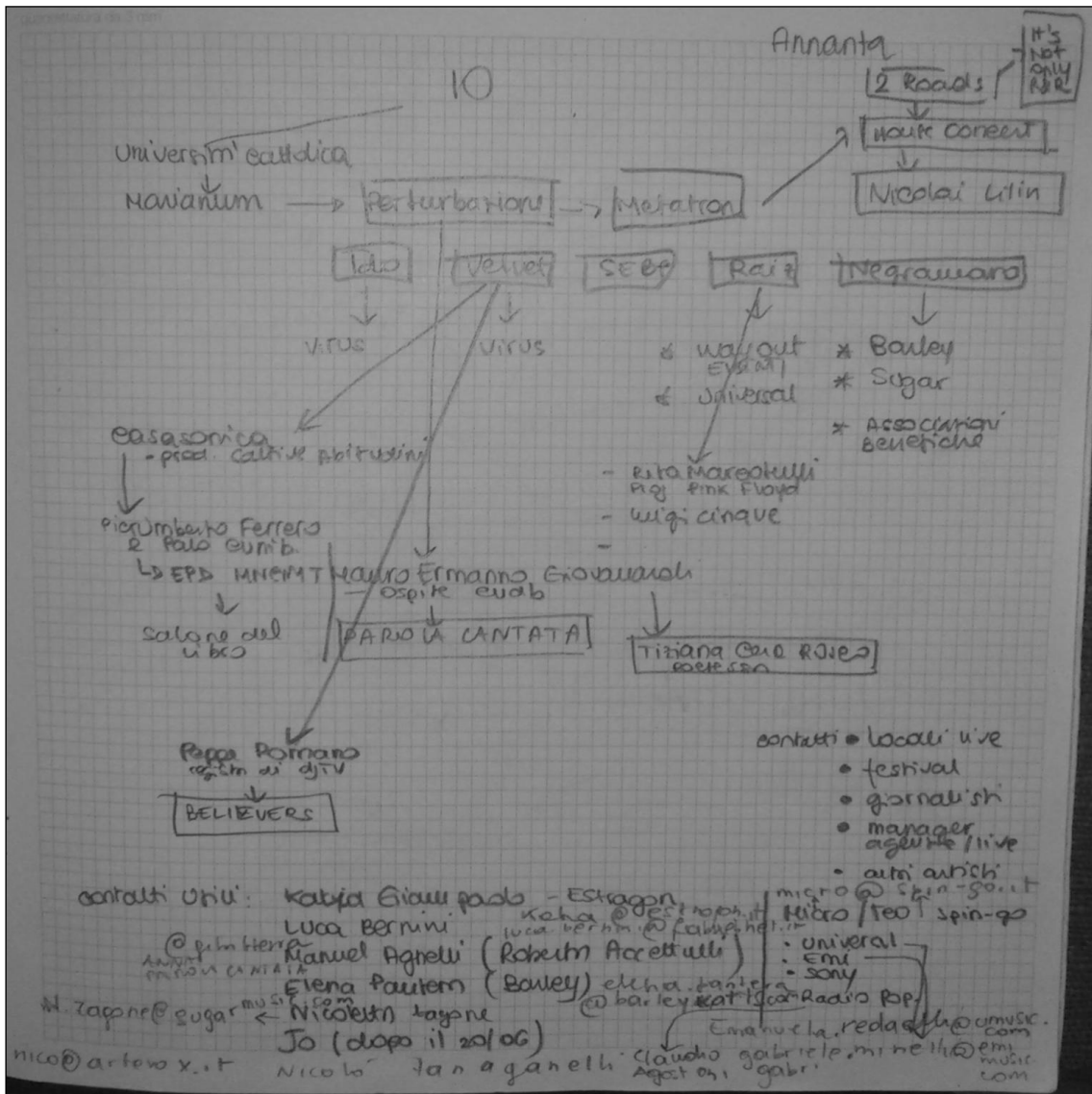


Figura 3: Respondent n° 28

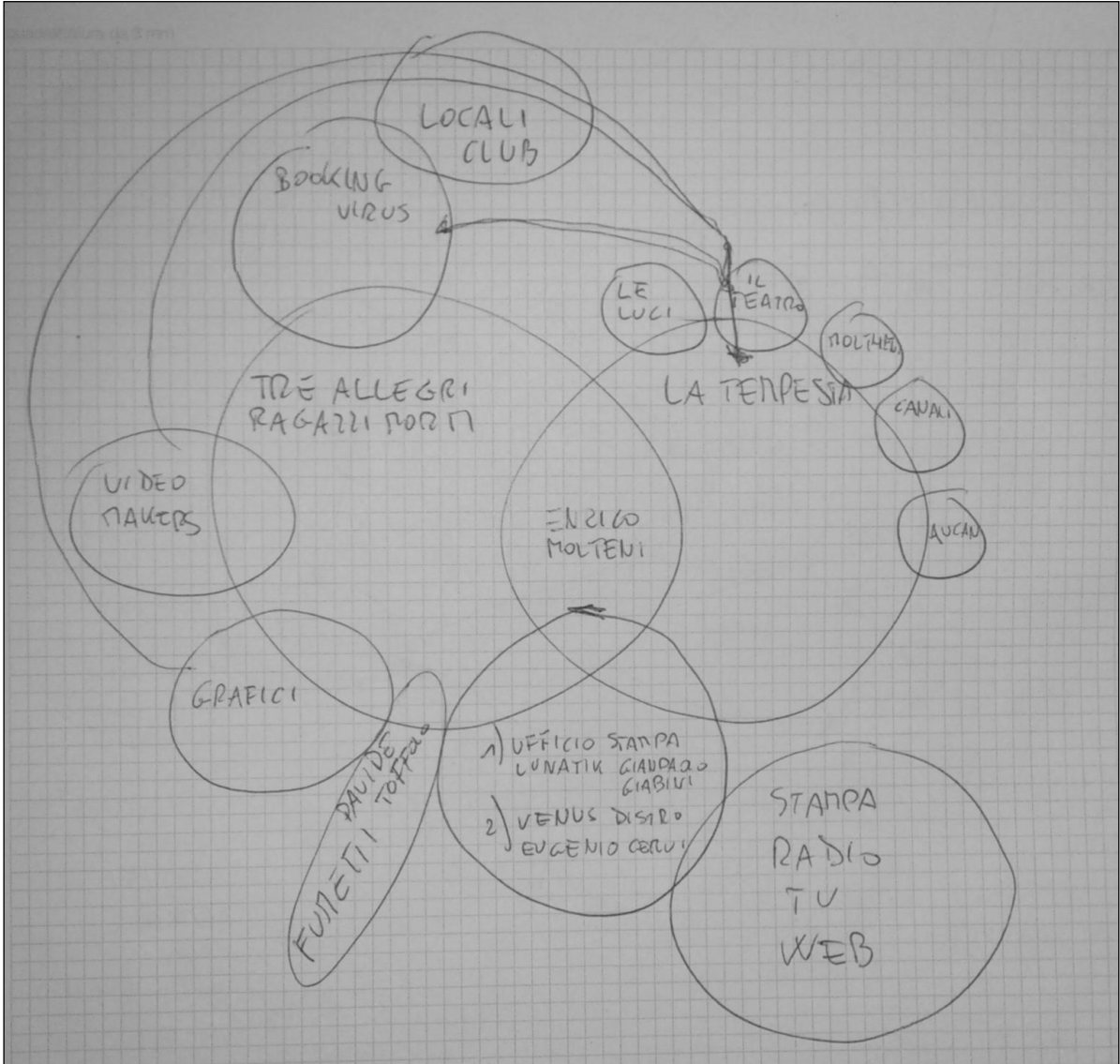
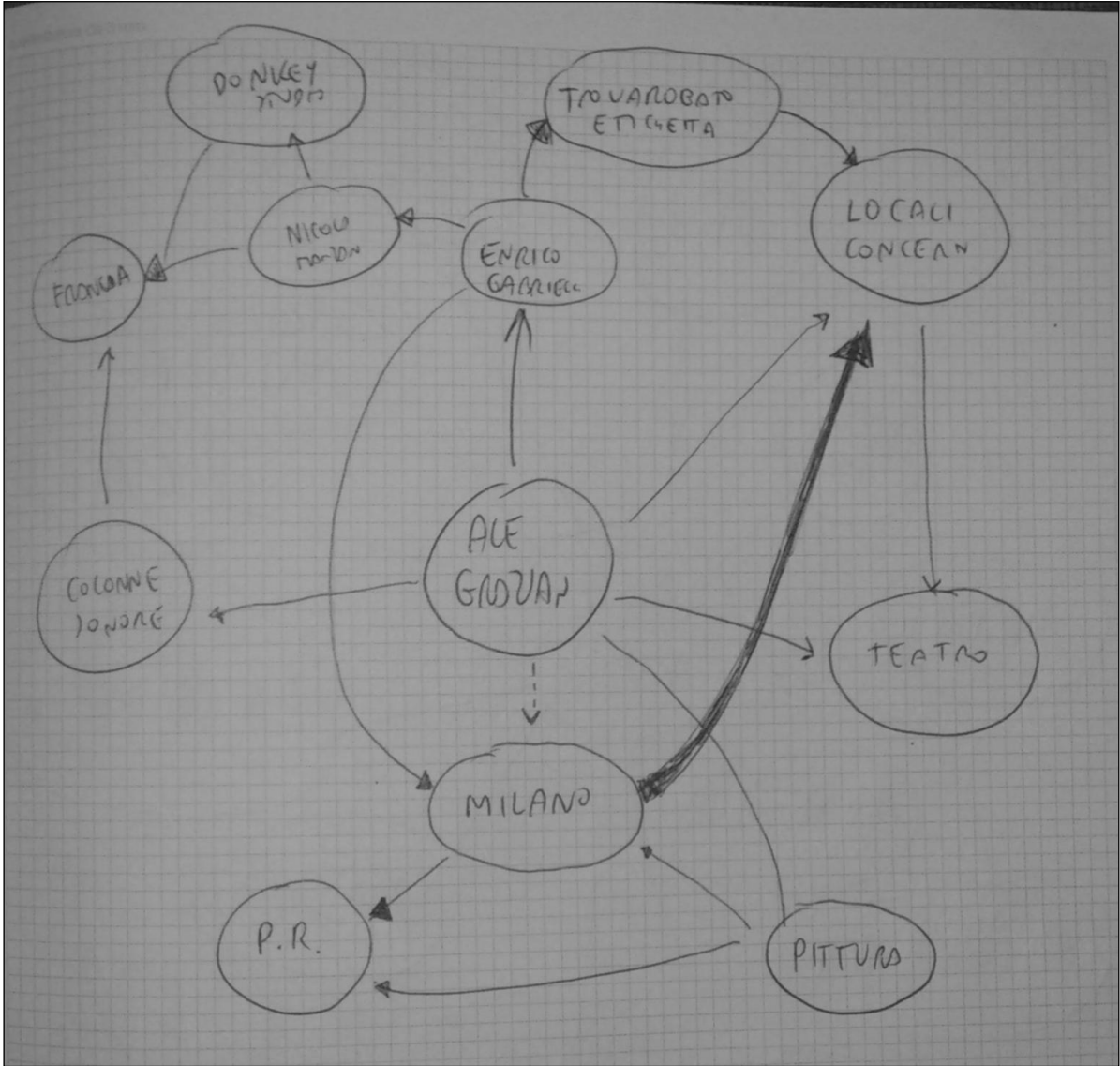


Figura 4: Respondent n° 27



# Acknowledges

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