

KEEP IT SIMPLE, MAKE IT FAST!

an
APP —
ROACH
to UNDER
GROUND
MUSIC
SCENES

Paula Guerra & Ana Oliveira

VOL. 6

Keep it Simple, Make it Fast!

An Approach to Underground Music Scenes

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Paula Guerra & Ana Oliveira (eds.)

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2.5. **A MEADOW FULL OF ANTS. A SUBCULTURAL FIELD APPROACH TO THE ITALIAN BLACK METAL SCENE**

Valeria Marina Borodi³² & Roberto Carradore³³

× **Abstract**

Black metal is an extreme metal subgenre that has existed in Italy since the late 1980s. Since then, several attempts to construct a scene were made, without success. Therefore, because of its fragility and ephemerality, it represents a unicum in the wider metal scene. In this contribution, we aim to look at the Italian scene, combining Straw's theoretical perspective and conceptual tools of Bourdieu's field analysis, thus conceiving it as a subcultural field where musical practices are interpenetrated with aesthetic and social practices. Combining documentary analysis of bands, labels, and bottom-up support activities, with in-depth interviews to privileged witnesses, our purpose is to understand if the Italian Black Metal scene has the criteria spotted in the sociological literature of music scenes and, if so, how this concept fits the characterization of this national and musical specificity.

Keywords: music scene, black metal, field analysis, subcultural field approach, DIY.

1. **Introduction**

Black metal is an extreme subgenre of heavy metal music that came of age, as it is conceived today, in the early 1990s in Scandinavia. Due to a series of crimes committed by musicians, the genre became famous in many countries, where specific identities between tradition and innovation were produced, generating different music scenes. In Italy, black metal reached its peak - both on the side of production and consumption - during the 1990s and a first attempt of constructing a scene was made, without success. A second attempt was made between 2005 and 2008 with the Black Metal Invitta Armata association. Since then, at least apparently, there have been no more attempts to construct a scene. Therefore, our study aims to analyse the peculiarity of the Italian context and to understand what are the elements that allow a scene to be considered as such and what are the self-representations within the Italian Black Metal (IBM) scene. We adopted the concept of "music scene" in the perspective of Bourdieu's field analysis and looked at the IBM as a "subcultural field", namely a symbolic space of exchange which possesses a certain degree of autonomy, coherence and organisation over time, and where musical practices are interpenetrated with aesthetic and social practices. Since in the Italian sociological literature this perspective of analysis has never been adopted to study black metal, we wanted to start filling this gap.

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2. A brief history of black metal

2.1. First wave of black metal

It is common opinion to trace the origins of black metal at the beginning of the 1970s, with Black Sabbath's self-titled debut album, recorded in 1969 and released on 13th of February 1970, which constitutes the year zero for the birth of heavy metal and arguably of black metal itself. Thanks to its dark atmospheres, satanic and anti-Christian imagery, and lyrics, it had a primary influence on black metal, as much as Motorhead's aggressive rhythm and volume and KISS and Misfits' punk outfits. Although the first seeds of black metal were sown during the 1970s, it is only during the early 1980s that the so-called "First Wave of Black Metal"³⁴ began to take shape. Bands such as Venom (UK), Bathory (Sweden), Mercyful Fate (Denmark), Hellhammer and Celtic Frost (Switzerland) established some features of the black metal canon. The first two Venom's albums "Welcome to Hell" (1981) and "Black Metal" (1982) – which also gave the name to the genre –, played the key role in defining the sound of black metal but also extreme metal in general: the music was chaotic both on the production and playing sides, and lyrics were explicitly imbued with anti-Christianity and occultism topics like never before. Furthermore, Venom's members also adopted pseudonyms, a practice that became common among black metal musicians. Although these bands had established a prototype for the genre, they are musically distinct from what is currently referred to as black metal, since they played music that was in the vein of thrash, speed, or death metal style with only slight changes (e.g., lo-fi productions and satanic imagery). Summing up, in the words of Dayal Patterson (2013: 5):

**The first wave was a very small collection of bands who pushed metal toward harsher territories in both sound and imagery [...]. Nonetheless, while it's a mistake to consider these bands exclusively part of the black metal genre, the work of these pioneers undoubtedly laid the foundations for the cult.*

Involving several bands in countries around the world, the "first wave" can be considered as a transition out of the common ground of heavy metal toward constructing a new and more identifiable genre, with stronger national embeddedness.

2.2. True Norwegian black metal

In the early 1990s, a slew of Norwegian bands pushed their extreme metal into more distinct musical territory, refusing the commercial logic of mainstream death metal bands and labels. Indeed, the reaction against the worldwide success of bands such as Slayer, Sepultura, and Cannibal Corpse, was musical, aesthetic, and ideological. The main features of the crystallisation of black metal as an independent genre were the presence of violent riffs played in tremolo picking, blast beats and screaming voices. In the intentions of the founders, black metal had to be the most extreme music and aesthetics. As Eugene Thacker argues, indeed, "black metal is black because it is [...] the most extreme form of metal, both in its attitude and in its musical form" (Thacker, 2011: 179).

In the attempt of constructing a black metal scene, it was crucial the role of the Helvete ("Hell" in Norwegian), an independent record store in Oslo owned by Euronymus, leader of the band Mayhem. The store and the record label, Deathlike Silence, which operated in its basement, served as a hub and focal point of inspiration for bands such as Emperor and Burzum. Together, they operated a stylistic turning point in the genre and in its imagery which rapidly became known as a "scene": the so-called "True Norwegian Black Metal". Some of the participants in the black metal movement were involved in crimes, such as "a series of church burnings, murders, and suicides [which] focused world attention toward Norway" (Wallin et al., 2017: 2).

The most emblematic event was the killing of Euronymus by Varg Vikernes (behind the one-man band Burzum). The murder was also linked to the burning of several churches in Norway and to another

.....
34 The distinction between "first" and "second wave" of black metal is retrospective and aims to emphasise continuity and discontinuity in the foundation of black metal in the early 1990s.

murder of a homosexual person by Bard "Faust" Eithun (a member of Emperor). As Kahn-Harris states, these events "brought a certain notoriety to black metal and led to features in the non-metal media throughout the world" (2004: 97). What characterised this scene was

**a spectacular, serious and uncompromisingly satanic vision of metal that attempted to merge music and practice as an expression of an 'essential' identity. Under the slogan 'No fun, no mosh, no trends, no core', a tightknit scene developed in Norway that attempted to be 'genuinely' satanic and evil. The scene developed a mythology in which Satanism was constructed as part of a pagan history of resistance to the conquest of Christianity (Kahn-Harris, 2004: 99).*

More precisely, Norwegian Black Metal scene generated a real ideology that has extended beyond the music genre (Zebub, 2007), which pillar was - besides antagonism toward organised religion and affinity toward Satanism, already mentioned - attempts to remove "mundanity"³⁵ from the scene through transgression and "transcendent violence" (Phillipov, 2011).

Public attention and international resonance to what the black metallers were doing, sped up the international diffusion of this musical innovation, maintaining at the same time a strong local and specific identity. A real "meadow full of ants", as one of our interviewees affirmed, has begun to take shape, stretched between innovation and tradition - a balance that can be considered a characteristic of national music scenes.

3. Theoretical and methodological framework

The concept of "scene" finds its genealogy in neo-Weberian microsociology and, in particular, with John Irwin (1977; 1997 [1970]), who in the early 1970s was the first sociologist to choose to focus on this concept, elaborating it explicitly as a system of action where "persons in interaction are involved in comparing, sharing, negotiating and imparting cultural patterns", by means of which they carry "the cultural component into consistent relationship and maintain boundaries around the system" (Irwin, 1997[1970]: 68). Irwin's merit was to definitively introduce this concept within the sociology of leisure in relation to cultural creativity and social stability within a flexible urban society. A scene is a semi-structured community that implies norms, rules, and places which can be understood as general instructions allowing a certain degree of freedom and creativity. Therefore, the concept of scene can be applied both to particular social events that can take place in each context and moment - in this case the scene "has a definite location and is transitory" (Irwin, 1997[1970]: 67) - and to a more permanent lifestyle.

Besides the importance of this first contribution, the concept of scene is used today in the field of popular music studies, offering "the possibility of examining musical life in its myriad forms, both production- and consumption-orientated, and the various, often locally specific ways in which these cross-cut each other" (Bennett, 2004: 226). In particular, Will Straw (1991) defines music scenes as supra-local cultural spaces encompassing a wide range of different musical practices. In this sense, as Straw affirms, a scene "destroys stable traditional continuities and at the same time cosmopolitises and relativises them" (as cited in Kozorog and Stanojević, 2013: 361). The author also adopts the concept of "field" conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu (1979) to describe spaces of symbolic circulation in which musical practices interpenetrate with other artistic, economic, political and social practices recognized within and from the outside as endowed with a certain degree of coherence and organisation. The set of these internal practices takes place in a broader external context that can influence the process of differentiation according to trajectories of change and embedded cross-fertilization. The concept of field also suggests "those procedures through which principles of validation and means of accommodating change operate within particular cultural spaces so as to perpetuate their boundaries" (Straw, 1991: 374). According to the author,

**it may be argued that the complex and contradictory quality of cultural texts [...] has prevented neither their circulation within societies nor their alignment with particular population groups and cultural*

³⁵ Kahn-Harris describes scenes as often being oriented toward the "logic of mundanity" (2007: 59), where scenic practices involve members mostly attempting to "experience 'everydayness' in all its regularity and unexceptionality within the scene itself" (Kahn-Harris, 2007: 59).

spaces from following regularized and relatively stable patterns. If this predictability is the result of semantic or ideological contradictions within these texts usually being resolved in favour of one set of meanings over others, then an analysis of these more general patterns, rather than of the conflicts which unfailingly produce them, may have a provisional usefulness at least (Straw, 1991: 374).

Thus, Straw shows a “bourdieusian” concern for the processes of legitimization and competition for cultural prestige. In particular, he conceives the scene as a subcultural field within which there are forms of power and domination, institutions, hierarchies, tacit and explicit rules, which determine its organisation, boundaries, and habitus - that is, that set of perceptual and cognitive schemes that are shaped by experience and that, internalised, orient the action.

In the present research we follow this theoretical approach of music scene, framing the Italian Black Metal scene as a subcultural field, focusing on the features and conditions that allow to observe the existence of a scene.

In particular, the research questions that have oriented our study are:

- ✦ Does the Italian Black Metal scene have the criteria spotted in the sociological literature to identify music scenes? If so, how does the concept of scene fit the characterization of Italian black metal in its national specificity?
- ✦ What are the theoretical consequences of the Italian Black Metal scene on the concept of scene in the subcultural field approach?

In order to answer these questions, we combined in-depth interviews, conducted between May and July 2021, with desk research, performed from February 2021 to March 2022. As for the first ones, we interviewed four privileged witnesses, including three men and one woman, all of them under 40. The interviews lasted two and a half hours on average. For them, we relied on a Telegram community born in 2016, which counts just over 100 members and a strong Italian character. The interviewees are privileged witnesses as each of them embodies one or more of the four key-roles that we have identified to describe the activities that are carried out within the subcultural field. One of the interviewees has a YouTube channel called “The Italian Black Metal Museum”³⁶, within which he deals with collecting and making available Italian black metal music productions, often underground and DIY. He is what we call a “curator”, since he is responsible for handing down the memory of these bands and music and putting the Italian peculiarity at the centre of attention. A second one has a Facebook page (“The Black Chalice”³⁷) on which he conducts live streamings and interviews with important exponents of Italian and international black metal. He recently decided to create a black and white fanzine, in full DIY spirit, dedicated to underground black metal from all over the world. For these reasons we call him a “supporter”. The other two key-roles that we have identified are the listener and the musician. What is peculiar to underline is that all respondents embody not just one, but multiple roles, suggesting that there are several belonging levels to a scene, and, for this reason, it is necessary to dissect the self-representations of it in its myriad forms of participation. Indeed, the classification of key-roles must be used as an analytical tool.

Finally, for a more accurate analysis, we integrated the interviews with desk research starting from the suggestions provided by the interviewees on labels, bands, and bottom-up support activities (e.g., fanzines), and, additionally, with other references on black metal - e.g., black metal theory symposia “Hideous Gnosis” (Masciandaro, 2010) and “Mors Mystica” (Daniel, Connole & Masciandaro, 2015). All the data gathered has been analysed from a qualitative perspective, emphasising the common views and values on the Italian scene, and identifying the most relevant latent dimensions and inner controversies which characterised the current underground situation and the structural challenges in the establishment of a solid and acknowledged Italian scene. The research presented here is in its pilot phase and all the results shared in this contribution must be considered as preliminary for a next and larger phase of data collection and analysis.

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/c/MuseoDelBlackMetalItaliano> (last visit on 30 October 2022).

³⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/ilcalicenero> (last visit on 30 October 2022).

4. Italian black metal scene: preliminary results

4.1. Genesis and development of black metal in Italy

In Italy, black metal has existed since the late 1980s. In a very common ex-post interpretation, “Neurodeliri” (1988) by Bulldozer is considered the very first Italian black metal album. However, IBM was initially strongly linked to the Scandinavian scene, reminiscent of both its musical style and iconography. Mortuary Drape and Necromass, two of the Italian prime movers, are example of the reinterpretation of the Scandinavian message, “using both its grammar and symbolic/colloquial apparatus” (Frangioni et al., 2018: 72). Only the one-man project Hesperia (also member of the black metal band Sulphuria), together with Funeral Oration, Inchiuvatu and Aborym, among others, in the 1990s pushed the genre in a partially innovative direction. These bands embraced a “back to the roots” centred on Italian culture and history and, for this reason, embodied in references to Roman and pre-Roman mythology, to the use of Italian and Latin lyrics, but also around the claim of a so-called “Italic spirit”³⁸. These aspects are congruent with some values they wanted to promote nationalism, misanthropy, fascism, elitism, and anti-modernism are some of them. As Frangioni and colleagues argue, in fact, “this serves as a good example of an auto-reflexive choice to claim the adherence to a cultural background” (2018: 74). Moreover, the presence of shared values gave IBM of the 1990s the opportunity to feel and self-represent itself as a scene. However, precisely in the years of its boom - between 1993 and 1994, when it had become a genre of the masses - IBM entered decline. “The black flamed weakened, like a fire suffocated by too much wood”, because of “jealousy, battles among have-nots, small circles in the bigger cities, [which] started forcing the public about the clubs to go, what to wear, what to read, how to act [...] in perpetual competition rather than cooperation”³⁹.

An attempt to rebuild a scene was made by Black Metal Invitta Armata, an association active between 2005 and 2008 which brought several bands and musicians together around a common musical style and precise ideological coordinates, this time explicitly centred on fascism and its imagery, which “has been expressed in a wide range of shades and with different degrees of belief” (Frangioni et al., 2018). The band Spite Extreme Wing dedicated the album “Non Dvcor, Dvco!” (2004) to the Endeavour of Fiume (*Impresa di Fiume*), led by Gabriele D’Annunzio between 1919 and 1920. Another example is Frangar’s album “Totalitarian War” (2007) which exalted World War I and glorified the elite assault troop Arditi. What went wrong this time, using the words of Frangioni and colleagues, was

**that they lack explicit geographic (and political) references and consequently [they] lack of a relationship with the present. As if in their argumentation the past was seen from the distant perspective of the historian rather than reinterpreted through the lens of the activist who tries to provide interpretative keys for the present by forming links to a mythical past (Frangioni et al., 2018: 81)*



Thus, IBM represents a unicum in the wider metal scene since its fragility and ephemerality (both during the 1990s and the 2000s). But what we think is of particular interest is that after 2008, apparently, there were no other attempts to rebuild a black metal scene. In particular, we wanted to investigate the reasons behind this absence through a “scene perspective”, which means adopting the concept of scene as a referent with the aim of studying the elements that allow a scene to exist and be considered as such.

4.2. Field analysis of IBM as a subcultural field

4.2.1. Key-roles and activities

In the research, we have adopted some conceptual tools of Bourdieu’s field theory in order to orient the

³⁸ It is important to highlight the difference between the terms “Italian” and “Italic”. In fact, while the first is a geographical and political referent, the second is a cultural concept, which refers to pre-Roman Italy.

³⁹ Museo del Black Metal Italiano, “Le origini del black metal in Italia, parte II” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3P2gTToZ-g> (last visit on 30 October 2022).

investigation on the key-roles and the activities carried out by the people engaged in the subcultural field's life. Their activities and self-representations are socially performed and exchanged and depend on a set of resources (capitals) related to a specific habitus. The concept of habitus is a generating and unifying principle that retranslates the intrinsic and relational characteristics of a position in a unitary lifestyle, that is, into a unitary set of choices - of people, of goods, of practices (Bourdieu, 1994).

We have identified four main key-roles: listener, musician, supporter and curator. The listener is the one who benefits from cultural products linked to the music genre and therefore possesses *cultural capital* in the objectified form (e.g., collections of LPs, CDs, books, fanzines, and other merchandising) but also social capital in terms of a community of listeners, and attendees to concerts and thematic festivals. The specific feature of the musician consists of the *practical knowledge* of the genre, such as the ability and skills in playing instruments or singing style. The supporter not only is involved in buying records and going to concerts but is deeply aware of its role in the circulation of music knowledge and invests his/her own personal *economic capital* for giving support to emerging bands, organising concerts, distributing and producing demos/albums and merchandising. In all these activities he/she does networking to enlarge and enforce the music scene as a social field. Finally, the curator (Hogan, 2010) is a special figure who takes care of the cultural productions in terms of innovation and tradition, identity and heritage of the bands and the scene itself: essentially, he/she deals with the construction of the representation of the *subcultural capital* within and outside the subcultural field.

Especially in the case of original and underground music genres, such as black metal, all these capitals must be analysed at the subcultural level, detecting the interests, symbolic and material, and the points of view that unfold in the field and on which the organisation of the field itself depends. For this reason, it is crucial to implement our model with the concept of *subcultural capital* as a form of symbolic capital, objectified and incorporated through social knowledge and practices and based on prestige and recognition. At a macro-level it operates as a general mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, defining boundaries, and establishing identities and differences inside and outside the field. Therefore, defining a black metal subcultural capital as the core of a black metal scene is the first step towards the characterization of the IBM scene. Exploring and extrapolating norms and values in the literature and deepening them in the interviews, we will now discuss the possibility of applying the concept of scene to IBM focusing on the following dimensions: audience, aesthetics, infrastructures, and networks.

4.2.2. Audience and aesthetics

The audience is an important element since without it there could be no scene. But the interesting result of our interviews is that the audience of black metal is always described in relation to the values shared within it. In this regard, a respondent said that being a *blackster* (black metal listener) implies

**a kind of unwritten social code of behaviour: [...] the real 'true' doesn't have to show too many emotions at a concert; [...] you're not true if you don't listen only to black metal; [...] as for the Italian scene, to be 'true' you must have political ideas of a certain kind, so maybe more sympathisers with the right, whether they are fascists rather than national socialists (Giulia, listener).*

The use of the phrase "unwritten social code", in fact, implies that there are rules and norms, together with values and beliefs, which have become implicit and that allow a blackster to self-represent him/herself and be considered as belonging to the black metal scene. Another important term is "true", which is related to the first one and which also is defined in opposition to the term "poser"⁴⁰. In fact, there are boundaries not only between the scene and the outside but also between the members of the scene. This is a very common sociological phenomenon of *schismogenesis*, typical of a close social system (Bateson, 1935; see Abbott, 2001, for the concept of "fractal distinction" in the scientific field). In the common knowledge, a blackster to be "true" must have and perform political ideas sympathising with fascim and national socialism. The blackster must show few emotions, and those emotions must be negative: "Black metal is linked with barbed wire to very negative sensations, both on an emotional level and on an esoteric level and on a cultural level" (Roberto, curator). This negativity is also pushed to

⁴⁰ A poser is someone who pretends to be a part of a culture or of a genre just to fit in and to impress other people.

the limit, somehow it becomes radical: “Black metal, for me, is a lifestyle, [...] is something out of control” (Il Cattivo Maestro, supporter). This idea often comes back with the concept of “extreme”, declined not only in philosophical terms (decadence, cosmic pessimism, etc.) but also understood as physical evil: “They [Leftovers band] are truly the total extreme, even in cutting oneself, self-mutilating on your body. [...] That is total extreme, really, to exhaustion” (Il Cattivo Maestro). The same sympathy for fascism and national socialism could be read not in ideological terms, but as a pure need to manifest hate and evil, and as a search for extremism. Thus, in IBM there is not only a political or a social dimension, but also a more personal and intimate dimension, both emotional and physical.

Linked to this, there is a discourse about the aesthetic dimension of black metal. Several bands (see, for example, Immortal, Mayhem, Gorgoroth and Dimmu Borgir) over the years defined a canon with the result that the black metallor is usually represented, among other features, as dressed in black, leather and studs, with long tousled hair and corpse paint. But there is also an aspect linked to the imagery of black metal: “There is no longer any line of light, there is no sun, there is no moon. There is nothing. The dark. Silence” (Il Cattivo Maestro). And also:

**I was very passionate about the first three Cradle of Filth albums, because [...] we are talking about a more symphonic, melodic black metal - let's say - because of all that dark, fantasy imagery, which can also be traced back to Gothic literature. [...] In addition, I was very fond of Immortal, a bit for their alternative and winter world with all its mythology and stories (Fabio, musician).*

These aspects mentioned by the two interviewees bring us back to the intimate dimension of black metal, which therefore is expressed also in personal interests and affiliations, and which also informs us on the cultural goods (i.e., *cultural capital*) that are shared within the scene.

4.2.3. Networks and infrastructures

In the previous sections, we have focused on the content of the black metal subculture, highlighting some elements which characterise the Italian specificity. Negativity and being extreme are considered the core of the audience experience. These values are declined into specific topics taken from national history, mythology, occultism, and religion. This set of experimental and aesthetical references acts in the symbolic exchanges at the subcultural level, enabling and disabling the constitution of a national music scene. In order to address this level, it is necessary to pay attention to the structural level of the subcultural field, looking at how its “backbone” takes shape in terms of networks and infrastructures. Networks in this context refer to bridging and bonding (Wilks, 2011) relations and mutual help between those involved in the subcultural field, thus not only between producers and consumers of the music genre, but also other insiders (such as owners of premises, and events organisers). Infrastructures refer to the record producing and distributing system, as well as to the concert promoting and venue systems (Weinstein, 2000). From the interviews emerged that these are two critical points, on which IBM is disconnected from the definitions of scene in the sociological literature. In relation to these points, it emerges also what interviewees define as scene - which is everything IBM is not. In fact:

**When it comes to the scene... it means more a network of contacts, so group X knows group Y, which knows in turn group Z and therefore makes a support network [...] to create dates, concerts, then situations, aggregation points in general for fans of a certain music genre (Giulia).*

**Bands, in my opinion, to create a scene, to create a strong coalition, sharing, must help each other (Il Cattivo Maestro).*

Thus, according to our interviewees, a scene is a support network of contacts based on coalitions and sharing. An IBM scene doesn't exist since “there is no cohesion or collaboration between people that share a passion for the same music genre” (Giulia). Two other reasons behind the absence of a scene are that “there is no global vision” (Fabio) and, secondly, that “the Italians have continued to cheerfully wage war for thirty years now” (Roberto), because of economic interests, different political ideas, games of power, and competition.

The lack of support networks has a negative effect on the infrastructures of the scene, that is, the complex of elements that constitute the support ground for the activities carried out within the subcultural field. In fact, their building relies on networks between insiders. At the same time, how is it possible to create bonds and relationships in the absence of infrastructures? Therefore, a double negative effect emerges both on the possibilities of networking and on the construction of infrastructures. For example, a deficiency that is underlined by the interviewees concerns the spaces of encounter and aggregation, such as concert venues and thematic festivals.

**In Italy there are no great points of aggregation. There is no place as aggregation point, at least currently. [...] There are no venues which can possibly bring together a scene at the national level. There are small local realities, but they struggle to hold on (Fabio).*

Also, distribution houses, record labels, magazines, and so on, are services around which several activities and resources unfold. Services without infrastructures and infrastructures without services are unlikely to exist.

**Scene means not only having many bands, but also having distro, labels, magazines, which come from the same place. You create a scene not only with the bands, but also with the insiders. Bands without insiders and insiders without bands don't go anywhere (Il Cattivo Maestro).*

Thus, regarding the Italian case, all the respondents affirm there is a lack of these infrastructures, which is sometimes attributed to a mental closure and a lack of culture on the part of those who work in the cultural and artistic sector. There is also a lack of economic resources, or, instead, there is an improper use of money - aimed more at the mainstream, than at supporting small underground realities. More thoroughly, the reasons for this absence should be sought in the cultural, social and economic fabric of Italy.

5. Conclusions

The goal of this research is not to verify whether or not an IBM scene exists, but if IBM reflects the key elements identified in the literature to describe a music scene. The history of the development and spread of the genre in the Italian context presents some attempts for the construction of a real national scene, thematically homogeneous and geographically organised. In the current situation, we detected several activities performed by what we called the key-roles and exchanges of resources typical of the subcultural field, but in a context with a lack of organisation at the infrastructure and support network levels. This fact makes it hard to consider the IBM scene within the theoretical conceptualization found in the sociological literature. Nevertheless, the word "scene" is strongly persistent and recurrent in the discourses both in the interviews and in the material examined. From the inner perspective, "IBM scene" is used as a *negative reference* that acts in the self-representations of the field. If there is no IBM scene, there is a need to build it, and all the effort spent by the key-roles is oriented toward this purpose. The reasoning about the historical and contingent forces that hinder the realisation of an IBM scene entails both internal (e.g., competition attitude fostered by the value of being true and evil) and external factors (e.g., lack of venues for emerging underground extreme metal bands). Beyond all these criticalities, the concept of scene acts both in the local identification of the black metal community (positioning individuals, bands and projects inside the field), and in its moral anchoring (establishing boundaries and conflicts, identities and differences). Compared to the sociological concept of music scene, the IBM scene expresses more the very *content* rather than its solid *form*. In other words, the creative energy and unique enthusiasm in the building phase, even if it does not assume a solidity in the long run, catalyses the attention of the few who invest economic and social capital in it. Ultimately, this unstable and precarious situation of the IBM scene can be considered as a guarantee of authenticity, according to the extreme and anti-commercial values of the black metal music movement in its early foundation back in the 1990s.

6. Perspectives

The preliminary results collected so far allow us to highlight the specificity of an IBM scene and to discuss its implications for the concept of music scene in general. Due to the small number of interviews conducted it is not possible to draw all the main features of the IBM scene. Nevertheless, our privileged witnesses have helped us to approach this unexplored field of research and to open new paths and issues for the next phase of the research. In particular, in the interviews emerged the role of a regional and sub-regional organisation of the black metal scene (e.g., Sardinian Black Metal scene). Also, the role of the Internet in the transformation of musical fruition is huge and affects the theoretical meaning of music scene. Compared to the nascent phase of an IBM scene in the past, the present situation and future perspective are strongly influenced by the positive role of the digital networking, which may help in the building of a moral community, bypassing the “offline” obstacles. In conclusion, the present research invites to review the concept of scene *in the light* of digital innovation, but also *in the shade* of subcultural realities where an invisible multitude of small actors cultivates and animates an unfinished extreme metal scene, like in a *meadow of ants*.

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