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THE INDEPENDENT SCREAMO MUSIC SCENE AND PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE TO GENTRIFICATION: A MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY IN MILAN AND NORTH-CENTRAL ITALY

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Scatto una foto
alle cose che perdo

Photo: Isabella Pascali / @film.amatoriali

e la chiamo *memoria*

Acknowledgments

Casa non è solo un luogo fisico in cui tornare, ma anche una sensazione di appartenenza, di calore e focolare. Il tema della casa è il perno centrale a cui ruota la mia vita: dalla Romania all'Italia, da Como a Faggeto Lario, e ora Milano. Luoghi fisici, attraversati da flussi di persone in costante movimento.

Grazie, a chi ha deciso di restare e di costruire un focolare insieme a me; grazie, a chi ha deciso di andare via, creando nuovi spazi di possibilità.

Grazie ai miei genitori e a mio fratello. Agli amici e alle amiche "di sempre": Gaia, Lorenzo e Anna, che ci sono sempre stati e sempre ci saranno. Ai nuovi amici e alle nuove amiche trovate lungo questo campo minato chiamato vita. Ai vecchi e ai nuovi amori, perché è di amore che si respira. Alla scena, che mi ha abbracciato quando ne ho avuto bisogno. A Bicocca, che mi ha aperto le porte nove anni fa. A me stessa, che, nonostante tutti gli imprevisti, non mi sono ancora persa.

Crolleranno le mura che chiamavamo affettuosamente casa.
Il vento porterà via l'instabile sabbia su cui poggiavamo saldamente i piedi.
Consumati dalle intemperie ci gireremo a guardare le brillanti macerie dei giorni passati.
Sospesi nel vuoto, bruceremo in un attimo e il cerchio sarà chiuso.

Stormo, «Delle nostre vite appese»

Lo so mi sbaglio se mi incaglio nelle rocce ormai sommerse, nell'assenza di radici o in tutte le altre cose perse, nell'esilio dagli amici, nei miei vortici a spirale che trascinano anche me nel gorgo della solitudine stellare. E non avendo un focolare mi succede che non so dove tornare, quindi adesso barra a dritta, si procede, che dietro ormai la costa non si vede. E avere fede in qualche stella non lo so se mi conviene che il vero volto delle cose è al buio che si vede bene.

Marnero, «Non sono più il ghepardo di una volta»

Abstract

Neoliberal urbanism is an open-ended phenomenon that exploits and (re-)produces uneven socio-spatial differences, characterized by geographical variability, trans-locality and multi-scalarity (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010). One mechanism not only unleashed by neoliberal urbanism, but also a symbol of it, is gentrification, understood both as a process of urban renewal, leading to the arrival of higher-income residents (Hackworth & Smith, 2001), and as a metaphor for processes of mainstreaming and commodification of everyday life and culture, leading to the marginalization of critical culture through a widespread exercise of discrediting, exclusion, and censorship (Kern, 2022).

The independent screamo music scene in Italy, and especially in Milan – where the effects on housing market and cultural policies are particularly visible in Europe – is a perfect case study. As a popular music genre, screamo – an offshoot of hardcore punk music – is more susceptible to the dynamics of commodification, but simultaneously it risks promoting social hegemony. Music thus becomes a field of struggle between processes of gentrification and commodification on the one hand, and practices of resistance to them on the other – i.e., the activities, techniques and resources performed by individuals to voice their dissent, to reclaim space, to construct meanings of aggregation and participation, and more generally, to undermine forms of power (Scott, 1985).

Based on 13 months of multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork (Marcus, 1995) conducted mainly in Milan and comparatively extended to other urban and non-urban contexts primarily in North-Central Italy, the analysis combines participant observation at events (including the organization of a screamo festival) with semi-structured interviews with independent collectives. Using a Ground Theory-informed analytical approach, the research examines how the screamo scene – understood as a set of practices, hard and soft infrastructures, and affective relations – reacts to the spatial, political, and cultural challenges imposed by late neoliberalism, including eviction and displacement, self-commodification and aestheticization of peripherality, which together reshape the conditions of urban belonging and artistic autonomy.

Through a multi-scalar lens, the thesis explores how the scene navigates tensions between centrality/peripherality and visibility/resistance, generating alternative spatial configurations that reimagine the periphery (physical and symbolic) as a site of cooperation, mutual care and autonomy. Gentrification emerges both as an external process of urban renewal and as an internal process of spectacularization and self-commodification. Yet, practices of resistance emerge at different scales:

at the micro level, everyday DIY practices like performance styles and embodied aesthetics reaffirm dissent and authenticity; at the meso level, collective efforts like the organization of events, the occupation and self-management of autonomous spaces, and the circulation of resources support networks of collaboration; at the macro level, anti-gentrification symbolic practices and discourses consolidate the political and cultural visibility of the scene. Generational change and a growing awareness around gender and inclusivity issues further reshape scene's ethical and political contours, while digital infrastructures extend its reach as tools for both connection and critique.

Ultimately, the study argues that gentrification and resistance are co-constitutive and relational processes. The screamo scene is embedded and operates within neoliberal urbanism, appropriating its tools to sustain autonomy, and turning instability into a collective practice of creativity, mutual care, and resistance. This multi-scalar understanding reveals how underground music cultures negotiate their existence, reshaping the spaces, relations and imaginaries through which the contemporary city is produced.

Keywords: neoliberal urbanism; gentrification; independent screamo music scene; resistance; multi-sited ethnography

Summary

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Introduction

Processes of neoliberal urbanization have profoundly transformed the social, economic, and cultural fabric of contemporary cities (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Peck et al., 2009). Within this context, Milan represents a case of late neoliberal urbanism (Tozzi, 2023), where real estate speculation, privatization of public goods, and the securitization of public spaces converge to produce new forms of exclusion and geographies of inequality. Rising housing costs, displacement, and the increasing precariousness of work and everyday life have reshaped the meanings of urban citizenship and belonging, challenging the "right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 2012) – a right that entails not only the access to urban spaces, but also the collective power to (re)produce them, shaping the ways of inhabiting, living in, and organizing the city.

Furthermore, the growing moralization of austerity and the diffusion of entrepreneurial discourses have fostered new regimes of "responsabilization" and self-management that extend deeply into the sphere of subjectivity (Foucault, 2010) – prompting an ethos of hyper-individualism (Keating, 2012). The moral economy of "austerity" (Clarke & Newman, 2012) reframes structural inequalities and produces individuals who are both autonomous and governable and self-reliant and precarious (Wacquant, 2007). In this sense, neoliberalism operates not only through economics and policies, but also through the everyday technologies of the self that shape desires, feelings, and ways of living (Brown, 2015; Wilson, 2018).

In Milan, these dynamics are particularly evident in the housing market and cultural policies. Processes of urban redevelopment and gentrification, which are often legitimized through narratives of creativity and innovation (for instance, the "creative city" and "eventful city" models), have led to the progressive displacement of low-income residents, migrants, and independent cultural actors, including associations and self-managed spaces that resist the incorporation into neoliberal logics of co-optation (Tozzi, 2023). The securitization of the public space (Graham, 2010), reinforced through the Security Decree (converted in law n. 80/2025 and effective since 9 June 2025), has intensified control and exclusion, legitimizing police interventions and the eviction of squats such as S.P.A. Leoncavallo, Macao, and F.O.A. Boccaccio, which had long served as key venues for countercultural and independent artistic practices (Mudu, 2004; d'Ovidio & Cossu, 2017). These measures demonstrate how neoliberal governance operates through both economic and repressive mechanisms, producing what Wacquant (2007) refers to as the "territorial stigmatization" of marginalized urban actors.

Whitin this landscape, independent music scenes emerge as sites where everyday resistance takes shape, as spaces of collective experimentation and mutual care, where urban actors negotiate their right to the city, and gather outside the dominant logics of the market and institutional control. The object of this thesis is to investigate the practices of resistance to gentrification enacted by the Italian independent screamo scene – a subcultural and musical ecosystem characterized by a strong adherence to the ethics of Do-It-Yourself (DIY), self-management, and collective autonomy. Based on thirteen months of multi-sited ethnography primarily conducted in Milan and compared with other Italian urban and non-urban contexts, this research investigates how the screamo scene – understood here as a set of practices, hard, soft, relational and digital infrastructures – reacts to the spatial, political, and cultural challenges imposed by late neoliberalism. More specifically, the research questions that oriented this thesis are:

1. How do independent music scenes react to gentrification processes, particularly in relation to the cultural co-optation and commodification for urban marketing and branding purposes, as well as to their displacement from the city center, or from the urban contexts?
2. How do independent music scenes react when not only is there a lack of physical space in which to aggregate, but also when the urban environment as a cultural and relational resource is distant or absent?
3. How do independent music scenes address the paradox of simultaneously resisting co-optation processes, while risking becoming agents of gentrification themselves?

To address these questions, I conducted participant observation at 44 events – including concerts and festivals – and collaborated directly in the organization of an independent screamo festival. Through this approach, I explored the hard infrastructures of the scene (venues, labels, bands and artists who make things together), the soft infrastructures (shared values, collectively endorsed lifestyle choices and aesthetic preferences), the relational infrastructures (the networks of trust, reciprocity, and collaboration that connect people, spaces and resources) and digital infrastructures (which cut across all these dimensions, linking material, affective, and social practices across contexts).

As already stated, Milan has been the focal point of this research, representing a paradigmatic example of neoliberal urban transformations. However, a multi-scalar and multi-sited ethnographic approach was adopted (Marcus, 1995; Falzon, 2009), enabling the analysis to be extended beyond the city and compared with other Italian contexts (urban and non-urban areas, in the North-Central and South Italy). This approach helped considering Milan as part of broader relational, infrastructural,

and cultural geographies connecting the local and the global, and the urban and the periphery, rather than an isolated ecosystem. Analyzing these scales together, allowed me to interpret gentrification as both a spatial phenomenon of urban renewal and as a social and cultural process of commodification and co-optation that reshapes participation, community-building, and practices of cultural production.

From a methodological perspective, this research integrated the multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork with an inductively oriented analytical approach informed by Grounded Theory principles. Data analysis was conducted iteratively on semi-structured interviews with independent collectives, fieldnotes, and visual data (such as photographs, videos, and flyers), drawing on Constructivist and Visual Grounded Theory approaches (Charmaz, 2006; Konecki, 2011; May & Dietrich, 2017), and allowing induction from the empirical materials.

Furthermore, in this research I embraced the principle of circularity of the research process (where observation, experience, and interpretation recursively shape one another) and explicitly acknowledged the boundaries between ethnography and autoethnography – in line with Anderson's (2006b) concept of analytic autoethnography. Through this perspective, positionality, emotional labor, and personal trajectories were treated as integral components of meaning-making and theoretical insight, addressing prior engagement with the field as an analytical resource and critically reflecting upon it throughout the research process.

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. Particularly, in Chapter 1, I developed the theoretical framework of the research by situating it within the critical debate on neoliberalism and urbanization processes. I discussed how gentrification – understood as both urban renewal and cultural (self-)commodification processes – reshapes urban spaces, everyday life, and cultural production, while generating new forms of exclusion and censorship. These dynamics can be framed through the formula of "splintering urbanism", discussed in connection with the idea of urban boundaries as frontiers and battlegrounds where conflict is enacted. I concluded this chapter by introducing the notion of resistance to gentrification as a set of situated and heterogenous practices.

In Chapter 2, I theorized the concept of music scene by tracing the differences and intersections with subcultures, countercultures, and neo-tribes. I examined how scenes operate across local, trans-local, and virtual scales, and how the notion of independence has evolved from an economic label to an ethical and political stance, and the key rhetorics historically associated with this concept. I also focused on DIY ethics and artistic activism as forms of situated resistance to commodification and urban marginalization, adopting a "practice turn" perspective to analyze how acts of autonomy, collaboration, and self-organization emerge within neoliberal urban contexts. Finally, I

conceptualized independent music scenes as relational ecosystems that negotiate the boundaries between resistance, co-optation, and survival.

In Chapter 3, I presented the case study of the research, outlining the research questions and theoretical justifications that guided the ethnographic fieldwork. I defined events and independent collectives as the units of observation, and practices of resistance – articulated at the micro, meso, and macro levels – as the units of analysis. Particularly, this multi-scalar perspective reflects the fact that processes of neoliberal urbanization are embedded within broader trans-local, national and global dynamics, and that practices of resistance are situated within these interconnected spatial and cultural scales (an approach aligned with multi-sited ethnography). I then traced the historical development and global diffusion of screamo music (from its origins in the US to its localization within the Italian context). Finally, I contextualized the ethnographic fieldwork within Milan and other Italian regions, illustrating how the city's neoliberal transformations intersect with broader national dynamics of cultural production and practices of resistance.

In Chapter 4, I illustrated the research design and methodological framework, situated, as already argued, within a multi-sited ethnographic approach. I described the process of data collection, which combined participant observation, semi-structured interviews and the analysis of visual and digital data within a Grounded Theory-informed analytical framework. In this chapter I also discussed the ethical challenges of conducting ethnographic fieldwork within a relatively small-scale music scene, emphasizing issues of access, gatekeeping, trust, and emotional labor. Finally, here the research is framed as a self-reflexive and co-constructed process in which the boundaries of the field are constantly negotiated through participation, reflection, and interpretation.

In Chapter 5, I reconstructed the ethnographic process of research, focusing on the methodological, experiential and relational dimensions of the fieldwork. I described how research was conducted through a multi-sited and multi-scalar approach, centered in Milan but extending to other Italian regions to explore the trans-locality of the screamo scene. I detailed the criteria guiding the selection of events, the interactions with independent collectives and audiences, and the process of participation observation within La Défense collective, in Parma. I finally reflected on the negotiation of access, the evolution of trust relationships, and the shifting positionality of the researcher, from outsider to partial insider, within a co-produced field.

In Chapters 6 and 7, I presented the empirical findings. The first one analyzes how the Italian independent screamo scene engages with urban processes of neoliberal transformation, focusing on the spatial and symbolic dimensions of resistance. First, it introduces the "center-periphery" metaphor

as both a geographical and cultural framework for understanding the positioning of DIY practices at the margins of the urban, cultural and political life, constructing a "counter-city" narrative. Secondly, it addresses gentrification as both an internal and an external process, considering how resistance can coexist with dynamics of self-commodification and adaptation to neoliberal logics. Examples include the spectacularization of live performances (for example, mosh pit and violent dancing), and the strategic choice of venues, which demonstrates how spatial contexts actively shape behaviors, aesthetics, and collective experiences.

The second one focuses on the social and cultural dimensions of resistance within the Italian independent screamo scene. It investigates how generational changes, gender relations and inclusivity, and the spectacularization of live performances reflect broader tensions surrounding authenticity and co-optation. Using ethnographic and digital data, the chapter discusses how Gen Z and millennial participants within the scene articulate political engagement, aesthetics, and DIY ethics, and how digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok contribute to new forms of self-representation and community belonging. This chapter also addresses the contradictions embedded within practices of resistance. Particularly, it reflects on how the DIY ethos in the contemporary context often appears as a floating signifier – an attitude, more than a coherent set of practices, that coexists with elements of sponsorship, self-commodification and digital visibility.

In the conclusions, I synthesized the main empirical and theoretical findings. I argued that the Italian independent screamo scene exemplifies how practices of resistance operate within and against neoliberal urbanization processes, revealing the porous boundaries between autonomy, co-optation and survival. The discussion revisited the research questions, showing that autonomy, mutual care and authenticity are not fixed oppositions but, rather, situated and continuously negotiated practices shaped by everyday contradictions and tensions within uneven geographies of opportunity. I then reflected on the theoretical, methodological and analytical implications of conducting ethnographic research based on the principles of multi-dimensionality, multi-sitedness, and multi-scalarity. Finally, I discussed the strengths and limitations of the study and outlined possible future strands of research.

Chapter 1. Neoliberal urbanism and gentrification: From urban renewal to cultural (self-)commodification processes

As anticipated in the introduction, this research investigated practices of resistance to gentrification processes within the contemporary neoliberal capitalist system, specifically as enacted by the screamo independent music scene in Italy, with particular emphasis on the city of Milan in a comparison with the broader Italian context. While this topic may initially seem to be approached from afar, the forthcoming theoretical discussion will provide some conceptual definitions to contextualize the study. Particularly, this chapter situates the thesis within the broader framework of neoliberal urbanism. Therefore, it reconstructs the main debates surrounding neoliberalism – and neoliberalization – and situates it within the context of urban transformations, analyzing one mechanism not only unleashed by, but also a symbol of it: gentrification, understood both as a process of urban renewal and cultural (self-)commodification.

1.1. Conceptualizing neoliberalism and urbanization

The debate surrounding neoliberalization processes and urban transformations is longstanding and deeply rooted in sociological and critical urban theory, to the point that the concept of neoliberalism itself, as Brenner and colleagues (2010) argued,

> has become, simultaneously, a terminological focal point for debates on the trajectory of post-1980s regulatory transformations and an expression of the deep disagreements and confusions that characterize those debates. Consequently, 'neoliberalism' has become something of a rascal concept – promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested (ivi, p. 184).

In this context, neoliberalism has often been understood only as a paradigm and a powerful ideology: "*a whole way of being and thinking, a type of relation between the governors and the governed much more than a technique of governors with regard to the governed*" (Foucault 2008, p. 218), that has influenced a number of policies all over the world. As such, in the words of Dean (2014), it

> has been used […] to characterize everything from a particular brand of free-market political philosophy and a wide variety of innovations in public management to patterns and processes found in and across diverse political spaces and territories (ivi, p. 150).

Le Galès (2016) likewise states that

> too often in urban studies, neoliberalism has been seen as explaining all sorts of transformation in different places, leading to assumptions of global convergence, and as explaining anything taking place in cities, from gentrification to the changing organization of waste disposal, the role of NGOs, the rise of mega projects and sometimes of new forms of democratic participation and governmentality (ivi, p. 156).

Indeed, the concept of neoliberalism has been stretched, becoming polymorphic and often misleading; it has been imposed as a hegemonic, all-encompassing concept, which also implies its blurriness for identifying specific mechanisms and processes. For this reason, this conceptualization runs the risk not considering that neoliberalism is also a "*highly contingent process that manifests itself and is experienced differently across space*" (Hackworth 2007, p. 7), not a state of being (Hall, 2011). Thus, a more constructivist and horizontalist approach to neoliberalism, "*thought as it were the same size as other things*" (Collier 2012, p. 186), may be adopted to better understand that it never acts alone, "[it] *is but one transformative pulse among many, and not necessarily the dominant one*" (Peck 2013, p. 134). Indeed, "*neoliberalism tends to exist in a kind of parasitical relation to other state and social formations (neoconservatism, authoritarianism, social democracy, etc.)*" (Peck et al. 2009, p. 52).

What emerges from this debate is that neoliberalism is not a fixed entity or an end-state, but an open-ended phenomenon, since

> these shifts in the macroconstitution of neoliberalism have not been reproduced homogenously across space. In fact, they have been associated with a marked intensification of spatially uneven development, which itself has produced new opportunities for – and challenges to – the neoliberal project (Peck & Tickell, p. 392).

For this reason, authors suggest the need to focus on neoliberalization as a process, thus "*on shifts in systems and logics, dominant patterns of restructuring, and so forth – rather than on binary and/or static comparisons between a past state and its erstwhile successor*" (ivi, p. 383). Indeed, "*the process of neoliberalization, then, is neither monolithic in form nor universal in effect*" (ivi, p. 384). Therefore, if the notion is to be of any use, neoliberalism – and neoliberalization – needs to be properly defined, and to be severely circumscribed. In this perspective, I intend to draw attention to

the multidimensional nature of neoliberalism, by examining its temporal changes and spatial manifestations at the macro, meso, and micro levels.

1.1.1. Neoliberalism as a (contingent) political and economic project: the macro and the micro level

At the macro level, it is important to trace the roots of neoliberalism to classic liberalism. Particularly, they are both

> concerned with circumscribing the power of the state, so as to promote a society based on freedom from either the arbitrary power of state elites and managers (authoritarianism) or the possibility of majority or conservative-traditionalist tyrannies (collectivism). They also make property rights the cornerstone of society and are always worried about the 'tax state' (Le Galès 2016, p. 161).

However, differently from political and economic liberalism, neoliberalism always understands market as good: "*it is by definition a superior form of social and economic organizations, and an end in itself*" (ibidem). In this sense, one of the major features of neoliberalism has been "*the growth of conglomerates of unrelated businesses as a result of antitrust regulation*", a trend that has resulted, on an economic level in vertical integration, oligopoly and corporatization. For example, considering cultural industries, since the early 1980s they are one of the most important segments of the so-called "new economy"[1] – the set of economic, social, and cultural phenomena associated with the rapid development of information and communication technologies. Their spread in recent decades could be seen as "*a reflection of the increasing convergence that is occurring in modern society between the economic order on the one hand and systems of cultural expression on the other hand*" (Power & Scott 2004, p. 3). In this context, I understand culture as

> the ideas and practices, sites and symbols, of what has been called the "symbolic economy", i.e., the process through which wealth is created from cultural activities, including art, music, dance, crafts, museums, exhibitions, sports and creative design in various fields (Zukin 2004, p. 3).

As regards specifically music industries[2], they have tended "*to take the form of an oligopoly of large companies with a very large market share, based on domination of distribution, financing and manufacture*" (Hesmondhalgh & Meier 2015, p. 94). Moreover, their economics

[1] For an in-depth critical analysis of this term, see Andy Pratt (2004) "The cultural economy. A call for spatialized 'production of culture' perspective". *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *7*(1), 117-128.
[2] Here, by music industries I am referring to those involved in recorded and live music.

> disproportionately rewards big hits and the creation of stars who effectively act as brand names in markets where it is difficult for buyers to know what kinds of pleasures they might be getting in advance from any individual cultural product" (ibidem).

Moreover, with the rise of digital distribution of music – thus, making it easier to share music as high-quality digital files – in the early twenty-first century, music marketing has been oriented towards the concentration of a sector already highly concentrated (Hesmondhalgh, 2007). These are conditions that advantage larger companies, while "independents" and "micro-independents"[3] often resort to the informal economy (Hunter et al., 2013). Music products themselves are more obviously commodities, and less obviously non-commodities or gifts.

What follows is that the way in which market is conceived by neoliberalism implies that it must be created, constructed, consolidated, and enforced. This requires the centrality of the state, its authority to impose a new political and social order, to create a market society based on competition and performance, as well as on coercion and violence. As Scott and Le Galès argue (2010), the state is crucial in the making of the market-society in two ways: "*(1) to control and destroy social relations, (2) to create market actors through institutional mechanisms that maximize insecurity and unpredictability*" (Scott & Le Galès in Le Galès 2016, p. 162). Indeed, over the years, the neoliberal state has been reconfigured in many ways: it promotes the privatization of public services; fosters the creation of markets in previously non-market domains (e.g., culture, education, healthcare); manages social inequalities rather than reducing them; finally, acts as a facilitator and a manager, rather than a guarantor of collective welfare (Peck, 2004; Brown, 2015). To keep track of all these shifts in the role of the state and in the macro-constitution of neoliberalism, Peck and Tickell (2002) identified two stages of neoliberal transformations, the roll-back and the roll-out neoliberalism.

> In the course of this shift, the agenda has gradually moved from one preoccupied with the active destruction and discreditation of Keynesian-welfarist and social-collectivist institutions […] to one focused on the purposeful construction and consolidation of neoliberalized state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations (ivi, p. 384).

The roll-back phase can be traced to late 1970s and early 1980s when, in contrast to the Fordist-Keynesian golden age,

> the national-state became the principal anchoring point for institutions of (gendered and racialized) social integration and (limited) macro-economic management, [and] neoliberalization

[3] In this context, I adopt the term "independents" to refer to "*organizations that are not 'corporations', understood as vertically integrated, well financed and big*" (Hesmondhalgh & Meier 2015, p. 94), but operating at a small and local scale.

> was inducing localities to compete by cutting social and environmental regulatory standards and eroding the political and institutional collectivities upon which more progressive settlements had been constructed in the past (ivi, p. 385).

Conversely, the roll-out phase can be situated in the early 1990s, when, "*no longer concerned narrowly with the mobilization and extension of markets (and market logics)*" (ivi, p. 389), neoliberalism was increasingly associated with "*the political foregrounding of new modes of "social" and penal policy-making, concerned specifically with the aggressive reregulation, disciplining, and containment of those marginalized or dispossessed by the neoliberalization of the 1980s*" (ibid.). It is in this context that emerges the idea of neoliberalism as a new form of governmentality, that produces – adopting a Foucauldian perspective – new, neoliberal, subjectivities. Indeed, as the authors argue,

> a new interventionist agenda [emerged] around social issues like crime, immigration, policing, welfare reform, urban order and surveillance, and community regeneration. In these latter spheres, in particular, new technologies of government [were] designed and rolled out, new discourses of "reform" [were] constructed (often around new policy objectives such as "welfare dependency"), new institutions and modes of delivery [were] fashioned, and new social subjectivities [were] fostered (ibid.).

Particularly, in neoliberalism "*the question of the articulation between individual and general interest is simple: the maximization of individual interest more or less automatically results in the maximization of general interest*" (Le Galès 2016, p. 162). In this sense, neoliberalism can be understood to all intents as a political project and conceptualized as an "*organizing ideology that shapes thoughts, practices, and self-conceptions*" (Taylor 2016, p. 46), not simply as an economic ecosystem. It emphasizes the prioritization of the self, individuals, and personhood (Foucault, 2010; Skeggs, 2011). Thus, another feature of neoliberalism is self-enclosed individualism, understood as a form of hyper-individualism (Keating, 2012). This means that "*the individual is disconnected from the collective dimension. In order to be recognized, to gain value and to have worth, individuals have to transform themselves by performing entrepreneurs of their self*" (Le Galès 2016, pp. 162-163).

More in detail, following McRobbie (2016), it can be identified a double process: on the one hand a process of disembedding of individuals from the large agencies of socialization and social cohesion (*internal individualization*) and, on the other hand, the "*obsessive culture of celebrity*" (ivi, p. 18) which is nourished through practices and discourses focused on competition rather than cooperation (*external individualization*). What has just been described can be analyzed as another facet of hyper-individualism and well reflects the market-society as explained by Le Galès, starting from Polanyi's

theorization[4]. In the same wake, Wilson (2017) asserts that the individual becomes a market actor, who must calculate "*potential gains, losses, and risks*" (ivi, p. 4), moving through the world in oppositional terms and always on the edge of competition – seen as a universal normal. Freedom itself "*has moved from autonomy to the disciplined, self-governed, calculating, entrepreneurial homo economicus who may be incentivized by rules*" (Le Galès 2016, p. 162).

After the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent global economic recession, a new phase in neoliberal policymaking has emerged: the one referred in terms of "late neoliberalism", of which "austerity" (Clarke & Newman, 2012; Davies, 2023) is one of the main features. Particularly, as McGimpsey (2017) argues, austerity "*functioned discursively to shift the locus of the crisis from private debt and reckless governance in the financial sector to levels of public spending and accumulation of government debt*" (ivi, p. 72). This means that

> the large-scale nationalization of private debt by governments during 2008 and the impossibility of guarantee against future such shocks came to constitute a national, existential economic necessity of a downward trajectory on the scale of public sector spending (ivi, p. 73).

Thus, austerity can be understood as a new form of moral economy that, on a macro level emphasizes "*the importance of success in international competition for private investment; social order; and the value of individual opportunity, for example through human capital development*" (ibid.). In contrast, on the micro level, it has involved an intensification of subjectivation forces (Foucault, 2013): "*the extension of micro-disciplinary techniques and a raising of the social, emotional and material stakes for subjects as a means of closer regulation of subjectivity*" (ivi, p. 77).

Alongside austerity, another feature of contemporary neoliberalism is securitization (Graham, 2010) – i.e., the strengthening of states in repressive sectors such as policing, national borders and social control. An example of this drift is the Italian law n. 80/2025, known as "Security decree" and effective from 9 June 2025, containing urgent provisions on public security, protection of personnel in service, as well as victims of usury and prison regulations[5]. For instance, the new decree introduces the crime of "*arbitrary occupation of property intended as someone else's home*" (or its appliances, such as garages or cellars); extends the so-called "urban daspo", a ban on being in certain areas of cities to those who have been reported or convicted, even by non-final judgment, in the previous five years, of crimes against the person or property committed in the vicinity of railway, airport, maritime

[4] See Polanyi, K. (1944). *The Great Transformation*. Farrar & Rinehart.
[5] urly.it/31b5k9 (last access: 17/06/2025).

and local, urban and suburban public transport infrastructure; but it also includes the expansion of video surveillance, restrictions on immigration, anti-begging regulations, as well as the expansion of police powers, resulting in a social climate of insecurity especially for those living in more difficult situations.

Austerity and securitization are only two of the main facets of late neoliberalism. Another issue is that of homeownership, that I will deepen in the second section of the chapter discussing gentrification processes. However, it is important to highlight that the division in these three phases is an attempt to identify the processual nature of neoliberalization, recognizing its path-dependent evolutionary trajectory (Peck et al., 2009). As Brenner and Theodore (2002) argue, an understanding of the existing neoliberalism must, indeed, "*explore the path-dependent, contextually specific interactions between inherited regulatory landscapes and emergent neoliberal, market-oriented restructuring projects at a broad range of geo-graphical scales*" (ivi, p. 351).

At the macro and micro level, contemporary neoliberalization processes can therefore be conceptualized building, in the wake of Rossi (2013), a biopolitical understanding of the post-2008 financial crisis. Particularly, in this new phase the state has often been represented through the "organismic metaphor" (DeLanda, 2006) as a reified, totalized object: the so-called "market-state", legitimated on the basis of the equity of opportunity to compete (Bobbitt, 2002) and producing, through the subjectivizing forces of the micro-practices of public service institutions, *"the rational, pragmatic figures of the (citizen) consumer, the (state) purchaser, the (private) provider, and the excluded, irrational citizen*" (Olssen in McGimpsey 2017, p. 66-7). What follows, in the words of Bauman (2007), is the rise of a society of consumers progressively commodified, which has been allowed by the expansion of credit in the form of consumer credit and by the privatization of risk.

> Behind the process of financialization of the consumer there is the historical tendency to place consumption at the center of the functioning of advanced capitalist societies, while production becomes increasingly immaterialized. […] In this context, the emergence of consumption as a privileged site for the fabrication of self and society, of culture and identity, as well as the blurring of conventional production/consumption dichotomies through the co-creation of commodities with consumers, have led to a profound metamorphosis of capitalism in Western societies (Rossi 2013, p. 1069).

Not only the society, but also the self has become progressively commodified. For instance, discussing about self-enterprise and immaterial labor in neoliberalism, Wilson (2018) suggests the market-state insists on promoting the self as an enterprise through a process of de-proletarization:

> The status-quo story of self-enterprise invites workers to think of themselves not as a class – that is, workers with experiences, positions, and problems in common – but as private, highly individualized enterprises locked in competition with each other (ivi, p. 122).

A second way to promote self-enterprise are the biopolitics of disposability: "*people who don't, can't, or won't conform to the norm of self-enterprise are considered disposable and thus subject to harsh and aggressive regimes of social control*" (ivi, p. 124). Their vulnerability can be therefore punished in different ways: exclusion from social services (welfare), housing insecurity, police control, medicalization or criminalization, moral and cultural stigmatization, and so on (Brown, 2015; Giroux, 2012; Wacquant, 2007).

According to Wilson (2018), the most pervasive and obvious labor of self-enterprise is self-branding, which "*involves the active and purposeful cultivation of a coherent and lucrative self-image*" (ivi, p. 134). However, self-branding also requires the commodification of the self:

> Self-branding involves the self-conscious construction of a meta-narrative and meta-image of self through the use of cultural meanings and images drawn from the narrative and visual codes of the mainstream culture industries" (Hearn 2008, p. 198).

This process is particularly evident in cultural, artistic and creative contexts, where the distinction between self-expression and saleable performance is becoming increasingly blurred. These logics have penetrated so far that they now permeate not only public institutions and services, but also people's lives, bodies and subjectivities. Even in the context of DIY music scenes, as I will discuss, there is a permanent risk that symbolic marginality can become desirable and, therefore, marketable.

However, as Rossi (2013) argues, this biopolitical pattern has proven to be fragile, because life cannot be integrally commodified and reduced without contradictions to the status of commodity, but there are always interstices for negotiation, resistance and resignification. For instance, affectivity, gratuity, informal relationships, and political identification are not entirely reducible to pure market logics. At the same time, a biopolitical response to the conditions of global economic recession post-2008 consists in the politics of (grassroot) resistance and contestation and in the politics of encounter, that are most visible in what Patel (2010) calls "the living politics of the city" and specifically from the "right to the city" perspective (Harvey, 1989a).

The biopolitical perspective on neoliberalization has the merit to put renewed interest on the nexus between capitalism and urbanization and on the urban dimension of economic crises. Indeed, conceptualizing space itself as political, in a Foucauldian perspective, it emerges that the urban

dimension is crucial to understand neoliberalization and, vice versa, neoliberalism is important as a framework to understand urban transformations.

1.1.2. The urban dimension of neoliberalism: the meso level

Alongside the idea that neoliberalization is a political and economic process through which the market-state establishes new institutions which legitimize, reward and sanction different behaviors (Scott, 2012), there is also the idea that "neoliberalization of urbanism" is a central feature of the general process of neoliberalization. Adopting the words of Pinson and Journel (2016):

> With the financialization of the economy, urban assets, built environments have become increasingly central and even crucial in the current forms of capitalist accumulation. Neoliberalism does not only land in cities or impact urban governance; cities are basically crucial cradles of neoliberalization, provide fundamental material bases for this process, but also for its contestation (ivi, p. 139).

Particularly, with the transition from Fordism (based on mass production and consumption of goods and on manufacturing as the leading form of labor) to post-Fordism (based on flexible accumulation and on immaterial labor[6]), starting from the 1980s economic dynamics themselves changed, attributing more importance to immaterial factors, such as cultural contents, trends, and symbols (Lash & Urry, 1994). Indeed, the increasing commodification of everyday life and culture (Harvey, 1989b) made the latter a central factor in urban policies development. Urban marketing, the organization of big events, the construction of architectural mega-projects, the commercialization of culture and its spectacularization often refer to evident neoliberal logics (Ciaffi et al., 2020). As Zukin (1995) states, culture itself has been transformed into a form of symbolic economy based on tourism, communication, and consumption. Indeed, culture has assumed an instrumental significance in cities in recent years, to the point that it is possible to assert that the experience of culture itself produces interest and wealth in contemporary cities (Zukin, 2004).

In this context, culture and city have become more intertwined than ever. The concept of space itself has been linked to specific forms of consumption, intended for the so-called "creative class" (Florida, 2002), and the urban middle class. Therefore living, working, and having fun in certain neighborhoods or areas of the city started reflecting a specific social status or a certain alternative

[6] Immaterial labor refers to "*less-tangible symbolic and social dimensions*" of production (Dyer-Witheford & de Peuter 2009, p. 4). Indeed, it produces immaterial commodities such as culture, knowledge, information, feelings, and experiences (Wilson, 2018).

way of feeling. As d'Ovidio (2016) argues all of this happens with high social costs, since this model has led to a strong polarization of society, the worsening of the process of individualization and competition of social life. Thus, in the last decades, cities have become points of tension and critical nodes in the evolving scalar politics of neoliberalization as well as environments where the commodification of culture, and particularly music, is most visibly manifested. The so-called "neoliberal urbanism" can be explained as the combination of two, intertwined, processes:

> On the one hand, cities today are embedded within a highly uncertain geo-economic environment, characterized by monetary instability, speculative movements of financial capital, global location strategies by major transnational corporations and intensifying interlocal competition. […] On the other hand, neoliberal programs have also been directly 'interiorized' into urban policy regimes as newly formed territorial alliances attempt to rejuvenate local economies through a 'shock treatment' of deregulation, privatization, liberalization and enhanced fiscal austerity (Peck at al. 2009, pp. 57-58).

Neoliberal urbanism can be therefore understood as an open-ended process that exploits and (re-)produces uneven socio-spatial differences and it is characterized by geographical variability, trans-locality and multi-scalarity (Brenner et al., 2010).

The discussion can be expanded to include not only the neoliberalization of urbanism, but also the urbanization of neoliberalism: indeed, "*cities have become the incubators for, and generative nodes within, the reproduction of neoliberalism as a 'living' institutional regime*" (Peck et al. 2009, p. 65). Urbanization is a structurally conflictual terrain: what is called "city" appears as an unstable, dynamic, and conflictual space produced by urbanization, the fruit of a continuous discarding (Guareschi & Rahola, 2015). The city can be understood therefore as the frontier of capitalistic accumulation. In the wake of Lefebvre (1974), it can be argued that the entire urban texture has become an essential part of post-Fordist, late-capitalist models of production within the broader context of neoliberalization. However, as Soja and Kanai (2006) explain,

> urbanism as a way of life, once confined to the historical central city, has been spreading outwards, creating urban densities and new 'outer' and 'edge' cities in what were formerly suburban fringes and green field or rural sites. In some areas, urbanization has expanded on even larger regional scales, creating giant urban galaxies with population sizes and degrees of polycentricity far beyond anything imagined only a few decades ago. […] [I]n some cases city regions are coalescing into even larger agglomerations in a process that can be called 'extended regional urbanization' (ivi, p. 58).

Therefore, the urban must be understood as a theoretical concept, a "concrete abstraction" – as I will argue in more detail in section 4.1.2. on scales, scaling and rescaling processes, and the "urban" form –

> in which the contradictory socio-spatial relations of capitalism (commodification, capital circulation, capital accumulation, and associated forms of political regulation/contestation) are at once territorialized (embedded within concrete contexts and thus fragmented) and generalized (extended across place, territory, and scale and thus universalized) (Brenner 2013, p. 95).

In this perspective, many authors have emphasized the importance of placing urbanization, rather than the urban, at the center of analysis, and of examining the exploitative dynamics that characterize this process on material, political and economic scales (Graham & Marvin, 2001; Kahn, 2005; Brenner, 2013; Guareschi & Rahola, 2015). For instance, Brenner (2013) argues that "*today spatial difference no longer assumes the form of an urban/rural divide but is articulated through an explosion of developmental patterns and potentials within a thickening, if unevenly woven, fabric of worldwide urbanization*" (ivi, p. 99). This trajectory must be therefore connected to "*larger-scale processes of territorial reorganization, circulation (of labor, commodities, raw materials, nutrients, and energy), and resource extraction that ultimately encompass the space of the entire world*" (ivi, pp. 103-104). In the wake of Brenner (2013), there is a dialectic between concentration and agglomeration and extension of the urban fabric (including the intensification of interspatial connectivity across places, territories and scales), which has become an essential analytical, empirical and political horizon for any critical theory of urbanization of the twenty-first century that attempts to answer to the theoretical questions: "Is there an urban *form* and/or an urban *process*?", and "What are the contemporary evolving geographies of urbanization?". Therefore, while formulas such as diffuse city, gentrification, urbanized territory and the revival of centers seem to suggest the persistent centrality of the urban as a core that catalyzes and synthetizes material and immaterial production, the advancement of knowledge and academic research, cultural styles and new forms of consumption, as well as practices of resistance, the urban dimension seems to have expanded to the point of losing its own unity. Nowadays, the urban

> tends to present itself as a heterogeneous conformation of locations and places whose connection builds on and results in the disconnection of other immediately adjacent locations and places. In other words, what we continue to call the city today appears primarily as an irregular mosaic, a chaining of archipelagos and enclaves that exceeds any unitary assumptions and any nexus of proximity and distance (Guareschi & Rahola 2015, p. 74, my translation).

This process can be summarized with the concept of "splintering urbanism" (Graham & Marvin, 2011), which encapsulates the set of processes that go beyond the urban form, capturing the essence of urbanization, and shifting the discourse from "*the urban as a linear overlay of scales, to more complex dynamics of urbanization, understood as a set of processes of rescaling that transcend any discrete principle of scalarity*" (Guareschi & Rahola 2015, p. 27, my translation). This concept also implies the analysis of the material fabric of relations and processes of capitalist urbanization – recognizing that the urban is a project of scalability –, rather than the urban as an abstract notion (again, understanding it as a concrete abstraction). The urban and the city, therefore, articulate and fragment into a spatial continuum losing any discrete dimension and unitary matrix: absolute centrality is thus given to "*the boundaries that cut through cities and disarticulate the very idea of the urban along the uncertain fault line that separates the territorial city and urbanized territory*" (ivi, p. 30, my translation). The result of these processes of rescaling and splintering determines a series of homology and differentiation relations:

> On the one hand, to impose itself is a violently common image, through the serial reproduction of similar dynamics (the central role of symbolic economy and immaterial production, the creation of urban rent, financialization, governance, gentrification, etc.) behind which logics of accumulation act based on an articulated extractive machine; on the other hand, individual cities diversify hierarchically among and within themselves (ivi, p. 31, my translation).

The central role of city and urban boundaries emerges: the internal ones, which compose and decompose the territory of the city, and the more general ones that identify the urban as the new frontier of capital. In this perspective, urban sites can be read through the notion of "multi-scalar friction" (Rahola, 2014). Conflict is therefore central in the understanding of the dynamics of valorization of spaces, which can also point the way to new collective formations. As also Peck and colleagues (2009) argue,

> just as cities are frequently positioned at the frontiers of neoliberal policy formation, experimentation and implementation, so too do they become sites of concerted resistance to global, national and local neoliberalization projects (ivi, p. 65).

Indeed, urban boundaries can be identified not only as frontiers, but also as battlegrounds, fields of struggle and resistance. It is in this context that the notions "explosion of spaces" (Lefebvre, 1974) and "right to the city" (Harvey, 1989b) emerge. With the words of Guareschi & Rahola (2015),

> speaking of the current form of the city in terms of urbanization means alluding to this explosion of spaces. And it requires, first and foremost, the reading of such an explosion as a continuous

> friction: between striated and smooth surfaces, between heterogeneous, pre-, neo- or post-capitalist temporalities, between what still traces back to an order, a scale, a form, and what instead exceeds that striation as a continuous production of interstices (ivi, p. 38, my translation).

Once again, the explosion of spaces can be interpreted both as the morphological dispersion of the city and as a social, political and epistemological fragmentation that solicits new modalities of action within the urban spaces. Urbanization can be understood as a permanent state of tension, where logics of economic enhancement and instances of spatial justice collide. The notion of "right to the city" itself, therefore, must be understood not only as the claim for access to urban spaces, but also as the collective right to (re)produce urban space, to determine ways of inhabiting, living in, and organizing the city. In a context marked by the increasing commodification of urban spaces, this means resisting the reduction of urban life to the logics of extraction; valorization and governance and reclaiming spaces of autonomy, interstitiality and collective experimentation where new political subjectivities and new forms of urbanity can emerge. Urban fragmentarity, represented through the concept of splintering urbanism, makes the possibility of conflict more diffuse and necessary. This implies a radical politicization of the urban space, opening a conflict between use and exchange value, collective needs and the imperatives of rent, social reproduction and capital accumulation.

1.2. Conceptualizing gentrification

One mechanism that not only is unleashed by neoliberal urbanization, but is also a symbol of it, is gentrification. Indeed, as Hackworth (2007) states, it "*can serve as a revealing window into much broader processes like neoliberalism*" (ivi, p. 123). Particularly, gentrification can be understood not only as a process related to urban renewal leading to the arrival of higher income residents (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Lees at al., 2008), but also as a broader cultural and social process related to the commodification of culture and everyday life (Kern, 2022). Therefore, in the next two paragraphs I will analyze these two perspectives, ultimately conceptualizing gentrification as a "*urban form of capitalism*", with the aim of understanding how it "*subsumes urban practices that were once developed as alternatives to urban capitalism*" (Aalbers 2023, p. 38).

1.2.1. Gentrification as a process of urban renewal

Much like the debate surrounding neoliberalization, the discourse on gentrification processes is longstanding and multifaceted. Since its first formulation in Ruth Glass's seminal study on post-

World War II London (1964), the term "gentrification" has evolved significantly, assuming different meanings and analytical emphases across time periods and geographical contexts; indeed, like neoliberalization, "*it is highly dependent on contextual causality*" (Maloutas 2011, p. 34). Following Wyly (2023), there is some degree of consensus around three defining characteristics of gentrification. Particularly, it takes place in

> 1) inner-city neighborhoods, where 2) poor and working-class residents are replaced or displaced by middle- or upper-class resident, through 3) the combined effects of wider societal changes that alter the socio-cultural meanings of urban living, and the land-market economics that can make reinvestment into 'downgraded' inner-city districts extremely profitable (ivi, p. 11).

However, Wyly continues, gentrification is far more than a neighborhood-scale process, and for this reason it is necessary to consider "*the interdependencies between local and extra-local processes*" (ivi, p. 12), by analyzing – once again – the circulation of capital, and thus understanding "*neighborhoods, housing conditions, occupational groupings, consumption preferences, and even the legal and institutional specifics of displacement, rent, tenure and property*" as part of a "*deeper essence in the ontology – the nature of being – in an urban world:* competition" (ivi, p. 13). Indeed, "*considering the context makes it clear that the essence of gentrification is the urban evolution of human competition*" (ibid.). At the core of this competition lies homeownership. As Rossi (2013) argues, homeownership, especially in the 1980s at the time of neoliberalism's rise as an ideology and a government practice, "*was considered central to the building of an increasingly individualized and consumption-based society, since the possession of a home was thought to offer a sense of belonging and 'ontological security'*" (ivi, p. 1069).

With attention to the historical expansion of homeownership, pursued through deregulation of housing finance, land-use regulation and often predatory lending practices (Rolnik, 2013) under the conditions of capital accumulation, five "waves" of gentrification can be identified.

The first three waves were theorized by Hackworth and Smith (2001) in their seminal paper *The Changing State of Gentrification*. Here, the authors argue that in the first-wave gentrification, "*disinvested inner-city housing* […] *became a target for reinvestment. While highly localized, these instances of gentrification were often significantly funded by the public sector*", as "*local and national governments sought to counteract the private-market economic decline of central city neighborhoods*" (ivi, p. 466). This first phase is prior to the economic recession of 1973, provoked by the international oil embargo that brought to the fall of profit rates and in the increasing global competition. In the resulting second wave, which coincides with the roll-back phase of

neoliberalization, gentrification took a more *laissez-faire* form, geographically expanding to include a larger part of the city, but also internationally. In this phase,

> gentrification is no longer simply a process of class-residential change, but extends into cultural and commercial spheres. The presence of arts and culture, either implicitly or explicitly, often functions as a 'soft factor' attracting new flows of capital into these neighborhoods (Aalbers 2023, p. 33).

The stock market crash of 1987 provided warning signs of another recession (early 1990s) that mutated the shapes of gentrification processes again. Thus, the third-wave gentrification was characterized by at least four aspects:

> First, gentrification is expanding both within the inner-city neighborhoods that it affected during earlier waves and to more remote neighborhoods beyond the immediate core. Second, restructuring and globalization in the real estate industry has set a larger context for larger developers becoming more involved in gentrifying neighborhoods (Logan, 1993; Coakley, 1994; Ball, 1994). While such developers used to be common in the process only after the neighborhood had been 'tamed' (Zukin, 1982; Ley, 1996), they are now increasingly the first to orchestrate investment. Third, effective resistance to gentrification has declined as the working class is continually displaced from the inner city, and as the most militant anti-gentrification groups of the 1980s morph into housing service providers. Fourth, […], the state is now more involved in the process than [in] the second wave (Hackworth & Smith 2001, p. 468).

Therefore, with the third wave gentrification processes, market-led urban public policies and commodification of urban space became more generalized (Smith, 2002), and gentrification was no longer about the small-scale and bottom-up initiatives as in the first wave. In this phase gentrification also expanded outside the inner-city core into more peripheral urban, and rural, areas. Moreover, "*it centers on the role of the (local) state as an investigator, catalyst or sponsor of the socio-spatial restructuring of the city*" (Aalbers 2023, p. 32). Third-wave gentrification is particularly known as "state-led gentrification" because it was about "*how the local authorities and national state use their regulatory and financial powers to enable – and indeed, to boost – profits made by private developers*" (ivi, p. 34).

A fourth wave of gentrification was theorized, among other authors, by Lees and colleagues (2008). It combines "*an intensified financialization of housing […] with the consolidation of pro-gentrification politics and polarized policies*" (ivi, p. 179). In this phase, gentrification consolidates as the dominant model of urban regeneration. However, the authors argue that this wave is specific to US, as it is only in the US that housing credit has been so extensively deregulated (as evidenced

by the subprime mortgage crisis). Moreover, public-private partnerships were also more advanced and entrenched in the US than in other contexts. The authors also place this wave of gentrification between the dot-com crash of the early 2000s and the financial crisis of 2007 that later spread globally. Indeed, in this context, there has been a massive switching of capital into real estate investments. For this reason, the following fifth wave of gentrification is known as "finance-led gentrification":

> This is not simply about the financial sector facilitating homeownership through mortgages (as in earlier waves), but also about finance taking a stronger foothold through the rise of corporate landlords (i.e. landlords backed by international capital markets) and platform capitalism (e.g. Airbnb) (Aalbers 2023, p. 36).

The gentrification frontier "*is not only rolled out to new areas but already gentrifying areas also experience new waves of investment. Local investment remains strong in many areas, but is now supplemented by global investment*" (ibid.). Particularly, individual investors, and especially the transnational wealth elites, have begun to acquire residential properties as a form of asset diversification – a "safe deposit box" to store their excess capital safely. However, "*such investments have manifold and extensive consequences for the urban fabric, including a disappearing sense of community, diminishing housing affordability and a loss of local economic opportunities*" (ibid.). This phenomenon is a key feature of housing financialization, that transforms housing in a financial asset for global funds and investment (REITs, REPE). In this phase, a dominant role is played by platform capitalism – primarily in the form of Airbnb – in channeling more capital into specific neighborhoods, e.g. those close to the center or those in cultural or creative areas, thus exacerbating rent gaps and reinforcing the logics of urban commodification. Particularly, Airbnb has pushed touristification of these neighborhoods "*not only resulting in house price inflation but increasingly also displacement, as* [it] *is often used throughout the year and thereby relegating long-term tenants to other districts*" (ivi, p. 37). Finally, as regards the role of state institutions,

> state continues to display many of its third and fourth-wave features, that is, state assistance plays an increasingly dominant role in facilitating private investment, not only in inner cities but increasingly also in other parts of the urban region (ibid.).

The state-support of gentrification is often considered natural, as if it is the duty of the state to support private investment. For this reason, in the fifth wave gentrification appears not only generalized but also increasingly naturalized.

However, following the "wave thinking" first proposed by Hackworth and Smith (2001), it could be argued that after the Covid-19 pandemic and the intensification of the climate crisis we are

assisting to the rising of a sixth wave of gentrification that is producing new geographies of reinvestment, displacement and revalorization. Moreover, rising unemployment, housing precarity and infection rates have disproportionately affected low-income households of renters, exacerbating inequality and producing uneven racial and gender impacts (Crosby & Nordstrom, 2024). For instance, Florida and colleagues (2023), discussing the effects of the pandemic on urban economic geography at the intra- and inter-regional geographic scales, argue the possibility of a remote work urbanism: telework could have a significant impact on mobility, transport and real estate, reshaping the urban hierarchies and redirecting demand and capital flows to suburban and exurban peripheries.

Added to the post-pandemic urban restructuring, this wave is characterized also by the financialization of climate resilience. Particularly, climate changes such as the rising of the sea levels, extreme weather events or heat waves are producing or accelerating social displacement in certain urban and non-urban areas. Population, therefore, shifts toward climatically "safer" areas (e.g., high-elevation geographies, inland and green cities) giving rise to the so-called "climate gentrification", which is based on the following proposition: "*climate change impacts arguably make some property more or less valuable by virtue of its capacity to accommodate a certain density of human settlement and its associated infrastructure*" (Keenan et al. 2018, p. 2).

The sixth wave of gentrification is therefore encompassed by ecological, digital and post-metropolitan modalities of gentrification, fueled by global finance, platform capitalism and green governance. This results in new forms of displacement and uneven development embedded in the logics of climate adaptation, public health, and digital connectivity.

In the analysis of gentrification as an urban renewal process, it emerges the importance of the conceptual framework of splintering urbanism. Indeed, processes of scaling and rescaling produce fragmented urban landscapes, and gentrification is both a driver and an outcome of these spatial transformations. On one hand, splintering urbanism creates the material and symbolic conditions for gentrification: "splintered" but strategically relocatable areas (e.g. ex-industrial neighborhoods, well-connected interstitial areas) become objects of reinvestment. On the other, gentrification accentuates splintering by producing luxury enclaves, creating special exclusivity, reinforcing the unequal distribution of services and accelerating the marginalization of the working classes. Understanding these interdependencies is crucial for decoding how neoliberal urbanization produces complex geographies of inequality in contemporary cities that go beyond the urban/non-urban dichotomy.

1.2.2. Gentrification as a process of (self-)commodification

Gentrification, however, as mentioned above, can also be interpreted as a broader process of commodification of culture and everyday life. It functions as a metaphor for processes of mainstreaming and appropriation that extend beyond cities and urban boundaries. In this latter perspective, one effect is the marginalization of critical culture through a widespread exercise of discrediting, exclusion, and censorship (Tozzi, 2023), and another is the co-optation of cultural practices, leading to their neutralization and depoliticization, fueling gentrification in a spiraling vortex of urban economy competition.

Particularly, since the second wave when it took a more *laissez-faire* form, gentrification extended also into cultural and commercial spheres. As Zukin (1987) states, gentrification appears as a multidimensional cultural practice, connoting "*both a mode of high-status cultural consumption and the colonization of an expanding territory by economic institutions associated with the service sector*" (ivi, pp. 143-4). As mentioned above, with cities transitioning to post-Fordism starting from the 1980s – that also partially coincides with the roll-back phase of neoliberalization and the second wave of gentrification –, culture and creativity have been identified as central factors in the urban policies development and urban marketing strategies, "*aimed at supporting the economic vitality of city-regions, and especially the ability of cities to compete for resources in the context of globalization and intensified inter-urban competition*" (Borén & Young 2013, p. 1800). In addition,

> through processes of globalization, digitalization and economic re-structuring, cities have become a preferred site for cultural and creative production and have inspired the 'creative city' paradigm as one of the most influential urban development approaches in the last two decades (Landau & Merkel 2019, pp. 111-2).

That of "creative city" is a term adopted to describe urban areas with a high concentration of workers in creative professions. Moreover, following this paradigm, cities should be welcoming, tolerant and characterized by a certain degree of cultural and social diversity in order to be able to attract and retain more "creative people" – again, the so-called "creative class" (Florida, 2002).

Between the 1990s and 2000s, not only the concept of creativity, but also that of culture and art were intensively used by both academics and policymakers to understand and reinvent their cities, which were hit by deep economic crises and social transformations (d'Ovidio, 2016). However, added to this, there is the implicit hegemonic project of "*favoring a particular type of culture (that appeals to a modern, or cosmopolitan, sensibility) over local or indigenous styles*" (Pratt 2011, p. 125). The neoliberal city, therefore, promotes only one version of culture and creativity: the one that re-positions

the city as an idealized space of consumption, while "*all cultural forms that do not contribute to promoting the image of the city, or to its economic growth, are generally dismissed as irrelevant*" (d'Ovidio & Cossu 2017, p. 7). Furthermore,

> city authorities often uncritically reproduce simplistic notions of creativity, despite critiques which highlight the potentially negative redistributive effects, i.e. public funding is spent on large-scale mainstream cultural resources to make cities 'attractive' as opposed to social welfare, education, healthcare or supporting other forms of creativity (Borén & Young 2013, p. 1081).

Indeed, gentrification processes transform the city "*by throwing out the poor and the working class, including people who have chosen to dedicate their lives to non-profit activities such as art, activism, social experimentation, and social services*" (Tozzi 2023, p. 38, my translation). Due to gentrification, on one side, neighborhoods can fill with life, and they can witness a sudden increase in the value of the land – also triggering financialization processes (Aalbers, 2019). On the other side, however, the extreme valorization of spaces can desertify the cultural terrain of a city – also leading to a process of co-optation of culture for urban marketing purposes. Conversely, cultural expressions – including music scenes that typically arise in urban environments (see Chapter 2) – which do not align with these mechanisms and resist commodification are often marginalized and even expelled not only from city centers but also urban contexts.

Another aspect of this process of co-optation concerns the fact that

> those who were, and would still be, the most suitable potential political subjects to claim the right to the city, most resistant to the monoculture of the consumption-rent-privatization cycle, namely activists, low-income residents, students, artists, critical intellectuals, social workers, and the unemployed are captured by means of a redundant cultural framework. Their political demands are transformed into entrepreneurial possibilities, participation understood as democratic power-sharing into an ambiguous and weak form of consultancy (Tozzi 2023, p. 62, my translation).

Hence, every cultural practice may be instrumentalized for urban marketing purposes, potential opponents can become stakeholders, and everything can be monetizable. And even what was supposed to be "counterculture", now neutralized and depoliticized, ends up feeding gentrification, in a spiraling vortex of competition – a structural principle to be exploited at every scale. Particularly, in the context of this research, counterculture is understood as one practice of resistance to gentrification, which is also often, as already stated, "*at risk of being hijacked by new forms of economic development such as 'the creative city' or falling into the trap of 'the commodification of culture of resistance'*" (Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso 2023, p. 344).

Counterculture is defined as a set of cultural practices, values, and symbolic forms that reject or subvert dominant social norms, ideologies and institutional structures of a given society. In urban contexts, it can manifest as spatial and aesthetic practices that challenge the dominant use of the city, including informal occupation of spaces (for example, squatting), DIY cultural production, and the creation of autonomous zones or temporary urban commons. While it can act both symbolically and materially as a form of resistance to gentrification, it remains vulnerable to the material and social processes of exclusion and censorship because it depends on affordable, marginal urban spaces that are incompatible with the profit-driven logic of urban redevelopment and valorization. Consequently, spaces that nurture alternative cultural expressions risk being co-opted, sanitized, or erased in the process of urban renewal. However, as I will argue in this thesis, it is also mandatory to not overlap spatial marginality with countercultural production: although countercultural practices often arise in marginal (non-)urban spaces, not all cultural expressions rooted in such contexts are explicitly resistant to dominant cultural and economic logics. Indeed, paraphrasing Becker (1983), alternative and countercultural activities should not be considered as separated from the mainstream cultural world, but as part of the "art world".

1.2.3. Displacement and practices of resistance to gentrification

In this context, the concept of displacement is crucial. It can be understood as a key consequence of gentrification processes and more broadly as the "*exclusion of people from one or more current crucial uses of a particular area of land or other territories*" (Penz et al. 2011, p. 16). Eviction, for instance, can be interpreted as a sub-category of displacement: it is "*the permanent and involuntary expulsion of people from their place of residence*" (Slater in Annunziata & Lees 2016, p. 3). Displacement and eviction, however, just like gentrification, do not only affect residential communities, but they can also extend to cultural practices, scenes and spaces – especially those more vulnerable to processes of gentrification and urban redevelopment. Indeed, they can rely on spatial and social conditions that are frequently incompatible with the logic of urban valorization, making them susceptible, as argued above, to marginalization, co-optation, or outright expulsion from the urban fabric. Therefore, displacement can be understood as both physical and symbolic, permeating everyday life.

Especially after the 2008 economic crisis, displacement has been framed as a collective problem, at least in the urban areas (Annunziata & Lees, 2016) and many anti-displacement movements emerged as a practice of resistance to gentrification processes related to both housing and culture.

These movements can be rooted into the need for the "right to the city", as Marcuse (2009) argues, to "*expose, propose and politicize*" the urban space. Indeed, scholars nowadays, recognize the emergence of a "*new logic of expulsion*" (Sassen 2014, p. 3), which encompasses different forms of gentrification and injustices (Lees et al., 2016).

Building on these dynamics of exclusion and marginalization, different practices of resistance have emerged among affected communities and urban actors, aiming to challenge the impacts of gentrification on both housing and cultural fronts. Drawing from Annunziata and Rivas-Alonso (2023), it is possible to open the notion of resistance to gentrification asking:

> Which specific set of practices can be catalogued under the label 'gentrification resistance' today? Under which circumstances do it overtly and covertly unfold? […] Moreover, could resistance to displacement be a reactionary concept? In other words, are we referring to the creation of alternative or simply to oppositional, defensive practices? (ivi, p. 336).

These questions lay the foundations to comprehend that resistance to gentrification "*is a set of complex practices that should be pluralized and problematized in relation to its scope, its agents and its intentionality*" (ibid.). Indeed, the field of resistance is characterized both by "*politically conscious, overtly oppositional, intentional and visible practices*" and by "*non-politicized, covert, unintentional, informal and deliberately invisible practices of everyday life*" (ivi, p. 337). Particularly, it is possible to argue that resistance to gentrification "*seeks to occupy, deploy and create alternative spatialities from those defined through oppression and exploitation*" (Pile in Rose 2002, p. 3). However, under the new logic of expulsion, practices "*that counter gentrification are also identity-based and have much more micro, less visible dimensions*" (Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso 2023, p. 337). Therefore,

> as much as resistance to gentrification can be collective, politically organized and visible, it can also be highly heterogeneous, somehow contradictory and incoherent, reflecting the intimate conflicting feelings of individuals, deliberately invisible, unconscious and practiced in solitude (ibid.).

This also means that resistance to gentrification is intrinsically linked to scale and to the possibility to navigate across scales: from the embodied, individual level to the household, and extending up to the national and global levels (Smith, 1992). Furthermore, resistance must be contextualized. As Mayer (2013) argues, anti-gentrification struggles are embedded within the variegated and fragmented neoliberal order and the field of urban social movements. Summarizing, it happens "*at different levels of engagement and in constant relation to other processes (what today*

is resistance tomorrow can be compliance), from the forces it seeks to overcome to multi-scalar hegemonic fault lines" (Annunziata & Rivas-Alonso 2023, p. 348).

In this framework, therefore, resistance to gentrification is not conceptualized as a monolithic or inherently oppositional force, but as a set of situated and heterogenous practices that emerge in response to the uneven restructuring of urban space. Particularly, drawing on Scott (1985) theorization, with resistance I mean those activities, techniques and resources enacted by individuals at the micro, meso and macro levels to voice their dissent, to regain possession of space, to construct meanings of aggregation and participation, and more in general, to undermine forms of power.

However, as previously mentioned, resistance must also be understood in its complexity and ambivalence. As several scholars have argued (see Zukin, 2009; Lees et al., 2016), practices originating as countercultural – such as DIY music scenes or autonomous cultural spaces – are often absorbed, neutralized, or rebranded within urban regeneration strategies that exploit creativity and authenticity as tools of urban branding and place marketing. Often, cultural actors themselves rely on market mechanisms for visibility, funding, or survival, thereby reproducing the very logics of commodification they may symbolically contest (Peck, 2005; Novy & Colomb, 2013). This dynamic illustrates what Harvey (2012) describes as the "contradictions of the right to the city", where resistance risks being co-opted by urban entrepreneurialism (Watson & Taylor, 2016). Therefore, rather than analyzing resistance as inherently subversive, this research adopts a situated perspective, paying attention to the tensions, compromises and entanglements that exist within neoliberal urban structures.

In summary of this chapter, it derives that by conceiving neoliberalism as a political and economic project is possible to observe its features across interlinked dimensions (cultural, economic, social, and urban) and at different levels (micro, meso, macro). Within this framework, gentrification emerges as both a mechanism and a symptom of neoliberal urbanization – articulated through processes of urban renewal and cultural (self-)commodification. By focusing on displacement and the co-optation of cultural practices for urban marketing purposes, this chapter has laid the groundwork for analyzing practices of resistance not as fixed oppositions, but as ambivalent, situated responses to urban transformations, and which can in turn be analyzed at the micro, meso and macro levels (in Chapter 2, this concept will be declined into more specific practices at each level). In this context, music scenes become a privileged site to investigate how alternative and countercultural production can embody, challenge, or navigate the uneven geographies of neoliberal urban change. Therefore, culture, and thus music, themselves can be conceptualized as a field of struggle, an arena of resistance.

Chapter 2. Independent music scenes and practices of resistance

As anticipated in the previous chapter, music scenes can be conceptualized as an arena of resistance against cultural and urban gentrification. From this perspective, it is important to understand their specificity in comparison with other sociological concepts such as subcultures, countercultures, and (neo-)tribes. This will be the focus of the first part of the current chapter. Next, a critical genealogy of the term "independence" will be provided, tracing its evolution from an economic position in the early 20th century to a cultural and political ethos rooted in the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) practices of the punk era. The discussion will then introduce the "practice turn" perspective, which provides a framework for analyzing resistance by focusing attention on multi-scalar practices that operate at the micro, meso, and macro levels. This framework articulates music-making and scene-building as forms of "artivism", simultaneously challenging dominant power structures and reshaping urban spaces.

2.1. Conceptualizing music scenes in relation to subcultures, countercultures, and neo-tribes

In this research, music scenes are understood as supra-local cultural spaces that encompass diverse musical practices, allowing for the creation of values and the expression of one's identity (Straw, 1991). In the debate on cultural formations, music scenes have emerged as a distinct concept, setting themselves apart from subcultures, countercultures, and (neo-)tribes.

Particularly, the concept of subculture can be traced back to the Chicago School as a means of explaining deviance and crime (see Jenks, 2004), but it was later adapted and developed by the cultural theorists based at Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). According to them, subcultures – often described with the adjectives of "youthful" and "spectacular" – emerged primarily within the *working-class* context, with music representing the central axis of subcultural style. Conversely, countercultures have been understood as an expression emerging within the *middle-class* context and oriented towards broader projects of social critique (Guareschi, 2023). While both subcultures and countercultures indicate a generational distance, or opposition to the dominant culture, their practices of resistance differ. Subcultures express opposition through symbolic practices such as style and cultural consumption, while countercultures aim for more explicit societal transformation by challenging institutions and suggesting alternative lifestyles (Roberts, 1978). As Guareschi (2023) notes, the subcultural perspective is not merely secessionist,

but rather "*aims to impact the rest of society, to provoke scandal, and to communicate a sense of estrangement with respect to prevailing and legitimized logics and lifestyles*" (ivi, p. 178, my translation). In line with Bourdieu's thinking, this entails the attempt to render "illegitimacy legitimate". Indeed, "*stigma functions as an element of authentication, while recognition is accompanied by the delegitimization, in terms of authenticity, of the subculture itself*" (ibid., my translation). For this reason, subcultures are defined as intrinsically resistant practices (Williams, 2007), acknowledging their at least symbolic political significance, even if this is not articulated in the constituent styles of militancy. Conversely, counterculture refers to a normative system of a group that contains,

> as a primary element, a theme of conflict with the values of the total society, where personality variables are directly involved in the development and maintenance of the group's values, and wherever its norms can be understood only by reference to the relationships of the group to a surrounding dominant culture (Yinger 1982, p. 23).

Within the field of Post-Subcultural Studies, however, the concept of counterculture has been addressed as "*a stable, coherent cultural entity seems oddly out of place given the loose affiliation of political, aesthetic and stylistic interests which found a fragile and temporal unity under the counter-cultural banner*" (Bennett 1999, p. 606). Similarly, scholars have proposed abandoning the concept of subculture, due to its inflexibility as an analytical tool, "*not least of all because it implies a relatively fixed relationship between specific aspects of post-war style and music with the class background of those who appropriate it*" (Bennett 2004, p. 225). Indeed, since the concept of subculture emerged in post-war Britain, several scholars have stressed that its analytical validity should not be detached from this specific socio-historical and geographical context. Extending the concept beyond post-war Britain would risk overlooking the fluidity and heterogeneity of contemporary youth formations.

Consequently, the alternative proposed is that of "neo-tribalism" (Maffesoli, 1996), understood as the outcome of a process of "deterritorialization" of identities and forms of belonging. From this perspective, affiliations are no longer determined by class, gender or ethnicity, but by "elective affinities" (Levy, 2001). Therefore, the analytical focus shifts from material – economic, social and political – conditions to the fluidification of experiences and self-representations, towards "*relational networks characterized by fluid temporal boundaries and floating forms of belonging*" (Corchia 2017, p. 311, my translation). The concept of neo-tribe highlights the ephemeral, plural, localized, and fluid nature of musical preferences and youth aggregations (Maffesoli, 1996; Bennett, 1999).

However, the main limitation of Post-Subcultural Studies is their "adaptive" perspective on social action, which demonstrates a reluctance to examine "*the context in which the cultural beliefs and practices of young people emerge and develop*" (Corchia 2017, p. 312, my translation). Since the beginning of 2000s, there has been a resurgence of themes such as economic inequality, political domination and social discrimination. As Guareschi (2023) notes, in recent decades,

> characterized by the increasing privatization of public spaces, the proliferation of control and surveillance tools, and the selective hyper-sanctioning of behaviors that do not fit into a commercial perspective, the demand for and practice of collective aggregation and alternative use of spaces, self-production of leisure, and escape from mechanisms of selection and discipline [acquire] an immediate political nature, as well as an economic value (ivi, p. 182, my translation).

In this context, the concept of scene has gained increasing importance for analyzing cultural practices. Scenes can be understood as micro-spaces in which – using Goffman's vocabulary – people experiment new identities, play specific social roles and perform for an everyday audience (Ferreira, 2016). A scene is composed not only of people but also of roles that describe the activities carried out within it. In this sense, there are musicians, audiences, curators, producers, managers, event organizers, club owners, and so on. Furthermore, roles imply norms, rules, and places that can be understood as general instructions allowing a certain degree of freedom and creativity, but that also determine organization, boundaries, and habitus of the scene. Resuming Straw's (1991) theorization, the scene can be understood as a "field" (Bourdieu, 1979): a space of symbolic circulation in which musical practices interpenetrate with other artistic, economic, political, and social practices recognized, internally and externally, as endowed with a certain degree of coherence and organization. From a Bourdieusian perspective, access to and participation in scenes is mediated by economic and cultural capital. This determines, for example, who can travel to concerts, purchase instruments and records, and contribute to cultural production. These forms of capital influence not only inclusion and recognition, but also the internal dynamics of the scene, shaping trajectories of change and cross-fertilization. Building on this, the notion of scene emphasizes both the circulation of cultural practices and their embeddedness in specific territorial, trans-local, and virtual networks (Bennett & Peterson, 2004). It is important to recognize the role of class, gender, and economic resources in structuring opportunities, hierarchies, and forms of recognition within cultural fields. This also makes it possible to consider the social and spatial inequalities that shape music scenes (Silver et al., 2010), offering a more situated understanding of cultural practices – one that acknowledges their entanglement with urban contexts, political economies, and power relations (Vivant & Morteau, 2020).

2.2. Music scenes in urban contexts: local, trans-local and virtual scenes

As anticipated in the previous section, a crucial aspect of music scenes is their rootedness in the territorial and urban contexts. Indeed, the concept of scene evokes, on the one hand, the territorialized organization of artistic activities that generate novelty and, on the other, a particular urban atmosphere linked to the way cultural activities are embedded in a territory and the values shared by the different stakeholders of this territory. According to Vivant and Morteau (2020),

> a scene is therefore an ecosystem comprising stakeholders, places, networks and values, as well as customs and protocols that are inherent to a domain which is both the product of a territory and a component of its identity (ivi, p. 2).

Particularly, recent scholarship has explicitly drawn on the notion of cultural ecosystem to emphasize the dense network of interdependencies that connects actors, organizations, and cultural practices within specific contexts (Bertacchini et al., 2022). That of ecosystem can be defined as "*a new framework for studying interrelated domains of cultural and creative activity that allows researchers to extend and connect their understanding across disciplines and scales (micro, meso and macro)*" (de Bernard et al. 2022, p. 349). In this sense, the concept of scene complements that of ecosystem in capturing the relational and dynamic character of cultural life. Bellevance and Guibert (2014) state that

> the use of the term "scene" – in forms such as local scene, urban scene, cultural scene – must first and foremost be linked to the resurgence of the role of physical space and, more broadly, the materiality of facts and representations in the social sciences since the beginning of the 21st century (ivi, p. 5, my translation).

Understanding scenes as cultural ecosystems, moreover, implies adopting an ecological approach to culture, which means focusing on "*the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings*" (Markusen et al. 2011, p. 8). This approach does not privilege economic value over cultural or symbolic value (Holden, 2015). Moreover, it enables

> an analysis of the complex power dynamics that unfold between all the actors involved. This perspective allows for a critical examination of the resources available to each actor, as well as the negotiations and exchanges that structure their relationship (Manzano et al. 2025, p. 4).

Indeed, the ecological approach to cultural production

> sheds light on the power dynamics within cities by focusing on the interdependencies between actors in the use, exchange and negotiation of resources within the arts system, which are key elements of urban competitiveness (ibid.).

In this perspective, by framing scenes as cultural ecosystems through an ecological approach, attention shifts to the web of interdependencies that connect cultural practices to the broader urban context in which they are embedded. Furthermore, the object of research is not only artistic and/or cultural production, but also the aesthetic, expressive, and performative dimensions of the city, which manifest themselves precisely in its various scenes that are simultaneously cultural and urban.

The concept of scene is therefore a flexible one, capable of capturing the continuity and constant transformation that characterize social worlds. Scenes are, in fact, a pivotal aspect of the social imagination of urban life and are typically understood as vaguely defined social worlds oriented towards forms of cultural expression. They are set in the fabric of everyday life but also function as an alternative to the ordinary world. Drawing from Straw's (2001) theorization and recognizing the innovative nature of the concept of "grounded mobility" developed by the author to evoke the dual articulation of national and trans-national scenes, locally anchored and cosmopolitan at the same time, Clark and Silver (2014) argue that the notion of scene "*is a powerful conceptual tool that allows us to discern the extent and configurations of meanings expressed by various places, thus making the local character of cultural life perceptible*" (ivi, p. 38, my translation). This concept, indeed, brings out flexible sets of local meanings – multiple and variously linked to each other. Furthermore, as previously emphasized, it is linked to the concept of "lifestyle", since it encompasses the cultural meanings expressed through the practices of people who determine the identity of a place. The cultural elements of a scene can thus be found in many different places, and their specificities can be understood by comparing how they are configured and articulated within different socio-spatial contexts.

However, as several authors have highlighted (see Straw, 1991; 2001; Bennett & Peterson, 2004), scenes cannot be reduced to local ecosystems, as they often operate through trans-local connections. Indeed, they are not confined to a single physical or symbolic place, but rather they emerge through networks of interconnected localities, where flows of people, aesthetics and practices circulate. In this sense, scenes are both embedded in specific urban contexts and stretched across multiple geographies, allowing local practices to acquire new meanings and resonance through their articulation with other contexts. Music events, touring circuits, digital platforms, merchandise and fanzines build infrastructures that enable scenes to circulate, thus making them both "grounded" and "mobile".

Since the mid-1990s the Internet has played an increasingly important role in everyday life. Bennett (2004) introduced the concept of virtual scenes to explain how digital infrastructures (blogs, forums, and social media) transform cultural participation by enabling geographically dispersed individuals to share cultural practices, aesthetics, and discourses. In this sense, virtual scenes connect different local contexts by providing additional channels for visibility, exchange, and recognition. They enable cultural practices to be anchored in specific places, while simultaneously expanding across trans-local networks.

However, the formation and persistence of scenes depend on the unequal distribution of cultural capital, economic resources, and spatial opportunities, which often mirror broader patterns of urban stratification. At the same time, these inequalities are negotiated and rearticulated within scenes themselves through everyday practices, symbolic boundaries, and collective imaginaries. In this sense, music scenes can become both mirrors and laboratories of social inequality: they reproduce dominant hierarchies while simultaneously offer alternative ways of belonging, creativity, and resistance. This is especially true for underground and DIY contexts, where access to affordable venues, autonomy from market logics, and collective self-organization are constantly threatened by processes of urban restructuring and gentrification. A situated analysis of scenes thus requires attention to how cultural practices are embedded in power relations and urban transformations, foregrounding the ways in which socio-spatial inequalities shape, and are shaped by, the lived experience of music and its networks.

What connects music scenes with local and urban contexts is the pursuit of authenticity, to which "*must be attributed the role of a powerful vector of the processes that redefine the functions and alter the socio-demographic composition of specific parts of large cities*" (Guareschi 2023, p. 162). Particularly, "*areas that are defined as authentic due to their urban, historical and, above all, social compositional characteristics, become objects of interest for higher-income residents*" (ivi, p. 163), thereby contributing to processes of gentrification. Authenticity is indeed a fundamental element in the self-representation of a music scene. It is constructed in relation to, and in negotiation with, a negative referent that consists of the mainstream lifestyles, dominant culture, and conformism. As Fine (2003) writes, "*the desire for authenticity occupies a central position in contemporary culture*" (ivi, p. 153). Within music scenes, it functions simultaneously as a marker of distinction and a guiding principle for participation, with the risk, however, of ending up reflecting mainstream culture, rather than resisting it. However, when codified as a normative model, practices aimed at asserting authenticity risk reproducing dominant cultural values and hierarchies, generating forms of internal conformism. In this sense, authenticity simultaneously operates as an internal process of defining and

establishing social and cultural boundaries that reinforce collective identity based on shared values, practices, styles and knowledge, and as an external process of projection, which – as Guareschi (2023) notes – reshapes "*the perception of places, objects and spaces*" and contributes to the "*construction of 'narratives' that are functional to the 'enrichment economies'*" (ivi, p. 172, my translation). Accordingly, authenticity not only organizes the internal dynamics of the scene, but also mediates its interactions with urban spaces, venues, objects, and cultural landmarks, with places considered "authentic" acquiring symbolic significance, attracting specific audiences, and influencing the cultural geography of the city. Therefore, rather than a fixed attribute, authenticity emerges as a negotiated, relational process that simultaneously structures social relations, spatial practices, and symbolic hierarchies within and beyond the scene.

2.3. Evolution of the concept of independence in the music world

In this research, the music scene under investigation – the screamo scene – self-defines and self-labels itself as "independent", since it positions itself outside institutional frameworks. In the broader music industries[7], the "*the term 'independents' usually refers simply to organizations that are not 'corporations', understood as vertically integrated, well financed and big*", but operating at a small and local scale (Hesmondhalgh & Meier 2015, p. 9). The concept of independence originated specifically within the context of recording music sector, reflecting the condition of the labels that, in contrast to major companies, "*do not control the means of the distribution of their physical recordings*" (Taylor 2016, p. 154).

Particularly, the distinction between major and independent record companies exists since music started being recorded: with the invention of the phonograph in 1877 and of the pre-recorded cylinders in 1889 – allowing music to be disseminated on a large scale – by Thomas Edison and with the introduction of the flat records in the late 1890s (available in different sizes: 5, 10 and 12 inches) that marked the beginning of vinyl. In the first decades of the 20st century, independence was associated with a movement of musicians and labels who sought to avoid reliance on major companies[8], producing music without the imperative to sell at all costs, using small record companies, or self-

[7] The term "music industries" is preferred over the singular music industry to acknowledge the plurality and diversity of sectors involved in musical production, dissemination, and commercialization (Williamson & Cloonan, 2007; Toynbee, 2000).

[8] A major record label is considered any label that has greater than 5% of the global market share and is part of a large international media group. Technically, the first record label was Edison Records (1888), while the second – still existing – is Columbia Records (also founded in 1888). Nowadays, there are three record labels recognised as "majors": Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group.

producing their own records. For instance, in the 1920s, some independent labels specialized in niche music genres such as vaudeville and folk blues (see Barlow, 1990), although most of them went in bankruptcy during the severe slump in the music industries caused by the Great Depression in the late 1920s and early1930s. The concept of musical independence re-emerged in the 1960s with rock'n'roll, R&B and country music, where independent artists who produced their own records were perceived as "*rebels against the corporate oligopoly, as defender of musical integrity, authenticity and expression against commodification and co-optation*" (Hesmondhalgh & Meier 2015, p. 97).

However, a more significant redefinition of independence occurred in the United Kingdom and the United States during the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the emergence of the punk and post-punk subcultures and the so-called "new wave". At that time, the term came to signify not only a structural or economic distinction from major companies, but also a cultural and political stance: an ethos of resistance to mainstream commodification, rooted in Do-It-Yourself (DIY) practices, collaboration, and experimentation.

Particularly, the signing of bands such as the Sex Pistols and The Clash with major labels (EMI and CBS[9] in the US, respectively) was perceived as "selling out", helping to fuel the growth of a new generation of labels inspired by the punk DIY ethos. Formed as "*a reaction against early punk's cynical (and anti-hippie) impulse to work with the major corporation*", these labels "*were the institutional embodiment of punk's famous commitment to access, propagated in fanzines and the music press and on record sleeves*" (Hesmondhalgh 1997, p. 257). Indeed, DIY approaches relied on relatively inexpensive means of production and access costs, "*especially when audiences affiliate*[d] *themselves with an aesthetic of rawness and energy rather than sophistication or complexity*" (Hesmondhalgh & Meier 2015, p. 97), that encouraged unskilled and untrained individuals to take control of the musical production.

A central feature of the punk DIY approach was the principle towards collaboration. By the early 1980s, in response to the decline in recorded music sales during the global recession, alternative networks of connection were created around the world between myriad local punk and post-punk scenes, challenging the dominance of multinational companies. For instance, the Canadian band Dead On Arrival pioneered a North American touring network that was later used by Black Flag and other hardcore bands, becoming a model for the entire independent music industry, including pioneering labels such as SST, Dischord and Alternative Tentacles (Azerrad 2001; Oakes, 2009; Spencer, 2008).

[9] Later bought by Sony Music Entertainment.

This approach represented a more reflexive and socially aware critique than the rock counterculture of the 1960s, as

> the organic intellectuals of post-punk inherited the 1960s counterculture's romantic opposition of art to commerce but added to it a recognition of the politics of musical production and circulation – the problem of getting products to audiences (ibid.).

Punk and post-punk independents counteracted the processes of concentration and oligopolization that had been typical of the music industries for much of the century. It was in these circumstances that the term "indie" evolved – initially in the United Kingdom – to refer to production and distribution; and it was therefore "*an encapsulation of the political-aesthetic hopes invested in small and decentralized recording industry institutions*" (ibid.).

By the 1990s, the compact disc (CD) had been widely adopted, and a system of independent labels continued to operate under the principles of autonomy and Do-It-Yourself. However, many labels had entered close financing, distribution, and marketing partnerships with major corporations. Consequently, the term "indie" came to denote a distinct popular music[10] genre. Initially a British phenomenon, it was subsequently subsumed under the category of "alternative rock" elsewhere, especially in the United States. However, the indie genre faced challenges related to its growing popularity. The stark contrast between post-punk independents who harshly rejected commercial methods such as video promotion and mainstream media exposure, and the commercially dominant pop industry that began to dominate charts, placed indie genre – which, in the meantime, was constructing a canon of white, underground rock references, and often marked by nostalgia, political conformity, and aesthetic traditionalism – on the periphery. It was only in the mid-1990s that a "new" version of indie had come to occupy the center ground of British music with bands such as Oasis and Blur. This neo-indie triumph, labelled "Britpop", had institutional foundations in post-punk, since many of the bands were or had been on labels fostered by the 1980s independent networks (Hesmondhalgh, 2010). Indeed, these bands emerged from companies that had survived the bankruptcies of the early 1990s and formed much closer ties with major corporations, suggesting an adherence to a more "entrepreneurial" notion of independence, as opposed to the emphasis on democratization of other independents. Furthermore, the consolidation of Britpop as a national phenomenon was heavily influenced by the British music press and mainstream cultural institutions,

[10] In this work, "popular music" refers to a field of musical production historically associated with industrialization and mass communication. Since the advent of sound recording, it has been shaped by cultural industries, mass-produced instruments, and commercial venues, making it both a cultural and an industrial phenomenon (see Bottà, 2020). The production, dissemination, and consumption of popular music are embedded in economic and technological infrastructures, linking artistic creation to processes of commodification and large-scale distribution.

contributing to the rebranding of "indie" as part of a broader cultural narrative. This marked the transition of independence from a countercultural practice to a mainstream category embedded within the logics of cultural and economic capital. By this stage, indie became to be understood as "*a set of sound and an attitude, rather than an aesthetic and institutional position*" (ivi, p. 51).

Finally, in the contemporary neoliberal context, music industries – like most cultural industries – have increasingly tended "*to take the form of an oligopoly of large companies with a very large market share, based on domination of distribution, financing and manufacture*" (Hesmondhalgh & Meier 2015, p. 94). Moreover, their economics "*disproportionately rewards big hits and the creation of stars who effectively act as brand names in markets where it is difficult for buyers to know what kinds of pleasures they might be getting in advance from any individual cultural product*" (ibidem). In this context, music independents tend to operate in market niches, struggling with the demise of retail, digitalization processes and advertising. As Taylor (2016) notes, under neoliberalism "*cultural goods* […] *are even more conceived and produced for exchange than they had been in the past*" (ivi, p. 78), implying that music is increasingly evident as a commodity rather than a symbolic good or gift. In this scenario, independent music no longer necessarily signals an anti-corporate ethos (in the punk and post-punk sense analyzed before), but more modestly an anti-major labels stance. Independent music can thus be interpreted as accommodated inside neoliberal capitalism[11], pragmatically embracing certain features of business to its related – e.g., crowdfunding initiatives, new production technologies, digital distribution mechanisms (see Postigo, 2015). Digitalization itself illustrates this ambivalence: it could be seen both as an obstacle (e.g., digital piracy and market saturation) for independents to produce and circulate music and as an instrument that could provide new parity between hits and niche media products, allowing for a "democratization" of popular musical production (see Young & Collins, 2010; Hracs, 2012), due to a radical reduction in costs associated with manufacturing, distribution, and bricks-and-mortar retailing (Anderson, 2006a).

A possible way for independent artists to escape the ever-expanding net of contemporary capitalism is focusing on restricted production (sub-field or small-scale production), in which musicians create music primarily for one another and for a small but dedicated audience. This often takes shape through the creation of "scenes", in the now-classical formulation of Straw (1991), already discussed in this chapter: supra-local cultural spaces encompassing a wide range of different musical practices, which allow to create values and express one's identity. Bourdieu (1993) conceptualized the field of restricted production as nearly synonymous with that of artistic production

[11] Indeed, it must be noted that "*musical independence continues to be circumscribed by one very important factor: financing*" (Hesmondhalgh & Meier 2015, p. 104).

itself, in opposition to the field of large-scale cultural production in general. This distinction, however, monolithizes the field of large-scale cultural production – seen as exclusively commercial – and creates an oppositional relationship with the restricted production, thereby overlooking the symbiotic relationships that often emerge between the two, in addition to the more predatory dynamics. Bourdieu further described small-scale or restricted production as marked by a relatively high degree of autonomy in producing "pure" artistic products, while mass production as oriented towards the manufacture of "commercial" goods. It must be underlined that this vision essentializes both domains and aligns with a broader discourse that portrays neoliberal capitalism as uniformly absorptive, which does not fully capture the complexity of contemporary cultural production. At the same time, the distinction between "pure" and "commercial" goods reiterates a rhetorical discourse, as already discussed, where independent music producers are often idealized as uninterested in profit or in the material value of their output. In practice, however, the boundaries are far more porous, as independent artists frequently negotiate artistic aspirations and economic sustainability within the very structures they seek to resist.

2.3.1. Key rhetorics associated with independence

Considering the different meanings that the concept of independence has assumed in the music world across the history of recorded music industry, recurrent rhetorics associated with this concept emerge, including those of authenticity, alternative, autonomy, freedom, cooperation, and community. This is possible because, as King (2015) argues, the concept of independence has always been understood as relational, implying independence *from* something. It is thus often constructed in binary terms, most obviously as *not dependent*, with the effect of shaping the utopian ideals associated with independence.

The discourse on authenticity, already highlighted as a crucial vector in the construction and self-representation of music scenes, also emerges in the historical debate on independence within the recording industry. In the 1960s, for example, rock'n'roll came to be especially valued as "authentic" because it was positioned as "alternative" to mass-produced pop music of the time, considered as artificial, contrived, cynical, and market driven. In this case, authenticity was synonymous with purity (see Bourdieu, 1993): insofar as music products created for their own sake were considered superior to that produced primarily for commercial success. Within this framework, the term "alternative" acquired a vernacular role in evaluating music products as more authentic or pure than mainstream outputs. It is important to note that, although often used interchangeably, "independent" and

"alternative" retain distinct meanings: indeed, many independent artists strive to create music that is both authentic and alternative. The former designates modes of production and distribution outside the control of major record labels, with an emphasis on autonomy, while the latter refers more explicitly to cultural positionings that are, following Bennett (2015), "*inherently participatory, grassroots, counter-hegemonic, non-hierarchical, one-to-one, small scale and on the margins*" (ivi, p. 12). For this reason, the author situates independence on a continuum between alternative and mainstream, "*operating on a sliding scale between dependence and independence, freedom and control, nonprofit and free market, center and margin: often invoking hybrid arrangements in order to continue to operate*" (ivi, p. 11). From this perspective, alternative music is typically represented as "radical" and always on the margins, relying on community volunteerism, while independent music is seen as more compromised, depending on hybrid arrangements to ensure larger audiences and relative economic stability.

However, in the independent music context, authenticity is also closely linked to the concept of "autonomy", understood as the capacity that artists retain to control their creative processes. Autonomy is regarded as a guarantor of authenticity, as it allows artists to produce work that is free from corporate influence and reflects their unique vision – again, reinforcing the contrast between the "purity" of artistic products and the "artificiality" of large-scale production. As Hesmondhalgh (1997) observes, that of autonomy is an ideal embodied in a romantic notion of "artist", while Bourdieu (1993) conceptualizes it as the power to establish one's own criteria for the production and evaluation. The capacity to transform the field of music production within a specific market and generate value that is both symbolic and economic is also an indicator of autonomy.

Furthermore, both "independent" and "alternative" are terms strongly linked to the concept of "freedom", often used synonymously with "autonomy" to describe the ability of musicians to create music that reflects their artistic vision and values. Freedom can take various forms: the capacity to create music unconstrained by commercial considerations, to express oneself artistically without fear of censorship or repression, or to participate in alternative modes of cultural production that challenge dominant cultural norms and values. However, in popular music, freedom is often a complex and contested concept, as it often entails risk, flexibility, and self-exploitation – such as, working without financial compensation (Bennett, 2015).

It must be underlined, indeed, that "freedom" has been deployed rhetorically as a weapon in the ideological arsenal of neoliberal capitalism itself. It has become a "free floating ideology" to attack "*what are seen as interfering and regulatory practices of the state, helping elites to regain their position*" (Harvey in Taylor 2016, p. 46). Artistic freedom is an important component of this ideology,

prompting Harvey (2015) to discuss the neoliberalization of culture. However, as Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2015) write, "*most music recorded and sold by 'independent' record companies is far removed from such grand ideas of artistic freedom and autonomy*" (ivi, p. 96), as independent artists in the era of neoliberal capitalism often explore business partnerships with technology, media and consumer brands, to build sustainable careers. Therefore, the romantic division between business and creativity, economic values and authenticity, must be overcome: "*just because a record label is independent does not mean that its owners are not attempting to turn a profit, and just because someone works for a major label does not mean that he or she is only interested in profit*" (Taylor 2016, p. 158).

Another significant rhetoric can be explored: the one related to the concepts of "cooperation" and "community" (see Hesmondhalgh, 1997), both with and against corporations and major record companies, producing a double contradictory fracture. On the one hand, collaboration with major labels is often perceived as a form of co-optation or "selling out": gaining financial stability, in this framework, is seen as compromising artistic credibility of authenticity. This helps explaining why independent products have often been associated with a low-budget aesthetic (Bennett, 2015). On the other hand, the notion of community – rooted in punk culture – is grounded in the Do-It-Yourself ethics and a rejection not only of the mainstream music industries and products but also of its technologies – digital means of distribution, storage, and listening platforms (Taylor, 2016). In this sense, fostering community and collaborating with other independents can be understood as a form of reciprocity (Sahlins, 1974), representing both a social ethic and a means of resistance against neoliberal capitalism and its extractive models of business.

Within this framework, the notion of independence intersects with another key concept: "underground", which is also deeply entangled with the rhetorics of authenticity, autonomy, and collaboration analyzed above. While independence primarily refers to the organizational and economic conditions of music production, underground denotes a broader cultural and symbolic stance, emphasizing marginality, experimentation, alternative expression, and resistance to mainstream culture. It is characterized by a sense of community and participatory networks that often embrace DIY ethics and collaborative practices. This provides a space in which artists and audiences can negotiate cultural values, identity, and belonging, operating simultaneously as a site of creative autonomy and social cohesion. The criteria for belonging to the underground scenes appear to be "*primarily social, linked to the environments in which artworks are produced and experienced, in which both artists and the audience operate*" (Guareschi 2023, p. 120, my translation).

More in depth, in contrast with independence,

> the underground is not only about the production but also about the fruition of certain artistic practices: […] sharing is not limited to taste, but it also involves, more generally, lifestyle, models of socialization, and a series of values and counter-values. It must also have its own "territory", not continuous but rather discrete, made of scattered places, connected to each other by lines invisible to the most, which can be accessed only through word of mouth in constant state of change that only insiders can generate in real time (ibid., my translation).

In this sense, "going underground" means "*escaping visibility, not only physical, in relation to places, but also economical, in relation to commercial and cultural circuits, evading the classification systems operating within the fields of artistic production*" (ivi, p. 121, my translation). However, although underground practices aim to challenge mainstream norms and values, they simultaneously risk reproducing similar dynamics, as the existence of underground cultures is intrinsically linked to the mainstream, and more specifically to the industrial dimension. Therefore, underground practices remain embedded within and shaped by the industrial infrastructures of music production and distribution, underscoring how marginality – once again – is always negotiated within the economic structures of the music world. Therefore, independence and underground are not oppositional categories but mutual reinforcing dimension within the same cultural field: independent infrastructures enable the reproduction of underground practices, while underground cultures reaffirm the symbolic and social value of independence.

"Independence", "autonomy", "alternative", "authenticity", "collaboration" and "community" are all conceptual and cultural fundamentals of the screamo music scene, which is strongly inspired by the punk DIY ethos analyzed above. They shape its practices, social structures, and aesthetic values, providing the framework through which the scene negotiates identity and meaning. These connections will be explored in greater depth in the analytical chapters of the thesis.

Furthermore, building on the interplay between independence and underground, the concept of resistance emerges as a crucial analytical dimension. While "independence" emphasizes structural and economic autonomy from major industries and "underground" highlights cultural and symbolic marginality, both converge in their oppositional stance towards mainstream logics of commodification. Resistance should therefore be understood not as a fixed condition but as a set of relational and negotiated practices. It operates within the same cultural and industrial fields as the mainstream, where independence and the underground designate material and symbolic peripheries, that are continuously negotiated.

2.4. The study of resistance in independent and underground music scenes

In this perspective, music scenes can be conceptualized as fields of struggle, where resistance unfolds not only against external pressures but also in relation to internal dynamics of cultural gentrification and self-commodification processes. Practices of dissent, authenticity-making and community-building are ways of contesting the mainstream industries, but can also become weapons of distinction, reinforcing hierarchies and forms of exclusion within the scenes themselves. Furthermore, as music scenes can be conceptualized as territorialized organizations that transform urban atmospheres (see Vivant & Morteau, 2020), practices of resistance operate both on the cultural and on the spatial level, making scenes crucial battlegrounds where artistic values, social relations, and urban dynamics intersect.

The aim of this section is to explore the concept of resistance more broadly, with a particular focus on the punk DIY ethos rooted in the screamo scene, by adopting the theoretical framework of the "practice turn" (PT) (see Shatzki et al., 2001), which shifts attention towards both abstract values and concrete, stratified practices through which participants within music scenes negotiate cultural, social and symbolic boundaries. This perspective emphasizes the importance of considering the embodiment of practices and self-representations, by analyzing how artistic and everyday actions operate at multiple levels. It also enables the integration of the concept of "artivism" or artistic activism (Guerra, 2023), focusing on how musical practices themselves can function as forms of cultural intervention and contestation within and beyond the scene. Indeed, as argued in the previous chapter, practices of resistance can be analyzed at micro, meso, and macro levels: from individual and everyday resistance to collective actions of protest and denouncement. As such, resistance should be considered not only an opposition to commodification of culture and music, but also as opposition to domination in everyday life, achieved through micro-practices that challenge the context in which individuals are embedded.

2.4.1. The "practice turn" perspective on urbanity and cultural resistance in music scenes

Practice theory conceptualizes practices as the primary units of analysis for understanding the organization of social life and culture. In this perspective, "*practices are not mere articulations, actualizations or manifestations of an already existing underlying structure*" (Genner 2020, p.3); rather, they are

> a continuous set of activities, intentional or routine, in which intentional and routine actions alternate and intersect [...]. In essence, practices encompass both the activities themselves (what is done) and the knowledge, rules, principles, and 'ways of feeling' underlying those activities" (Governa 2017, p. 233, my translation).

From a methodological perspective, the practice approach guides empirical research in examining how practices are enacted, sustained, and transformed in different sites and at different scales, paying particular attention to embodiment, material infrastructures, tacit knowledge, and the performative dimension of social action.

Amin and Thrift (2001) proposed the "practice turn" to rethink the urban dimension. In this perspective, the city can be conceptualized as a "category of practices", overcoming the idea of the city as a fixed essence or integrity, and instead accounting for multiplicity and contingency as intrinsic properties of the urban areas (see Roy, 2015). Indeed, as Amin (2013) argues,

> to look into the city is not to look into a complex mechanical entity such as a clock that, once opened and scrutinized with the rules of timekeeping machines, becomes transparent in all its workings and, for this, fixable. Instead, it is to look into a constellation of entities, networks, and systems with their own logics and dynamics that are only ever partially visible and always emergent in their combinations (ivi, p. 204).

Therefore, the relation between practices and space allows the comprehension of the multiple ways in which space is "produced" and the multiple spatialities of different types of subjects. In this sense, practices can be understood as embodied experiences, and the urban as a field of practices in which bodies are enacted – in the wake of Harrison (2009), as "bodies in action". As Latour (2004) further emphasizes, "*to have a body is to learn to be affected, meaning "effectuated", moved, put into motion by other entities, humans or nonhumans*" (ivi, p. 205). Importantly, bodies not only act within space, but are also inscribed in it, resonating with its material and symbolic dimensions. Practices are intrinsically spatial (Schatzki, 2015), not only because they are always located somewhere, but also because they constitute "*the way in which understanding of the world occurs*" and "*bring space into play and are realized with space, mutually constructing each other (practice constructs space; space constructs practice)*" (Governa 2017, p. 234).

From this perspective, music scenes can also be understood as embodied urban practices, where musicians, audiences and organizers actively participate in shaping, contesting, and reconfiguring the integrity of the city by producing atmospheres, meanings, and forms of resistance that intervene in both the cultural and urban sphere. This demonstrates how creative practices and spatial dynamics

are deeply intertwined. This perspective also emphasizes the multi-sited and multi-scalar nature of the practices of resistance (Guerra, 2018), since actions unfold simultaneously at micro levels (embodied performance and everyday interactions), meso levels (scene organization, networks, and local venues), and macro levels (relations to music industries, urban infrastructures, and cultural economies). This stratification enables for a more nuanced understanding of how resistance, autonomy, and identity are **e**mbodied, socially enacted, and spatially inscribed.

Moreover, independent and underground music practices can be conceptualized as forms of artivism. This means that creative practices intervene in social and urban spaces, by challenging the mainstream commodification, promoting alternative communities, and enacting forms of social critique. In the case of the screamo scene, as it will be further examined in Chapters 6 and 7, these practices embody the punk DIY ethos, creating both cultural and urban interventions that contrast mainstream logics, while negotiating participation, identity and belonging. Thus, artivism itself reveals its multi-scalar character: from micro level embodied practices to meso level scene interactions and macro level cultural and urban transformations – underscoring how everyday practices of resistance simultaneously produce cultural hierarchies and reshape the urban environment.

2.4.2. Micro, meso, and macro practices of resistance in music scenes

In the first chapter it has been argued that resistance can be analyzed as the set of practices, strategies, and resources enacted by individuals at the micro, meso, and macro levels to express dissent, reclaim space, generate meanings of collective belonging and participation, and, more broadly, to challenge existing power structures. Particularly, in subcultural studies, and specifically regarding music scenes, the concept of resistance "*points to an ethos and practice of self-sufficiency outside the spectrum of systems of domination within a capitalist society*" (Guerra 2018, p. 246).

In this sense, at the micro level, that Scott (1985) defines as "everyday resistance", this concept "*may be thought of as exerting a constant pressure, probing for weak points in the defenses of antagonists, and testing the limits of resistance*" (Scott 1989, pp. 58-9). Often "*quiet, dispersed, disguised or otherwise seemingly invisible*" (Vinthagen & Johansson 2013, p. 4), everyday resistance emphasizes the stratification of practices and their embodiment in the routine of music scenes. It can also include tacit, implicit and often unconscious forms of opposition that manifest through habitus, aesthetic decisions, and everyday modes of self-organization. Rooted in the punk ethos of autonomy

and authenticity, these practices can also take the form of personal artivism, where performance, lyrics, or visual expression communicate oppositional or socially engaged messages.

At the meso level, resistance means "*'doing things' when there is scarcity of resources or lack of access to them – and that is crucial for constituting groups, scenes and collectives*" (Guerra 2018, p. 248). For instance, it involves creating participatory networks, sharing skills, and organizing concerts, festivals and squatting. These practices consolidate shared cultural norms, ethical codes, and values (e.g., anti-commercial principles, DIY ethics and collaboration), while simultaneously constructing social identity and a sense of belonging. Resistance can therefore involve identity battles between different music scenes or subgroups, and reflexivity is exercised to address internal contradictions and tensions. At this scale, artivism tends to take a collective form, promoting community-based initiatives, festivals, and projects that use artistic practices to raise awareness, foster solidarity and challenge cultural hegemony, transforming cultural production into a vehicle of political expression and social change.

Lastly, at the macro level, resistance can be understood, using Guerra's (2018) words, as "*an attitude of protest, denouncement and demarcation. The need to survive on the fringe of the mainstream, in a self-taught mode that tilts against the capitalist system, is what is at stake here*" (ivi, p. 247). Here, resistance manifests through the creation of independent infrastructures – for example, distros, labels and digital platforms – that provide an alternative to the production and circulation circuits of the corporate music industries, for example distros, labels and digital platforms. However, this dimension is also characterized by ambivalence, as independents often engage in selective collaborations with mainstream actors, balancing survival strategies with the preservation of creative autonomy. Beyond infrastructures, macro level resistance also operates symbolically, generating alternative imaginaries and forms of subcultural capital that shape wider markets, media discourses and cultural policy. Therefore, artivism can become institutionalized through advocacy, politically oriented festivals or public interventions, thereby extending the influence of independent and underground scenes into broader cultural and political arenas.

However, it should be noted that the distinction between the micro, meso and macro levels serves primarily as a conceptual tool for delineating and analyzing social practices. Micro and meso level practices, such as self-organized shows, DIY venues and informal networks, can have an impact on a broader scale, shaping cultural landscapes and influencing urban imaginaries. Conversely, macro level dynamics, such as municipal redevelopment policies or the commercial appropriation of subcultural aesthetics, infiltrate and alter everyday practices, limiting possibilities while creating new forms of local negotiation and contestation. Moreover, resistance does not always emerge as explicit

political opposition: it can also assume tacit or latent forms, as in the case of everyday resistance, embedded in the ways individuals and collectives inhabit, use, and reinterpret spaces.

Furthermore, these practices do not exist in isolation; rather, they demonstrate a profound interdependence: the micro informs and transforms the meso and macro, while the macro continually conditions both. In this sense, the micro-meso-macro framework is less a rigid ontological map and more an interpretive lens through which the entanglement of resistance practices can be more rigorously theorized. This chapter has established a conceptual framework for analyzing the Italian screamo scene as a space of cultural and urban resistance. Unlike traditional subcultural concepts, the notion of "scene" offers a flexible perspective, emphasizing "supra-local cultural spaces" where identities and values are formed. The focus on authenticity acts as both an internal boundary and contributes to urban gentrification. The chapter also traced the evolution of independence from an economic concept to a broader cultural and political stance, particularly within the punk DIY ethos. The screamo scene embodies the principles of autonomy, cooperation and community, positioning it within the underground as a site of symbolic and cultural marginality. Adopting a practice-oriented perspective, resistance is understood as a set of multi-scalar practices ranging from micro level, everyday actions such as producing fanzines, to meso level collective organizing, and macro level efforts to establish independent infrastructures. This approach illustrates how the scene challenges dominant cultural norms and transforms urban spaces through everyday practices. Subsequent chapters apply this framework to the Italian independent screamo scene, providing a detailed and contextually grounded analysis. Chapter 3, in particular, will present the research questions that guided the study, outline the operationalization of the concept of resistance, and provide a detailed account of the screamo genre and how its scene has evolved over time and space, situating these practices within the broader ethnographic context of the research.

Chapter 3. Case study: Research questions, the Italian *screamo* scene, and the context of research

3.1. Research questions: problematization and theoretical justification

Building on a theoretical framework rooted, on the one hand, in the processes of urban neoliberalization – marked by processes of cultural and urban gentrification and displacement – and, on the other, in independent and underground music scenes conceived as arenas of resistance to forms of both physical and symbolic marginalization, the main research question that has guided this research is:

> *How do independent music scenes react to gentrification processes, particularly in relation to the cultural co-optation and commodification for urban marketing and branding purposes, as well as to their displacement from the city center, or from the urban contexts?*

The urban context is here to be intended not only as a form of the environment in which people live, but also as a place where to find opportunities for contamination, for encounters with difference, and for interactions between lifestyles, and cultures and subcultures (Mela, 2006). More specifically, in the first case the urban context is conceived as availability of space. However, in neoliberal cities, this potential is increasingly challenged. As discussed in Chapter 1, contemporary urban contexts, are often characterized by processes of privatization, marginalization and exclusion that limit access to both material and symbolic resources (Harvey, 2012; Manzano et al., 2025). This is particularly evident in cities such as Milan, which "*has adopted a policy of minimal intervention in the cultural sector, leading practitioners to denounce the total lack of institutional support*" (d'Ovidio & Cossu 2017, p. 8). Indeed, as Manzano and colleagues argue (2025), "*access to physical space in Milan* […] *has become largely unaffordable, especially in central areas where services, infrastructure, and capital crucial to cultural production are concentrated*" with the resulting in independents being pushed to the urban periphery or "*'plugged in' into urban marketing, rebranding initiatives and regeneration circuits"* (ivi, p. 11). Understanding the urban in spatial terms means considering space as an active factor in the processes of social construction of urban structures and attributing an important role to environmental and ecosystem characteristics. Il also means viewing the territory as the result of ongoing processes of territorialization – that is, the reorganization and re-inscription of space through economic, political and social relations, which entail a dialectic between agglomeration

and broader processes of territorial reorganization (Brenner, 2013). This approach also pays attention to different types of space, such as areas and boundaries, flows of material and immaterial elements, and places where territorial and symbolic singularities are concentrated (Ciaffi et al., 2020). In the second case, urban experience is understood as a cultural experience: living in the city means not only residing in a space characterized by a certain density of living, but also being able to experience fashions, rhythms, social and, indeed, cultural practices. In this sense, the urban environment has the power to concentrate people, institutions, activities, and cultural styles, offering at the same time visibility, collaboration and symbolic recognition. Urban space is socially produced, shaped by everyday practices and interactions (Lefebvre, 1974). Moreover, it possesses a symbolic dimension (Harvey, 1989c), that enables cities to serve as arenas of cultural negotiation and resistance.

Independent and underground music scenes emerge and develop within these heterogeneous urban ecologies, drawing on the density and plurality of social interactions that cities foster. At the same time, they are profoundly shaped by urban transformations, since gentrification processes not only displace scenes from urban and central areas but also appropriate their cultural capital, branding their aesthetics and practices as tools for urban marketing and "creative city" policies. This double facet – exclusion on one side and co-optation on the other – makes cities both enabling and constraining environments for independent and underground cultures. Investigating how these scenes react to such pressures means, therefore, examining practices of resistance, adaptation, and re-signification that unfold across spatial, cultural, and political dimensions.

Building on this, therefore, two further research questions emerge:

1. How do independent music scenes react when not only is there a lack of physical space in which to aggregate, but also when the urban environment as a cultural and relational resource is distant or absent?

2. How do independent music scenes address the paradox of simultaneously resisting co-optation processes, while risking becoming agents of gentrification themselves?

The first question further elaborates on how music scenes respond to the two different interpretations of urban space outlined above – space as availability of territory and as a cultural experience. Indeed, on the one hand, the lack of accessible venues, rehearsal spaces, or autonomous areas forces scenes to experiment with strategies of survival, often resorting to temporary, peripheral, or virtual spaces (Shaw, 2005). On the other, when the city ceases to function as a cultural hub – when institutions and policies marginalize independent practices – scenes must create new circuits of

aggregation and cultural exchange, thereby redefining the conditions of possibility for collective creativity (Straw, 1991).

The second question pushes the analysis further, recognizing the agency of music scenes in urban transformations. Scenes are not merely acted upon by gentrification, but they also act within it: not only are they shaped by processes of spatial restriction, gentrification, and cultural co-optation, but they also actively contribute to the social and cultural configuration of the urban environment. This double facet underscores the necessity of examining music scenes as dynamic actors that operate across multiple spatial and cultural scales, revealing the complex interplay between urban transformations and (sub)cultural practices. Furthermore, as Harvey suggested (2001), "*by seeking to trade on values of authenticity, locality, history, culture, collective memories and tradition*", market forces themselves "*open a space for political thought and action within which alternatives can be both devised and pursued. That space deserves intense exploration and cultivation by oppositional movements*" (ivi, p. 411). Therefore, drawing on Lefebvre (1996), these spaces enable marginal cultures, including independent and underground music scenes, to appropriate and actively shape urban environments, thereby challenging capitalist spatial organization. Urban spaces thus become sites where flows of capital, culture and difference intersect, enabling resistance and experimentation. Music scenes exploit these spaces to negotiate, re-signify and transform urban spaces according to their own social and cultural logics.

As it will be further argued in the next chapter, urban spaces are multi-scalar and heteroglot (Kahn, 2005) – a term borrowed from Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia –, traversed by processes of *scaling* and *rescaling* (Brenner, 2004). In this perspective, cities are sites where different groups, discourses, temporalities, and practices coexist, interact and often conflict. Moreover, the urban itself can be conceived as a project of scalability (Brenner, 2015). Gentrification processes have altered and expanded the forms of cities, making it necessary to examine urban frontiers and interstices – both physical and symbolic – where conflict and resistance are enacted, and where alternative cultural practices reconfigure the meanings and possibilities of urban life. Again, these conceptualizations provide the analytical lens through which music scenes can be understood as both shaped by and actively shaping their urban environments.

As argued in the previous chapter, the music scenes on which this research is focused are those that arise typically in the urban environment, particularly within the realm of popular music. Following Chambers (1986), the production, circulation and consumption of popular music have always found their place in the urban contexts, since it has often been addressed as one of the main symbols of urban creativity (Bottà, 2008; Watson, Hoyler & Mager, 2019). Since popular music is

more exposed to processes of commodification, it follows that it can constitute a privileged point of observation for looking at the practices of resistance to neoliberalization processes. More specifically, this research examined the screamo genre, rooted in hardcore punk music, and its associated independent collectives involved in the organization of music events, including concerts and festivals. These collectives incorporate principes of collaboration, reciprocity, and mutual support, in line with the punk DIY ethos. By prioritizing cooperative practices, they enact forms of resistance against the hyper-individualism and commodification of the contemporary neoliberal capitalist system, and therefore they provide a nuanced perspective on how music scenes negotiate, contest, and reshape urban and cultural landscapes, offering insight into both micro level everyday resistance and broader socio-spatial dynamics. Alongside music events, as discussed in the next section, they were adopted as units of observation for this research.

3.1.1. Events and independent collectives as units of observation

In this research, music events – concerts and festivals in particular – are adopted as the primary unit of observation. This methodological choice is rooted in the recognition that events, far from being marginal or ephemeral, represent key arenas in which social relations, cultural practices, and urban dynamics converge. Contemporary ethnography increasingly acknowledges that temporary sites are as important as traditional geographically bounded and static spaces (Delgado & Cruz, 2014). This is the case of events, that are busy and dynamic places, where situations and audience behaviors and moods can change quickly. Events can be defined as "*social constructions, situated within international, national, regional, organizational and tribal cultures and subcultures*" (Jaimangal-Jones 2014, p. 39).

Etymologically, the term "event" denotes something that "comes out", a specific spatio-temporal occurrence that manifests as a rupture or transformation in relation to what existed previously and what will follow afterwards. Historically, the term has become strongly associated with artistic, cultural and sporting manifestations, as well as social practices and collective rituals. In urban sociology, events are not merely conceived as isolated occurrences, but as structured practices embedded in the symbolic and material economies of cities (Richards & Palmer, 2010).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, cities have adopted strategies that capitalize on their resources, such as spaces, histories, creative energies, and local talents, in response to strong pressures from globalization, the unpredictability of economic systems and the need to establish new cultural

identities. They use cultural assets and resources in an attempt to regenerate the social and urban fabric, presenting them as a means to foster cultural prosperity and social cohesion. Yet these narratives tend to mask the processes of commodification and spatial inequality that accompany these strategies. The organization and promotion of events have therefore become an urban development strategy known as "festivalization" (or "eventification"), which aims to reaffirm the cultural identity of entire urban areas. This process aligns with broader city branding strategies (Kavaratzis, 2004) and the experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), in which urban life is commodified through memorable cultural experiences designed for both residents and global audiences. Within this logic, events have become a fundamental element of contemporary cities. On the one hand, they are a means of economic planning for the city; on the other, they are a tool for strengthening metropolitan social dynamics.

In this context, the attention is focused on cultural events as a means of understanding how culture is performed, experiences and circulated. Festivals, concerts, exhibitions, and other cultural gatherings not only generate economic capital but also produce symbolic capital – whether by reinforcing dominant urban narrative or by contesting and reshaping them through alternative and countercultural narratives. Cultural events can be distinguished by several features (Richards & Palmer, 2010). Particularly, they are characterized by: a cultural focus (e.g., music); spatio-temporal specificity (i.e., tied to particular times and places); an audience (whether physically present or virtually engaged); and stakeholders (i.e., individuals, institutions, or groups with cultural, political, or financial interests in the event). Therefore, events can be defined as collective social practices established in contemporary cities, around which economic and symbolic capital circulates.

As units of observation, events provide distinct advantages for the study of independent and underground music scenes. They condense a wide range of practices – artistic, organizational, economic, and social – into observable forms. They are moments in which music scenes become visible, through performance, participation, and interaction. They are sites where the ethos of independence and the politics of cultural resistance are enacted, negotiated, and contested. Adopting events as units of observation allow to capture a multiplicity of dimensions:

1. **Embodiment and performance**: how aesthetics and political values are enacted by artists and audiences;
2. **Social organization**: how DIY practices such as organizing concerts or festivals, or managing venues, illustrate collective forms of resistance and cooperation;
3. **Spatial negotiation**: how scenes inhabit and contest urban spaces, facing struggles for access to spaces, tensions with authorities and displacement due to gentrification;

4. **Symbolic production**: how events generate and circulate narratives, meanings, and imaginaries that contribute to the cultural identity of scenes and cities.

As Bennett and Peterson (2004) note, scenes must be understood in relation to the spaces and contexts in which they materialize. Events constitute such contexts: they are temporally bounded yet socially and culturally dense. They enable researchers to examine how independent music scenes are intertwined with broader urban dynamics of commodification, branding, and cultural co-optation, while also exploring the micro level practices of resistance that persist within them.

The analytical focus on events also acknowledges the ambivalent role they play in contemporary cities. On the one hand, independent music events embody practices of resistance, where values such as autonomy, cooperation, and authenticity are performed and reinforced (Guerra, 2018). On the other hand, events are increasingly susceptible to processes of co-optation: cultural festivals and music gatherings are frequently appropriated by city branding strategies and transformed into tools of urban marketing (Colomb, 2012; Novy & Colomb, 2013). This tension between resistance and commodification makes events particularly fruitful sites for the analysis, since they allow the investigation of how independent and underground scenes navigate neoliberal urban transformations, resisting displacement, asserting alternative cultural logics, and yet sometimes becoming complicit in processes of gentrification themselves (Shaw, 2005).

In conclusion, adopting events as units of observation allows this research to engage directly with the lived, embodied, and spatialized practices of independent and underground music scenes. Events crystallize the contradictions of contemporary urban life: they are simultaneously sites of cultural resistance and instruments of commodification, spaces for community-building and vehicles for city branding. By focusing on events, this research can trace how scenes negotiate autonomy, identity, and belonging within the uneven geographies of neoliberal urban change.

Together with music events, independent collectives constitute a second, equally important unit of observation in this research. While concerts and festivals crystallize practices of resistance into highly visible and temporally bounded forms, independent collectives provide access to the ongoing organizational, relational, and affective work that sustains these events. In this sense, events can be viewed as the "front stage" of independent music scenes, while independent collectives embody the "backstage" (Goffman, 1959), where planning, negotiation, and everyday practices unfold. They are not only organizational nodes, but also social laboratories, in which values of autonomy, cooperation, and dissent are continuously reproduced, debated, and embodied.

From a methodological perspective, the integration of events and independent collectives reflects the principles of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995; Falzon, 2009), which emphasizes the importance of tracking practices, discourses, and networks across different yet interconnected sites. Events provide rich, performative settings in which to observe interactions among artists, audiences, and urban contexts, while independent collectives facilitate the tracing of how these interactions are prepared, mediated, and sustained over time. In this research, independent collectives were also the primary access point for fieldwork: by engaging in participant observation within one of them (as it will be better discussed in the next chapter), I gained access to key actors and narratives that would otherwise remain invisible, thus situating both interviews and observations within an embedded, relational context.

Furthermore, independent collectives operate at different scales. At the micro level, for example, they embody everyday practices of resistance, such as DIY organizing, resource sharing, and informal support networks. At the meso level, they act as nodes that connect different scenes and negotiate identity boundaries. At the macro level, they adopt political stances in relation to cultural policies, urban transformations, and market pressures. Therefore, observing independent collectives complements the focus on events, enabling a richer understanding of how resistance is enacted, negotiated, and institutionalized within independent and underground music scenes. As will be shown in section 3.2.2., the Italian context is a particularly fertile ground for exploring these dynamics: independent collectives not only sustain the screamo scene, but also embody the practices, values, and tensions that constitute the very context of the present research.

3.1.2. Practices of resistance as units of analysis

The units of analysis for this research consist in the practices of resistance to gentrification enacted by the Italian screamo music scene at different scales – micro, meso, and macro. As already argued, from a theoretical perspective, this tripartition reflects the multi-scalar nature of resistance, which cannot be fully grasped if reduced either to individual subjectivities or to macro-structural forces alone. From a methodological perspective, it offers a flexible yet rigorous lens to trace how practices of resistance manifest, interact, and circulate across different levels of social life. Particularly, this tripartition reflects the multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995) that, as it will be discussed in the next chapter, has been adopted for the field research. Particularly, this approach conceptualizes social contexts as the sedimentation of performances, practices, narratives and power relationships that are stratified across time and space (Coleman & Crang, 2002). In the

case of the screamo scene, this means that events and independent collectives are not observed as self-contained realities, but as situated nodes within broader trans-local networks. Every site has multiple layers of meaning and historical trajectories, and is continuously reshaped by the movement of people, music, aesthetics, and political discourses. Therefore, by examining practices of resistance across different sites, this approach enables the understanding of how local experiences of DIY organizing, identity negotiation, and spatial struggles are intertwined with wider cultural imaginaries and structural transformations associated with neoliberal urbanization processes.

Resistance has been operationalized into concrete, observable practices, providing a starting point for their investigation and interpretation within ethnographic fieldwork. Table 3.1.2. provides an overview of practices of resistance identified within the screamo scene. They are not rigid classifications but offer a provisional framework to guide ethnographic observation and analysis. Every practice is described in terms of its main characteristics, the scale of enactment, and its relation to broader forms of resistance. It is also important to acknowledge that resistance not always manifests as an explicit or intentional opposition. Acts of resistance can be implicit, or even unconscious – embedded, for example, in routines, affective relations and aesthetic choices. In this sense, resistance can operate along a spectrum of overtly political practices to more tacit gestures of autonomy, authenticity, and refusal of commodification.

Table 3.1.2. Operationalization of practices of resistance for ethnographic observation

Level	Dimensions of resistance	Indicators	Connections with DIY/Punk ethos/Artivism
Micro	Everyday resistance and embodied practices	- DIY music production and distribution (e.g., home recordings, fanzines, Bandcamp releases); - Lyrical/political content expressing dissent; - Lifestyle commitments (e.g., veganism, straight edge); - Performance styles and embodied aesthetics (e.g., screaming, violent dancing).	- Direct DIY, punk ethos of autonomy, personal artivism through performance or provocative content; - Preservation of cultural authenticity.
Meso	Collective, organizational and relational practices	- Organization of DIY events in self-managed venues (e.g., squats and zones of temporary autonomy); - Resource-sharing (e.g., equipment, skills, logistics); - Relational dynamics within and between collectives (e.g., conflict management, inclusion/exclusion); - Processes of negotiation and reflexivity in decision making; - Development of shared codes of ethics (e.g., anti-fascism, anti-sexism, and anti-capitalism).	- Collaborative punk ethos, collective artivism through cultural events and initiatives; - DIY, autonomy in space and stage practices; - Strengthening of affective, trust-based, and cooperative networks that sustain the scene; - Consolidation of punk/DIY identity and artivism as a cultural practice.
Macro	Symbolic practices	- Establishment of independent labels, distros, and digital platforms; - Discourses that reject commodification and mainstream logics; - Creation of alternative imaginaries (e.g., visuals, flyers, scenographic setups); - Advocacy or alignment with broader activist causes (e.g., anti-gentrification and animal rights).	- Structuring DIY on an industrial scale, organized punk ethos; - Pragmatic strategies for autonomy and sustainability, incorporating artivism into economic models; - Creation of subcultural capital, institutional and public artivism, influence on cultural and musical discourse.

Therefore, resistance was not treated as an abstract category, but rather as a set of situated activities, discourses and material arrangements enacted by participants within the screamo scene. As

illustrated in Table 3.1.2., it is particularly important to note that these practices are intertwined at different levels: individual micro-practices can contribute to the construction of meso networks for collaboration, while strategies at the macro level can impact the operational possibilities of the micro and meso levels. In addition, by examining embodied and stratified practices, it becomes possible to investigate not only the materially observable actions of participants, but also the intangible aspects of self-representation and cultural identity that are produced and negotiated within musical scenes.

These practices were observed during the participant observation at various events, engagement with the activities of an independent collective and semi-structured interviews with members of independent collectives across Italy. The analysis of the material and symbolic artifacts produced by the screamo scene also contributed to this observation. In this way, the abstract concept of resistance was translated into an empirical lens, guiding the ethnographic analysis and enabling comparison across different contexts.

In the following sections of this chapter, I finally present a detailed account of the Italian independent screamo scene, which constitutes the case study of this research, with Milan as the primary site of analysis in comparison with other Italian contexts. This comparative perspective, aligned with the multi-sited and multi-scalar ethnographic approach, allows for the identification of commonalities, tensions, and connections across local contexts, using the operationalized practices of resistance as a guiding framework.

3.2. History of the diffusion of screamo: from the US to Italy

Tracing the origins and defining characteristics of screamo music is a complex operation, given the limited scholarly attention it has received in both musicological and sociological literature. The genre has often been conflated with emo, of which it is more accurately a sub-genre, leading to an ancillary consideration of it. Existing literature has largely examined emo and screamo in relation to mental health issues, including emotional dysphoria, self-harm, and suicide (see Definis-Gojanović et al., 2009; Dellavalle et al., 2011; Shafron & Karno, 2013; Sharman & Dingle, 2015), thus adopting predominantly a psychological perspective on the subject. Another strand of research has focused on performances and the crisis of masculinity within emo subculture (see Peters, 2010; De Boise, 2014; Fathallah, 2021), again omitting screamo. Added to this, both genres are often misclassified as derivatives of heavy metal or extreme metal, a misleading association. Furthermore, screamo is often mistakenly reduced to the screaming vocal technique – shared with genres such as black metal – due

to a superficial linguistic resemblance. Considering this persistent conflation and lack of dedicated analysis, it is worth providing a distinct account of screamo as a genre and scene, separating it from its emo counterpart.

3.2.1. Genealogy and history of screamo music

Screamo music traces its roots back to hardcore punk, itself an offshoot of late 1970s punk rock. Emerging in the United States in the early 1980s, hardcore punk has been defined as a male-dominated youth culture (Haenfler, 2006) and closely associated with

> the releases of independently-run record labels such as Dischord Records, SST Records, and Alternative Tentacles, and acts such as Adolescents, Bad Brains, Black Flag, Circle Jerks, Dead Kennedys, Fear, The Germs, Minor Threat, and Scream[12].

Musically, hardcore retained punk's raw energy and oppositional ethos, but pushed it toward greater speed, heaviness, and aggression, while maintaining punk's anti-establishment stance and Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethic. Its stylistic features included shouted or screamed vocals, stripped-down style of production, and short, tightly structured songs.

From this foundation, several offshoots emerged. Post-hardcore, exemplified by bands such as Fugazi and Quicksand, preserved hardcore's DIY and oppositional stance, while introducing longer and more complex arrangements "*with an ebb and flow building and release both in the music and vocals*"[13]. It also placed greater attention on personal expression and existential themes (see Ambrosch, 2018). Almost in parallel, emo (or emotional hardcore) took shape in the mid-1980s, particularly within the Washington D.C. scene, with bands such as Rites of Spring, Dag Nasty, and Embrace. Emo distinguished itself by "*incorporating more melodic songwriting, poetic lyricism, and highly expressive, passionate vocals*"[14]. During the 1990s, the genre diversified into distinct regional styles, most notably the Midwest emo scene (e.g., Cap'n Jazz, American Football, Braid, Mineral), which infused emo with indie rock and pop sensibilities, laying the foundation for the later mainstream rise of "emo-pop".

[12] https://rateyourmusic.com/genre/hardcore-punk/ (last access: 24/09/2025).
[13] https://rateyourmusic.com/genre/post-hardcore/ (last access: 24/09/2025).
[14] https://rateyourmusic.com/genre/emo/ (last access: 24/09/2025).

3.2.1.1. First wave of screamo

In contrast, on the West Coast, the San Diego scene of the early 1990s evolved towards more chaotic and aggressive territories, giving rise to what would soon be called "screamo". Widely regarded as the "first wave" of the genre, bands such as Heroin, Antioch Arrow, Honeywell, Mohinder, and Indian Summer developed short, intense, and complex songs, often characterized by rapid shifts in tempo and rhythm, dissonant guitar work, and screamed vocals. Central to this milieu was the Ché Café, a crucial DIY venue that nurtured the emerging sound and scene. Independent record labels also played a crucial role in the development of this genre: Gravity Records (founded in 1991 in San Diego by Matt Anderson of Heroin) and Ebullition Records (founded in 1990 in Goleta, California, by Kent McClard, a former Maximumrocknroll[15] columnist, with a strong DIY and anti-consumerist ethos). This first wave of screamo was marked not only by its musical innovations, but also by its political and cultural connotations – often emerging as a reaction to the conservative turn in California at the hands of politicians such as Roger Hedgecock –, and/or by distinctive influences – drawing inspiration from the Nouvelle Vague cinema and from the Frankfurt School critical theory, thereby embedding the genre within a broader countercultural discourse.

3.2.1.2. Second wave of screamo

By the late 1990s, from this environment, also emerged the emoviolence sub-genre (e.g., Orchid, Saetia, Jeromes Dream, City of Caterpillar, and Pg. 99), that spread beyond San Diego, especially on the US East Coast, and pushed screamo toward even greater intensity through the use of blast beats[16] and extreme dynamics, while maintaining a radical DIY ethos. This coincided with the beginning of a "second wave", which also witnessed the flourishing of European screamo. Indeed, at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, screamo had expanded its boundaries, evolving into a worldwide phenomenon. Especially Europe saw the emergence of several new artists, who achieved relatively higher levels of popularity within the genre.

Although the beginning of European screamo must be dated back in the 1990s in France (e.g., Undone, Ivich, and Jasmine), in Germany (e.g., Kassiopeia and Akephal), and Italy (With Love), what it is often considered "true" screamo – distinct from hardcore punk – began spreading with Daïtro

[15] A not-for-profit zine founded by Tim Yohannan in 1982 in San Francisco focused on punk rock and hardcore music.
[16] Blast beat is a type of drumbeat, which is played as an alternating single-stroke roll broken up between the kick drum and the snare drum at high speeds (from 189 bmp in sixteenth notes). It originated in hardcore punk and grind-core, and it's often associated with extreme metal genres such as black metal and death metal.

(2000) in France, and La Quiete (1999) and Raein (2002) in Italy. Three albums were influential in defining the "European screamo" sound: Raein's *Il n'y a pas d'orchestre* (2003), the Daïtro and Raein's self-titled split (2004), and La Quiete's *La fine non è la fine* (2004). Features included the reverb on guitars, often without any heavy distortion, and highly melodic passages. As Dave Norman – head of Zegema Beach Records[17] – states:

> European screamo was basically put in motion by a few Italian bands, as their popularity gave rise to a host of amazing, beautiful and melodic screamo with bouts of utter chaos. Earlier bands with this sound include La Quiete, Raein, Mihai Edrisch and Daitro, who were pioneers of the genre, and they remain untouchable within it[18].

3.2.1.3. Third wave of screamo

While screamo remained largely underground in Europe – circulating through underground circuits and remaining faithful to the original sound – in the US the early 2000s marked a different trajectory. Here, screamo became increasingly mainstream and was referred as "MTV screamo"[19] or emo-pop. The term was adopted by the music press and mainstream critics to describe a wave of bands whose style only partially overlapped with the original genre. In 2002, music journalist Jim DeRogatis observed that

> there's no denying that an aggressive new sound is rapidly emerging from the underground and quickly gaining an ever-widening audience among fans who are sick and tired of nü-metal at one end of the spectrum and pre-fabricated pop and hip-hop at the other extreme. And by any name, plenty of listeners, fans, and music-industry insiders are banking on it becoming the sound of 2003[20].

This rebranding coincided with the rise of bands such as The Used, Thrice and Thursday, many of whom signed multi-million dollar deals with major labels including Island (Universal Music Group) and Reprise (Warner Music Group) Records. The frontman of The Used himself defined screamo a "*very silly word […] there for record companies to sell records and for record stores to categorize them*"[21]. As a result, the term "skramz" began to be used within the independent scene to

[17] http://www.zegemabeachrecords.com/ (last access: 24/09/2025).
[18] https://www.invisibleoranges.com/understanding-screamo-a-dissection/ (last access: 24/09/2025).
[19] https://www.metalsucks.net/2010/06/07/the-history-of-metalcorescreamo/ (last access: 24/09/2025).
[20] http://www.jimdero.com/OtherWritings/OtherScreamoGW.htm (last access: 24/09/2025).
[21] https://web.archive.org/web/20141111042806/http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,543090,00.html (last access: 24/09/2025).

reclaim distance from the "mainstream"-oriented screamo of the third wave, reflecting continuity with the underground, collaborative practices that had persisted since the first wave[22].

This wave was also marked by the globalization of the genre, facilitated by internet platforms (e.g., MySpace, blogs, and netlabels), and DIY touring circuits. During this period, screamo flourished across Latin America (e.g., ¡Silencio, Ahora, Silencio!), Asia (e.g., Heaven in Her Arms, in Japan), and Eastern Europe, extending its reach far beyond its original US and Western European strongholds.

In Italy, this was the golden age of bands such as Raein, La Quiete, Fine Before You Came, Gazebo Penguins, and Gomma, alongside a proliferation of smaller projects tied to squats, self-managed and occupied social spaces, and independent collectives. Festivals and benefit events reinforced the connections of the genre with political radicalism, veganism, queer struggles, and anti-capitalist practices. The same years, however, also saw the emergence of Italian emo-pop bands (e.g., Dari), who capitalized on the commercial success of "MTV screamo" from the United States. The coexistence between screamo and emo-pop emphasizes the deep fracture between underground and mainstream. The former positioned itself not only as a musical alternative, but also as a cultural and political counterpoint to commodified youth cultures – both in Italy and across Western countries.

3.2.1.4. Fourth wave of screamo

In the early 2010s, the term "screamo" began to be reclaimed in the US by DIY bands such as Loma Prieta, Touché Amoré and La Dispute, releasing records (often hybridized with post-hardcore) on larger independent labels such as Deathwish Ink. These bands revitalized the genre by combining intense emotional expression with experimental approaches to composition and performance, fostering tight-knit, participatory communities around their music. However, it was only in mid-2010s that a "fourth wave" of screamo began to emerge in both Europe and the US, thanks to the reunion of seminal bands such as Pg. 99, City of Caterpillar, and Jeromes Dream.

In Italy, new bands such as Øjne, Shizune and Storm{O} played a key role in spreading this wave. Particularly, Øjne's album *Prima che tutto bruci* (2017) is regarded as a milestone in the return to the DIY ethos of the 1990s and the revival of the term "skramz", signalling both a reclamation of the underground roots of screamo and a critique of its mainstream appropriation. These bands were

[22] Indeed, the distinction into "waves" is a merely theoretical operation to better understand the history and evolution of the genre.

actively engaged in community-building practices, organizing shows in squats, independent venues and temporary spaces, and fostering collaborations and networks that reinforced collective identity and artistic autonomy.

3.2.1.5. Fifth wave of screamo

However, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the live circuits that sustained the community dimension of screamo. Globally, the post-Covid years (2021–today) have witnessed a dynamic resurgence of festivals, DIY tours, and small-scale venues, often integrating political-cultural agendas of their urban contexts. Although musical styles differ across contexts, this revival (coinciding with the "fifth wave") is consistently grounded in collective participation, ethical modes of production, and cultural resistance – principles that closely resonate with the practices observed in the Italian scene. In Italy, bands such as Riviera, Shizune, Put Purana, Stegosauro and Radura, and the reunions of La Quiete and Raein between 2023 and 2025 exemplify this revival of this genre, combining renewed musical intensity with explicit forms of cultural resistance.

At the same time, the vitality of the genre more broadly can also be observed in its global recorded productions, encompassing albums, EPs, singles, splits, and other releases. RateYourMusic[23] counts 9.660 releases between 1992 and 25 September 2025 tagged as "screamo", of which 680 are from 2024 and 407 are from 2025 so far. While these numbers offer an indication of activity levels, they should be treated with caution. This is because RYM relies on user submissions and releases that are not uploaded to the database remain uncounted, meaning that the data reflect visibility rather than the exhaustive scope of the scene.

This chronological framework highlights screamo's ongoing evolution as a global phenomenon, continuously negotiating a balance between underground autonomy, musical innovation, and socio-political engagement, while tracing a clear lineage from its hardcore punk roots to contemporary practices of resistance and community-building. However, it must be noted that this wave-based division is primarily theoretical and represent only a proposed framework for understanding the development of screamo (and it is not necessarily a universally accepted categorization).

[23] Rate Your Music (RYM) is a community-built music and film database where users can rate, review, catalogue, and discover new music and films and contribute to the database itself. Its operation is based on the concept of the wiki since each change or addition must be approved by a moderator.

3.2.2. The independent screamo music scene in Italy

Screamo is a music scene that has consistently been defined by its openly anti-establishment character. It circulates almost exclusively within independent and underground music circuits, that are rooted in a strong Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethos and approach. Furthermore, far from being only a musical style, screamo foregrounds autonomy, collaboration, and resistance to mainstream commodification. In Italy, as elsewhere, screamo is a small, underground, but widespread phenomenon, and with a well-defined audience, providing a privileged lens through which to examine practices of resistance to neoliberal urbanization processes, particularly by focusing on the symbolic and economic values generated in everyday cultural life.

As illustrated earlier, the Italian screamo scene emerged during the second wave of the genre (late 1900s-early 2000s), when the US screamo expanded internationally through DIY networks, independent labels, and international touring circuits. Alongside their French counterparts, Italian bands such as La Quiete (formed in 1999) and Raein (formed in 2002) helped shape the "European screamo" sound, characterized by melodic passages, the use of reverb-drenched guitars, and a balance between chaos and lyricism. This positioning within the second European wave was not only stylistic, but also organizational, as these bands were deeply embedded in the DIY touring infrastructures that connected scenes across Europe, the US and Latin America. Today, Italy has dozens of active bands labelled as screamo – e.g., Radura, Quercia, Noverte, Øjne, Votto, Sacrofuoco, Shizune, Stegosauro, and many others already mentioned – as well as several independent micro-labels and distribution companies, including Non Ti Seguo Records (Milan), To Lose La Track (Umbertide), Dischi Decenti (Bologna), NoReason Networks (Milan), Controcanti Produzioni (Napoli), Longrail Records (Turin), Shove Records (Alessandria), Dischi Sotterranei (Padova), General Soreness (Perugia), and Solchi (Parma).

Parallel to this, a network of independent collectives has developed, engaged in both recorded and live music industries. In the recorded sphere, they handle production, reproduction, and circulation of music, while in the live sector they manage booking, promotion, ticketing, and event organization. Between October 2023 and February 2025, **56 independent collectives** were identified, spread all over the country, and especially in Northern Italy. These collectives are involved in the booking and organization of DIY events, including screamo events, but not limited to these. In Table 3.2.2. they are listed as follows:

Table 3.2.2. Independent collectives involved in the booking and organization of screamo events in Italy

Region	Independent collectives
Lombardia	Ali di Cera DIY (Milan); Deafening DIY Shows (Milan); Persimmon Collective (Milan); Collettivo Pianura Padana (Mantova); Worst Collective (Brescia); Pavia Hardcore (Pavia); Collettivo Adespota (Saronno); Orrore Cosmico (Lodi)
Emilia-Romagna	Warm Room Collective (Modena); Bologna Punx Collective (Bologna); Collettivo La Défense (Parma); Collettivo HMCF (Bologna); Collettivo Nervous Kinds (Parma); Soglianois (Forlì-Cesena)
Veneto	Life Is Strage (Vicenza); Trivel Collective (Venezia); Pariah Posers (Padova); Belluno HC (Belluno); 1911 Collective (San Donà di Piave); Bloop Events (San Donà di Piave); Padova Hardcore (Padova); Niente Concerti (Feltre)
Piemonte	Turin Is Not Dead (Turin); Turin Moving Parts (Turin); Piano delle Mosche (Biella); Rebra Booking (Torino)
Liguria	Collettivo Sbermuz (Genova); Collettivo NoPanic (Sestri Levante); Alt Zone (Genova)
Trentino Alto-Adige	Voxhole Collective (Bolzano); Baitattack (Trento); Trigger Collective (Trento)
Friuli Venezia-Giulia	Cielo Perso DIY (Pordenone); New Udine Hardcore (Udine); Trieste Hardcore (Trieste); In Grind We Trust (Trieste); Il Grande Baccano (Pordenone); Urban Infection (Pordenone); Hardcore Reborn (Trieste); Rawmans Punk Crew (Gorizia)
Marche	Twogirlzoneskramz (Fano)
Lazio	Roma Skramz (Roma); Weird Side Collective (Rome)
Toscana	Bad Taste Collective (Florence)
Umbria	Space Introverts (Perugia)
Puglia	Meh! (Bari); Altrimenti Labs/Sound (Bari); Mal di Testa (Andria); Bari Hardcore (Bari); Ceripunk (Foggia); Foggia Hardcore (Foggia)
Campania	Turnover Collective (Napoli); 1a0 (Caserta)
Calabria	M.A.D. Productions (Cosenza)
Sicilia	Tifone Crew (Catania)
Sardegna	Cagliari Hardcore (Cagliari)

These independent collectives are not peripheral; rather, they represent central nodes within the Italian screamo scene, embodying the ethos of collaboration, reciprocity, and versatility that has historically defined the (punk) DIY approach. In contrast to the neoliberal logics of hyper-individualism and commodification, they sustain modes of cultural production grounded in solidarity and mutualism. Furthermore, the versatility of their members, who move fluidly across roles and different activities (e.g., musicians, promoters, label owners, graphic designers, and technicians) offers a broader perspective on how the scene functions, creating a dense network of practices that dissolve the boundaries between production, distribution, and consumption. This versatility enables screamo to exist not only as a musical genre, but also as a scene with its own economy of values, social networks and cultural practices. Italian independent collectives operate as spaces where cultural production, social interaction, and political resistance converge. They offer an alternative to market-driven logics and sustain a living, autonomous infrastructure for the scene.

Alongside the independent collectives explicitly dedicated to the musical sphere (and often engaged in forms of artivism), it is important to acknowledge the role of self-managed and occupied social spaces (i.e., squats), as well as other venues (e.g., open-air spaces, independent cultural associations), which will be further examined in Chapter 5. These spaces are run by collectives that are not strictly musical in nature, but they regularly organize concerts as part of their broader political and cultural activities. For this reason, they are not included in the table presented above, but they nonetheless play a crucial role in the ecosystem of the scene. Their contribution extends beyond providing venues and logistical support: they create a wider cultural and political context that sustains live music practices, linking the screamo scene to broader practices of resistance and urban countercultures.

Furthermore, some organizers hold only occasional events or one-off festivals – such as Can I Scream Fest**,** Grida dai Fienili**,** or Adescite Fest (see Chapter 5) – which is why they are not included in the table presented above. Despite their occasional nature, these events play a crucial role in the ecosystem of the scene, providing spaces for musical performances and fostering community-building and collaborative networks, while engaging with the socio-political dimensions of the scene. In doing so, they reinforce the DIY ethos and the embeddedness of screamo within a broader framework of cultural resistance.

More in general, the Italian scene has been greatly influenced by the fourth wave of screamo (from the mid-2010s onwards), which sparked a resurgence of interest in “skramz” aesthetics and a return to grassroots DIY networks, following the decline of “MTV screamo” in the US and of emo-

pop in Italy. As already stated, the album *Prima che tutto bruci* (2017) by Øjne became emblematic of this revival in Italy, reconnecting contemporary screamo with the legacy of Raein and La Quiete, and appealing to new generations of listeners. For this reason, screamo in Italy can be conceptualized as both a genre and a scene: a dense constellation of bands, micro-labels, independent collectives and audiences whose everyday practices sustain a countercultural infrastructure. Situating the Italian scene within the broader historical trajectory of screamo's fifth waves makes it possible to see how global and local forces intersect and how DIY practices materialize as forms of cultural resistance extending beyond music into broader urban and political struggles. Finally, the Italian screamo scene is deeply embedded in transnational DIY networks, through tours, split releases, and collaborations with foreign bands and labels. This circulation sustains both continuity and renewal, enabling new generations to coexist with the legacy of established bands and confirming screamo in Italy as a local manifestation of a wider global counterculture.

3.3. The city of Milan and the broader Italian context of research

In recent years, Milan has become the nerve center of the screamo scene in Italy, with many bands located in the city. It is also an important transit root, due to its geographical position, for international band tours. Furthermore, especially between 2023 and 2025, thanks to the independent collective Ali Di Cera DIY (formed in August 2022 and based in Milan, with the main objective of organizing live concerts) and other several event organizers, many screamo concerts have been organized, including both Italian and foreign bands from around the world. This was possible because of their contacts and networks with different venues around the city or in adjacent territories (and, more generally, in the country), including C.S.O.A. Cox18, C.O.A. T28, C.I.Q. – International Neighborhood Centre, Legend Club, Santeria Toscana 31, F.O.A. Boccaccio, and Bloom.

However, many of these places have become the subject of increasingly extreme eviction policies by municipalities, often accused of being narrow and incapable of valorizing local resources. For example, F.O.A. Boccaccio has experienced repeated evictions and relocations since its foundation in 2003. Over the past two decades, it has occupied around twelve abandoned sites in Monza (close to Milan), including former factories, the former Apollo cinema, the former Verga stadium and spaces in Via Boccaccio, Via Arnaldo da Brescia, Via Aspromonte, Via Durini, Via Rosmini, Via Timavo, Via Val d'Ossola and Via Don Verità[24]. Considering the existence of temporary autonomous zones

[24] https://www.monzatoday.it/attualita/storia-20-anni-foa-boccaccio.html (last access: 29/09/2025).

(TAZs[25]), the number of occupations rises to nearly twenty. Each eviction has been followed by new occupations accompanied by protests, mobilizations and solidarity campaigns. While these evictions were frequently justified by municipalities on the pretext of safety issues or redevelopment plans, they nonetheless revealed the precariousness of the project. Although the collective currently lacks a permanent physical space, it continues to provide an enduring infrastructure for independent cultural and musical practices in Monza, embodying a form of urban resistance that challenges local policies while affirming the right to self-managed spaces. The latest episode is the eviction of S.P.A. Leoncavallo, one of Milan's most prominent autonomous public spaces, in August 2025. Founded in 1975 and relocated to Via Watteau in 1994, Leoncavallo has long served as a node for alternative culture, activism, and independent music. Amid a heavy police presence, this eviction disrupted ongoing activities and sparked widespread protests across the city, the largest of which took place on 6 September 2025[26].

These episodes highlight the fragility of live-music infrastructures while simultaneously fostering solidarity, creative adaptation, and renewed commitment to DIY practices. Ultimately, they underscore the dynamic relationship between self-managed spaces, cultural production, and urban policies in shaping independent music ecosystems in urban contexts. These cases also illustrate how the neoliberal urban policies of Milan have not only intensified the precariousness of self-managed spaces but have also undermined the cultural infrastructures on which scenes like screamo rely. The fragility of live-music infrastructures stems not only from economic constraints, but also from deliberate exclusion: autonomous spaces are often marginalized in official narratives, despite their role in sustaining vibrant cultural practices.

These dynamics must be understood within the broader socio-political context of Milan and its surroundings, shaped by processes of neoliberal urbanization. The eviction and marginalization of self-managed spaces reflect a governance model treating the city as a "growth machine" (Logan & Molotch, 1987). In this framework, co-optable cultural production is promoted, while underground practices resisting commodification are delegitimized or marginalized (Tozzi, 2023). The fragility of live-music venues exposes structural inequalities and shows how the struggles of the screamo and DIY scenes intersect with broader struggles over the right to the city. Evictions often produce a spillover effect in nearby areas such as Monza – as in the case just analyzed of F.O.A. Boccaccio,

[25] TAZs can be defined, as Bey (1991) theorizes, as temporary occupations or self-managed spaces that arise in the interstices of institutional control, creating moments of autonomy and collective experimentation (raves are an example of this).
[26] https://www.ilpost.it/2025/09/06/cortei-protesta-leoncavallo-milano/ (last access: 29/09/2025).

where collectives repeatedly occupy new spaces, sustaining cultural activity and highlighting multi-scalar dimensions of urban resistance.

Historically, like many other urban contexts around the world, Milan has suffered a decline in economic and cultural impulses, of which deregulation, privatization, the loss of power of municipal administrations and the loss of metropolitan identity are only some of the causes. Particularly, the cultural policies of the city have been strongly criticized, especially in the early 2000s, for the lack of investment in the local cultural and artistic scenes (Alfieri, 2009). In the same years, coinciding with the centre-right council of Letizia Moratti (2006-2011), the city also adopted a policy of minimal intervention in the cultural sector, leading professionals to denounce the total lack of institutional support (d'Ovidio & Cossu, 2017). In 2011, however, the new city council of Giuliano Pisapia (2011-2016) represented a strong break with the former right-wing and centre-right governments that had led the city for many years. Cultural policies focused on competitiveness and international dialogue, but also on the valorisation of local resources, which were exploited to become a tool for attracting tourists and "creatives". Indeed, many academics and critics have denounced how – in the face of a great bottom-up participation, underpinned by trust in the new cultural administration, and in the new political climate and cultural reactivation of the city – the strong critical impulse from cultural and artistic associations had disappeared. To the present day, the mayor Giuseppe Sala (2016-present), has pursued a narrative of Milan as a "creative city", internationally competitive and that never stops, but at the same time attentive to its citizens. However, behind all this, there is a reality of increasing privatization, of attracting real estate capitals that increase inequalities, especially in housing conditions, of gentrification processes, and so on. Milan, indeed, is a "growth machine" (see Logan & Molotch, 1987) based on a profoundly unequal model of development.

In this trajectory, the upcoming 2026 Milan–Cortina Winter Olympics constitute a paradigmatic example of the neoliberal urbanization processes that are investing the territory. Although the event is officially presented as an opportunity for global visibility and infrastructural modernization, it has already accelerated processes of speculation, urban renewal, gentrification, and ecological exploitation (e.g., the urban regeneration projects of Santa Giulia district and the Scalo di Porta Romana[27]). Critical networks such as C.I.O. 2026 (Interregional Coordination against the Olympics) have highlighted how public resources are redirected towards mega-events at the expense of local needs, situating their struggle within a transnational repertoire of anti-Olympic mobilizations. A parallel controversy is the planned demolition and redevelopment of the San Siro stadium, where

[27] https://scaloportaromana.com/en/ (last access: 30/09/2025).

discourses of "urban regeneration" mask speculative logics and the erasure of the collective memory associated with one of the most iconic sites of the city.

Added to this, the cultural model of Milan itself changed with EXPO 2015, constituting indeed a critical turning point in the city's urban and cultural planning, marking a moment of transition from traditionally "big events" (international exhibitions such as Il Salone del Mobile) to cyclically repeated, micro, meso, and macro events that mark the time of the city, including the so-called "weeks" (e.g., Desing Week, Digital Week, Green Week, and Piano City). In this sense, Milan has become an "events city", and as such, like Barcelona, London, or Paris, embodies and promotes the model of the "creative city" (see Chapter 1). However, it also perpetuates a highly exclusionary narrative towards all cultural activities that do not agree to be co-opted, that is, exploited for urban marketing and branding. Therefore, the identity of Milan as an "events city" exacerbates the marginalization of underground music cultures, including screamo.

Given the neoliberal urban trajectory of Milan, the city provides an ideal context for the present study. At the same time, a multi-scalar and multi-sited ethnographic approach enables the comparison between Milan and other urban, peripheral, and non-metropolitan contexts, highlighting how opportunities typically associated with metropolitan environments are reconfigured across Italy. This lens is essential as the dynamics observed in Milan are not isolated but intersect with national-level processes. For instance, legislative frameworks such as the Italian law n. 80/2025 known as "Security decree" (see Chapter 1) have further constrained the space for self-managed cultural practices across Italy, legitimizing intensified evictions and reinforcing narratives of criminalization around squats and autonomous spaces.

Indeed, although Milan has served as the primary site of observation for this research, fieldwork was also conducted across multiple regions in North-Central Italy, including Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto and Umbria, to capture the diversity of the screamo scene and its local manifestations. These additional sites provided insights into how independent collectives, DIY venues, and small-scale festivals operate under varying socio-political conditions and urban policies. As it will be analyzed in the next chapter, the multi-sited ethnographic approach allows for a comparative perspective, highlighting both common patterns and regional specificities in organizational and resistance practices, and cultural engagement. By situating Milan within this broader Italian context, the research not only reflects the centrality of the city but also emphasizes the interconnections between metropolitan and more peripheral contexts, explaining how local struggles are embedded in – and shaped by – national-level dynamics that simultaneously constrain cultural autonomy and foster renewed forms of collective resistance.

In this sense, the screamo scene provides an insightful vantage point to explore how urban resistance, cultural marginalization, and global economic restructuring are entangled across scales. At the same time, the scene in Milan cannot be reduced to a struggle for visibility. Concerts and events organized by DIY collectives also function as spaces of politicization, where music is intertwined with queer, ecological, and anti-capitalist struggles (see Chapter 7). In this sense, the screamo scene contributes to broader countercultural and intersectional practices, offering not only alternative forms of cultural production but also battlegrounds for social and political resistance against the neoliberal restructuring of the city.

In the next chapter, the research design of the thesis will be presented, detailing the methodological framework (multi-sited ethnography), the analytical approach (i.e., the Grounded Theory-informed strategy), and the ethical considerations, including reflexivity and circularity of the research process, the boundaries between ethnography, autoethnography and autobiography, emotional labor, and related issues.

Chapter 4. Research design: Methodological framework, methods of analysis, and ethical considerations

I conducted the research on the field adopting a multi-sited ethnographic approach.

This methodological approach entails tracing a phenomenon across multiple locations, emphasizing the circulation of people, discourses, and practices rather than confining research to a single field site. It challenges traditional notions of localized ethnography by exploring connections, associations, and relationships across diverse contexts. In the following section, I will outline the origins and purposes of this approach, subsequently discussing how the notions of *site* (section 4.1.1.) and *scale* (section 4.1.2.) are understood and applied within this methodological framework.

4.1. The multi-sited ethnography

The most important theorization of this approach can be traced to Marcus (1995; 2011). In the author's wake, multi-sited ethnography (MSE) allows to navigate dichotomies across different sites and scales of analysis, reconstructing the system of relations and trans-local interdependencies that co-produce any particular social setting or phenomenon. In this sense, MSE can contribute to unpack the systemic reach of the research object into micro-components, that can be observed and traced in their mutual interaction and co-production across multiple scales (and thus ultimately compared).

This approach was elaborated in the context of theoretical reinvention of US anthropology, as an attempt to comprehend how to ethnographically study globalized phenomena. Particularly, this approach was intended

> as an experiment to address the crisis of representation for the canonical, realist mode of ethnographic writing, recasting a critical reflection of the late 60s around ethical and political implications among researchers and research co-participants, as well as the forms of description of fieldwork experience, mediation, and interpretation of cultural differences (Murillo 2022, p. 45).

It is not only a set of strategic practices for field research, that has as objective data gathering through participant observation and interviews or geographically bouncing from one site to another, but it also involves the description "*of what it means to be entangled in the very web of relationships*

the ethnographer may find himself or herself across scales" (ibidem). In this sense, the local scale becomes the starting point for interpreting "globality" of sociocultural phenomena, within the contemporary debates on the transnational conditions. Moreover, it must be said that the context itself is the product of performances, practices, narratives, and power relationships stratified through time (Coleman & Crang, 2002).

This serves as the foundation for the concept of music scenes adopted in my research, in the wake of Straw (1991): supra-local cultural spaces encompassing a wide range of different musical practices and networking processes. Therefore, music scenes are not only local expression of creative and cultural practices, but they are entangled with supra-local and global forces that permeate and shape them; for this reason, all these localized expressions should be considered as a single multi-layered trans-local scene. At the same time, "global" phenomena cannot be separated from their different local expressions, interacting and merging with each other. This means that musical impulses are transmitted across locations, which allows participants in music scenes to be informed about trends and innovations in different places, and vice versa. Therefore, a music scene "*destroys stable traditional continuities and at the same time cosmopolitizes and relativizes them*" (Straw in Kozorog & Stanojević 2013, p. 361).

Adopting the multi-sited ethnographic approach, it is also important to take into consideration relational spaces that are created during the fieldwork, between the researcher and the subjects of the research, that influence data collection, analysis and the production of texts. In this wake, the field itself

> becomes a 'product of the research' and 'is generated not only through following the interlocutors/respondents but also by the concurrent decision-making of the ethnographer, qualifying both the researched and the researcher for the category of "actors"' (Islam in Patisaoura 2024, p. 2).

Indeed, as Coleman and Collins (2007) state, the field "*is constructed through a play of social relationships established between ethnographers and informants that may extend across physical sites, comprehending embodied as well as visual and verbal interactions*" (ivi, p. 12).

It follows that the field of MSE itself – in which participant observation takes place – is relational, no less than multi-sited. More radically, as Candea (2009) argues, the boundaries of any field have to do with the theoretical purpose and aim of ethnography, regardless of location. For this reason, it is important during fieldwork to consider how different social settings can share substantive research commonalities and be co-produced and interdependent. Moreover, following Falzon (2009), the focus

must be on the "*thick description of a network rather than its individual nodes*" (ivi, p. 16). Indeed, as Marcus (1995) argues, MSE defines as its objective the study of social phenomena that cannot be accounted for by focusing on a single site.

In the wake of Gustavson and Cytrynbaum (2003), relational spaces consist in the social relations and social dynamics inherent in the practice of ethnography. They can be understood as ongoing processes that may have an impact on the shape of the research. As Marcus (2011) states, multi-sitedness represents

> the objective relations of a system which can be studied independently of ethnography (e.g. a network); the relations set into play as an artifact of a research design […]; and the para-ethnographic perspective, the clockwork or 'native point of view', which is always spatio-temporal, that the ethnography works within for its own purposes and produces results in conversation with (ivi, p. 28).

In this context, space is conceptualized in the wake of De Certeau (1984) as "*the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities*" (ivi, p. 117). Moreover, as Lefebvre (1974) flashed it out: the space (including the space – i.e. the field – of ethnography) is socially produced. This implies taking into consideration "*vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables*" (ibidem) in the practice of ethnography. Particularly, MSE "*gives the opportunity to think through experiences and interpretations of temporal orders across sites*" (Benton et al., 2017, p. 463), and for unfolding fixity in designation and identity (Leonard, 2009; Marcus, 1995). Indeed, the MSE approach and the debate on relational spaces are intertwined with other issues in the ethnographic research, namely reflexivity, subjectivity, and the role of the ethnographer in co-producing space during the ethnographic practice.

4.1.1. The sites of multi-sited ethnography and their boundaries

In the light of all this, what is at stake here is the importance of understanding what the sites of ethnography are. Indeed, as Rahola (2014) argues, "*contemporary ethnography does not simply transcend the local, rather it shows how place is composed by processes that link a multitude of locales around the globe*" (ivi, p. 3). For this reason, the actual, physical and material dimension of sites must not be lost, and attention must be put on the "*struggles or frictions that define the ways in which both subjects and sites are mediated in their interactions and defined in their mediated*

experiences" (ivi, p. 4). Therefore, with the author's words, "*the specific site of ethnography* […] *is not only defined by a friction but is itself a friction*" (p. 6). In this perspective, friction[28]

> is both the (potentially local) outcome defining a site (the meaning of "local" in the global present) as something that is once and for all impossible to conceive as a pre-given and bounded place, and, above all, is the possible, actual, material site of ethnography, as the (material as well as localized) "situation" triggered by the clash of non-scalable or differentially scalar spatial and temporal situations or subjects and the apparatuses' scalable efforts (ibid.).

It is possible to affirm that frictions themselves can be assumed as specific sites in contemporary ethnography. Thus, the ethnographic fieldwork is anything but already given or bounded, but again is relational, co-produced, and co-constructed. In this context, by focusing on the trans-local character of urban spaces, I argue the importance of adopting a multi-sited and, therefore, trans-scalar ethnographic approach in the study of music scenes and gentrification processes, as it allows for a focus on "*conflicts and frictions within scales, among scales, and notably between scalable and reproducible dynamics and technologies and nonscalable and un-reproducible situations and subjects*" (Rahola 2014, p. 13). The ethnographic field-site – that is, the direct object of ethnographer's experience – is, in this perspective, a set of spaces and places, i.e. imagined spaces, that are networked together across borders and in which the ethnographer finds himself or herself to be entangled and actively engaged.

However, it is still fundamental to address how the ethnographer selects the field-site and defines its boundaries – that is, what is inside and what is outside of the ethnographic research – in multi-sited ethnography. By doing this, it is necessary to recognize that the field is not the chosen object of study, but rather it is a means of investigating. Therefore, the rationale for multi-sited ethnographical research consists not merely in covering multiple locations, but in following the circulation of meanings, practices, and power relations that connect them. This approach examines how spatially distinct contexts are shaped by – and in turn shape – common dynamics, revealing both shared structures and local specificities. Rather than treating sites as discrete units for comparison, multi-sited ethnography emphasizes their relational construction through networks, translations, and situated interactions. Furthermore, physical locations are not chosen in an autocratic or arbitrary way, rather "*by the scholarly literature on a particular topic, the current state of methodology, and one's unfolding ethnographic insights on the ground*" (Falzon 2009, p. 12). This is also how the bounding of the field of research functions. Engaging with notions such as trans-locality and multi-sitedness

[28] The author borrows the notion of "friction" by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's book *Friction. An ethnography of global connections* (2005).

does not mean that there are no boundaries between ethnographic sites, but it does mean again focusing attention on the fluid dimension of the "production of space", or the "production of site" (Brenner & Elden, 2009), as well as recognizing the value of the temporal dimension in determining the extensiveness and thickness of the field-site. Ultimately, the boundaries of the field are therefore not decided by the ethnographer in isolation, but by the whole methodological and epistemological complex of which he or she is a part. Indeed, as Candea (2009) suggests, processes of delimitation and selection are necessary in order to overcome the indeterminacy of the field experience at the beginning, during and at the end of the fieldwork (e.g. by following the principles of triangulation and saturation, as I will argue later) and to transform it into a meaningful account, while leaving room for unanticipated discoveries and directions.

4.1.2. On scales, scaling and rescaling processes, and the "urban" forms

In the definition of multi-sited ethnography emerges the importance given to the concepts of "space" and "scale".

Particularly, Brenner (2015) argues that

> the geo-economic project of neoliberalism, centered on capital mobility, deregulation of markets, and increasing commodification, proceeded through a mighty attack on the scales of socio-political regulation and the attempt to forge a new planetary-level scalar hierarchy in which the logic of competition by all possible means is institutionalized (ivi, p. 145, my translation).

Indeed, the notion of "scale" has become central in the debate on the "explosion of spaces" (Lefebvre, 1979) and the territorial restructuring processes triggered by post-Fordism. This debate is well illustrated in the book *New State Spaces. Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (2004) by Neil Brenner. Synthetically, what Brenner argues is that scales can be understood as the multifaceted geographical materialization of capitalist relations. It is necessary – as an exercise in theoretical abstraction – to represent, read, interrelate and compare phenomena, nevertheless risking imposing order among them and constructing hierarchies that do not necessarily reflect reality. For this reason, it must be noted that scales are socially constructed. Indeed, "*geographical scales are the product of economic, political, and social activities and relationships; as such they are changeable as those relationships themselves*" (Smith 1995, p. 61). Moreover, as stated earlier, it is also important to consider the processual nature of the dynamics of spatial transformation itself, which means that space can never be regarded as static, fixed or given; rather, the production of space "*always*

represents forces of capital, always implicates political elites, and sometimes also provokes collective resistance" (Zukin 2011, p. 10). For the same reason, as Kahn (2005) states, urban sites are "*multi-scalar, heteroglot settings for interactions and intersections*" (ivi, p. 287), meaning that they are not merely multi-layered or fragmented, but are animated by a plurality of actors, languages, and temporalities that coexist, conflict and mutually shape one another. In this sense, cities function as arenas of negotiation, where heterogeneous spatial, social, and symbolic narratives intersect.

Brenner's argumentation is that nowadays it is increasingly difficult and misleading to trace certain processes back to single scalar matrices (local, global, regional, urban, rural, etc.) and even to read them in multi-scalar terms, that is, to analyze how an urban territory can be traversed by an interweaving of phenomena and processes on different scales, but also how a multiplicity of different territories can be traversed synchronically by an interweaving of such a plot (cf. Sassen, 2007; 2013). The author proposes – in the wake of the contemporary debate also carried on by other authors such as Smith (1993), Agnew (1997), and Swyngedouw (1997) – to interpolate them through the processes of *scaling* (scalar differentiation) and *rescaling* (scalar re-differentiation), that is, to analyze the material fabric of relations and processes of capitalist urbanization – recognizing that the urban is a project of scalability –, rather than analyzing the urban as an abstract notion. Therefore, these two processes, which in contemporary capitalism are at the basis of the dynamics of institutional development and social conflict, allow attention to be placed on the dynamics of inter-scalar relations and transformations of spatial landscapes. In this sense, scales "*constitute the temporally stabilized effects of a plurality of socio-spatial processes to be theorized and investigated in specific terms*" (Brenner 2015, p. 134, my translation).

However, it must be recognized that scaling and rescaling processes develop along with other forms of socio-spatial structuring such as territorialization and place-making. Therefore, to construct a multi-sited ethnography, it is also important to focus on urban governance systems and cities, as they shape both the spatial articulation of power and the conditions under which cultural practices emerge and circulate. In this perspective, what is urban appears "*not only as a level located within supra-urban political-economic hierarchies but also as the product of dense inter-scalar networks that interconnect localizations scattered throughout the World System*" (ivi, p. 128, my translation). The urban is trans-human and trans-local (Amin, 2007). Again, the urban can be understood as a "concrete abstraction": it is not a pregiven site, space, or object, but is a theoretical construct. What is called a city

> is configured today as a heterogeneous and technologically dense spatio-temporal mosaic, composed of rhythms and flows that redefine the sense of distance and proximity, and crossed by confining devices of various kinds" (Guareschi & Rahola 2015, p. 30, my translation).

Resuming Lefebvre's metaphor, the explosion of spaces has also led to an explosion of the forms of the cities and of any administrative framework within which the urban phenomenon has been confined. Therefore, the forms of the cities today appear as "*the unstable, dynamic and contested space produced by urbanization, in some ways its continuous discarding*" (ivi, p. 39, my translation).

What emerges is the impossibility of defining the urban as a spatial unit on its own right, as well as – by focusing on the urbanization process, instead of the urban as a given phenomenon, in the wake of Brenner (2013) – the impossibility of distinguishing the urban from the non-urban. Gentrification processes, for instance, have further altered and expanded the forms of the cities, so that today they appear more like an irregular mosaic, challenging any assumption of proximity and distance under the formula of *splintering urbanism* (as already analyzed in the first chapter), which leads back to the extractive dynamics of capitalism. Nowadays, indeed,

> the urban seems to transcend the national and state order, bringing it inexorably into crisis, and its space becomes the material precipitate of the inextricable intertwining of inside and outside that characterizes the new geography of markets, finance, material and immaterial production (ivi, p. 80, my translation).

This means to read the urban as a productive and extractive site, as well as collocating it as a juncture of a continuum of production and absorption, called capitalist urbanization. Therefore, there are a production, and a wealth created in cities, that in turn produce cities: which are expressed in intangible terms of ways of living, organizing, producing space and that is under threat of expropriation, appropriation/deprivation, being swallowed up "elsewhere" (what is called "non-urban": the suburb, the rural, the wilderness, etc.).

This "elsewhere" has long served as a "constitutive outside" to determine the urban as a specific type of settlement space (whether understood as a city, a metropolis, a city-region, etc.). However, as already stated, the focus must be on the *processes* through which the variegated landscapes of urbanization – and, ultimately, of capitalism – are produced. For this reason, urbanization should not be understood as a mere process of agglomeration – "*the dense concentration of population, infrastructure, and investment at certain locations on a broader, less densely settled territorial*" (Brenner 2013, p. 102) – but it must be connected to larger scale processes of territorial reorganization, circulation and resource extraction.

Therefore, following Smith (2015 [1996]), it is important to take into account the urban "frontiers", the margins, the interstices, the vacant spaces located at the fringe between the territorial city and the urbanized territory, those practiced and lived spaces that more or less consciously oppose the extractive dynamics that define urbanization. It follows that the opposite of gentrification is not abandonment and decay, or the rhetoric of "bottom-up development" of neighborhoods, rather the "*democratization of the right to housing. [...] The first and most immediate patriotic act should be to occupy spaces, squatting*" in order to regain possession of frontiers (ivi, pp. 197-195). In this perspective, urban sites can be read through the notion of "multi-scalar friction" (Rahola, 2014). Conflict is therefore central in the understanding of the dynamics of valorization of spaces, which can also point the way to new collective formations.

4.1.3. Participant observation at events and in an independent collective

Multi-sited ethnography primarily involves participant observation as a research method, with the aim of making sense of the localized and everyday experienced hierarchies – and the resulting practices of resistance to them. Participant observation can be generally defined as "*an omnibus strategy [...] that contains a variety of information gathering techniques that involve various forms of observation – from unobtrusive ones to full-scale participation*" (Ervin 2000, p. 142).

My field research consisted of two synchronic activities: participant observation at music events (concerts and festivals), and participant observation in an independent collective in north Italy, during the organization of a major screamo festival. My research design included a year of field research, involving events and meetings with the collective. Particularly, the selection of the events to attend was made following the principle of saturation, based on the model of theoretical sampling that I borrowed from Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This means that I collected data until no more new information of relevance to my study emerged, nor any new hypothesis or theories to investigate further (see section 4.2.). In Chapter 5 I will go into greater detail about how I chose the events to attend and the collective to be part of.

The research pursued two primary objectives through these two different activities. On the one hand, through participant observation at music events, I aimed to study the practices and behaviors enacted by the audience, the relationships between people and events, the organization of events, the emotional impact of events on their audiences and their engagement, and the immediate socio-cultural context in which social dynamics took place. On the other hand, through participant observation in

an independent collective, I aimed to study the discourses circulating within it, the self-representations of the people involved in it, their phrases and semantics, but also the meanings they attribute to terms such as "independent", "resistance" or "DIY", in their daily interactions and routines (the taken-for-granted).

Regarding participant observation at music events, as stated by Mackeller (2013), "*by attending the event even as a passive spectator, the researcher becomes a participant in the event, taking part in the social setting*" (ivi, p. 58). In the wake of Spradley (1974), a list of the elements to observe at events is: space (the event location), actors, activities, objects (the items located in the setting), the single acts (e.g., moshing, crowd surfing), events (what is happening? In the period post, during and pre), time (planning and organization of events, post-event ramification and consequences), goals (what participant are aiming to achieve), feelings (the participants' emotions).

The two activities of participant observations were carried out with an inductive approach, "with a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance (Spradley 1974, p. 4), that means approaching the fieldwork with curiosity, not with a theory or hypothesis to be tested, with the aim of understanding social reality and emotional associations from the emic point of view. Indeed, in the wake of Holloway et al. (2010), "*the inductive approach associated with ethnography implies that the insider viewpoint, the lived experience of participants will be prioritized, and that the data produced will guide researchers' understanding of event participation*" (ivi, p. 77). Indeed, participant observation means that the researcher is immersed in the setting, that he or she interacts with participants, observes spontaneously and in detail what is going on and can make questions about it. Through participant observation, the researcher can "*explore and understand the event experience by sharing, participating in, the experience (the "doing" or "being there")*" (ibidem).

However, if the research on the field started inductively, later the process became abductive. This is because, as the research progressed, I developed working propositions and ideas which I tested out over the following data collection and analysis, until I gained – as already stated – saturation. Abduction means "*selecting or constructing a hypothesis that explains a particular empirical case or set of data better than any other candidate hypotheses, as a provisional hypothesis and a worthy candidate for further investigation*" (Thornberg & Charmaz 2013, p. 153). Abductive reasoning is reinforced by procedures and methodological attitudes that are typical of a Ground Theory-informed approach, i.e. constant comparison between data, the circularity and reflexivity of the analytical approach (see section 4.2.).

Different levels of participant observation can be identified (cf. Walsh, 1998; Robson, 2002), including "complete participant", "complete observer", "participant as observer", "observer as participant" and "marginal native". During the fieldwork at events, I aimed to reach the highest level of involvement possible, as I was already an ordinary participant in the situations under investigation (cf. Spradley, 1980). Indeed, as it will be discussed in the section of ethical considerations, this familiarity with the context facilitated access and understanding. In contrast, regarding my participation within the independent collective, I define myself as a "moderate participant" (Robson, 2002) or "active member" (Adler, 1987), reflecting engagement in collective activities while maintaining a primary focus on observation rather than full immersion. Adler (1987) argues that by assuming the role of active member, researchers

> get swept up into many of the same experiences as members. While this has the distinct advantage of adding their own selves as data to the research, both as a cross-check against the accounts of others and as a deepened awareness of how members actually think and feel, it propels researchers through various changes. (ivi, p. 64).

In addition, the long-standing methodological debate surrounding covert versus overt observation must also be considered. In the case of my research, for the events I chose to not systematize my approach, since being a "complete participant "*does not necessarily entail a covert approach or deception of others, for example where the researcher is already a participant in the culture in question*", as in my case (Jaimangal-Jones 2014, p. 43). However, especially at the beginning and in non-familiar sites the behavior that I adopted can be traced back to the covert approach, since my objective was that of "*observing and digesting the entirety of various events from the decor and venue layout, to the behavior of individuals*" (ivi, p. 48). With continued attendance, interaction with audience gradually increased. Since screamo is a music scene where there is a core of individuals who regularly attend all organized events, there have been occasions in which it was necessary to introduce the research project and clarify my role, thereby transitioning from covert to overt observation, not to mention those people who already were familiar with me as friends or acquaintances. It must be noted that informing all participants at every event of my position as a researcher was not feasible; however, those engaged on a more personal level were appropriately informed. The extent of information provided was adjusted according to the context and formality of interactions: "*the less formal the setting the less detail required*", as excessive specificity could "*adversely impact on the spontaneity of the interactions, becoming more of a hindrance than a help in the research process*" (ivi, p. 50). As the encounters progressed, the dissemination of my project was more conversational and natural.

In contrast, participation within the independent collective was conducted using an overt approach. The objective was that of constructing meaningful interactions with the members of the collective, by maintaining transparency regarding research objectives and activities. Furthermore, given the closed nature of the collective, in which members involved are close friends, entry the group would have been impossible without an intermediary and without openly communicating my motivations for taking part in organizing the festival. This certainly led, as I have often pointed out in the field notes (and as it will be argued in the ethical considerations and in Chapter 5), to a limited access to the field, to an initial distrust of me, and a lack of understanding of the extent to which my involvement in the organization of the festival should have been allowed. While this may have initially prompted "normative" behaviors, over time it facilitated the development of relationships grounded in trust and mutual respect, enabled gradual active participation, and fostered a sense of being treated as an equal and accepted member. This approach also helped me to avoid and neutralize potential identity ambiguities, while allowing for the negotiation of my role and identity, which were understood as being constantly constructed throughout the research process (Gobo, 2008). Consequently, although my initial role emphasized more observation over participation, as the months and meetings progressed, progressive involvement permitted active engagement alongside ongoing observation. Balancing observation and participation thus represented a central challenge of this phase of fieldwork, requiring careful calibration of moments in which intervention was appropriate versus moments in which it was not.

4.1.4. Ethnographic field notes: the role of smartphones, social media, flyers and fanzines

A section needs to be dedicated to the recording of ethnographic data.

To document the events and meetings under investigation, observations were made by using primarily field notes, photographic and video images, Instagram posts and other social media contents regarding events and more in general the scene (for example, Instagram stories and posts, newsletter on Substack, YouTube videos), merchandise, flyers, and fanzines.

Particularly, field notes are essential for ethnographic research and should include a significant amount of pure description of action, individuals, and activities, with the objective to reach a greater understanding of the cultural processes and dynamics at play within specific contexts, such as different events. When feasible, direct quotations should be collected "*to fully capture the reality of a place* […] *the reality of face-to-faceness that permits most fully knowing is the reality of spoken*

messages and gestures" (Lofland 1971, p. 4). Taking notes is essential both during and after the field visits. With respect to events specifically, my field notes encompassed all aspects of the event experience: pre-event feelings and issues, decision-making processes and influences surrounding individual events. Post-events notes were equally fundamental as they provided additional understanding on my behavior as a researcher, on the interactions (verbal and non-verbal) with participants, and on various perspectives of the events and individuals involved, whether member of the audience or of the collective.

However, field notes are not only descriptions of ethnographer's experiences and observations, but they also involve the selection and emphasizing of different features and actions while ignoring and marginalizing others. As Emerson et al. (2011) argue, field notes "*are products of active processes of interpretation and sense-making that frame or structure not only what is written but also how it is written*" (ivi, p. 9). Field notes are the translation of ethnographers' experiences on the field, and at stake is the subjective understanding of both what they are doing in the field and what they believe they have understood from their observations and participation. Therefore, the writing of field notes requires an additional interpretive step. For this reason, "*they reveal their 'liminal' character by situating themselves in an intermediate space between subjective and objective, private and public, personal document and scientific document*" (Pasquarelli 2024, p. 122, my translation).

In the wake of Pasquarelli (2024), three stages in the process of writing my field notes can be identified: inscription, transcription, and description. Particularly, inscription consists in drafting brief notes (jottings), memos, mnemonic words and phrases to recall the events and statements captured in their flow during the participation process. Transcription involves putting a reported story into writing and takes the form of dictation. Inscription and transcription are activities that are carried out during the fieldwork, while description occurs once the fieldwork has ended. It involves formulating a coherent representation of the reality studied, and traditionally requires a secluded, isolated place, separated from the field. In this last phase, my field notes took the form of a field diary – the internal structure of which is divided by temporally ordered chapters and whose title is the date of the event/meeting, the name of the event and the city in which it took place, while the contents of the notes follow a time order.

Going into detail on the type of field notes, mine include descriptive, methodological, theoretical and emotional field notes (Gobo, 1999). Descriptive notes are detailed descriptions in their factual essentiality of events and actions experienced by the ethnographer. Methodological notes are questions and reflections to difficulties that emerge during the fieldwork; they represent the constant feedback between the observational activity, the method employed, and the reaction of the actors

studied. Theoretical notes are hypothesis, ideas, interpretations that can emerge from the beginning of the fieldwork; they represent an attempt to develop the more general meaning of one or more observational notes. Finally, emotional notes represent the aim to capture the ethnographer's feelings, sensations and reactions to the specific characteristics of the observed event.

Field notes were recorded with the support of a smartphone, rather than with the classic notebook and pen. The smartphone can be regarded nowadays as a common feature of everyday life and therefore tends to go unnoticed, while the latter could be perceived as intrusive in the field, catalyzing unwanted attention. Every behavior adapts to its setting, and it is equally important to consider the ways in which participants make use of it (Wolfson, 1976). Within music events, the use of smartphones for taking pictures and videos has become a common praxis: there is almost always someone in the audience with a device in hand, especially in highly visual music scenes such as screamo. Another advantage of using a smartphone for field notes consists in allowing the ethnographer to stay on the field, without the need to walk away from it to take notes. In my case field notes were taken during the concerts, putting myself in a corner of the room/space, keeping an eye on the stage and on the audience as I wrote. On some occasions, during the interval between one band and another at the same event, I had to record while queuing for the toilet or for the bar, or in the smoking area. Field notes were also enriched with pictures and videos during music events, not only to the venues, but also to the audience (while ensuring anonymity by avoiding identifiable faces) and bands. The camera, as an ancillary instrument for the research on the field, provided a richer and more complex means of representing the music scene.

The role of smartphones is not limited to take notes, photographic and video images, but they can also become an instrument when at the center of the observation there are worlds characterized by a relevant digital component, as in the case of screamo music scene. In this case, smartphones themselves can be regarded as a relevant site of research. They can become, together with computers, a key instrument to conduct participant observation within digital environments. Particularly, in my research, Instagram (a social media platform) has become an essential space for gathering information about events, which are published and publicized with flyers and written posts, among other forms of communication. It turned out to be an essential instrument for sounding out the ground before the event, and for understanding people's expectations and emotions, their sense of anticipation. It was also useful in retrospect for understanding how the event had been received, and for gaining more perspectives on details that I may have missed in my observations, such as the outfits of the bands on stage, mosh-pits, or crowd surfing. Since ethnographers cannot always be physically present in all locations, social media – and particularly Instagram Stories – can become a relevant tool for

expanding the possibilities of observation and knowledge, by offering new perspectives with which to mediate one's own. For this reason, in order to adhere to the multi-sited ethnographic approach, Instagram has become an ancillary instrument for conducting field observations, including events that could not be attended in person due to a lack of resources.

Finaly, as anticipated at the beginning of this section, other important tools for observation included flyers, merchandise and fanzines. Fanzines are self-published magazines guided by a Do-It-Yourself ethos. Historically, they have constituted an integral, and at times indispensable, part of subcultures, scenes and social movements; indeed: "*zine-making enables its creators to be transformed from 'passive observer[s] into active participant[s]' in cultural production documenting and circulating their stories on their own term* (Worley in Backer et al. 2024, p. 2). Flyers, in turn, are fundamental to circulate events, and – as in the case of fanzines – allow those who create them to express their creativity. Finally, merchandise belongs to the same sphere of meanings as flyers and fanzines. However, despite sharing a similar symbolic and cultural function, merchandise occupies a distinct position as it is embedded within market dynamics. It both reflects and reinforces social meanings, while simultaneously circulating within a commercial logic, thus highlighting the tension between DIY cultural production and commodification. Together, these three forms – fanzines, flyers and merchandise – serve as essential cultural artifacts for the study of a highly visual and aesthetic music scene such as the screamo one, because they are created through social interactions and are embedded in the activities of the social group. Visual elements (not only fanzines and flyers, but also videos and photographs) further enrich the analysis by adding additional layers of meaning. Indeed, as Backer et al. (2024) argue, visual methods can be analyzed using an analytical and reflexive approach. In this sense, such cultural artifacts are not only a support for the research, as a "representative quote" from a key passage of one's field notes, but they are also another form of data with which to engage, searching for internal patterns or those connected to the historical context.

4.1.5. Semi-structured interviews and sampling

In conjunction with the start of the two activities of participant observation, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with key informants belonging to independent collectives that are involved in the organization of screamo music events in Italy. These interviews were primarily conducted to facilitate a circular and reflexive process, enabling the examination of both practices of resistance to and the self-representations of participants, and allowing insights to flow reciprocally between these two dimensions. Indeed, I did not want simply

> to observe and report physical movements of people in temporal and spatial sequences, but to study and explain their actions, we can do it only by relating them, implicitly or explicitly, to some notions about such movements, to knowledge, beliefs, ideas or ideals (Holy and Stuchlik 1983, p. 36).

At the same time, given my decision to adopt an inductive approach, I did not want to start the fieldwork with theories and hypothesis to be tested, or to take for granted notions, meanings, values, beliefs, and participants' emotions. The aim was that of comprehending the forms "*these notions have in a person's imaginary, the meanings they hold for them and the uses to which they are put, or might be put in ensuing action*" (Hockey and Forsey 2020, p. 83). Furthermore, the research was not intended to be limited to my own experience; it encompassed not only "being there", but also "being with" research participants. As Hockey and Forsey (2020) observe, "*interview as a moment of engagement, a site of participation in the life of the person we meet and talk with*" (ivi, p. 75). For these reasons, the interviews were preparatory, preliminary or contemporary to the beginning of fieldwork in order to identify the main aspects warranting attention during participant observation at events and throughout the organization of the screamo festival in northern Italy, to determine the key events not be missed and to identify the individuals with whom to engage. Moreover, as Holloway et al. (2010) note, triangulation in ethnographic research is "within method" (i.e., between observation and interviews) rather than "between methods" grounded in different epistemologies (such as qualitative versus quantitative approaches)[29]. From a methodological standpoint, this entailed cross-referencing participants' responses in the interviews with my field observations, in order to ensure that what was observed corresponded as closely as possible with the themes that have already emerged from the interviews, without the concern of "missing out" on relevant insights.

The questions (see Appendix 1) of the interviews revolved around these topics:

a) On independent collectives: their roles, activities, what needs they address to, how the collective was born, what the term "collective" means to them, etc.
b) On screamo: their definition of screamo, how it has changed over time in Italy, where it is more active in Italy (geographically), screamo aesthetics, etc.
c) On the screamo scene: definition of scene, existence of a screamo "scene" in Italy today, challenges and difficulties, spaces of the scene, etc.

[29] There are different forms of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation and methodological triangulation. For an in-depth explanation of each of these forms, see Denzin (2009). In the case of this research, however, I will principally refer to methodological and data triangulation.

d) On resistance: what DIY means to them, reasons for choosing DIY, politics and economics of DIY, cultural climate of the city where they live, etc.

For the interviews I employed purposive sampling, which is criterion based and non-probabilistic (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Specifically, the criterion was homogeneity: I selected individuals who belonged to the same group and that have similar characteristics, namely being part of an independent collective and organize music events. Some interviewees, however, were identified through snowball or chain referral sampling (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981), as they were recommended by previous interviewees for their extensive knowledge of particular areas or topics relevant to the research. Among the ten interviewees, three were women and seven were men, with ages ranging from 22 to 38 years old. The under representation of women reflects the male-dominated nature of the screamo scene (see Chapter 5 and 7). The independent collectives to which they belong are disseminated in different regions of Italy: Piemonte (1), Lombardia (2), Emilia-Romagna (2), Veneto (1), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (1), Emilia-Romagna (1), Marche (1), and Sicilia (1). Selection of collectives was based on their level of activity in organizing music events in Italy.

The interviewees were all contacted via the Instagram platform, through a brief but explanatory massage regarding my research (see Appendix 2). Interviews were conducted both in presence and online, using the Google Meet platform (with the camera turned on), and were recorded using a smartphone's recorder. Additionally, I took notes in a notebook during the interviews, with the respondent's prior consent, as a further tool for data triangulate – and to begin organizing the collected material. All interviews lasted an average of two hours, with a few extending up to three hours. The extended duration is attributable to the broad range of issues explored, including topics that emerged spontaneously beyond the original interview guideline, which proved essential for investigating aspects that had not been initially anticipated and for deepening the understanding of the research questions.

Before starting the interviews and the participant observation within the independent collective, the respondents were asked to sign two documents: the personal data processing form and the informed consent form for the research[30] (see Appendix 3 and 4). This step was essential to ensure that participation was fully informed, to guarantee the possibility of withdrawal at any time, and to safeguard the anonymity of the participants. Anonymity was further ensured using pseudonyms, chosen by the participants themselves, with which they can identify themselves if they wish to consult

[30] They are written in Italian since the interviews were conducted in Italian. Instead, Appendix 1 (interview outline) and 2 (first contact for the interview) are translated in English.

my thesis or any academic publication derived from it. This approach also sought to render the interviews – and the participant observation – less extractive and to actively involve participants in the decision-making process, with the aim of reducing the power differential between researcher and participants. Regarding events, anonymity was maintained by employing pseudonyms for attendees and by avoiding filming or photographing individuals' faces. However, as this research employs a multi-sited ethnographic approach, the sites themselves – i.e., event venues, locations, and cities – are analytically significant for comparative purposes. Therefore, it was only possible to omit sensitive information that could identify specific individuals, while other contextual details remained public. At the same time, both the independent collective in which I participated for the organization of the festival and the festival itself are public entities. Throughout the research, care was taken to ensure that no identifiable connections could be made between individuals and their actions or statements.

4.2. Qualitative data analysis

While the previous sections have detailed the procedures for data collection, the following sections put attention the methodology for data analysis. Particularly, qualitative data analysis "*is an interactive process of bringing order to disorderly data*", because, simultaneously with the observations and interviews there is the attempt "*to make sense of the data and to write about them*" (Daymon and Holloway 2002, pp. 159-160). This interpretative act involves "*theorizing and explaining by linking emerging ideas derived from* [the] *analysis to established theories by comparing and contrasting others works with* [my own]" (ibidem). Therefore, data collection and data analysis are closely intertwined processes which proceed circularly in reciprocal interaction.

Since the beginning of the research, from the interviews and the first events attended, I started to organize and catalogue the data collected as interviews transcriptions, interview notes, field notes, and visual data. The process of analysis itself started in conjunction with data cataloging. For this reason, I started coding and developing some early concepts, at first without the help of any software, but as the data increased, I needed more support, thus, I started using NVivo 14. NVivo is the acronym for Nud*IstVivo: Non-numerical Unstructured Data*Indexing, Searching and Theorizing Vivo. As the label itself suggests, it is a software aimed at the analysis of texts, images, multimedia documentation (non-numerical data) – namely, qualitative data.

4.2.1. Open, axial and selective coding

Coding is a central and important process in qualitative data analysis (Morse and Richards, 2002). The first step was that of importing all the data collected and to classify the files between observations at events, observations in the collective, interviews, interview notes, and visual data (specifically, flyers, photographic and video images, fanzines and merchandise). I gave specific attributes to each file. In the case of interviews (and the notes), I created different attributes through which to classify the files: age, gender, employment, independent collective of belonging, and city of residence for every interviewee, date of the interview. In the case of events, the attributes are name, date, location of the events (city and venue). In the case of field notes with the collective, the attributes are the date and location in the city. Finally, in the case of visual data the attributes are the type of data collected (flyers, fanzines, etc.), date, and location.

In total, I have collected **173** pages of field notes in the independent collective; **413** pages of field notes from participant observation at events; **50** pages from jottings and memos; **350** pages of transcription (between 30 and 35 pages for each interview). Added to this, I collected **283** visual data, that are mainly photographic and video images. Fanzines, merchandise, flyers, but also Instagram posts and other digital material that are non-textual data were recorded – as a matter of convenience – as images, in order to facilitate their analysis and interpretation.

I then created two codes, one for each research question (RQ1 and RQ2), and began to recursively read and re-read the data collected, generating codes "subordinate" to the two main codes as the research progressed (*open coding*). These codes are key words, issues and themes that recurred in the evidence. For example:

Table 4.3. Examples of topic and in vivo codes created using NVivo 14

Code RQ1 *How do music scenes react when not only is there a lack of physical space in which to aggregate, but also when the urban environment as an opportunity for support is distant or absent?*	**Code RQ2** *How do music scenes address the paradox of simultaneously resisting co-optation processes, while risking becoming agents of gentrification themselves?*
Code RQ1.1: Cultural activism	**Code RQ2.1**: "Free entrance"
Code RQ1.2: Occupation	**Code RQ2.2**: Inclusive spaces
Code RQ1.3: "Long live DIY and long live friendships!"	**Code RQ2.3**: Dance practices
Code RQ1.4: "Once out of Milan, you are among sheep"	**Code RQ2.4**: "Free Palestine!"

Source: Personal elaboration on collected data

Particularly, as it possible to observe in Table 4.1., I adopted both *in vivo* and topic codes. Particularly, a code "*serves as a label that represents an idea or a phenomenon in sections of a text which are similar or have the same meaning*" (Daymon and Holloway 2002, p. 306). *In vivo* codes are "*the words and phrases used by participants themselves to describe a phenomenon*" (ivi, p. 137). Examples of *in vivo* codes are RQ1.4 "Once out of Milan, you are among sheep" and RQ2.4 "Free Palestine!". They correspond to the language used by participants, reflect their reality and perceptions of it. Topic codes (Richards, 2005) are terms created directly from the ethnographer to describe evidence in the data and that not necessarily correspond to the language used by participants. An example of topic coding is RQ2.3 "Dance practices", that can involve moshing, stage diving, circle pit, and other gestures. This code has been decided directly by me and corresponds already to a second phase of the coding process (*axial coding*), which is the creation of links between different codes, that are grouped together and compared with each other. The objective in this phase, indeed, was that of identifying relationships that can indicate patterns in the collected data. Finally, in the third and last phase (*selective or focused coding*), a limited set of focused, more direct, selective and conceptual codes was identified in order to construct categories (Charmaz, 2006), that can be defined as are "conceptual assertions" in which groups of codes that share common meaning references are synthesized.

Open coding, axial coding and selective coding are three analytical steps into the coding process (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As illustrated above, open coding involves "*segmenting the data, attaching conceptual labels to these segments, and making comparisons among the segments*" (Maxwell and Chmiel 2013, p. 30). Axial coding is "*where the data* [broken down by open coding] *are reassembled so that the researcher may identify relationships more readily*" (ibidem). Finally, selective coding consists in "*coherent lines of interpretation with respect to the data analyzed and thus proceed toward the construction of a more abstract and complex theoretical framework related to the phenomenon studied*" (Salvini 2010, p. 110, my translation).

However, coding can be also a limit for the research: it can "*restrict the adaptability of* [the] *research, causing* [the ethnographer] *to overlook interesting and useful aspects that are outside the question structure*" (Daymon and Holloway 2002, p. 303). Indeed, coding makes data more manageable, but it also risks deflecting attention from phenomena that are not coded and from the context. For this reason, I tried to deal with the coding process in a flexible and open manner, since in qualitative research there are no rigid stages or rules for undertaking this process. This means recognizing that these phases are not as distinct and consequential as they appear to be, but they are intertwined and circular – as the nature of ethnographic research is. In fact, they can be considered as purpose-built passages, or guidelines for the researcher (as argued by constructivist grounded theorists), with the aim of orienting and facilitating qualitative data analysis, rather than limiting it.

4.2.2. Grounded Theory as a strategy of analysis

The coding process depicted so far can be situated into a broader analytical framework informed by the principles of Grounded Theory. Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), GT can be defined as a general method of comparative analysis and a set of procedures capable of (systematically) generate theory based on data. As Daymon and Holloway (2002) state, it is "*an open, reflexive form of research where data collection, analysis, the development of theoretical concepts and the literature review occur in a cyclical and interactive process*" (ivi, p. 130). The most important guidelines in GT are illustrated by Charmaz (2010) as follows:

1. Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process.
2. Analyze actions and processes rather than themes and structure.
3. Use comparative methods.
4. Draw on data (e.g. narratives and descriptions) in service of developing new conceptual categories.

5. Develop inductive categories through systematic data analysis.
6. Emphasize theory construction rather than description or application of current theories.
7. Engage in theoretical sampling.
8. Search for variation in the studied categories or process.
9. Pursue developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic (ivi, p. 11).

In this research GT is mobilized as an analytical strategy to strengthen the interpretative power of the study. Indeed, Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) argue that "*grounded theory methods move the research and the researcher toward theory development*" (ivi, p. 160). Since GT can sharpen the analytic edge and theoretical sophistication of ethnographic research, I argue that ethnography and GT can complement each other. In fact,

> ethnographers can make connections between events by using grounded theory to study processes. A grounded theory emphasis on comparative method leads ethnographers to (1) compare data with data from the beginning of the research, not after all the data are in; (2) compare data with emerging categories; and (3) demonstrate relations between concepts and categories" (ivi, p. 161).

In this sense, GT enables the ethnographer to undertake processual research, that develops in context and time, allowing to investigate how participants create meanings through social interactions in specific contexts. Thus, the use of GT allows data to be interpreted, not just reported or described. This also means continually searching for relationships between concepts in order to generate patterns and connections from which theories, or at least theoretical ideas, can be developed (Daymon and Holloway, 2002).

As already argued in the previous paragraphs, theoretical sampling is informed by GT, and I adopted this model to select which and how many events to attend, until theoretical saturation – when no new relevant information to my study was found in the data. Hand in hand with this process of selection, there is the "theoretical sensitivity", which guides theorizing activities in GT – firstly by acquiring more information through reading, and secondly by increasing ethnographer's knowledge through experiences, that is in the case of this research through participant observation. Furthermore, the development of theoretical sensitivity keeps the coding process grounded: "*constant comparison of codes, categories, and concepts with observed events and places, allows the researcher to see if interview transcript analysis accords with what has been observed in the field*" (FitzGerald and Mills 2022, p. 10). Finally, in GT theoretical sampling needs to be combined with constant comparative analysis, which refers to the constant examination of data throughout the research process (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). This combination results in a data and methodological triangulation (within-

method, as already illustrated in the previous paragraphs). Data triangulation refers to collecting data from multiple data sources – in my case, from multiple events –, while methodological triangulation to using multiple methods in the same study – in my case, interviews and observations. Both are essential for the quality of qualitative research and of the eventual final grounded theory.

More in depth, comparison between data is strengthened by memo-making, which is also a crucial step between coding and a first draft of the analysis (and thesis). Through memoing, it is possible to

> reconstruct the path of development of the researcher's awareness and knowledge about the topics studied, make explicit his [or her] own reflections, questions, doubts, and the strategies through which he [or she] worked to clarify them (Salvini 2010, p. 33, my translation).

Thus, memos "archive" ideas, reflections, doubts about empirical circumstances and elaborated concepts, and to trace patterns in the data and emerging theory. They can also be used to "*address practical, methodological questions and to explore emerging theoretical possibilities. Such memos not only provide initial theoretical materials, but they also help to focus and to guide future observations and analyses*" as they are "*in-process*" (Emerson at al. 2001, p. 362). Memos are therefore essential elements to be integrated into the analysis and interpretation processes.

Memoing is also part of a reflexive practice, that means recognizing the researcher as active agent in data generation and accounting his or her biases and perspectives. Reflexivity thus means that the ethnographer must "*adopt a self-critical stance to (1) [the] research, (2) [the] research relationships, (3) [the] personal assumptions and preconceptions, and (4) [the] own role in research*", as I will attempt to do in section 4.3, which is concerned with ethical considerations (Daymon and Holloway 2002, p. 94).

However, after the first theorizations of Glaser and Strauss (1967) on GT, many different versions have been developed, such as Glaserian GT (Glaser, 1978) Straussian GT (1987), multi-GT (Goldkuhl and Cronholm, 2010), and constructivist GT.

In the case of this research, I adopted Charmaz's (2006; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007) constructivist position to Grounded Theory. It is based on social constructivism, which means that "*both the research process and the studied world are socially constructed through actions, but that historical and social conditions constrain these actions*" (Charmaz and Bryant 2008, p. 376). In this sense, practices of resistance cannot be separated from the contexts in which they take place, and their interpretation can only be (multi-)situated in the social, cultural, political and economic contexts (from the urban/city level to transnational conditions). Moreover, this approach recognizes the active

and vital role that the researcher plays in the research process, "*particularly in the developing dialogue between researcher and data from which codes and categories, and eventually a grounded theory should result*" (ibidem). Hence, the constructivist position of GT focuses on issues that I already addressed (or will address shortly), such as reflexivity, research context, the inescapable effect of prior knowledge and existing literature. As Charmaz and Bryant (2008) argue:

> constructivism takes a relativistic view and emphasizes: (a) the social conditions of the research situation; (b) the researcher's perspectives, positions, and practices; (c) the researcher's participation in the construction of data; and (d) the social construction of research acts, as well as participants' worlds (ibidem).

This position assumes that researcher and participants co-construct data, and in virtue of this, constructivist grounded theorists view their methodological strategies more as guidelines rather than rigid prescriptions "*by being open for more than one significant or frequent initial code. […] Such oppeness means that the researcher continues to determine the adequacy of those codes during the focused coding*" (Thornberg and Charmaz 2012, p. 48). Indeed, as argued before, I also adopted an open attitude toward coding process, being careful not to stiffen on rules.

4.2.2.1. Visual Grounded Theory

Not only textual data, but also visual data were subject to a GT-informed coding for the present research. For this reason, before addressing the issue of theorizing from data, it is necessary to consider visual data analysis, since very little has been written so far about how the constructivist Grounded Theory strategy of analysis can be applied to visual data. In fact, even if the use of visual data within Grounded Theory has been justified with the adage "*all is data*" (Glaser 1998, p. 8), there are very few outlines of a proper VGT strategy.

The objective here is not to provide a historical account of how visual methods developed emerging from the "pictorial turn" in visual data analysis (Mitchell, 1992) or to compare these methods; rather, the purpose is to delineate and explain the basic strategies I, in an exploratory manner, employed to elaborate a VGT, starting from a few outlines identified through bibliographic research.

A first outline of VGT has been proposed by Konecki (2011), who developed the concept of *multislice imaging*, arguing that images not only show multiple layers of meaning but can also be interpreted from multiple perspectives:

> the multislice imagining is a grammar of visual narrations analysis that accents the following stages: a) an act of creating pictures and images (analysis of context of creation); b) participation in demonstrating/communicating visual images; c) the visual product, its content and stylistic structure; d) the reception of an 'image' and visual aspects of presenting/representing something (ivi, p.131).

These are the premises on which VGT is based. The key point, as argued by Mey and Dietrich (2017) in the second outline, is to reject the transformation of visual data into mere texts and textual interpretations, and to formulate concrete analytical steps to ensure a systematic and rule-based analysis of non-textual data. In other words, images and videos should be treated as visual objects, rather than as texts to be described. Therefore, since traditional Grounded Theory is based on coding, it follows that also Visual Grounded Theory must follow the same guidelines – that I drowned from Mey and Dietrich (ibidem) and by Ridge (2024, third and last outline). The authors argue that during the open coding process, visual data must be "broken up" into segments (that is, into pictorial elements with a code for each) and visual meanings, instead of reducing them to verbal paraphrases, documenting this process with memos in order to transcend the level of pure description of visual data. Open coding and memos are thus closely interlinked. This process of segmentation and coding can also be guided by WH questions (what, who, when/how long, where, why, with which, and what for). The second step is the creation of categories that, as with texts, reflect the conceptual content of images and videos (selective coding). As with traditional data, over the course of interpretation of visual data, theoretical sampling becomes fundamental to decide if any additional material is needed to answer the research questions. Finally, to ensure continuous integration between data and categories, also constant comparison is needed. In this way, it becomes clear that textual data and non-textual data are highly interlinked and complete each other, and thus cannot be separated, not only in the coding process, but also in the theorization from data.

An example of VGT coding applied to a photograph of a DIY screamo event can be the summarized in Table 4.2.:

Table 4.4. Example of VGT coding on visual data using NVivo 14

Coding steps	Code/category	Visual example
Open coding	1. Absence of stage; 2. Audience with microphone.	1. Musicians and audience on the same level; 2. Fan singing together with the vocalist.
Axial coding	1. Horizontal relationality; 2. Political and identity participation.	1. Musicians blended with the audience; 2. Presence of slogans and collective singing.
Selective coding	1. DIY concerts as spaces for political resistance; 2. Cultural democratization.	1. Connection between slogans and participatory practices; 2. Overcoming the hierarchy between stage and audience.

Source: Personal elaboration on collected data

Another example of VGT coding can be found in a video depicting a circle pit at a screamo event. In this case, the following procedure was adopted. During the open coding phase, I divided the video into small segments: crowd running in a circle, bodies colliding, participants helping those who fall, and the pit intensifying with the music. I then assigned initial labels to each of these elements, such as "collective motion", "playful aggression", "mutual care", and "rhythm-driven intensity". During the axial coding phase, I established connections between these codes by asking *how* and *why* they were related. For example, "collective motion" and "mutual care" were linked under the broader category of *embodied solidarity*, while "playful aggression" and "rhythm-driven intensity" came together under *music-body interaction*. Finally, in the selective coding phase, I integrated these categories into the core concept of the circle pit as a visual and embodied practice in which sound, movement, and solidarity converge to transform physical chaos into a structured expression of community and resistance.

However, this framework should be understood as an exploratory orientation within Visual Grounded Theory, rather than as a finalized or comprehensive method. Its development would require further theorization, starting from the distinction between images and videos (which in this case are simplistically treated as sequences of images themselves). First attempts in this direction have been made by Dietrich and Mey (2018), and Habib and Hinojosa (2015). In this research the lack of specific resources and the appropriate methodological tools and expertise limited the possibility of pursuing such a refinement, which undoubtedly constitutes a limitation of the research.

4.2.3. Theorizing from data: theoretical coding

Lastly, it is necessary to address the issue of how theorizations can be constructed from the data. Glaser (1978) developed with this purpose *theoretical coding* (and theoretical codes). This process is not separate or posthumous from the other coding processes (open, axial and selective), but it is simultaneous and intertwined with them. Holton (2007) defines theoretical coding as "*the identification and use of appropriate theoretical codes to achieve an integrated theoretical framework for the overall grounded theory*" (ivi, p. 283). Theoretical codes are analytical tools to organize and conceptualize open, axial and selective codes and categories with each other in order to develop a coherent ground theory. Again,

> theoretical codes consist of ideas and perspectives that researchers import to the research process as analytic tools and lenses from outside, from a range of theories. Theoretical codes refer to underlying logics that could be found in pre-existing theories (Thornberg and Charmaz 2013, p. 160).

They include ideas, terms or abstract models that can specify relations between categories developed by the researcher during the focused coding and may help him or she to tell an analytic story that has coherence. Therefore, theoretical coding is supplied by the logic of abduction (see 4.1.3.):

> researchers explore their knowledge base of theoretical codes and compare them with their data and their own constructed codes and categories. Then they choose (or construct) and use the 'best' theoretical codes as analytical tools to relate categories to each other and integrate them into a GT (ivi, p. 161).

Abduction, mainly developed by Peirce (1960; 1979), is a way of capturing the dialectical shuttling between the domains of observations and the domains of ideas. Using abductive reasoning means constantly moving back and forth between data and pre-existing as well as developing knowledge or theories and makes comparisons and interpretations in the search for patterns and the best possible explanations. Therefore, abduction is a cerebral process, an intellectual act of informed guessing, since the researcher is confronted with

> thousands of possible explanatory conjectures (or conclusions) […]. The essential function of abduction is their role as search strategies which tell us which explanatory conjecture we would set out first to further inquiry … through the explosive search space of possible explanatory reasons. (Schurz 2008, pp. 203-204).

From these definitions of abduction emerges its necessary connections with previous knowledge, that can be either merely applied (through a qualitative induction) to a phenomenon or modified and transformed (through an abductive inference).

Finally, theoretical coding is also reinforced by theoretical sensitivity, which can be developed through ethnographic participant observation. Such an approach provides valuable insights into the everyday interactions, contexts, and social structures that shape participants' lives, activities, and relationships. Therefore, to complete the circle of reflection, systematic notetaking further strengthens Grounded Theory research by fostering both inductive and abductive reasoning. To conclude, it can be argued that ethnography and Grounded Theory can complement each other to significantly improve the quality, validity, and trustworthiness of qualitative research.

4.3. Key ethical considerations in research methodology

During fieldwork, a number of ethical challenges emerged, which I sought to address and critically reflect upon in my field notes and memos. In this section, I want to concentrate specifically on the issues related to positionality/ies; the negotiation of field access and gatekeeping; the boundaries between ethnography, auto-ethnography, and autobiography; the boundaries between observation and "retrospection" and the circularity of the research process; as well as emotional labor. These issues cannot be sharply separated, particularly if one acknowledges that ethnography demands fluidity and mobility in the role played by the ethnographer throughout the fieldwork process. Nonetheless, I will here attempt to organize and present them as distinct thematic cores.

4.3.1. Multipositionality

One of the first issues that I found myself having to deal with is that of positionality, which is anchored to a broader urge for being reflexive and, specifically in multi-sited ethnography, to consider the role of the ethnographer in producing and constructing spaces with research co-participants during the ethnographic practice (Murillo, 2022; Patsiaoura, 2024). Indeed, ethnography demands a certain degree of ethnographer's self-reflexivity, self-awareness and a critical investigation of their position and impact on and from the context of research (Marcus & Fischer, 1986).

I started listening to screamo music when I was 16 years old, thanks to a friend of mine that introduced me to the genre, suggesting me albums and bands to listen to. I started with Hopesfall and

La Dispute, and then I discovered Stormo, Raein and La Quiete. I immediately fell in love with Raein. What I loved the most were their lyrics, divided between politics and philosophy. After that, it came the music: the rhythmic sections of their songs, alternating with the more melodic ones, is something that make them unique to me. Finally, after a while, I started to appreciate the screamo as a singing technique.

Then came the concerts. I remember the first concert of Stormo at Ligera Music Club in Milan as if it were yesterday. It was the 11th of July 2015. Many years later, in 2018, my passion for music became irrepressible, so I started writing for an online DIY zine. I wanted to do this because I needed to feel that I was part of the music that I was listening, contributing in some way to keeping alive the underground music scene in Italy. I continued writing for this zine until 2021, when I graduated from my master's program. Due to the lack of time and energies, I could no longer contribute to the zine. This is one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make in my life. It was like abandoning a family, this is how much I cared of the other colleagues and friends, with whom I exchanged listening suggestions and thoughts on music and related subjects every day. Throughout all these years, in addition to writing for the zine, there were concerts that I was unable to attend as often as I would have loved to, partially because of Covid-19 pandemic and partially because I was living in the province of Como at the time, without a driver license – a limitation that reflected my social and economic positioning. Then, in 2022 I started my Ph.D., and I moved to Milan driven by the desire to experience the sociality with colleagues and friends, not to depend on anyone for transportation, and to be able to go to concerts more freely. Access to live music and scene participation was thus mediated by material conditions, highlighting how social and spatial factors shape engagement with cultural fields.

When I first started the Ph.D. program, the research project was oriented toward questions and aims that later evolved into the focus presented in this manuscript. At the beginning, I thought that I could never chose a research topic that was so outside the conventional patterns of academic research, at least in my perception. Every academic department has research strands that are more "institutionalized" than others, making it difficult to step outside these research canons and thus hindering creativity – even on a personal perception level. As with any "novelty", my reaction was to become defensive or to tiptoe around for fear of disturbing academic conventions. I was also scared of researching a topic that had never been studied before. I was already imagining how difficult it would be to theorize about a music scene from scratch, without the confrontation with literature, and therefore with the fear of making irreparable mistakes that would cause me to lose academic credibility and put my career in jeopardy.

That was until one day my supervisor asked me: “Marina, why don’t you do the research on a topic that you are really passionate about?”. Something blossomed in me, like a flower. And I began to set up the theoretical framework and research design. I probably just needed positive reinforcement from my supervisor. Everything was so “easy” at that point. It was as if my subconscious mind had been working on the research for months, without me even knowing it. And so, at the beginning of 2024, I began the field research. A field, as I mentioned in section 4.1., that was not new to me, but one in which I had already been involved for several years, as a listener and for some time also as a contributor to an online DIY zine.

Thus, since the very beginning of my research, I had to address my pre-existing connections with the screamo scene, and the reasons to study it. I chose the screamo scene because I felt that something was going on. Like a sixth sense, there were various signals that I could not ignore and that I felt they could be addressed through ethnographic research, particularly through participant observation. Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1980) notion of “practical sense”, this intuition was less an individual instinct and more an embodied familiarity with the field, enabling me to perceive subtle changes and anticipate emerging dynamics. My prior engagement with the screamo scene provided me with access to field and shaped a mode of perception that enabled me to grasp subtle cues, unspoken norms, and emergent dynamics as they unfolded. Indeed, I noticed an increase in the number of events in Milan, the mixing between punk and screamo in the same events, a more general openness to this genre on the part of venues I used to go to for events of others musical genres (mainly metal). On top of that, in 2023, a lot of independent collectives were springing up all over Italy. Therefore, I knew there was something worth exploring, but then the difficulty was: how to anchor screamo in a theoretical framework, how to develop research questions that would help me unpack this reality to observe it better? After a while, I found the answer, which is Milan with its uneven model of development, a city afflicted by a real estate crisis, a financial bubble that does not yet seem destined to burst. In all of this, there is less and less space for counterculture, that is, everything that is outside the mainstream, pre-approved culture packaged by the municipality and used for urban and city marketing purposes in attempt to gain more international visibility, more investments, and – on the other hand – more inequalities.

Counterculture is confined to the margins of the city, both in a symbolic and a physical manner (see Chapter 6), as something that must remain “underground”, under the surface; on the one hand, because it should not interfere with the so-hard won city’s showcase, and on the other, because it has

to preserve its "unspoiled" nature[31], in a horizon of hope, of pure utopia, to keep practices of resistance alive, that would otherwise die. That is, if I do not believe that counterculture can come up with something alternative to mainstream culture, why should I fight and resist? It is a political choice, and political choices always envision a horizon where things will one day settle down. Then mine is also a political choice to believe that counterculture can resist mainstream culture, and that screamo, at least in Italy and at least in these years, can be a countercultural manifestation.

I quote a passage from my methodological field notes that I believe is perfect to encapsulate what I am attempting to explain:

> My political ideals prompted me to choose how to approach the topic of my doctoral research. I chose to study gentrification because of an inner drive whereby music for me has always been a medium, a tool for political action and reflection, for "cultural activism", as Christian called it. I have always found in this my specific form of activism, or to put it better: I found in music my ideals, or maybe I searched for music with my ideals until I found them. Music can be militant. Speaking can be political, singing can be political, writing lyrics can be political. Even listening to music cannot be passive. But basically, I've always been more of an intellectual, a thinker. I reflect upon things, I dissect them. I've always been more introspective, analytical, than a person who takes action in the true sense of the word. Is that a bad thing? I don't know. I think it's about being aware of it (Methodological fieldnotes, 03/02/24, Parma).

To sum up, I state that my choice to study screamo and the practices of resistance to gentrification is a political choice, and that my own political orientation and personal interests influenced the choice of the research field. Indeed, as Bourgois (1991) argues, the topics that we study and the methods we employ are bound up with political practice. Thus, in line with the feminist perspective, I believe that "*critical and insightful gaze does not come from a position of disinterest from which the researcher works, but that interest itself comes from the advantage of 'being engaged'*" (May and Perry 2013, p. 110). The idea that the researcher should choose the research object in a disinterested manner, without emotional involvement or commitment, risks perpetuating a positivist conception of ethnographic research.

This also advocates for decentering the field, recognizing that ethnographic knowledge coexists with other forms of knowledge in the co-construction of the field. The latter should therefore not be

[31] However, I will argue that counterculture is contaminated by mainstream culture. They are not really an alternative to the other, but rather what we call "counterculture" is a niche within the mainstream culture.

seen as bounded, but as shifting locations, in relational positioning within and between field settings of inquiry and living. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) indeed argue that

> ethnography is beginning to become recognizable as a flexible and opportunistic strategy for diversifying and making more complex our understanding of various places, people, and predicaments through an attentiveness to the different forms of knowledge available from different social and political locations (ivi, p. 97).

However, the theme of positionality in multi-sited ethnography draws attention on the concept of "multi-positionality": it refers to the condition of occupying multiple intersecting identity positions, not only in the sense of intersectionality (such as race, gender and class), but also in relation to the specific and shifting locations of the research field (Dodworth, 2021). In this perspective, being reflexive and analyzing the many positions that the ethnographer can play means putting attention on inter-subjectivity, linking ethnographers and participants as interactive and positioned subjects. Again, it means to also reconsider field as a construct of the research, generated through a concurrent decision-making of the ethnographer and co-participants.

Therefore, this issue implies also questioning the methodological and theoretical implications of being a female person in a male-dominated scene. From a theoretical point of view, this helped me unveil and focus on power asymmetries between female, male and non-binary genders, for example in dance practices and on the stage: To what extent is the mosh pit "inclusive"? What gender stereotypes are being reinforced? How is the presence of more male musicians and fewer female musicians explained within this scene? From a methodological point of view, being a woman made me reflect on my participation in the events, wondering if in order to self-consider myself completely involved I had to mosh and stage dive, and influenced my access to the field.

Beyond gender, access to the screamo scene was also mediated by social and economic conditions. As anticipated, living in a provincial area, not having a driver's license or lacking the financial resources to travel frequently to larger cities constrained my participation in concerts and other scene-related activities. These limitations demonstrate the structuring influence of class, which, although often invisible to participants, shapes opportunities, networks, and forms of engagement within cultural spheres. From a Bourdieusian perspective, social and economic capital determine who can attend events and who can participate and gain recognition within the field (Bourdieu, 1979; 1993). In this sense, the less visible class differences are, the more they subtly organize social relations and hierarchies within the scene, affecting who can actively participate, contribute, and be recognized.

More in general, the concept of multi-positionality entails recognizing that the field is inherently shaped by power dynamics, that the researcher is never a neutral observer, and that fieldwork is the result of ongoing negotiation between insider and outsider positions, as well as between professional and personal roles. Researcher must continually adapt and renegotiate his or her positionality across diverse sites, relationships, and power dynamics.

4.3.2. Negotiating access to the field and gatekeeping

As I previously mentioned, my gender played a significant role in determining my access, and legitimation, to the fieldwork within the independent collective. I believe that, if I had been a man – especially considering that I was initially the only woman involved, prior to the later inclusion of two other women for the festival's organization – I might have more easily gained their trust and legitimation, as I would have been perceived as more ideologically and socially aligned, in terms of both gender and political orientation.

Beyond gender, another asymmetry that marked my position in the field was the intrinsic divide between researcher and research participants. Even though, over time, the experience of "being there" and "being with them" may have come to feel "natural" or "normalized", this did not eliminate the underlying power dynamics. Such asymmetry resurfaced in subtle but telling moments – for instance, each time I reached for my smartphone to take field notes, the distinction between observer and participant became palpably visible.

In this context, I started reflecting on the classical insider/outsider dichotomy (Merton 1972; Narayan 1993). As Clifford (1997) argue, the notion of "shifting locations" suggests that even when the ethnographer is positioned as an "insider" within the fieldwork (in my case, as I underlined before, I already participated in the scene mainly as a listener, but for some years also as a contributor for an online DIY zine), he or she cannot be an insider to all sectors of a community. Therefore, even if I was familiar with the screamo scene, I could not consider myself familiar with every single process or aspect within it. For instance, when I joined the independent collective, I knew nothing about how organizing an event works, how to book a band, how to negotiate reimbursements, how to make agreements with the venues, and so on. I was an "outsider" to these dynamics, and as such I had to negotiate my presence in the field and mediate it with my ability to understand what was happening. What I want to argue is that the insider and outsider positions are not fixed as in the classical binary

by Merton (1972), but they are contextual, the result of continuous relational processes, which are allowed by multi-sited ethnography (Dodworth, 2021).

In addition, access to the field is negotiated between the researcher and other people belonging to the field. In my case, I first encountered an intermediary, without whom I would never have been able to access the collective, given its such closed and narrow nature. As Gobo (2008) argues, intermediary can be defined as "*the person who creates the contact, or establishes the communication, between the researcher and certain members of the organization or group*" (ivi, p. 121). Again, my multi-positionality and my already established presence in the field were elements to consider. Indeed, it happened to me that after the interview with a key informant, whom I already knew thanks to my experience in the online DIY zine (we worked together on the zine during the same period), and talking about my future plans for the research (when I had not yet begun the participant observation), he told me that he was part of an independent collective in Parma and that – if I needed help – he could contact the other people involved in order to ask their opinion for me to join. However, as I anticipated, he was an intermediary, not a gatekeeper. For this reason, once established the contact with the independent collective, I had to negotiate my access to the field, my roles and identity/ies. Initially, then, the intermediary acted as a bridge between me and the gatekeepers. Unlike intermediaries, gatekeepers are the people from whom the researcher must seek approval to gain access to a group. In this case, the gatekeeper was the affiliate leader of the collective, who personified the will of all the other members, careful to promote harmony within the group and after being assured that there would be no risks or damages to them. This negotiation phase lasted about a month and a half and involved great emotional stress. Since independent collectives are so enclosed, based on strong bonds of friendship and trust, I thought I would never be able to access them. And if it was so difficult to gain access and legitimation to this collective where at least I knew one intermediary, I feared that it would be even more difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to a collective where I did not know anyone personally.

In the next chapter I will elaborate on the experience of accessing the field. What I would like to reiterate in this section is that the insider/outsider dichotomy and the asymmetrical dynamics that inevitably characterize the fieldwork proved to be key concepts to reflect upon and that influenced the methodological framework. Together with multipositionality, these concepts focus attention on legitimation and self-legitimation of being a researcher in the field – processes that are fluid, multi-sited, relational and inevitably ambivalent, generating uncertainty of meaning and expectation.

4.3.3. Boundaries between ethnography, autoethnography and autobiography

Related to the theme of self-reflexivity is the issue of the boundaries between ethnography, autoethnography, and autobiography. Indeed, if multi-sited ethnography requires reflection on how one's identities are negotiated and constantly (re-)constructed in the field, this necessarily implies the incorporation of autobiographical elements into one's research, which can blur the boundaries between ethnography and autoethnography.

> Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward exposing a vulnerable self (Ellis and Bochner 2000, p. 739).

Although autoethnography – in which the researcher's own autobiography serves as the focus of interest – is an essential component for the empirical research, the process of self-reflexivity that it presupposes should however illustrate that different interpretations of our world and that of the others are possible, that there is not a "true" knowledge of the world; rather, knowledge is always situated and co-constructed within the field. Moreover, "*lived experiences should be rendered by different voices in order to avoid a single voice standing for the 'truth' of an experience and in order to grasp appropriately the peculiarity of individual experience*" (Winter 2013, p. 257).

In my research there are both autobiographical and autoethnographical elements. Since I argued that the field is relationally constructed, co-produced, and that the classical insider/outsider dichotomy must be overcome, my multipositionality within the field is to be taken into account, not only from an autobiographical perspective, but also from an autoethnographical one, meaning that also my experience of the events within the field becomes empirical material to be observed and to be compared, in an attempt to capture the polyvocality of the research field.

To prevent my personal involvement from serving merely as anecdotical illustration, I sought to follow as closely as possible Anderson's (2006b) perspective on analytic autoethnography, which emphasizes that the researcher's experience can become a rigorous empirical and analytical resource by putting into action five key principles: *"(1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) visible and active researcher in the text, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to an analytic agenda*" (ivi, p. 378). CMR status means actively engage into the field and "being there", while maintaining analytical awareness (e.g., documenting and analyzing action). Indeed, "*autoethnographer's understandings, both as member and as a researcher,*

emerge not from detached discovery, but from engaged dialogue" (ivi, p. 382). Analytic reflexivity requires critically examining how one's own experiences and positionality shape the research process. It entails "*self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one's actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with those of others*" (ibid.). Textual visibility of researcher's self demonstrates the researcher's personal engagement in the social world under study. This means that "*autoethnographers should illustrate analytic insights through recounting their own experiences and thoughts as well as those of others*" (ivi, p. 384), avoiding self-absorbed digressions. Dialogue with informants beyond the self entails engaging with other participants' perspectives, enriching the analysis and capturing the polyvocality of the field. Finally, commitment to an analytical agenda involves using "*empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves*" (ivi, p. 387). In this way, analytic autoethnography enables personal experience to be incorporated into analysis, bridging autobiographical insight and broader theoretical understanding.

4.3.4. "Retrospection" and the circularity of the research process

In relation to the principle of self-reflexivity and that of the circularity of the research process, both of which I have discussed at length in explaining my analytical approach, a key concept I have identified is that of "retrospection" – the process of reviewing past events and situations to make sense of them in the light of new information and experiences. I believe a passage from my methodological field notes clarifies this process well:

> I realized that from the very moment I chose the topic of my Ph.D. research, I was immersed in my field of research and more or less consciously paid attention to the stimuli coming from outside, related to the field, in the hope that they could be a source of inspiration, of cues to better think and design my research and subsequent fieldwork. In a more or less conscious way, I paid more attention to posters, events, started to look at Instagram pages, to read newsletters, to hear podcasts, and so on, in search of inspiration, details, and new elements to study and deepen. So too, during concerts, I also began to sharpen my eyes and tune my ears to catch a glimpse of more things said and unsaid. So, retrospectively, although I cannot claim to have started my research in June [2023] when I presented the theoretical paper and not even in October [2023] when I presented the research design – then still imperfect – I can nevertheless say that reflecting on one's research and approach to it, as well as on the access to the field is necessary not only during the field itself, but also in preparation to it and in my case also retrospectively (Methodological fieldnotes, 17/05/2024, Milan).

In this passage, I mention the fact that even before the fieldwork started, my senses were subconsciously alerted in search for information, with the hope that one day it would be useful to me for the actual fieldwork. This awareness prompted me to strengthen the circularity of the analytical process across all phases of the research, from the preparation of the field to the end of it, and even beyond.

Therefore, retrospection should not be understood merely as recollection, but as a methodological and epistemological practice through which it is possible to reinterpret earlier perceptions in the light of later experiences. As Pink (2009) and Wacquant (2004) state, the embodied dimension of ethnographic knowledge only becomes accessible through retroactive awareness. In this sense, retrospection consolidates the circularity of the research process, revealing how data, perceptions, and positionality are co-constructed across different temporal moments of the ethnographic process.

4.3.5. Emotional labor and additional ethical issues

Fieldwork, as a process of constant reflection and negotiation, poses a significant emotional burden on the ethnographer. Indeed, a relevant issue in my field research was that of emotional labor. The issue of multi-positionality – understood as the recognition that the researcher inhabits multiple, intersecting identity positions; must continually negotiate his or her role across different research sites, and must undergo constat identity redefinitions – foregrounds the ethical and emotional tensions that arise from navigating uneven power relations and the performativity of the researcher's role within them (Clifford, 1986; Haraway, 1988), contributing to a profound sense of emotional fatigue, exhaustion, insecurity, and ethical anxiety.

Emotional labor can be defined as the management of feelings, often conflicting feelings, during the fieldwork (Keller and Peirce, 2024). Many authors argue the urgency to move emotions from the margins to the center of our reflections on methodology and fieldwork, especially when researchers are grappling with their positionalities when in the field.

Particularly, in my fieldwork, my emotional fatigue of always being friendly and convivial, ready for dialogue and engaging in casual conversations during the evenings, collided with physical fatigue. Indeed, in addition to the traditional working hours, in the office or at home, there were events in the evenings, mainly on weekends, but sometimes during the week and for several days in a row; not to mention having to take the train to Parma and return late at night when no one could accommodate me. Meetings were always held during the week and at the times in which other members of the

collective were free from their work, that is, in the evenings. My field notes are peppered with expression of fatigue, such as these:

> In general, I perceived a weary mood this evening, first of all from my side. And perhaps this personal tiredness is reflected in how I perceived the evening in general? (Fieldnotes, 09/02/2024, Milan).

> It's Sunday evening and I am tired. Yesterday I attended Piume Pesante at Bloom in Mezzago and we came back late, although we promised ourselves (again) that we wouldn't do it this time (Fieldnotes, 06/10/2024, Milan).

For the 13 months of fieldwork, it was difficult to put boundaries or even distinguish between work and private life, because everything felt like work. Even without meetings and without concerts, I had to arrange field notes, transcribe interviews, look for new events, arrange to go to them, and so forth and so on. Often, I had conflicting emotions: on the one hand, happiness and fun during the evenings (not that fieldwork necessarily has to be pleasant just because I chose it and no one forced it on me, but neither should work be viewed solely as a duty devoid of pleasure), and on the other hand, physical and emotional fatigue:

> This is the first moment this evening in which I am enjoying myself and precisely for this reason I speak with Giulio about how important it is to remind myself to enjoy the experience, in order to avoid experiencing the fieldwork as nothing but stress, given that I made the choice to align my work with a passion (Fieldnotes, 09/02/24, Milan).

> The moment has finally arrived. I had been waiting for it for a long time, and I hoped I would reach it feeling less exhausted than I do now. Still, I'm happy that months of work are finally starting to pay off (Fieldnotes, 21/09/2024, Parma).

> My trips to Parma – meeting after meeting, encounter after encounter – gradually became more and more enjoyable, despite the constant fatigue they brought. An hour and a half by train each way, sometimes followed by midnight buses to get home, or nights spent at Bruno's or Nathan's with early alarms the next morning to be back at the office and to return to my everyday life (Fieldnotes, 25/09/24, Milan).

At the same time, as previously mentioned, I experienced the strain that often accompanies social interaction. The more events I attended, the more individuals I came to know. After the initial months, I developed friendships with some of them – individuals who became key figures during fieldwork, offering support and helping to alleviate the stress and fatigue associated with my work. Nevertheless,

there were moments when I lacked the energy to socially engage, even with them, preferring instead to remain on the margins in order to concentrate on taking field notes.

There are some of the ethical considerations that I attempted to address during the fieldwork and that I wanted to elaborate on here. Many other issues would have been worth exploring, but, again, resources and time were limited and would have drawn attention away from the real core of the research. Moreover, it is impossible to think that one can convey on the entirety of their research, even if it is a doctoral dissertation; there will always be missing details.

Some examples are the themes of alcohol, smoking and drugs within the scene, which it might not be as central as in other music scenes (e.g., the clubber scene) but is still relevant. As a researcher I was aware that an easy way to keep conversations as spontaneous as possible was to ask for a lighter or in line for the bar, whereas it would have been rather awkward to stop a random person without knowing them to ask them what they thought about the band they had just heard or about a particular event that happened during the mosh pit, for example. At the same time, I often wondered my field notes: is it ethical to drink alcohol during field observations? To what extent is it acceptable for the ethnographic practice? What is the limit that should not be exceeded? Without getting drunk, or losing self-awareness and control over oneself and one's field, but drinking in a social context where people are used to drinking, is it not still a way to immerse oneself in the field as much as possible and to have more spontaneous interactions?

Another issue on which I had to reflect on are the long-term consequences of being exposed to high decibel intensities of sound, in the cases of festivals, for example, even for 8 hours in a row, and for several days in a row. A rock concert might reach 120 dB, while exposure limit for the World Health Organization is set at 85 dB for up to 8 hours. Each 3 dB increase halves the allowable exposure time. This made it necessary to buy earplugs in order to preserve my hearing and not have tinnitus in the days following the events. Earplugs could also have been an object of observation, perhaps leading me to construct other categories of interpretation, for example, between conscious and naive listeners.

These two ideas are to argue that the horizon of issues to be explored starting from my experience in the field as a researcher could have opened numerous doors of theorization, but if it is true that "all is data", then it is the task of the researcher to select, based on the research questions and objectives, which data are more relevant than others.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have illustrated a rich and complex methodological framework, through which I have been seeking to take into account the methods and techniques used to collect and record data, the strategies of analysis and interpretation, and the most relevant ethical issues connected to my ethnographic research practice. In the next chapter, trying to stick to the principle of self-reflexivity, I will deepen my activities in the fieldwork, attempting not only to describe, but also to give an account for the decisions made, the selection of sites for ethnography, and so on.

Chapter 5. Following the independent screamo music scene: Constructing the fieldwork in Italy

This chapter provides a detailed account of my fieldwork activities, focusing on the theoretical and methodological choices that guided my decision to conduct research within a specific independent collective, as well as across various music venues and locations in different Italian cities, and especially in Milan. This perspective connects local music practices to broader urban dynamics, revealing how independent scenes negotiate and resist the pressures of urban renewal and commodification. Adopting a multi-sited and multi-scalar ethnographic approach allowed me to examine Milan not as an isolated urban ecosystem, but as a node embedded in wider relational, infrastructural, and cultural geographies that shape both its independent music scenes and its transformations under neoliberal logics. The following sections reconstruct how these insights emerged through grounded engagement, highlighting the interplay between observation, participation, and (self-)reflexivity that defined the fieldwork experience.

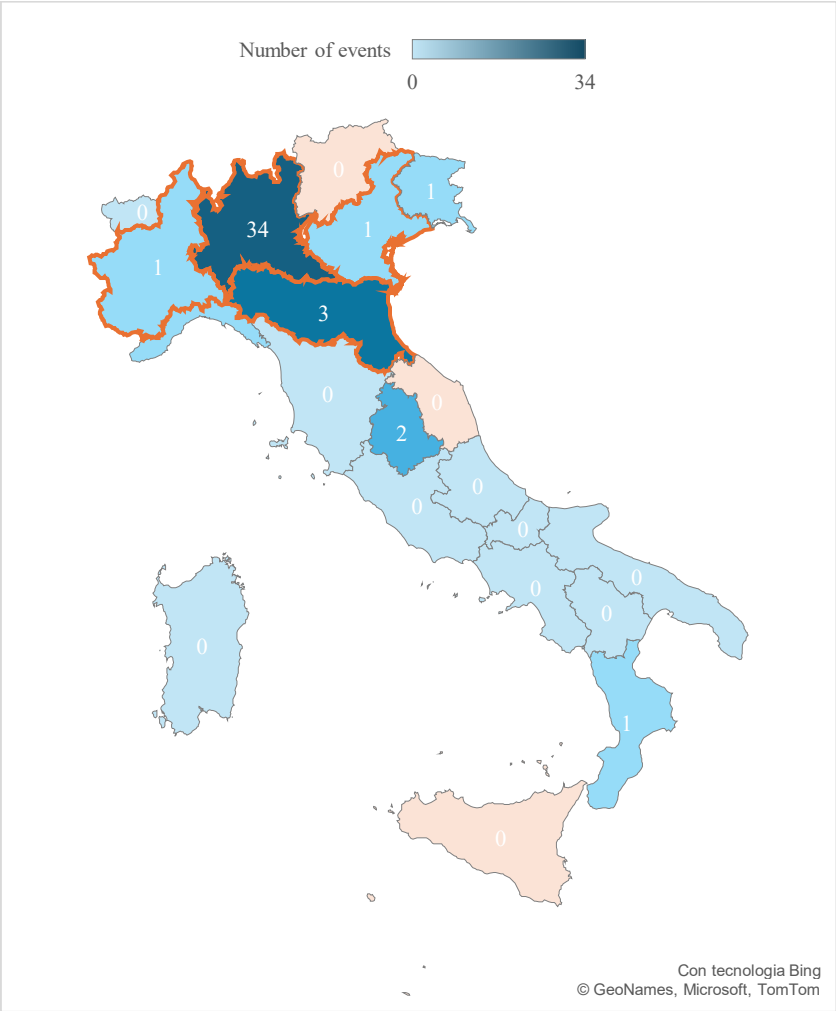
To narrate these issues in a self-reflexive and circular manner means making explicit, as I anticipated in the previous chapter, the autobiographical elements that influenced the fieldwork. This chapter is not only the detailed description of the ethnographic empirical research, of impressions and *in fieri* decisions, but it is also an act of interpretation and retrospective sense-making. Indeed, the general aims of qualitative data analysis are to describe a phenomenon in some or greater detail, to compare several cases in order to find similarities and/or differences, to explain the conditions on which such similarities/differences are based, and, finally, to develop a theory of the phenomenon under study from the analysis of the empirical data. However, since the methodological framework for the analysis is rooted into the Grounded Theory approach, as I explained in the previous chapter, data collection, analysis and the development of theoretical concepts occur in a cyclical and interactive process (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). For this reason, in this chapter I will reconstruct how these processes unfolded during the fieldwork, by making explicit the methodological rationale behind the choices undertaken. The focus is not on personal experience as such, but on how situated engagement with the field was transformed into analytical material and framed within a sociological perspective. Therefore, autoethnographic elements are indispensable for ethnography – understood here as the final written account of the ethnographic research.

5.1. A construction of the map of the screamo music events I attended

I officially started the fieldwork on 20 January 2024, and I concluded it on 9 February 2025.

Over the course of **13 months**, I attended **44 music events**, including 14 festivals and 30 concerts; 34 events in the region of Lombardy, of which 26 in the Milan area and the other 8 events in the nearby provinces; 7 events in five other regions of northern Italy; 2 in central Italy and 1 in southern Italy. In the map (Graph 5.1.), it is possible to observe the number of events I attended for region. The light orange regions are those in which I interviewed three of the ten key informants belonging to independent collectives, although I was unable to attend events; while the regions outlined in bold orange are those in which I both attended events and conducted interviews. In this way, I mapped all northern Italy (except for Valle d'Aosta, where there is no known active music scene).

Graph 5.1. Number of events I attended for region (2024-25)



Source: personal elaboration on collected data

More in detail, in Table 5.1. I mapped the event venues and locations that have been part of the fieldwork.

Table 5.5. Event venues and locations (2024-25)

Region	Province	Locality	Event venues
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Cox18
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	COA T28
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	SOS Fornace
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	C.I.Q. - Centro Internazionale di Quartiere
Lombardia	Monza-Brianza	Mezzago	Bloom
Piemonte	Torino	Torino	Magazzino sul Po
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Santeria Toscana 31
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Circolo Arci Bellezza
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Casa Occupata Gorizia
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	La Casa Di Alex
Umbria	Perugia	Montone	Montone
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Alcatraz
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Barrio's: Teatro Edi/Barrio's Live
Lombardia	Varese	Saronno	Saronno (TAZ – Temporary Autonomous Zone)
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Cavalcavia Eugenio Bussa
Lombardia	Milano	Magenta	Elbohrero House
Calabria	Cosenza	Cosenza	Auditorium Popolare – Centro Sociale Rialzo
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Legend Club
Emilia-Romagna	Parma	Parma	ARCI PWCC
Emilia-Romagna	Parma	Parma	Saletta Adorno
Lombardia	Bergamo	Bergamo	Associazione Ink Club
Lombardia	Milano	Milano	Ateneo Libertario
Lombardia	Monza-Brianza	Arosio	Associazione Culturale No Profit "Mondo Delle uoVa" - Sala Prove
Liguria	Genova	Genova	LSOA BURIDDA
Friuli Venezia-Giulia	Pordenone	Fontanafredda	Astro Club
Veneto	Vicenza	Selva di Trissino	Anfiteatro all'aperto
Emilia-Romagna	Modena	Carpi	Associazione EKIDNA
Lombardia	Bergamo	Bergamo	Edoné
Lombardia	Monza-Brianza	Muggiò	Parco Superga
Lombardia	Mantova	Suzzara	Suzzara

As regards Lombardy region, I attended events in 14 different venues in the single province of Milan, 21 venues including also the provinces of Monza-Brianza (3), Bergamo (2), Mantova (1) and

Varese (1). The second region in which I attended more events is Emilia-Romagna, in 3 different venues: 2 in the province of Parma and 1 in the province of Modena. The city of Parma is also where La Défense, the independent collective in which I made participant observation for six months, is located. Finally, I attended events (one venue each) in the Piemonte, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Veneto, Umbria and Calabria regions.

These venues can be classified in four typologies of spaces, based on their legal nature, cultural vocation and degree of institutionalization (see Table 5.2.). This classification should not be understood as rigid; rather, it provided a guideline to navigate the diversity of spaces encountered during the fieldwork and to structure the analysis.

Table 5.6. Event venues classification

Self-managed and occupied social spaces	**Independent Cultural Associations and ARCI**	**Hybrid and other independent venues**	**Informal, open-air or reclaimed urban spaces**
Cox18 (Milan)	Circolo ARCI Bellezza (Milan)	Bloom (Mezzago)	Elbohrero House (Magenta – private yard/garage space)
COA T28 (Milan)	ARCI PWCC (Parma)	Magazzini sul Po (Torino)	Cavalcavia Eugenio Bussa (Milano – bridge)
SOS Fornace (Rho)	Associazione Ink Club (Bergamo)	Alcatraz (Milano)	Suzzara (Grida dai Fienili – temporary converted barn)
Casa Occupata Gorizia (Milan)	Associazione EKIDNA (Carpi)	Barrio's: Teatro Edi/Barrio's Live (Milano)	Anfiteatro all'aperto (Selva di Trissino – temporary self-managed open-air space)
Auditorium Popolare – Centro Sociale Rialzo (Cosenza)	Associazione Culturale No Profit "Mondo Delle uoVa" - Sala Prove (Arosio)	C.I.Q. - Centro Internazionale di Quartiere (Milano)	Parco Superga (Muggiò – urban public and institutionalized park)
Ateneo Libertario (Milan)	Associazione Saletta Adorno (Parma)	Santeria Toscana 31 (Milano)	Saronno (TAZ – Temporary Autonomous Zone)
LSOA Buridda (Genova)	La Casa di Alex (Milano)	Astro Club (Fontanafredda)	Montone (Italian Party – village)
		Edoné (Bergamo)	
		Legend Club (Milano)	

The first typology consists in **self-managed and occupied social spaces** (so-called "squats"): spaces rooted in political autonomy and grassroots organization. Examples include Cox18 in Milan, LSOA Buridda in Genova and Auditorium Popolare – Centro Sociale Rialzo in Cosenza. They serve as hubs of independent cultural production where countercultural practices are enacted. They are horizontally managed by political collectives that promote anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-fascist

practices. They claim the occupation as a political act of urban dissent and reappropriation of urban spaces for collective, social and cultural purposes. Moreover, despite being locally rooted, they are connected to national and international networks of other social centers, autonomous movements, and alternative spaces.

The second typology is **independent cultural associations and ARCI**: spaces legally recognized, often linked to national networks such as ARCI (Italian Recreative and Cultural Association) and with a clear legal status. Examples include Circolo ARCI Bellezza in Milan and Associazione EKIDNA in Carpi. They operate as associative spaces with membership cards, promoting social, cultural and musical activities that are accessible to different segments of population, while maintaining an openness to alternative and independent cultural expressions, including underground music scenes. They are strongly rooted in their local territories, addressing local needs and building relationships with the surrounding social fabric.

The third typology consists in **hybrid and other independent venues**: hybrid and semi-institutionalized spaces that mediate between mainstream and underground cultural proposals. They can be associations, like Edoné in Bergamo, cooperatives, like Bloom in Mezzago, or cultural enterprises, like Santeria Toscana 31 in Milan. They share being public spaces allocated through calls for proposals ("bandi" in Italian), which are often the result of urban regeneration projects. Moreover, they are less dependent on membership networks (e.g., ARCI) and their identity is more oriented towards culture and entertainment rather than politics.

Finally, there are **informal, open-air or reclaimed urban spaces**: both institutionalized and non-institutionalized spaces, self-organized by members of the scene and used temporarily. They range from urban interstices and private backyards (e.g., Elbohrero House in Magenta) to barns repurposed for festivals (like *Grida dai Fienili* in Suzzara) and rural or semi-public open-air venues (such as Parco Superga, in Muggiò, or Montone, a small-town near Perugia). They are organized by collectives, associations or individuals operating with a DIY ethos, often without a formal structure or with a light form of coordination, offering free or low-cost events. Among them, *Italian Party* in Montone and Parco Superga in Muggiò represent more institutionalized configurations, that benefit from the support of municipalities. By contrast, Elbohrero House and *Grida dai Fienili* in Suzzara are entirely non-institutionalized and more informal. At the most extreme end of the politicization spectrum is the festival of *Acque Scure* in Saronno. Indeed, it is a TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zone): a self-managed, temporary occupation of a marginal urban space that reclaims and temporarily transforms it through collective, countercultural practices.

Comparing the number of events I have attended in Lombardy with those in other regions, it is evident that the other regions are underrepresented. The roots of their underrepresentation in the multi-sited ethnography I conducted must be found in different methodological factors that brought me to choose some regions (and related venue locations and events) over others. Additionally, I will address the structural and socio-economic factors within the Italian context (and the music scene) that prevented a comprehensive comparison of all regions.

5.1.1. Methodological factors that influenced the construction of the map

The first methodological factor consists in the sampling model that I have chosen to adopt. Indeed, as I already argued in Chapter 4, theoretical sampling is not a statistically representative sample, which means that the decisions about the data to be collected are determined by the concepts that I discovered, both at the beginning of the research and later as the (grounded) theories were being constructed.

The second methodological factor regards the ten semi-structure interviews I have conducted in conjunction with the beginning of the fieldwork. In this context, indeed, I interviewed key informants belonging to independent collectives that are involved in the organization of screamo events in Italy. The interviewees are originally from the following cities: Turin (1), Milan (2), Vicenza (1), Parma (1), Modena (1), Bolzano (1), Pordenone (1), Catania (1).

As I already anticipated in the previous chapter, in the face of some preliminary aspects to observe in order to start the collection of data to answer my research questions (e.g., clothing and aesthetics, flyers, locations, ticket costs, and any political discourses delivered on stage by the bands playing), my objective was that of understanding what were, from the interviewees' perspective – i.e., as individuals involved in the scene and dealing with it every day –, the most relevant issues on which to focus my attention during the fieldwork. For instance, one central aspect that I investigated through the interviews was the meaning attributed by the interviewees to the concept of "scene" they belong to. Rather than imposing a theoretical definition, the term was treated as an emergent category, identified through iterative coding and constant comparison. Recurrent dimensions – such as networks between people and venues, shared ideals, and collective practices – emerged from the data. This grounded approach allowed me to construct a conceptualization of "scene" that reflects both relational and structural elements of the screamo scene, integrating participants' perspectives with

field observations and existing literature. The resulting definition is therefore not imposed but derived from the interplay between empirical evidence and emergent theoretical insights.

5.1.2. The presence of hard, soft and relational infrastructures

A structural factor that influenced my map construction consists in the presence of hard and soft infrastructures (see Landry, 2000; Stahl, 2004) in urban and non-urban contexts, as well as within the music scene in Italy. The presence of such infrastructures has oriented my ethnographic focus on North and Central Italy. However, regions in the South Italy and in the Islands were not excluded from the analysis. Although I did not conduct fieldwork there (except for a music event), I have attempted to draw hypotheses and conclusions concerning these regions through indirect observation and secondary sources (for example, as I will explain, thanks to social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok).

From a theoretical point of view, the "infrastructural turn" in music scenes studies can be dated to Finnegan's (1989) research on local musicians in Milton Keynes, to Straw's (1991) article on the alternative rock and dance music in Canada, and to Shank's (1994) analysis on the rock'n'roll scene in Austin, Texas.

Finnegan (1989) adopts the notion of "pathway" to describe the material resources that foreground the infrastructural dynamics shaping music scenes. Pathways are invoked to explain how "*local music practices depend indeed on individuals' connections, but also have a certain abiding structure over and above the links of particular individuals*" (ivi, p. 305). Such pathways, continues Magaudda (2020), "*bring to light the presence of a recurring and obdurate configuration of local connections, instrumental to shaping relationships and options for local music practitioners*" (ivi, p. 28).

Straw (1991) argues the importance of "institutional infrastructures" such as campus radio stations or independent record shops for the emergence of a music scene. The author also points out the existence of an infrastructure

> *'made up by enterprises catering to an interest in the history of rock-based forms of recorded* music' *and how they indirectly helped to establish interactions between punk rock and new wave, within the wider cultural space of alternative rock in the eighties* (Shank in Magaudda 2020, p. 28).

Finally, Shank (1994) establishes the importance of a local infrastructure for music making and performing. The explains the raise of the local rock scene in Austin as an attempt to "*build an industrial infrastructure modelled on that of the national recording industry*" (ivi, p. 17), in a deliberate and self-conscious manner. In this case, music infrastructures are seen primarily in terms of economic and productive resources supporting music production.

Therefore, in these three contributions the "*music's infrastructural dimensions have generally been limited to addressing the importance of physical spaces within the city, such as concert venues, shops, recording studios, or other kinds of market related organizations*" (Magaudda 2020, p. 27), struggling, on the other hand, to explore the "*wide range of relational qualities of infrastructural entities and their ability to shape, stabilize, and transform relationships between artists and audiences, places and identities, contents and consumptions patterns*" (ivi, p. 29).

A more nuanced understanding of music infrastructures emerges thanks to Stahl (2004) in his study about the Montreal music scene. Particularly, he distinguishes between hard and soft infrastructures. This distinction is borrowed from Landry's (2000) works on creative cities, in which the author argues that cities' growth is based on creative works that require to shift the perspective from material infrastructures (such as roads, bridges, and buildings) to soft infrastructures (such as intellectual activities, collaborative tools for sharing ideas, and so on). In this perspective, Stahl argues the importance of the symbolic and affective resources that contribute to articulate the identity of a music scene. He understands hard infrastructures as the material institutions of a scene, while soft infrastructures consist of "*human substance, which gives the scene a discourse, motivation and a common ambience*" (Barone 2016, p. 26). Moreover, in his theorization, the lack of hard infrastructures pushes people to "Do-It-Themselves" (DIT), developing a human network that transcends locality (i.e., trans-locality, multi-locality, multi-sitedness).

Therefore, hard infrastructures are concert venues, record shops, recording studios, fanzines, radios, labels, bands and artists who collaborate through them; in general, any physical space in which people belonging to the scene can aggregate, both publicly (e.g., at concerts and festivals) and in a more private context (e.g., in recording studios and collective meetings to organize events). Adopting Magaudda's (2020) words, they correspond to "*everything more obdurate than musical practices and meanings*" (ivi, p. 29): the durable, material and institutional systems that make music practices possible. On the other hand, soft infrastructures refer to the implicit relational substance that is supposed to unite people along some artistic, cultural, and political lines: the "bubble" of shared values, collectively endorsed lifestyle choices and aesthetic preferences – the DIY ethos, feminism, veganism, and inclusivity, are some of the main features of the screamo scene – "*are more fully able*

to project a cohesive, dynamic and emotionally embedded sense of scene onto the physical contours" of urban, non-urban and virtual settings (Bennett & Rogers 2016, p. 15).

However, between these two dimensions another one can be added, that of relational infrastructures: the networks of trust, reciprocity, mutual care and collaboration that connect the material and affective dimensions of the scene. Within the Italian screamo scene, relational infrastructures function as connective tissues, enabling cooperation, continuity, and mobility across different places and scales. They, to all respects, embody the connection between people, spaces and resources. Following these theoretical remarks, during my fieldwork the attention was focused not only on the hard infrastructures around which the scene exists and evolves – particularly, focusing on music events as the unit of observation, as explained in Chapter 3 – and the soft infrastructures – for example, on the affective dimension of the scene and the ideals shared within the bubble –, but also on the relational infrastructures that sustain the everyday life functioning and trans-local cohesion of the scene.

In Chapter 6, I will explore hard and relational infrastructures more in depth using the "center-periphery" metaphor, arguing that peripherality is a matter of perspective. This can be physical: being removed from the city center and the urban context – understood as the availability of space and opportunities – to the "margins" in relation to urban and non-urban boundaries. But it can also be symbolic: when the "urban atmosphere" is absent or distant, and when the "urban features" of the music scene are lacking. From this perspective, peripherality can be both a consequence of unequal negotiations with urban authorities and a political choice rooted in resistance practices. In Chapter 7, I will discuss soft infrastructures arguing that the spectacularization of the scene – those gestures and movements, often dangerous and violent, perpetuated by the audience and by musicians *specifically* to be noticed within the crowd and to be documented (e.g., through videos and photographs) – clashes with the DIY ethos in everyday practices of resistance to co-optation and commodification. Inclusivity and the affective dimension of the scene, for example, often must be mediated by internal conflicts within the scene that lead toward greater sensitivity to self-commodification, in economic and cultural terms – in this sense, the "peripheral" label can be reclaimed by the scene as fashionable, surrounded by an aura of chicness and exclusivity.

5.1.2.1. Digital infrastructures and virtual scenes

As Magaudda (2020) argues, the notions of hard and soft infrastructures in music scene studies have become even more important with the advent of the so-called "virtual scenes", introduced by Bennett and Peterson (2004). Particularly, the concept of virtual scene

> opened up a new space for conceptualizing those scenes in which face-to-face interaction is no longer the only, or the main, form of participation, and where mediated forms of connection offered by Internet became constitutive of musical life (Magaudda 2020, p. 32).

Building on this perspective, I suggest that not only hard and soft infrastructures, but also relational ones are closely linked to virtual scenes and to the idea of the scene as a network of places and people, as emerged in the interviews. It can be argued that while hard and soft infrastructures provide the physical and symbolic spaces for aggregation, relational infrastructures capture the networks of trust, cooperation and affective exchange that sustain the scene. Accordingly, TikTok and Instagram have become central infrastructures for the music scene, extending participation beyond local events and enabling both trans-local and intergenerational engagement.

Particularly, Instagram – the main platform adopted by the people belonging to the screamo scene to interact, share opinions, memes, publish stories and posts about the concerts they attended, and much more – has been a central tool for my observations and analysis: to sound the ground of events, before and after they took place, to gauge the audience's emotions and expectations about them. Moreover, since economic and time resources were lacking to physically map all Italian regions and related events and venues in person, Instagram stories extended the possibilities of observation and knowledge. Clearly, this kind of content is not only mediatic, but also mediated by other points of view that are not my own, making it one of the many "situated knowledges" (see Haraway, 1998) within the field[32] – thus returning to the importance of understanding the field as co-participated and co-constructed.

Therefore, digital infrastructures draw attention to the trans-locality and multi-scalarity of contemporary music scenes, and on how local music activities and identities are co-constructed, mediated and shaped by digital platforms. Particularly, hard, soft and relational infrastructures are increasingly intertwined with digital ones, as the latter help sustaining and developing human networks that transcend locality. In fact, contemporary music scenes are not solely anchored in fixed

[32] In fact, it would be interesting to explore in greater detail the possibilities offered by Instagram Stories to conduct a netnography of events, studying the potential of this tool from a methodological point of view, but also the ethical issues that could rise from it.

localities, but they unfold through multiple spatial registers: from everyday life spaces to the spaces of event venues and the algorithmically curated spaces. In this sense, music scenes can be analyzed as fluid assemblages of the physical and the virtual spaces, and of the individual and the collective spaces. Accordingly, the mapping of the Italian screamo scene is not only physical, but also virtual and symbolic. Digital infrastructures, depending on the analytical lens adopted, can operate simultaneously as hard, soft, and relational: as hard infrastructures, they provide the technological means through which music content circulated and relationships are maintained; as soft infrastructures, they shape the discourses, aesthetics, and senses of belonging to the scene through social media interactions and visual cultures (e.g., Instagram posts, or TikTok videos); and as relational infrastructures, they sustain affective proximity and cooperation within dispersed communities.

5.1.3. Symbolic centrality and the multi-scalar geography of the fieldwork

Moving from these methodological and structural factors, as regards the music events that I attended outside Lombardy regions, I have formulated three criteria to select them: the largeness of events, the variety of the audience, and the bands playing. These criteria are not arbitrary, but they reflect the research questions on how the screamo scene is sustained and reproduced across different contexts. First, the scale of an event provides insight into the resources mobilized (infrastructural and relational), which serves as an indicator of its symbolic centrality within the scene (Crossley, 2009; Magaudda, 2020). Second, audience diversity allows for the exploration of how social groups (by age, geography, or degree of involvement) participate in the scene, thus connecting to debates in the literature on inclusivity, subcultural boundaries, and processes of renewal (Bennett, 2000; Haenfler, 2023). Third, the bands playing constitute a central axis of scene-making: they reflect trans-local networks, collaborations across territories, and symbolic hierarchies that shape musical legitimacy (Crossley, 2009; Kruse, 2010).

All of them have the merit of putting attention on the symbolic, rather than the physical, centrality of the chosen events. Symbolic centrality can be measured through the resources involved in the organization of events and their potential attractiveness. Physical centrality, by contrast, can be measured through the presence of hard and soft infrastructures within the contexts chosen for the study. In this case, I am referring to event venues, whether alternative or institutionalized gathering spaces, and to human networks between collectives and audiences. By adopting these three criteria, my aim was not to establish an exhaustive or universal framework, but to construct a heuristic tool

that guided the selection of analytically fruitful events for the fieldwork. In this sense, symbolic centrality does not necessarily exclude other events that may have been equally significant in different respects; rather, it highlights those occasions where the interplay between infrastructures (venues, collectives, networks), and symbolic resources (attractiveness, visibility, legitimacy) was most evident and most productively connected to my broader research questions.

The events in which I took part outside of Lombardy region were five festivals: the second edition of *Selva Festival* in Pordenone (Friuli Venezia-Giulia), the twenty-second edition of *Italian Party* in Perugia (Umbria), the third edition of *Life Is Strage* in Vicenza (Veneto), the eight edition of *Adescite Festival* in Genova (Liguria), *Second Impact Fest* in Modena (Emilia-Romagna), and the fourth edition of *Alle Foglie Festival* in Parma (Emilia-Romagna, in whose realization I collaborated as part of my fieldwork). Except for Alle Foglie Festival, all of them were at least two days long. Moreover, all of them involved foreign bands in the line-up, and included at least eight performances in one day. The musical genres played ranged between screamo, post-hardcore, emo-violence, and punk, thus predicting a larger and a more variegated audience (with respect to characteristic such as age, origin, aesthetics of clothing and accessories, and so on).

The remaining three events that I attended outside Lombardy region were chosen following the principle of the field saturation, and more specifically from hypotheses that emerged during the fieldwork to be tested. I am referring to the two concerts that took place in Torino and in Cosenza, where I followed one of the bands who played the most around Italy during my fieldwork, especially in the North, and for this reason also one of the most well-known in Italy. Since one of the main outcomes of my research is the spectacularization of screamo events (as I will deeply argue in Chapter 7), I wanted to observe the different audience reactions depending on the context. Specifically, I hypothesized that proximity to the band's hometown would led to more spectacularized events, as audiences who feel "at home" during the event and in the presence of a band perceived as "familiar", are also more likely to feel free to "overdo it", whereas the distance of the band from the hometown and in a context where it is less known would make the audience more self-contained (e.g., when moshing).

The last event I attended took place in Parma, at the end of December 2024. I chose to attend it because two members of the collective in which I made participant observation for the realization of Alle Foglie Festival also played with the band they belong to. This setting offered the opportunity to observe how the collective members navigated their dual roles as organizers and performers within their own social networks, surrounded by friends and familiar audiences. It also allowed me to explore how the experience of the event and the intensity of audience participation were shaped by the band

performing in their hometown, highlighting how local attachment and social embeddedness influence the dynamics of engagement and interaction during live shows.

More in general, in choosing events, I took into account a broader socio-economic factor that consist in the contextual differences between Italy's regions, and particularly the longstanding structural divide between the North-Central and the South. This divide is reflected in the availability of physical infrastructures for music events, the density of audiences, and the presence of active independent collectives. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, while northern regions tend to host a higher number of venues and events, southern regions are characterized by fewer physical resources, making local initiatives often more symbolic and socially significant despite their smaller scale.

Therefore, rather than being pre-given, the map of the music events and related venues and locations that I attended was an ongoing process of construction during the fieldwork, not only through word-of-mouth and flyers circulating on Instagram, but also through methodological and theoretical factors that emerged during the research process, influencing my decisions and shaping the interpretative strands and first theorizations that I developed.

5.2. Alle Foglie Fest *#4: my experience as a participant of an independent collective*

Alongside participant observation at events, I have also attended meetings with La Défense independent collective in Parma for the organization of the fourth edition of *Alle Foglie Fest* #4. The first meeting I attended was on 26 February 2024, after almost one month of negotiating access to the field. In total, over a period of **six months**, I attended **seven meetings** to organize the festival[33].

As practices of resistance are inherently political, and the collective was presented to me as one of the most politicized within the screamo scene, I imagined that it could enlighten me on the issues that I was investigating. Moreover, since most of its members belong to the millennial generation, their experiences offered a valuable point of comparison with the younger participants of the scene. This intergenerational contrast allowed me to explore how political engagement, cultural practices, and understandings of autonomy and DIY ethics have evolved over time within the Italian screamo scene.

[33] As already illustrated in the previous chapter, all the meetings were held in Parma, during the week, and after the members of the collective had finished work.

Both the collective and the festival they organize, Alle Foglie Fest – name derived from a song of La Quiete representing the autumn season (which is also the reason why the festival is always organized at the end of September), – hold a symbolic role in the Italian screamo scene. Indeed, since its first edition in 2021, after the Covid-19 pandemic, the festival has marked the return to live music and is often referred to as a turning point for the so-called "new wave" of Italian screamo. Its continuity and visibility have consolidated its role as one the key nodes in the network of DIY and politically aware music initiatives in Italy.

During the fieldwork, the history of La Défense emerged as deeply intertwined with that of other cultural organizations in Parma, including association Rumore Bianco and the rehearsal space Saletta Adorno, both managed in collaboration with municipal institutions. This constellation of spaces and projects reflect the collective's complex positioning in the city's cultural ecosystems – simultaneously countercultural and cooperative with municipal institutions, while continually negotiating their political identity as a DIY collective. This positioning exemplifies what has been theorized as cultural activism (Buser et al., 2013): "*forms of social critique grounded in artistic and organizational sensibilities that challenge and are challenged by old definitions of radical politics*" (ivi, p. 619). This definition helps to put attention on the constant negotiation and debate between music and its relations to politics, the ongoing and perpetually unsettled redefinition of the artistic and political identity and practices of the collective. Furthermore, the ethnographic data collected in Parma confirmed the analytical relevance of the cultural activism framework discussed in Chapter 2, showing how collectives within the screamo scene enact everyday resistance through hybrid strategies that combine DIY ethics, cultural production, and engagement with local institutions.

5.2.1. Access to the field

At the beginning, the process of negotiating the access to the collective seemed relatively straightforward. However, the following weeks revealed a more complex reality. Communication with the group slowed down, and through informal exchanges I learned that "*one of the reasons they were considering whether to have me join the WhatsApp group and attend the meetings was that they wondered if their gestures would be natural, spontaneous*" with me around (Fieldnotes, 15/02/2024, Milan). This hesitation did not merely reflect a question of personal trust but offered insights into the collective ethos of the scene itself, where authenticity, horizontality, and shared belonging are central values. The temporary suspension of access became, therefore, an indicator of how boundaries within the scene are continuously negotiated and how participation must be earned through the same

relational and affective dynamics that regulate inclusion and recognition among the member of the scene. In this sense, the episode highlighted the tension between observation and participation that defines ethnographic engagement in self-managed and DIY contexts, where the legitimacy of one's presence depends less on formal consent and more on the gradual construction of mutual confidence and trust.

Particularly, texting with Bruno, who had positioned himself as the spokesperson between me and the rest of the collective, I asked him the favor to send them a massage that I had written, so that they could more transparently assess whether my presence was welcome or not:

> Of course, I realize it is intimidating that there is a person taking notes on the things you say, on the meanings you build around the DIY ethos, rather than on the organization of a festival. On the other hand, it is not the people but the practices that are my object of investigation, and in any case, it is all governed by privacy documents and you don't have to censor yourself, if anything I censor myself. The moment you say, "This thing we don't want it to be known", I delete it. I in the first place have a duty to you and must protect your privacy. Also, I won't record you as I did for the interview, but I will simply take notes. However, the most important thing that I hope I can transmit is that I don't want to be considered simply as an external person who is standing there watching you and studying you in every single interaction, because that's not really what it's about. And I think it could distort what I would do and exaggerate it perhaps, even increasing the perceived discomfort. Mostly, it will be my personal reflections about things that I hear or see that are interesting to answer my research questions. However, I believe that the gist of it and what I would like for you to try to do is think of me as person, role-playing, who has discovered Alle Foglie Fest and would love help organizing it, because I may have resources to put at disposal to help. This is the reason I suggested writing the meeting reports if you wish or doing the most annoying tasks that you don't have the will or the time to do. Kind of like a helper. Then, [think of me] as a researcher, who reflects on her experiences inside the festival organization (ibidem).

After sending this message, I started reflecting on how I was feeling about the access to the field:

> This makes me very anxious because I was certain that I had assured my access to the field given the confirmations I had received from both Bruno and Christian, instead it seems to me that it is all the opposite of what I wrote in early February. Perhaps I was wrong to assume that they would not reconsider, that they would have no doubts about me. On the other hand, though, no matter how enthusiastic or even intrigued they might have been at first, it's okay that they eventually changed their minds. After all, to them, I am a stranger, a person they saw for the first and only time in their lives. The same goes for Bruno as well, as much as we may have known each other

> for seven years through social media and thanks to the zine, early February was the first time we actually saw each other in person (ibidem).

After the long message that I asked him to share with the collective, Bruno replied to me that he would inform me about their decision. He also suggested that I discuss with Christian my access, as he felt he could no longer be an intermediary between me and them. At that point, it was also important to clarify that I did not want to take for granted his role of intermediary or that he would speak on my behalf, because that was not his duty, but mine.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, their reluctance can be read as a meaningful expression of how inclusion and trust operate within the screamo scene. Rather than a simple matter of personal skepticism, their doubts revealed the implicit rules that regulate participation and belonging in a collective that defines itself through shared histories, physical proximity, and mutual recognition. My positionality – as a woman, younger than the most of them, not based in Parma, and approaching the collective for the first time – situated me at the margins of these dynamics. The negotiation of my access therefore became a lens through which to observe how boundaries of legitimacy are constructed and how the ethos of autonomy and DIY is continuously reproduced through selective openness. In this sense, what might appear as reluctance can also be interpreted as a form of care towards the scene itself: an attempt to preserve the intimacy and authenticity of a space where relationships and political identities are deeply intertwined. It was precisely in this context that I began to elaborate many of the ethical considerations that I have already explored, regarding access to the field, gatekeeping, emotional labor, and so on.

While I was waiting for a response, I continued researching events and pursuing interviews, even trying to figure out what other collectives might have been a valid alternative. Finally, on 25 February 2024, Bruno contacted me to say that they were meeting the day after and that I was invited to join them. The next day I took the train to Parma, enthusiastic and worried at the same time. Even if I did not officially gain access to the field, at least I could try to explain them in person my Ph.D. project and introduce myself to the other members of the collective as well:

> […] I am excited to attend their first organizational meeting since they knew the official date of the festival and have the opportunity to explain my research and make myself known. I do not want to assume that after this first meeting I will be added to the WhatsApp group chat and can officially start doing ethnography within the collective. I do not want to fall back into the mental trap of the beginning of February and risk questioning my entire thesis work again. […] Precisely because I don't know what to expect and I don't want to fall head over heels since everything could still change, I focus on something else. I decide that I want to get there as spontaneously as

> possible. To try to make myself known first and foremost as Marina, as a person who loves screamo music, who decided she wanted to be part of the "scene" through this thesis, keep an anchor through this paper, just as until 2022 I felt part of it through writing for the zine. And only after making myself known as a researcher, a doctoral student doing the thesis on screamo (Fieldnotes, 26/02/2024, Milan-Parma train).

When I arrived there, I discovered that there were only four of us attending the meeting. Besides me, Christian and Bruno, only one other person had joined: another member of Christian's band, that I will call Andrea. They explained to me that the other two members of the collective were no longer living in Parma, and, for this reason, they would not attend the meetings this year. This would be our formation for a couple of months, while in May 2024 three more people were invited to join the organization of the festival, as I will elaborate shortly.

5.2.2. Evolution of the relationship with the collective

As soon as the meeting started, I understood that the organization of the festival had begun before I joined the group, since they were discussing bands that they had already contacted and decisions they had already made. They informed me that the date of the festival is confirmed for 21 September. Consequently,

> we get straight down to the organization of Alle Foglie fest. Even before I have the chance to introduce myself and explain my role to Andrea who does not know me, Christian pulls a notebook out of his jacket and reads us the agenda of the meeting. He immediately sets the tone for the meeting in a very formal and professional manner (Fieldnotes, 26/02/2024, Parma).

The day after the first meeting, I wrote my first impressions and reflections about the collective and my personal experience with them. Particularly, I felt a great sense of discomfort and embarrassment:

> Despite my willingness to be involved in their decisions, I was rarely spoken to directly unless I was the one speaking. I also felt uncomfortable several times about the fact that I was taking notes in front of them, as I was very focused on the notes, keeping my eyes fixed on the screen and typing, while they were talking. It was difficult, therefore, even the interaction with them itself, in addition to not being directly involved in the conversations by them (Fieldnotes, 27/02/2024, Milan).

At the same time, I imagined that,

> in turn, they must have felt uncomfortable seeing me typing on my phone and, perhaps, precisely because of this they did not know how right it was to involve me in their decision-making processes on the one hand so as not to distract me, and on the other hand because perhaps they have an idea of academic research like scientific research: observing without interacting? (ibidem).

However, starting the participant observation within the collective also brought to new insights. Indeed, I realized the potential for discovery that this form of participation could offer to me:

> I realized in just one meeting with this collective that the political discourses that I can glean from doing observation are many, and far more detailed than I could have gleaned from the outside as a mere (covert) spectator to events. I am grateful to Bruno who gave me this chance and, I guess, for insisting with the guys. I believe that, if it were not for the fact that we have known each other for so many years, this would never have been possible. I cannot even imagine the difficulty of joining another collective where I don't know anyone or if I know anyone it is only by sight or in a very superficial way. It seems to me that friendships between people, mutual esteem and trust, are crucial element to take part in these kinds of collectives/organizations (ibidem).

During the second meeting the conversation went straight down to the organization of the festival again. Christian pulled out his notebook and read the meeting agenda, as he did the previous time. As I wrote in my fieldnotes:

> It has been almost a month since we last saw each other, but in the meantime, I feel that the atmosphere is more relaxed regarding my presence in the group, especially by Christian, who I sense was/is the one most uncomfortable about my presence (Fieldnotes, 18/03/2024, Parma).

In that occasion, it became clearer to me than it was at first that Christian was the affiliate leader of the collective, he was the gatekeeper from which I needed both a formal and informal validation for my participation in the collective. The formal validation consisted of admitting me to the group and adding me to the WhatsApp chat, while the informal validation was demonstrated through verbal and non-verbal behaviors, such as making eye contact and using the term "we" when discussing decisions. However, the proper legitimacy of being there and with them arrived only during the fourth meeting in May:

> I am officially part of Alle Foglie Fest!
>
> Before officially informing me of this, there was a very big preamble from Christian and Bruno, who told me that before proposing me to be part of the organization they had to think about it for a long time and wondered whether or not this would invalidate my work. Question that they ask

> to me on this occasion and to which I answer that: "No, it does not invalidate my work, in fact I am happy to be part of it so that I can lend a concrete hand, instead of feeling like a fly on the wall who cannot do anything and only takes notes". I add that I'm happy to be able to facilitate their work wherever possible, and wherever they allow me to.

Their proposal made me feel genuinely welcomed and acknowledged as part of the collective. For the first time, the distance between me and them seemed to blur, and I could finally engage as a peer in the group's activities and decisions.

The day after the meeting, I wrote down the following impressions after re-reading the fieldnotes of the previous day:

> Looking back on it now, it's amazing how I had absolutely no idea that I would be proposed to join the organization of Alle Foglie #4 when Christian proposed the agenda of the meeting at the beginning of the evening (which included the topic of "new members"). In fact, perhaps, I was even a little jealous thinking about the fact that other people would join the organization while I, who had been following them for months, couldn't, because I thought they didn't want me, or that they wouldn't want to interfere with my job. I am very happy to be officially included in the group and no longer be a mere observer, but to be able to call myself a full and legitimate participant. I also wonder what it will be like from now on when new people come to the meetings. I also imagine it would be much harder for me to take notes without missing nuances. But anyway, for now, I am enjoying this moment of pure happiness! (Fieldnotes, 02/05/2024, Milano).

A month later, on 4 June, the new people were added to the group chat, but it was not until 17 July that I finally had the chance to meet them. With their arrival, my relationship with the collective evolved further. The group became more heterogeneous, and my presence was progressively normalized within its everyday interactions. As roles diversified and responsibilities were distributed, I also began to experience a different positioning within the group: less as an external observer and more as one among others, engaged in shared practices and decisions. This transition did not erase my position as a researcher but rather integrated it into the collective's ecology of roles, allowing me to participate more naturally while maintaining reflexive awareness of the boundaries of my involvement.

In this paragraph I wanted to take into account how my relationship with the collective evolved over the months and how my impressions of it changed, in the attempt to describe how I gradually went from being an outsider to becoming – and feeling like – an insider.

5.2.3. After Alle Foglie Fest *#4: post-festival reflections*

Both in the weeks after the festival and in March 2025, while re-reading the fieldnotes that I wrote as part of my participant observation in the collective, following the self-reflexivity and "retrospection" principles, I attempted to elaborate and review my experiences: what I have learned and how my relationships with the persons involved in the collective and with the city of Parma have changed. In this perspective, I report the initial impressions that I wrote in the first week following the festival, in conclusion to this part of the fieldwork, when I was still "fresh" from my experiences, although I was already feeling nostalgic:

> These are my final considerations on this part of the fieldwork. Andrea is the person with whom I have formed the strongest bond, because he is warm-hearted, kind, always available. Bruno, with his ups and downs, is the person with whom I had the more political discussions about topics such as DIY and inclusivity regarding both the festival and in general the current state of the screamo scene. Christian is the one who mediated the most between all of us, as well as being the one who set the meeting agendas, ensuring that we did not get lost in the many tangents that arose during discussions. With Bibi and O, who joined the group later, I bonded mostly through joking and fooling around, while I only had the chance to interact with Vivian a few times. Nevertheless, I found her very sweet, because she had a very protective attitude towards the group as well as me, even though she had only known me for a short time.
>
> Contextually, my trips to Parma meeting after meeting, encounter after encounter – gradually became more and more enjoyable, despite the constant fatigue they brought. Although I had always felt my life in Milan disconnected from the one in Parma, from the fieldwork I was conducting there, Parma had also become somewhat of a safe haven for me. It is a city where I feel "at home", like Como (where I grew up), where I like to go shopping, where I enjoy going out to eat, to meet my "old" friends, who are actually new. At the same time, I have often fantasized about moving to Parma after I returning from Portugal, because it's more affordable, because I won't really have any ties in Como except for some friends and my brother, while in Parma there is this wonderful group of friends and colleagues that I know would welcome me with open arms and make me feel at home.
>
> Parma is a small, but functional city. It is bike-friendly and full of places to go out in the evening. It is also a university city. There is even a self-managed and occupied social center (ArtLab), which is something that Como lacks, and venues like Saletta Adorno/Solchi Dischi and PWCC for gigs. There is also an independent cinema and an open-air cinema in the summer. There is nature and good food. It's an extremely livable city and perhaps for this reason it is also very touristic and gentrified, especially the historic center. By contrast, the Oltretorrente area, where

> Bruno lives, for example, is full of more alternative places, as Pedale Veloce (an ARCI club), the independent bookstore Ciurma, ArtLab, Vecchie Maniere and Bastian Contrario – all of them are places that have become landmarks in the city and meeting spots with the guys and girls of the collective. However, I am also aware that I am romanticizing the city because I am feeling nostalgic. Indeed, without living in Parma, I can't really know and understand the issues of the city, if not only through the eyes of the people that lives there.
>
> More in general, Parma seemed to be a welcoming city, and the group was certainly more welcoming than any collective or group of friends I have seen in Milan, (especially when based on betrayals). Undoubtedly, as I write this, I feel overwhelmed by a sense of nostalgia because AFF#4 is over and thus also my reasons to go to Parma. I wonder if I will be able to stay in touch with all of them, I am afraid I won't, but at the same time I don't doubt it either. At the same time, I am relieved that I won't have to take endless trains and that I can settle in Milan again. This autumn began with a whirlwind of events, meetings, travels, and consequent fatigue, hours of sleep to recover and anxiety of not being able to keep up with everything. But right now, sitting at my desk, I am happy for the opportunity that I had. I feel grateful for all the new friendships that I built over these months, thanks to and through AFF#4 and the events I took part in (Fieldnotes, 25/09/2024, Milan).

In March 2025, six months later, I re-read the fieldnotes regarding *Alle Foglie Festival* to organize them more effectively, making them coherent and consistent in preparation for writing my findings, and especially this chapter. This process prompted several reflections on the fieldwork, making it possible for me to have an overview about my experiences in the field in a more "detached" perspective, analyzing myself as one of the participants within the field, constructing and sharing meanings, deconstructing and developing new practices of resistance together with the other members of the collective. This re-reading also helped me to give to the research a full circularity. I wanted to do more than just report actions and movements in temporal and spatial sequences, but also to interpret and explain my own actions alongside those of the other collective members, in a retrospective sense-making.

The first issue that emerged from this retrospective analysis concerns the process of recognition within the collective and its impact on my positioning as a researcher. Particularly, I reflected on the fact that there was never a chance to discuss about my thesis: they never asked any questions about it, like if it was a taboo subject. My hypotheses are many: perhaps they never asked about because they were embarrassed, or afraid of what I might have written in my fieldnotes, or reluctant to "snoop" in my job. Although we never discussed my field notes directly, we often talked about various issues related to the scene, as well as the theoretical and political reflections that have ensued, which they

knew I was writing about. For instance, we discussed about the spectacularization of the scene and about the self-commodification triggered from some collectives and bands, in several spaces and from the behaviors of several people attending the events. We discussed the generational gap and differences regarding moshing and mosh pits, as well as participation at events and physical appearance, and how Gen Z present themselves (dressed differently from Millennials, often with colored hair, piercings, group T-shirts, and so on). We also discussed inclusivity, particularly in relation to the preventive measures we were preparing for Alle Foglie (which we ultimately failed to implement). As I already mentioned, I never omitted that these issues would be central to my field research and to my thesis. I do not know if this information was sufficient for them, or if they would have liked to know more but they did not ask for the reasons mentioned above. On these occasions, however, we never talked about my reflections on the experience of organizing the festival, that is, my thoughts about them as a collective, the practices put in action, the measures taken to realize the festival and so on, while we talked more about general dynamics within the scene, that were not necessarily related to the collective itself.

The second issue regards the gradual transformation of my linguistic register, which paralleled the evolution of my role within the collective. Initially, my fieldnotes were more detached and impersonal, seeming more like a report in which I was describing "them". Over time, as I became more engaged in group decisions and everyday interactions, plural forms such as "we", "us", "we thought that", and "we would like" began to appear more frequently – signaling a shift from external observation to shared participation. As I mentioned in the paragraph above, I believe that this was due not only to the fact that the guys explicitly asked me, during the fourth meeting, to help in the organization of the festival, but also by their verbal and non-verbal language. For instance, Christian started using "we" when looking at me and asking my opinion during meetings, and Bruno started discussing what was right or wrong from a political perspective for the festival with me. I finally felt that my legitimacy as part of the collective was fully recognized when I was invited to remain involved in the organization of the fifth edition of Alle Foglie. On this occasion, I felt that my status as a "participant", was acknowledged and reinforced both formally, when Thomas explicitly asked me whether my continued involvement had any implications for my research, and informally, through the affective bonds that I had built within the collective. The language issue also highlights how my identity within the group has constantly been renegotiated and questioned, that is, it has never been fixed, and similarly my role (or roles) and the expectations attached to it have changed over time.

A last issue regards the structure of the meetings that I attended. Particularly, while La Défense has been presented to me as a fully horizontal group operating without formal assemblies or defined

roles, my observations revealed the coexistence of horizontal ideals and practical forms of coordination – e.g., the recurring presence of meeting agendas, reports, and a tacitly recognized figure of facilitation. Collective organization and horizontality itself, therefore, are continuously reproduced and negotiated thorough interactions, and redefined in the micro-interactions through which the collective organizes and sustains itself. In this sense, the post-festival reflection phase not only closed a cycle of fieldwork but also opened a space for methodological awareness. It clarified how participation and observation, involvement and distance, are not opposites but intertwined conditions that define the very possibility of ethnographic knowledge.

This final section featured primarily my fieldnotes because, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, my goal was to give a photography of my experience not only as a researcher but also as a participant within the field, highlighting my insecurities and feelings of inadequacy that accompanied me along the way. As discussed in the ethical considerations of Chapter 4, the emotional labor of ethnography also involves managing these affective dimensions, acknowledging how doubt, discomfort, and partiality shape the research process itself. For this reason, I have focused here on the experiential and relational dimensions of the fieldwork rather than on the thematic content of the meetings – such as the practices of resistance and their self-representations – which will be analytically developed in the following two chapters. Particularly, as already anticipated, in Chapter 6, I will examine how the Italian screamo scene is materially and symbolically configured across urban, trans-local and national scales, focusing on the tensions between gentrification, marginality and resistance. In Chapter 7, I will examine the cultural and aesthetic dimensions of these dynamics, analyzing how processes and practices of self-commodification, spectacularization, and inclusivity shape the contemporary meanings of resistance within the scene.

Chapter 6. Neoliberal urbanization processes of gentrification and resistance: Discussing the physical and symbolic marginality of the scene

This chapter examines how the Italian independent screamo scene is materially and symbolically configured across multiple spatial scales, in relation to its hard and relational infrastructures – from the urban micro-geographies of venues and cultural institutions to the trans-local and national networks of collectives, musicians and audiences that support it.

As argued throughout the thesis, urban and territorial spaces are not static, but dynamic and conflictual arenas where social relations, spatial practices, economic forces, and symbolic meanings intersect (Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 2012; Le Galès, 2016). Processes of neoliberal urbanization have redefined the forms and boundaries of contemporary cities, dissolving traditional distinctions between center and periphery, and challenging any assumption of proximity and distance. Within this context, the urban emerges as a project of scalability (Brenner, 2013), in which processes of territorialization and deterritorialization continuously reconfigure spatial hierarchies and social relations. The resulting landscape of splintering urbanism (Graham & Marvin, 2001) focuses on the uneven restructuring of urban space and distribution of resources, infrastructures, and opportunities.

In this context, the notion of "explosion of spaces" (Lefebvre, 1974) emerges, understood both as a morphological dispersion of the city and as an epistemological fragmentation that solicits new modalities of action within the urban space. Since the struggles over use and exchange values, collective needs, visibility and appropriation are inscribed in the material and symbolic geographies of the city, the politicization of space can be seen as an expected consequence: the *right to the city* (Harvey, 1989b) gains renewed significance – a right that entails not only the access to urban spaces, but also the collective right to (re)produce them.

Within this framework, resuming the research questions, urban spaces become both a resource and a constraint for independent music scenes. On one side, the urban context provides infrastructures, visibility, and opportunities for encounters and contamination; on the other, it generates processes of exclusion, displacement, and co-optation, activating practices of protest and resistance. Moving beyond the urban context, this chapter explores how unequal spatial conditions shape the ways in which autonomy and belonging are practiced and negotiated by the Italian independent screamo scene. In doing so, it situates the scene within broader processes of neoliberal

urban transformations, where cultural production becomes both a site of creativity and a battleground of struggle.

Focusing on the center-periphery metaphor – as both spatial and symbolic categories that articulate uneven relations of power, visibility, and legitimacy within the contemporary urban and cultural systems – and gentrification – as both an external process of urban renewal and displacement and internal process of commodification and aestheticization of marginality –, this chapter seeks to understand how spatial asymmetries and urban transformations shape, and are shaped by, practices of autonomy, belonging, and resistance. These dimensions reveal how the scene operates within a complex spatial dialectic, between visibility and invisibility, centrality and marginality, resistance and co-optation, situating it into broader processes of neoliberal urban transformations, while foregrounding the creative and political agency of those who inhabit and reinvent it.

6.1. The "center-periphery" metaphor: symbolic and infrastructural asymmetries

As argued at the beginning of the chapter, neoliberal processes of urbanization, of which gentrification is a symbol (see section 1.2.), have generated new forms of centrality and marginality. Processes of territorialization and the explosion of spaces have put into discussion the traditional distinction between center and periphery, generating polycentric urban structures (Kloosterman & Muster, 2001; Soja, 2013) and new configurations of inclusion and exclusion. Within this context, the Italian independent screamo scene offers a privileged case for investigating how these spatial asymmetries manifest and are experienced, contested, and reinterpreted through practices of cultural production, participation and resistance.

In this perspective, the notions of center and periphery should not be understood as fixed geographical positions, but as relational metaphors that describe uneven distributions of symbolic capital, cultural legitimacy, and infrastructural access. They are continuously produced and redefined through material, institutional, and affective practices. Particularly, centrality refers to both geographical proximity to the urban core and the concentration of infrastructures, cultural institutions and forms of symbolic capital that sustain visibility and legitimacy. Following Harvey (1989a), it can be argued that centrality embodies a process of capitalistic accumulation (of resources, relations, and imaginaries) through which specific urban areas are constructed as privileged sites of creativity and innovation. The creative city model (Florida, 2002) operates, in this sense, as an ideology that redefines cultural and urban centrality in terms of economic productivity and commodification. The

center of the city, therefore, is not a stable or fixed site, but a moving constellation of spaces and resources (both material and symbolic), generating forms of centrality, polycentrism, and, at its margins, the possibility of counter-cities.

By contrast, peripherality can refer to both physical displacement from the infrastructural and institutional cores of the city and symbolic displacement, which occurs when the "urban atmosphere" is absent or distant, and the opportunities of visibility and recognition are inaccessible (see section 3.1.). However, these conditions can be reclaimed and re-signified as resources for autonomy and experimentation. Peripherality, in this sense, can no longer be reduced to a condition of exclusion – as a result of unequal negotiations with city authorities –, but it also entails a political choice, rooted in practices of resistance and the search for autonomy and alternative modes of inhabiting and (re)producing the city. Informal venues and self-managed and occupied social centers, for example, can function as "counter-cities": "*spaces where alternative futures are imagined and enacted and where the subaltern create places of hope*" (Dulhunty 2023, p. 1). Indeed, the concept of counter-city is aligned with that of the periphery and subaltern (Roy, 2011; 2014), and with being separated and excluded from the mainstream. However, counter-city also incorporates the ethics of "care with" (Tronto, 2017), which refers to reciprocal care, trust and reciprocity within marginal urban communities. Therefore, peripheral and autonomous spaces are not only sites of alternative cultural production and resistance, but also infrastructures of relational care, where autonomy does not turn into isolation or elitism, but remains anchored in democratic and interdependent forms of coexistence (Power, 2019).

However, as scholars such as Zukin (1995) and, more recently, Kern (2022) and Tozzi (2023) have shown, the aesthetics and symbols of marginality – traditionally associated with urban countercultural and subcultural scenes – are frequently absorbed into processes of urban renewal and commodification, turning resistance into a resource for urban marketing and capital accumulation. In this sense, marginality is aestheticized, becoming central to the symbolic economy of the creative city. Similarly, Shaw (2005) warns that "*'authenticity', if not displaced by gentrification, is a candidate for appropriation by the market*" (ivi, p. 156). Consequently, it is important not to conflate spatial marginality with countercultural resistance. Alternative cultural spaces (such as squats) often are entangled and operate within the circuits of mainstream culture that they aim to oppose, revealing how countercultural autonomy can be precarious and contingent, continuously negotiated in relation to the institutional, economic and symbolic resources on which they rely, to their objectives and alliances that sustain them. Their autonomy is better understood as embedded within the circuits of neoliberal cultural production (Ley, 2003; Guerra, 2018). The boundaries between mainstream and

underground, and between centrality and periphery, are thus porous: autonomy can coexist with complicity, and marginality can become a form of cultural capital. That of peripherality is a situated and ambivalent position within the broader cultural ecosystem: it can be both a space of experimentation and autonomy and a terrain of commodification and co-option. Therefore, peripheral cultural formations should be analyzed not in binary terms – autonomous versus commercial, resistant versus co-opted – but as complex, hybrid configurations that operate within the contradictions of the neoliberal capitalist system. This also means recognizing the agency of music scenes in urban transformations: they are not only shaped by processes of gentrification and cultural commodification, but also actively contribute to the production of alternative forms of centrality within the urban environment (see Ley, 2003).

This analytical framework allows for a more nuanced understanding of the Italian screamo scene as a cultural formation that inhabits and animates counter-urban spaces, where practices of resistance and reciprocal care are enacted. Adopting a multi-scalar perspective, the following analysis moves from the micro level of individual venues within the urban fabric, with Milan as a laboratory for gentrification and resistance (section 6.2.), to the meso level of networks that connect different local scenes (section 6.3.), and the macro level of the national uneven geography of cultural production, marked by the persistent divide between North-Central and South Italy (section 6.4.). Finally, in the section 6.5., these levels are reconducted to the question of gentrification, understood as both an external urban process, through which independent spaces are displaced or incorporated into the creative city, and internal cultural logic of self-commodification and aestheticization of peripherality.

The analysis of the spatial dimension of the scene also provides a foundation for the next chapter, which will focus on the dynamics of (self-)commodification, and explore how independence and resistance are rearticulated through processes of aestheticization and spectacularization.

6.2. Urban centralities and peripheralities: Milan as a laboratory of gentrification and resistance

At the micro level, within the urban fabric of Milan, venues such as Santeria Toscana 31, Circolo Arci Bellezza, C.S.O.A. (Centro Sociale Occupato Autogestito[34]) Cox18 and C.O.A. (Centro Occupato Autogestito[35]) T28 embody different material and symbolic logics. They highlight how the center-periphery metaphor operates not simply as a geographical distinction, but as a process of

[34] Literally translated as “self-managed and occupied social center”.
[35] Literally translated as “occupied social center”.

relational negotiation over infrastructures, visibility and legitimacy. In cities increasingly shaped by neoliberal urban policies and the rhetoric of the "creative city", like in Milan – which constitutes a laboratory for gentrification and resistance (see Chapter 3) –, centrality and peripherality are continuously negotiated, producing spatial and socio-cultural configurations where institutional and autonomous practices coexist in tension.

Particularly, a screamo festival organized at Santeria Toscana 31 on 17 November 2024 constitutes the perfect case to highlight these tensions. The venue, located between the Porta Romana neighborhood (in the south-east of Milan) – an area that has undergone significant urban redevelopment in recent years and is currently affected by transformations related to the 2026 Winter Olympics – and the Bocconi University, embodies the "creative city" model: it is a multifunctional space that hosts concerts, exhibitions, branded cultural events, a school of artistic production, a bar and restaurant, thus combining artistic programming with commercial and educational activities. Citing their words:

> A large indoor square, a creative factory, the space at Viale Toscana 31 is part of the redevelopment plan for cultural and social areas supported by the Municipality of Milan. […] All of this is located in front of the upcoming Bocconi campus, near the Vettabbia park, and next to the former Porta Romana railway yard, which faces important urban projects (Fondazione Prada, Fondazione Filarete, Pompeo Leoni Center, IED). Santeria Toscana 31 is a unique model of entertainment, business, and work, with high production, cultural, and recreational goals for the entire city[36].

The language of this self-description emphasizes alignment with the institutional narrative of urban innovation and cultural entrepreneurship. The rhetorics of "a unique model of entertainment, business and work" and of "high production, cultural, and recreational goals for the entire city" convey a vision of culture as an instrument for economic growth and urban attractiveness, mirroring the discourse of the creative city (Florida, 2002; d'Ovidio, 2016), where creativity, entrepreneurship, and culture are mobilized as tools for urban competitiveness, masking the social and spatial inequalities that these processes often generate (Zukin, 2004).

The venue is supported by Liveurope, which is "*a pan-European initiative supporting concert venues in their efforts to promote European music diversity*[37]". Santeria is one of the 24 music venues

[36] https://www.santeria.milano.it/toscana-31/ (last access: 20/09/2025).
[37] https://liveurope.eu/about-us (last access: 20/09/2025).

supported by this initiative (24 in 24 countries) and has supported over 5.000 concerts in 40 different countries to date. They also write:

> We provide support in the form of a financial bonus to our member venues, proportionally to their bookings of emerging, European, non-national acts. The idea is to give concert venues both an incentive and a safety net to take more risks to promote the diversity of the European music scene to their audiences. In short, we support the shows organized by our venues, who are completely autonomous in their choice of programming[38].

Through terms such as "incentive", "safety network", "risk-taking", this excerpt also reveals a market-oriented logic of governance. Cultural diversity is here framed not as a political or artistic value in itself, but as an investment to be managed and rewarded through measurable output (the number of emerging, European, non-national acts booked). The rhetoric of support conceals an implicit condition: autonomy is granted within the parameters of institutional eligibility and quantifiable performance. Furthermore, this funding mechanism and institutional affiliation secure transnational visibility that is structurally inaccessible to self-managed or informal venues, exposing asymmetries in both hard and soft infrastructures. In terms of soft infrastructures, Santeria is recognized as a legitimate site of European cultural production. This legitimacy means being included within a transnational support network and having access to a wide range of contacts with institutions, promoters, booking agencies, press offices, and so on. In terms of hard infrastructures, this recognition translates into the availability of a stable and legally recognized place, furnished with professional sound systems and advanced technical equipment. By contrast, self-managed and occupied spaces tend to operate under more precarious physical and legal conditions, facing issues such as safety, authorization, as well as the constant threat of eviction.

Therefore, the organization of the screamo festival in such a venue embodies a central ambivalence in contemporary independent music practices. On one side, it can be motivated by the opportunity for greater visibility, professional recognition, and access to an adequate sound equipment and infrastructures that many self-managed venues lack. On the other side, it redefines the material and symbolic boundaries of the scene itself, broadening the public reach and cultural legitimacy, simultaneously challenging its own ethos of autonomy. The result is a tension between independence and institutional cooperation, revealing how autonomy in the contemporary urban context is a situated practice that must be constantly negotiated and redefined in relation to the infrastructures that sustain it.

[38] Ibidem.

Similar dynamics are visible in the case of the Circolo Arci Bellezza, also located in the Porta Romana district, Bellezza is part of the Arci (Italian Recreative and Cultural Association) network: a national association that promotes social and cultural initiatives and operates as associative spaces with annual membership cards. Bellezza retains, however, an aura of accessibility and familiarity that resonates with the ethos of independent music scenes, even if operating within a legal and administrative framework. It often provides an infrastructural compromise for the screamo scene, since its capacity and technical equipment allow for events that would be impossible in smaller DIY venues. Very well-known bands such as Stormo and Quercia attract a larger audience, that transcends the screamo scene, which increases visibility but also introduces higher production costs and more formalized management practices. The collaboration of these bands with official booking agencies marks a process of "professionalization" within the scene – not simply economic, but organizational and symbolic – involving new intermediaries (e.g., promoters and booking agents), contractual agreements, and standardized promotional strategies, which tend to align independent events with the operational logic of the wider music live industry. This "professional turn" (Guerra, 2020) challenges the DIY ethos of the screamo scene, highlighting once again how independence increasingly requires negotiating rather than rejecting professional structures.

Both Santeria Toscana 31 and Circolo Arci Bellezza demonstrate how the center-periphery metaphor can operate beyond geographical boundaries. They represent more institutionalized and market-oriented organizations, embedded within the infrastructures of the "creative city". These venues are located in a symbolically central neighborhood for processes of gentrification within the geography of Milan (though geographically peripheral within the city). In this sense, Santeria and Bellezza embody an ambivalent position: once situated in marginal areas, they are now institutionally central, reflecting the displacement of cultural centrality from the historic core to re-branded peripheries. Nevertheless, their adoption by the screamo scene also responds to pragmatic needs rather than mere ideological choices. While they do not fully embody the values of the scene (i.e., autonomy, freedom, alternative expression, community, and so on), they offer infrastructures that self-managed and occupied spaces often cannot provide. For many musicians and organizers, especially when dealing with larger audiences or touring acts, these venues make possible events that would otherwise exceed the logistical capacities of DIY infrastructures. Field observations suggest that this configuration affects the relational cohesion of events, since interactions tend to be less familiar and spontaneous compared to the atmosphere of self-managed venues. Finally, these venues transform the performance itself, shifting the perception from a collective ritual to a cultural event. Indeed, the differences in infrastructural and institutional positioning also contribute to shape the ways in which spaces are inhabited and experienced by different audiences.

By contrast, venues such as Cox18 and T28 represent an inverse configuration. They also are physically central to processes of urban gentrification – since they are located respectively in the Navigli (in the south-west) and in NoLo (North of Loreto, in the north-east of Milan) neighborhoods –, but they remain symbolically peripheral within the cultural institutional geography of Milan, maintaining their countercultural and autonomous ethos. As regards Navigli neighborhood, between 2011 and 2012 several projects were proposed by local self-organizations to regenerate, from the bottom up, the area between the two canals: Naviglio Grande and Naviglio Pavese. These proposals were encouraged by the City Council, riding the wave of EXPO 2015 (Rabbiosi, 2016). Physical interventions to improve the quality of open spaces and green areas were accompanied with cultural activities as a means to facilitate cultural expression and identity formation within the area. This municipal endorsement, as highlighted by Rabbiosi, also opened a broader debate concerning the co-optation of bottom-up initiatives by neoliberal urban policies. Today, the Navigli area can be described as a gentrified urban district, shaped by long-term processes of commercialization, culture-led regeneration and "foodification". Similar dynamics of bottom-up regeneration can be observed in NoLo neighborhood, although on a more recent scale and particularly intensified by the social and cultural effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Located to the East of the Central Station, NoLo has experienced significant urban transformations in recent years, driven by an influx of young creative professionals, growth in commercial activities, and increasing residential mobility. As Bortolotti and Grassi (2025) state, the regeneration of NoLo is taking place through a process of gentrification, the stages of which reflect the classic evolution highlighted in the literature: "*an urban area considered marginal and degraded has begun to attract new residents; in parallel, investments have grown, especially in real estate, triggering an escalation of property values*" (ivi, p. 4).

Within these gentrified areas, spaces such as Cox18 and T28 exist as "enclaves" of resistance, underscoring the paradox of peripherality in the center: they resist from within, producing counter-hegemonic forms of proximity and cultural production. For the screamo scene, they constitute symbolic and affective centers, providing legitimacy, identity and continuity to the practices that sustain the DIY ethos.

Deepening some of these aspects, in the case of Santeria Toscana 31 my fieldnotes report:

> I'm curious to find out how many "new" people from other parts of Lombardy, Italy, or even from other scenes will gather for a screamo event, meaning people I've never seen hanging out in this scene before. I wonder what kind of social aggregator Santeria can be and what kind of people it can actually attract to a screamo event, given the curiosity that not only I and my close circle of friends have towards the event. I'm also curious to understand why Santeria, since it's an unusual

> venue for screamo and for us who go to screamo concerts (Fieldnotes, 17/11/2024, Santeria Toscana 31, Milan).

Indeed, during the festival the audience appeared to be more heterogeneous than in most DIY events I attended: people of different ages and degrees of familiarity with the scene attended the event. Particularly, as I wrote in my fieldnotes, "*I noticed a group of emo kids with heavy makeup and fluorescent colored hair playing soccer in front of Santeria. They were also dressed alike, wearing the same heavy boots and military cargo pants*" (ibidem). The presence of these younger participants – many of whom were likely under eighteen – points to a partial renewal of the audience and aesthetics of the scene. Their style explicitly refers to the "emo revival" aesthetic circulating today on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, where screamo has acquired new visibility through the nostalgic reinterpretation and recontextualization of the early-2000s emo subculture (see Chapter 7). As a friend commented during the event,

> "Kids who can't go to Cox18 because their parents won't let them can come here instead". Cox18 is probably perceived as "unsafe" (in terms of the common perception of social centers: unreliable people, criminals, free drugs and alcohol, etc., trying to hypothesize), while Santeria is probably perceived as safe because it is a space legally recognized as concert venue and therefore as a place where rules are respected (unlike social centers, which are probably perceived as "rule-free") (ibidem).

This perception highlights how symbolic legitimacy and institutional recognition influence participation. Indeed,

> the discussion is about how spaces influence actions and practices. In this case, the difference lies in the comparison between social centers and legal concert venues: how do they influence actions and practices differently? This applies to both the audience and the bands, as well as to the management of the space (i.e. the managers) (ibidem).

The institutional status of Santeria may lower the social and generational boundaries, since it is perceived as a "safe" space. By contrast, squats such as C.S.O.A. Cox18 or C.O.A. T28 are associated with political militancy and often stereotyped as unsafe, or as socially deviant. As a consequence, physical and symbolic conditions of the venue may influence how the scene performs and perceives itself, and shape not only who attends but also how the music is experienced, how bodies move, and what forms of interaction are considered appropriate. For instance,

> "during a set, someone got slapped for being annoying", they say. "We don't notice it because we're always among us, but these things always happen at concerts", says a friend, almost sensing

> what I'm thinking right now. However, I believe that this also happened because the institutional, formal space made these dynamics and gestures more visible, even though they have certainly always been present at concerts. It's not just the fact that we're always among us (which is also true), but also the fact that there are places where these toxic dynamics emerge more than elsewhere precisely because of the configuration of the space, the evening and the event (ibidem).

This incident was perceived as something that "always happens", although the way it was managed and interpreted differed from what it might be handled in self-managed spaces. According to Lefebvre (1991), space is not a neutral container; rather, it is a social configuration of practices that make certain behaviors more visible while others more invisible, producing implicit rules of behavior. In this case, the more institutional context of Santeria, the lighting, the disposition of the stage, the security staff and the heterogeneous audience exacerbated the perception and interpretation of the behavior as problematic. However, it also individualized it, delegating its management to security staff or the audience members. Conversely, in self-managed or occupied spaces, similar behaviors are addressed through collective and preventive practices, such as public statements, anti-harassment protocols, or post-event discussions (see Chapter 7). This is because the relational proximity, shared ethos, and informal regulation that characterizes these venues produce a sense of collective intimacy, where tensions are framed within a shared ethical and political responsibility, in line with the DIY ethos of care and mutual accountability (Haenfler, 2006; Guerra, 2018).

Another aspect of spatial configuration that deeply influences practices within venues concerns the division between stage and audience, and the bodily interactions that follow from it. During the Stormo performance at Circolo Arci Bellezza, a security guard was standing next to the stage, preventing the audience from getting too close or engaging in intense dancing. As I wrote in my fieldnotes:

> As soon as people started dancing a little more energetically (not even violently), he would intervene to separate them and also to make sure that the stage (made of wood and slightly raised from the floor to distinguish it from the rest of the floor) was not touched in any way. This is a practice that I have never seen at any underground concert I have been in my entire life. The strangeness of this gesture was so evident that, at a certain point, the singer waved his hand to signal that he disagreed with this gesture and motioned for us to come closer to the stage again (Fieldnotes, 08/11/2024, Circolo Arci Bellezza, Milan).

A similar moment occurred two months later during the Quercia performance, when the band stopped playing to address the audience and the security staff with the following words:

> "Our job is to make sure people can have fun. You vigilate, okay. If something happens, if someone gets hurt, if there's a problem, security is here for you. Security is here for us. But here we are aware people. If someone falls, we're here to help them up. The same goes for people who want to crowd surf. We have fun with some rules, and the rule is that we support each other". Then, they apologize for interrupting the gig, but the singer says it seemed necessary to make this clarification (Fieldnotes, 04/01/2025, Circolo Arci Bellezza, Milan).

In both cases, the venue imposed normative frameworks of bodily control and risk management that are foreign to the DIY ethos. Practices such as moshing, stage diving and crowd surfing became objects of regulation, transforming the audience into a potentially dangerous collective body to be contained, rather than a shared space of trust and responsibility. These dynamics reflect broader logics of urban governance and neoliberal securitization (Foucault, 1977; Zukin, 1995; Graham, 2010), where collective expression is managed through surveillance, regulation, and external intervention, making it predictable and safe. Conversely, in DIY spaces, physical proximity and the absence of external control enable horizontal forms of regulation, grounded in the shared ethical codes of trust, care and reciprocity, reflecting the micro-politics of self-organization. More generally, the material configuration of venues such as Santeria Toscana 31 and Circolo Arci Bellezza – including the elevation of the stage, fixed lighting, barriers and, often, security staff – verticalize the performance, translating it into a social configuration of power that shapes the gestures, affects, and interactions. The reactions of the bands who publicly challenged these constraints, reveal a micro-political negotiation of space: the principles of mutual care and trust of the DIY ethos were here renegotiated. In this sense, these venues embody the ambivalence of contemporary independent music: they both provide professional infrastructures and visibility and reproduce regimes of control, that participants within the scene continuously contest and reframe through situated practices of resistance.

Photo 6.1. Santeria Toscana 31 (on the left), C.O.A. T28 (on the right)

Continuing the topic of the presence and configuration of the stage in relation to the audience space, it is important to note how this spatial element is experienced differently within self-managed and informal venues. In places such as Santeria Toscana 31, Circolo Arci Bellezza, not to mention others (Legend Club and Alcatraz), the stage is physically and symbolically elevated from the audience space (see Photo 6.1); it functions as a boundary that separates performers from the audience, reinforcing the vertical hierarchy between production and reception. For instance, during another screamo festival in Santeria Toscana 31, in my fieldnotes I noticed:

> The singer climbed down from the stage, which is about a meter high. Perhaps he wanted to be in the middle of the mosh pit, joining the audience. I think that for a band not used to this kind of stage, it must feel alienating to have to play on it. The distance from the audience is considerable. Of course, the stage here in Santeria is still small to medium in size, but it must also be said that most bands in the screamo scene are used to playing on almost non-existent stages in squats. Santeria is definitely a "privileged" place to play (Fieldnotes, 09/02/2025, Santeria Toscana 31, Milan).

Stepping down from the stage can be read, by all means, as a micro practice of resistance that challenges the hierarchies inscribed in the architecture of the venue. It reclaims proximity and re-establishes a horizontal relationship with the audience.

By contrast, in squats and more informal spaces such as C.S.O.A. Cox18, C.O.A. T28, C.I.Q. – Centro Internazionale di Quartiere, Casa di Alex, Ateneo Libertario, and so on, the stage is often absent or minimally elevated (see Photo 6.1). This spatial proximity, coupled with the absence of barriers between performers and audiences, encourages horizontal forms of interaction, allowing bodies to move fluidly across the space, and producing a collective action in which musicians and participants become co-actors in the performance itself. Audience members often sing along, grab the microphone, or engage directly with the band, transforming the event into a collective and affective experience.

> Some, pretty young, guys take the microphone from the singer and start singing the song in his place. They climbed onto the stage specifically for this purpose. […] it's as if it were a modus operandi of theirs and of the audience that follows them, that at concerts there is a lot of moshing, and people try to climb onto the stage, steal the microphone from the singer and sing his place. Valerio also climbs onto the stage to sing the songs together with the others in the audience (Fieldnotes, 16/02/2024, Magazzini sul Po, Turin).

It is within this embodied exchange that the mosh pit – the area adjacent to the stage where the audience can move and dance energetically and sometimes violently, giving rise to dance practices such as moshing, crowd surfing, stage diving, or hardcore dancing – takes shape as a site of negotiation and embodied mutual care. Indeed, this space is based on an implicit code of conduct, requiring participants to help each other if they fall and to avoid intentionally hurting others, particularly those at the edge of the mosh pit or even outside of it. Again, in these venues, safety becomes a shared practice, continuously enacted and redefined through collective attention.

As I observed in my fieldnotes, the area in front of the stage is the most symbolically significant during events:

> This makes me think that the important things at concerts always happen in front of the stage: from crowd surfing to moshing and other forms of dancing. What's more, the further back you are, the less you can see what's happening in front of the stage. And when the stage is low, you can't even see what's happening on it. That's why I've always liked being at the front, in the first few rows, also to take field notes (Fieldnotes, 09/02/2025, Santeria Toscana 31, Milan).

This configuration of the spaces between the stage, audience and the mosh pit embodies the anti-hierarchical and participatory ethos of the DIY culture of co-production of the musical experience through embodied interactions. Audience inhabits the performance space, rather than observing it,

reflecting a broader political orientation towards a participatory ritual that reinforces community-making.

In an attempt of summarization these aspects, in the fieldnotes of *Italian Party* in Montone, I evidenced:

> It is also true that there is no real boundary between the audience and the musicians. There is no "stage", so it is easier to "invade" it, as if there were no fourth wall (as in theater). This is an interesting point to consider. This invasion of the space – the physical and metaphorical stage – occurs both when it is effectively delimited and when it is not. I recall Miriana saying during the Riot Girlz #1 debate on 6 October 2024 that we need to overcome the differences between the audience and those who perform/organize. In the end, invading the stage is exactly a way to erase this difference, or rather a way to deceive it – unconsciously, I believe, in most cases. It is another assertion of the fact that "we are all equal" (Fieldnotes, 26-27/07/2024, Italian Party, Montone).

These dynamics can become even more intense in smaller places: "*There is no stage at T28. The space is too small. The singer moves among the crowd, who mosh with him. There is a lot of energy in the room. Moreover, if the space was half-empty before, now it is packed with people*" (Fieldnotes, 21/01/2024, C.O.A. T28, Milan).

In these contexts, proximity collapses the distinction between performers and audience, amplifying both physical and emotional intensity, at the same time requiring constant negotiation. As I wrote during the concert of Ojne, one of the most known Italian screamo bands:

> It's time for the last song. The singer asks the audience not to surround the musicians before playing so that they can enjoy the song better. In fact, they are used to people jumping on the stage and onto the singer's microphone. The audience is difficult to manage during their concert. I think it's as difficult for them as musicians, because they have to protect their instruments and not lose their balance while playing, as it is for us in the audience, because moshing is very intense – not violent – and it's difficult, if not impossible, not to be pushed around. […] Despite these words, however, especially during their last song, there is more moshing than before, more chaos than there had been throughout the entire evening. There are also many people doing crowd surfing (Fieldnotes, 24/03/2024, C.O.A. T28, Milan).

These moments reveal the fragile balance between participation and spatial regulation, and between emotional intensity and mutual care, which defines the affective politics of the mosh pit. Indeed, the mosh pit materializes the tension between autonomy and control: on one side, moshing depends on spontaneity and proximity, while on the other, it is regulated by shared ethical codes that

sustain safety and reciprocity. Within this context, the body becomes both a medium of expression and a site of politics. However, these spaces can also give rise to forms of performative excess and self-display, which can contradict their ethos. As I discuss in Chapter 7, the dynamics of spectacularization and self-commodification are increasingly challenging the boundaries between authenticity and performance within the DIY scene, illustrating how countercultural practices are constantly negotiated within circuits of affect, capital and self-representation (Guerra, 2018).

Finally, the absence of more familiar faces and the more fragmented sociality observed during these events point to a symbolic distance between the independent screamo scene and the institutional live music industry. As I wrote in my fieldnotes,

> it's strange to be here at the concert, also because no one from the scene is here. My friends are happy about this, or at least it doesn't bother them. For me, however, this has an important symbolic meaning because it demonstrates the disconnection between the scene and the music, already more hipster, more trendy, and managed by booking agencies at a more trans-local than local level (Fieldnotes, 08/11/2024, Circolo Arci Bellezza, Milan).

The band itself appeared more isolated:

> They stayed among themselves the whole time, as if they didn't know anyone or no one wanted to approach them, probably so as not to disturb them. It was on this occasion that I noticed the difference with other concerts in the scene but in less or non-gentrified places, where an atmosphere of conviviality and spontaneous sharing is created (ibidem).

By contrast, in smaller self-managed venues, conviviality and informal interaction are central to the experience: people talk, share drinks, and move fluidly between performers and audiences. Citing an interview within a fanzine:

> Yes, compared to other environments – such as pop music or other genres – there is much more of a community spirit, partly because the venues are smaller, they are clubs, environments that also need the actual support of those who frequent them. So there's a more active interest. When you go to a very large venue, you might not even perceive the implications of costs, effort, and set-up involved, whereas if you're part of a community, you help each other more, there's more exchange. Not necessarily from people who play, but also from those who listen through passages, T-shirts, beds, sofas, floors. [...] The scene often allows you to go and see concerts on your own, safe in the knowledge that you'll find someone to welcome you anyway.

What emerges from this excerpt is that the scene is inhabited by the same people, recognizable both in the same city and in different and distant contexts – from Milan to Perugia, from Turin to

Cosenza –, confirming the trans-local (Bennett & Peterson, 2004) nature of this community and that reciprocity is infrastructural, as I will argue in the next section. In this sense, participation is both mobile and affective: people travel to attend shows, to meet friends, to encounter familiar faces. Furthermore, the sense of community that defines the Italian screamo scene is derived not only from shared values (soft infrastructures), but also from the spatial and organizational configuration of the venues in which it occurs (hard infrastructures). Smaller venues depend for their survival on the active participation of those who inhabit them. They are sustained by material and symbolic reciprocity, creating a sense of community, and producing a form of collective care and responsibility. This fosters a sense of interdependence and mutualism that sustains the material life of the scene. In larger, and more institutionalized venues (such as Santeria Toscana 31 and Circolo Arci Bellezza), this sense of reciprocity is less evident. The scale and professional organization of these spaces creates a more distant relationship between organizers, performers and audiences. However, as I argue in the next chapter, this relational proximity can also generate dynamics of closure and exclusion. The same social familiarity that sustains the sense of belonging within the scene can give rise to informal hierarchies based on friendship networks, personal recognition and symbolic capital, leading to forms of elitism and gatekeeping.

Summarizing, the analysis of venues such as Santeria Toscana 31, Circolo Arci Bellezza, and self-managed spaces like C.S.O.A. Cox18 and C.O.A. T28 situated within the urban fabric of Milan highlights how centrality and peripherality are not fixed spatial categories, but relational positions continuously negotiated within the urban fabric, marked by gentrification, infrastructural development and the emergence of multiple creative poles. Particularly, the spatial configuration of these venues reveals that centrality with the institutional culture does not correspond to centrality within the screamo scene itself. Spaces such as Santeria and Bellezza, symbolically central in the official cultural geography of Milan, often remain peripheral for the scene. By contrast, spaces like Cox18 and T28, although institutionally marginal – retain central positions in the affective and cultural geography of the scene. Rather than fixed oppositions, these categories operate as shifting coordinates within a fragmented cultural geography, which is continuously renegotiated through everyday practices of participation and resistance. Furthermore, from this analysis Milan appears as a fragmented and contested field, in which gentrification and counter-spaces co-exist, intersect, and often conflict. The polycentric structure of the city, shaped by processes of gentrification, produces a mosaic of competing centralities and margins that coexist within the same territory.

However, the dynamics analyzed in this section are not unique to Milan. The city provides a key point of view for observing the dialectics between gentrification and resistance, but similar processes

can be observed in other urban contexts across Italy. A particularly emblematic case is that of L.S.O.A. (Laboratorio Sociale Occupato Autogestito[39]) Buridda in Genova, an occupied and self-managed social space that, much like Cox18 or T28 in Milan, has long represented a symbolic center for local countercultural and underground activities. Founded in 2003 and evicted on 30 July 2024, Buridda has hosted a wide range activities, including concerts, festivals, theatre workshops, assemblies of various political collectives, a playroom for children, and even aerial silk training. The diversity of activities reflects the inclusive and creative ethos of the space, where artistical, social, and political practices intersect to produce a microcosm of collective experimentation and mutual care.

During my fieldwork, I attended Adescite Festival (at its eight edition), held at Buridda in May 2024. At that time, the space was under the threat of eviction, following the official notice issued on 1 December 2023. The festival was announced on Instagram as a "*village fair dedicated to love and passion for independent music and for self-production in all its forms*"[40]. As I noted in my fieldnotes, the atmosphere before and during the festival was permeated by a sense of both celebration and tension, reflecting the city's broader political climate. Genova was indeed going through a politically turbulent moment. A few days before the festival, the president of Liguria region, Giovanni Toti, had been placed under domiciliary arrest on corruption charges. One the organizers of the festival responded with irony to the domiciliary arrest of Toti, by posting a fake skull wearing a fisherman's hat with the caption: "*Genova punx – they will never have us*". Furthermore, in early May, several anarchist activists were arrested outside of another self-managed space, the Ex Latteria Occupata, sparking widespread protests across the city center. These convergence of events created a tense atmosphere, that permeated the time and space of the festival itself, amplifying its symbolic significance. It became not only a moment of music celebration, but also of collective resistance: an affirmation of autonomy in the face of repression, and a temporary reappropriation of the urban space. Therefore, as in the case of Cox18 and T28 in Milan, Buridda and Adescite Festival embodied the ambivalence of autonomous spaces under neoliberal regimes: simultaneously vulnerable to displacement and eviction and peripheral in their material conditions, yet capable of transforming instability into a shared experience of mutual care and festivity, and central in shaping the symbolic and affective geography of the scene.

These observations reinforce the idea that the dynamics analyzed in Milan are part of a wider, trans-local configuration, in which spatial asymmetries, infrastructural scarcity, and practices of

[39] Literally translated as "self-managed and occupied social laboratory".
[40] https://www.instagram.com/adescitefest/ (last access: 20/09/2025).

resistance recur across different contexts, that exceed the boundaries of individual cities. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the Italian screamo scene exists and operates through a network of interdependent localities. Building on this, section 6.3. explores how these spatial dynamics materialize at the meso, trans-local level, by tracing the relational infrastructures that sustain the scene.

6.3. The relational infrastructures of the scene: trans-local centers

At the meso level, the focus is on the relational infrastructures that interconnect and sustain the Italian screamo scene. Indeed, the scene exists and is fueled by trans-local networks of collaboration, reciprocity, and exchange of resources. It is not, therefore, a geographically bounded entity, but it operates as a trans-local movement. Following Bennett and Petterson (2004), scenes are not only local, but "*they are also connected with groups of kindred spirits many miles away*" (ivi, pp. 8-9). Within this framework, the metaphor of center and periphery acquires new meanings. Milan, for instance, can be analyzed as a node within the national live screamo music circuit, concentrating both hard, relational, and soft infrastructures. However, other affective and symbolic centers exist elsewhere, in smaller cities, provincial towns, and rural areas.

Trans-locality responds to a need of producing affective communities that transcend face-to-face interactions (Kruse, 1993). These connections are sustained through the exchange of recordings, bands, fans, fanzines, and online platforms, which together act as the connective tissue of the scene. Bands often organize tours through word-of-mouth, relying on the hospitality of friends and local independent collectives. DIY labels and distros also play a crucial role within these trans-local networks, functioning as connective nodes between otherwise dispersed localities, and redistributing visibility across territories. More in general, the circulation of people, music and material and symbolic resources ensure a geography of solidarity that sustains the existence of the scene in the everyday life – what Finnegan (1989) called "pathways" (see Chapter 5).

Within this framework, festivals play a crucial role in nurturing trans-locality. They are a "*special sort of trans-local scene*" drawing "*dispersed individuals together on designated occasions*" (Bennett & Peterson 2004, p. 9) and temporarily materializing otherwise distant networks. Festivals

> periodically bring together scene devotees from far and wide in one place, where they can enjoy their kind of music and briefly live the lifestyle associated with it with little concern for the expectations of others. Events are most likely to take on the characteristics of a scene if festivals

> take place over a number of days in a risk-free environment, such as a rural area, so that participants have a chance to enact the ways of life idealized within the scene free of the usual supports of urban life and away from other people and from the agents of social control (ivi, p. 10).

Life Is Strage (Selva di Trissino), *Italian Party* (Montone) and *Second Impact Fest* (Carpi), despite taking place in rural or small-town contexts, have proven to be key festivals for the Italian independent screamo scene. Field observations revealed that these festivals attract participants from across Italy and abroad, temporarily transforming peripheral locations into symbolic centers of convergence, where shared values and aesthetics are collectively reaffirmed.

Life Is Strage took place at the end of June 2024 in Selva di Trissino, in the municipality of Vicenza (Veneto region). The festival was organized by the independent collective that gives the name to the festival in an open-air amphitheater with high stone steps for sitting and watching the concerts, while the stage was located in the center of the square, under a gazebo (see Photo 2.) – the only thing separating it from the audience and the mosh pit (reaffirming what already analyzed in the previous section about the presence and configuration of the stage).

Photo 6.2. Life Is Strage

As I wrote in my fieldnotes: "*I find the atmosphere to be very festive and friendly. Even though people may not know each other very well, perhaps only by sight or by hearsay, right now – as far as*

I can see – they are sharing a wonderful moment of joy" (Fieldnotes, 22-23/06/2024, Anfiteatro all'Aperto, Selva di Trissino). This festive atmosphere is not experienced only by me: "*Before we arrived at Selva di Trissino, Amalia said that more than to the LIS itself, she was happy to return because of the people who would be there, including friends she doesn't see very often anymore*" (ibidem). This interaction emphasizes how festivals like Life Is Strage operate not only as musical events, but also as relational and affective spaces. Here, to be celebrated is not only the music, but more importantly the continuity of relationships and shared memories that sustain the scene over time.

Italian Party represents one of the longest-running independent festivals in Italy. Since its first edition, in 2005, it has been curated by To Lose La Track, a DIY label based in Perugia (Umbria region), which has also become one the most important nodes of the Italian screamo network over time. Until 2023, the festival was held at the Umbertide Platform, but in 2024 – the year of my fieldwork – it was relocated to the nearby small-town of Montone. This happened because the dates of the Italian Party coincided with another event that took place under the Rocca of Umbertide, colliding with the festival itself. This new organization, I discovered, was

> entirely at the expense of the organizer and his label (To Lose La Track), unlike what would have happened if the event had continued to be held in Umbertide, with which the administration had agreements in place for many years whereby it would be at their expense, and not at his individual expense (Fieldnotes, 24/07/2024, Montone).

In a public statement shared on Instagram, the organizer denounced the lack of institutional support:

> Due to a lack of coordination, the citizens of Umbertide have lost an event of great economic and cultural value, with its 15 performances by Italian and international bands, and whose relocation to Montone will weigh heavily on the label's finances. With regard to cultural spaces, Corrente had already raised the issue of the critical usability of these places in our municipality with the City Council in a question dated November 15, 2023. This question fell on deaf ears, as no concrete response was received regarding a management plan to ensure the continuation of cultural activities and the possibility of creating new ones[41].

This episode exemplifies the precarious and uneven infrastructures on which the independent cultural production relies, revealing again how centrality and peripherality are relational positions within the Italian cultural ecosystem. The festival occupies an ambivalent position: while rooted in a

[41] https://www.instagram.com/toloselatrack/ (last access: 20/09/2025).

small-town and peripheral context, over the years it has expanded its scale and visibility, attracting people from all over the country and abroad, and temporarily becoming a symbolic (in terms of affectivity and proximity) center for the Italian screamo scene. Italian Party reconfigures the geography of the scene, by redistributing visibility towards marginal territories, distant from Milan. Moreover, the festival stands at the intersection between a DIY ethos and local institutional collaboration. It shows how autonomous cultural practices can be integrated into the framework of local development and tourism promotion, reflecting the ambivalent position of many independent festivals within processes of urban and regional regeneration.

The case of La Défense collective in Parma further illustrates this ambivalence. Particularly, as anticipated in the previous chapter, the collective's activities, carried out through different spaces in the city of Parma, such as *Saletta Adorno* and *Rumore Bianco*, reveals a strategic engagement and collaboration with the municipality. This makes it possible to argue that the people of the collective are much involved and active in the countercultural proposal of the city, while collaborating with municipal institutions and continuously negotiating their political identity as a DIY collective. This negotiation approach can be described using the term of "cultural activism" (Buser et al., 2013), which Christian – interviewed before starting the participant observation within the collective – used himself as an interpretative framework for the activities carried out within the city of Parma:

> We did a lot of, allow me the term, cultural activism. I don't consider myself a political activist because I'm not, I don't organize manifestations. I go to them, but I don't organize them. We are cultural activists, fundamentally, ok? But this doesn't change the fact that we convey values in some way (Interviewee 4, 03/02/2024).

Indeed, as Christian argued, when they created association Rumore Bianco their choice

> was to continue working with institutions because we perceived possibilities to achieve important and relevant things. However, we didn't absolutely want to lose our roots, the mentality that drives counterculture, activism, and so on. […] We use Rumore Bianco and Saletta Adorno for official things, and the collective's logo for the [screamo] events. If we collaborate with institutions, we use Rumore Bianco. It is, we can see it like that, a trivial as well as a realistic escamotage of the, of what you can get out of a city. I have always been of the idea that fighting only on one front is a limiting thing. Why there is the need to fight on multiple fronts? Because the war that we must do is not limited to organizing the most beautiful concert in a social center. It is not just that. We must do more than that, right? And there are thousands of ways to be able to do that and there is to fight on multiple levels (ibid.).

Rather than signaling co-optation, these collaborations function as a pragmatic strategy that sustain autonomy and visibility within the cultural ecosystem of Parma, illustrating how independence can persist through, rather than despite, interaction with institutions.

At the same time, the conflict of interests between To Lose La Track and the Umbertide administration illustrates the fragile balance of the Italian Party festival: while celebrated as a symbol of cultural vitality, the festival remains materially unsupported, depending on mutual care, personal networks and reciprocal trust between organizers, musicians, audience, and other roles involved. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of Italian Party was that of a large celebration, as its very name suggests. Again, these moments highlight how the festival operated as a temporary affective community, where trans-local networks were materially and symbolically enacted through conviviality and relational proximity.

> As Carmen remarked: "I really like this cozy atmosphere, it feels like a village festival". I completely agree with her. It feels strange to be here in central Italy and still see so many faces from the North. We are colonizing central Italy with the Italian Party, and it's absurd that all these people have decided to come here from all over Italy (Fieldnotes, 26-27/07/2024, Italian Party, Montone).

Indeed, another kind of trans-local scene "*is created when a band's fans regularly follow their favorite musicians around the country from tour date to tour date and energize local devotees of the music and lifestyle*" (Bennett & Peterson 2004, p. 10). This pattern of mobility is particularly evident in the Italian screamo scene, especially in North-Central Italy, where people travelling for events transform geographical dispersion into an affective network of circulation. The individuals appear in various contexts, from Milan to Turin, from Perugia to Cosenza, creating a sense of belonging through movement and shared presence, rather than territorial confinement, and redefining the geography of participation. Travelling together, sharing accommodations, and organizing carpools, for instance, are all practices that consolidate relational infrastructures within the scene – particularly, interpersonal trust and mutual care.

A third festival worth analyzing is the Second Impact Fest, organized by the Warmroom Collective in Carpi (a small town in the municipality of Modena). It took place at the Ekidna Association over three days at the end of May 2024. Ekidna is a space legally recognized by the municipality – operating as an associative space with a membership card, similarly to Circolo Arci Bellezza. It is strongly rooted within its local territory, addressing the local need for an alternative cultural production.

What distinguishes the Second Impact Fest is the curatorial attention towards international bands. Each edition of the festival, indeed, included a significant number of foreign bands, mostly from the European screamo and post-hardcore scenes. As a result, the festival diversifies the musical offer and extends the geography of the scene beyond national boarders to include an international audience, thus fostering exchanges different local European scenes and aesthetics sensibilities. In this sense, Second Impact Fest operates as a trans-national node within the Italian screamo scene, amplifying the scale of trans-locality and transforming the circulation of musicians and audiences into a practice of cross-border solidarity.

The promotion of the event itself, from the creation of a dedicated website to the reels and posts shared on Instagram, reflects a transnational orientation, since communication was curated carefully both in Italian and English languages, anticipating and explicitly targeting an international audience. This strategy suggests an awareness of the festival growing reputation beyond the national borders, positioning it into the broader European independent music ecosystems. At the same time, the creation of the website and the coordinated digital promotion of the festival signal a process of professionalization within the scene. As illustrated in the previous section, the DIY ethos coexist and is challenged by this professional turn (Guerra, 2020). However, rather than a sign of co-optation, such practices can be interpreted as a form of "strategic professionalism": a pragmatic adaptation through which actors within the scene appropriate the communicative and organizational tools of the mainstream music industries to preserve and reinforce their autonomy. By keeping collective control over decisions and reinvesting resources within the scene, professionalism becomes not a threat, but a means of sustaining autonomy and ensuring the continuity of independent cultural production.

Summarizing, the festivals over analyzed reconfigure the geography of the Italian screamo scene by transforming peripheral territories into temporarily affective centers. These events embody the relational infrastructures through which the scene exists and resists, subverting spatial hierarchies of cultural production and musical legitimacy (Crossley, 2009): belonging is, at the trans-local level, defined less by physical proximity to the urban core and more by participation in shared practices of collaboration, care and resistance. By contrast, traditional cultural geographies privilege metropolitan centers as nodes for innovation and creativity (Scott, 1997; Pratt, 2008; Watson, Hoyler & Mager, 2019). More in general, trans-locality redistributes symbolic capital and cultural visibility to peripheral areas. Indeed, the center-periphery metaphor here assumes a new meaning: instead of fixed opposites, they emerge as mobile coordinates within a geography of circulation, rather than concentration.

At the same, the symbolic inversion of center and periphery not always eradicate structural asymmetries that persist in the distribution of hard, relational and soft infrastructures within the scene. Musicians and independent collectives from smaller cities or rural areas rely on metropolitan circuits (e.g., Milan, Turin, and Rome) for visibility, resources and touring opportunities. However, through practices of circulation, hospitality and mutual support, the scene constructs alternative forms of belonging and legitimacy, challenging the dominant narratives of cultural centrality within the independent music ecosystem.

6.4. The national scale of peripherality

The center-periphery metaphor can be understood also at a broader territorial scale. Indeed, the dynamics that reconfigure centrality and peripherality inside cities are reproduced across the national territory, where the uneven distribution of hard, relational and soft infrastructures, resources and cultural opportunities shapes differentiated conditions of participation in the music scene. In this perspective, peripherality reflects the historical and socio-economic divide between North-Central and South Italy. At the macro level, the national geography of the scene thus reflects and refracts the territorial inequalities of the nation, since access to venues, networks, and audiences remain concentrated in metropolitan and industrialized regions.

More in general, the fieldwork observations revealed a larger presence of hard and relational infrastructures in northern Italy, which concentrates most of the venues, festivals, and logistical resources that sustain the everyday life of the scene, making it both symbolically and physically central within its geography. By contrast, southern Italy remain characterized by infrastructural scarcity, resulting in fewer music venues and locations, limited accessibility and reduced opportunities for aggregation and interaction. However, the few events that occur in these contexts are surrounded by an aura of great importance and symbolism: their rarity transforms them into exceptional moments of convergence, temporarily re-centering the periphery. Similar dynamics emerge in smaller towns and rural areas, where the absence of stable infrastructures amplifies the affective intensity and collective investment surrounding each event.

I sensed this aura of great symbolism in Cosenza (Calabria), at Rialzo Social Center (founded in 2013). It is located in the area of the former railway workshops, between Viale Mancini and Via Popilia. According to the official website of the collective, Auditorium Popolare (Pouplar Auditorium), it is a place of resistance to property speculation:

> thanks to the social commitment of many people who live and work in this area, it has become a place of community life that counteracts the loneliness into which the cult of consumerism and the consequences of the global economic crisis are pushing us[42].

Their aim is to "*create a space where music, culture, art, politics and sociality can be produced and reproduced, where active participation in city life can be freely expressed, outside the rhetoric and economy of big events*" (ibid.), and to make the place

> public... in the true sense of the word, accessible to all, usable and safe. It aims to offer a counter-cultural alternative in terms of both music and active participation in the city's cultural program, providing a model of city management that is democratic, collaborative and experimental, and which moves away from the power games that have governed Cosenza for years[43].

Particularly, while waiting for the event to begin, I found the collective's manifesto (or that of one of the collectives that inhabit the space), which intrigued me because of the parallelism drawn between the collective, witches and the sabbath dance. Some of the sentences that caught my attention were: "*Activists of the night, free bodies in space, respectful souls that intertwine and whisper ancestral breaths*", "*The extraordinary claims its power, reality is surpassed*", and "*We are witches, demons,* magare[44], *beasts of the primal forest, celebrating the holistic ritual of community*".

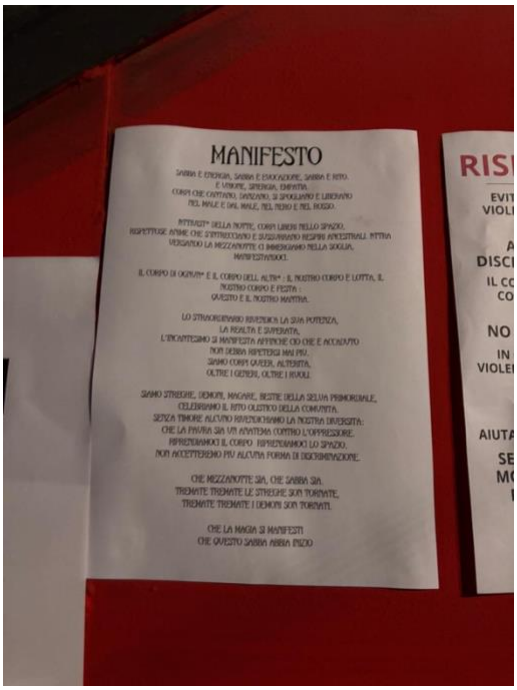


Photo 6.3. Manifesto of Auditorium Popolare in Cosenza (Rialzo Social Center)

[42] https://www.auditoriumpopolare.org (last access: 25/10/2025).
[43] Ibidem.
[44] Southern Italian folk witches.

In the fieldnotes, I commented:

> This comparison between the collective and witches is interesting. Witches who historically have been antagonists of religion, patriarchy, and moral order. Witches who could perhaps be considered among the first feminists in history. I appreciate this metaphor of the sabbath, of the witches' dance: a collective, nocturnal dance, held far from the eyes of ordinary society, in secret, in the woods. It resonates deeply with how collectives move in the shadows, existing as something other – if not completely separated – from the dominant social order and its values, moving against the tide, revisionist, just like witches (Fieldnotes, 30/11/2024, Rialzo Social Center, Cosenza).

The symbolic association between the collective and the witches follows the center-periphery metaphor: peripheral cultural actors are both marginalized and feared, yet collectively powerful. The sabbath dance becomes a metaphor for countercultural gatherings: an act of resistance performed at the margins, outside institutional visibility, but, at the same time, imbued with creativity, care and transgression. Once again, events like the one in Cosenza show how peripherality is not merely a spatial condition. It is re-signified as power and communion, as a way to inhabit the margins and as a space of autonomy and collective experimentation. Moreover, as I will deepen in the next chapter, the body becomes both a site and instrument of struggle and resistance (Latour, 2004; Hynes, 2013): celebrated, liberated, and politicized through dance and ritual (Thrift, 1997).

The condition of peripherality and the need for connection and visibility, highlights the central role of digital infrastructures in keeping the scene alive by maintaining human networks and forms of belonging and participation beyond the physical limitations of urban and more densely infrastructure contexts. Social media platforms, in particular, as I will deepen in the next chapter, function as spaces of informal socialization and trust-building, where proximity is cultivated before it becomes embodied in physical encounters at concerts or festivals. As one interviewee explained:

> Sometimes I see someone's IG story and comment because they posted a band I like — then we start talking, become friends, and later meet at concerts or plan to go together. In my case, I can be a bit shy at first. I might see someone who seems really interesting at shows and think: "Wow, I'd love to be friends with them". Social media becomes the perfect way to make that happen. I find it hard to go up to someone and: "Say, hey, nice shirt, I love that band too". It's much easier to reply to a story or message to say: "Let's go to that concert together". From this point of view, social media platforms made things much easier for me. (Interviewee 7, 12/02/2024).

These everyday connection practices exemplify how the scene compensates for structural inequalities through digital infrastructures, which foster relational proximity. However, the fact that such mediations are necessary reveals that geography still matters, since access to physical places, resources and opportunities remains unequal across the Italian territory. In other words, although digital networks facilitate the circulation of people and affections, they do not fully compensate for the structural asymmetries that influence the geography of cultural production in Italy. These contextual differences can be better understood by considering broader socio-economic dynamics, particularly the long-standing divide between North-Central and South Italy.

Particularly, regarding the cultural and creative economy in Italy, several authors argued that cultural and creative industries tend to concentrate into clusters that are geographically polarized by this divide (Lazzaretti et al., 2011; Bertacchini & Borrione, 2013). Furthermore, Crociata and colleagues (2024) discussed that the traditional cultural and creative economy, although the sector's different domains show a more heterogenous geography today than in the past, is still dichotomized not only between North-Central and South Italy, but also between large urban areas and peripheral areas. Indeed, based on Florida (2002) theorizations on creative cities, the authors state that

> cities provide essential elements to the CCIs, namely many opportunities for interactions between different people and organizations, the infrastructure and networks necessary for technological development to take place, critical mass of highly skilled individuals and so on (Crociata et al. 2024, p. 56).

Milan, in particular, as explained in Chapter 3, has developed a cultural-oriented urban policy aligned with the creative city model, which is based on city consumerism and urban branding (d'Ovidio, 2016). This model is inevitably rooted also in the cultural practices of the independent screamo music scene itself, and in its constituents, like other countercultural scenes and subcultures that attempt to oppose it (Tozzi, 2023). Consciously or not, these practices incorporate logics of visibility, promotion, and self-entrepreneurship that reflect the broader conditions of neoliberal cultural production. This is particularly evident, as seen in the previous section, when considering the "professional turn" within the scene (Guerra, 2020). Indeed, contemporary underground scenes can be analyzed as niche formations within the mainstream music ecosystem, reproducing, while simultaneously negotiating and resisting, its dominant values and aesthetics. The use of digital platforms like Instagram to promote events, or the use of music streaming platforms such as Spotify exemplifies this entanglement. Practices aimed at fostering autonomy and sense of belonging often inevitably mobilize the same instruments, languages, and economies of attention that sustain the mainstream music ecosystem (Hesmondhalgh & Meyer, 2015).

One of the interviewees well argues these differences both between North-Central and South Italy and between larger urban areas and more peripheral areas:

> [In the North] there is more movement, which I call hotspots. Because… for example, in the South there are no hotspots. There are big cities, but for one reason or another they're not on the map, it's simply a geographical matter. For example, for us as a band, playing in the South […] it's more difficult. I mean, what's it like for a kid? If they grow up in Veneto, they take the train from Vicenza and in an hour they're in Marghera and can go to Venezia Hardcore Festival. That's where we used to go when we were younger, so that means eight years ago. But for a kid who becomes passionate about punk and emo in Catanzaro, their life is exponentially harder, they're far from all these things. If instead I live in Bologna, I have everything at hand, it's more accessible… I mean, there's more, there are more things. Then Bologna is a university city, it's practically a microcosm. I mean, I don't want to go on too long, but definitely on a quantitative level there are more things, there have been more things for a longer time, there are more people, so there's also… there's also a history, there's a counterculture that has deeper roots… and reasons to exist too. Like Milan, which is a totally gentrified city, it has its own historical reasons, different reasons. That's how I see it, but if you look at the data… these are the places where there are more opportunities, more concerts, more things. If you live far from these places, you're far from the movement, like, you're far from these things and so you experience them in a different way (Interviewee 3, 30/01/2024).

This interview provides an insider account of how uneven cultural geographies are perceived and experienced within the scene. The distinction between "hotspots" and "coldspots" captures the asymmetrical concentration of infrastructures and connected opportunities across the Italian territory. Hotspots like Milan or Bologna are not only logistical nodes (in terms of venues, audiences or even transport connections), but also historical and symbolic centers where countercultural traditions have sedimented over time, producing a sense of continuity and legitimacy. By contrast, smaller cities and southern areas that are described as "off the map" emphasize both material and symbolic marginalization.

The reflections of the interviewee on the significance of playing in the South expands this picture:

> That's really the point and one of the reasons why I think it's so important to play in the South. It's not just about how nice it is when it happens, but about how rare and difficult it is. There are many bands and promoters from the South, but for us it's hard to go there. With work and everything else, going to Calabria takes two full days of travel. It's just far, and the transport connections are terrible. If someone from Catanzaro wants to come to a concert in Milan, they basically have to take a plane – it's not easy. So, it's not only about physical distance, but also

> about accessibility and investment. From a musician's perspective, playing in Catanzaro or Crotone – and we actually have a few proposals from there – feels almost like playing in Indonesia, because it's so far from everything else. But that's exactly why it matters: there's interest, and very few people go there. A show of ours in Crotone might be exponentially more meaningful than one in Milan, because Milan is accessible – we go there often, we pass through. But in the South, for someone seeing you for the first time, that concert might mean much more. Because it's exclusive, it's rare. (Interviewee 3, 30/01/2024).

Here, distance is not only physical, but also infrastructural and affective: traveling to the South requires additional time, economic resources, and organizational effort, which discourages circulation and reinforces spatial inequalities. To be "far from the movement" means also to experience the scene differently; less through direct participation, and more through mediated forms of engagement (again, emerges the centrality of digital infrastructures). At the same time, this means that a concert organized in the South can be "exponentially more meaningful" than one organized in Milan, precisely because of its exceptional nature.

These spatial asymmetries, therefore, shape not only the access to events, but also the sense of belonging to the scene. This excerpt highlights how infrastructures and histories of local countercultures interact to produce uneven conditions of participation, echoing wider patterns of regional inequalities within the Italian cultural ecosystem.

These themes emerged also during the interview with Bruno, my intermediary with La Défense collective. As I wrote in my fieldnotes reflecting on our conversation:

> […] we talked about the differences between Sicily and Lombardy, and in general northern Italy, in the organization of concerts. The discussion was focused on the fact that in southern Italy people is hungry for music, and in general there are fewer spaces and people available to organize concerts. There is really a lack of resources not only economical, but also physical and temporal. He mentioned some spaces as Scugnizzo in Napoli, S.p.Arrow in Rende (Calabria). He also mentioned some collectives/organizations that organize in central-southern Italy such as Controcanti Produzioni and MED Production. In the North, on the other hand, according to him, there is more availability of spaces and concerts; thus, there is also a more curated musical selection, more attention to the price of concerts, and so on (Fieldnotes, 03/02/2024, Parma).

This excerpt draws attention on the fact that scarcity in southern regions is not only economic but also temporal and affective. The lack of venues and available organizers translates into a form of cultural precarity that constrains continuity and experimentation. What the interviewee refers to as "hunger for music" is a result of this scarcity of resources in peripheral contexts, which imbues local

scenes with a strong affective intensity. The comparison with Lombardy highlights again the centrality of North Italy. Particularly, across all the ten semi-structured interviews that I conducted with members belonging to independent collectives in Italy, Milan consistently emerged as a crucial center for the screamo scene. Interviewees described it as a city that concentrates opportunities, infrastructures and networks:

> In terms of the number of concerts and how easy it is to organize them, I think Milan stands out. Why? Well, even though I know organizers – for instance, the collective Ali di Cera – who also struggle to find suitable venues depending on the band's size or expected audience, there are still far more opportunities compared to places like Pordenone or Vicenza. For example, I know that Vicenza will face serious problems once Bocciodromo is gone; they'll probably have to move, and they're already organizing some concerts in Padova. So yes, I'd say that, overall, Milan is probably the best place right now (Interviewee 1, 13/12/2023).

Starting from this, it is possible to assert that Milan has a dual role in the national geography of the scene. On one side, it is an infrastructural center that concentrates venues, audiences and organizational skills. This centrality is rooted in a long historical trajectory. Indeed, Milan hosts the headquarters of major records companies such as Sony Music Entertainment and Warner Music Italy, several booking agencies, and media companies. Moreover, the city is also home to some of the most significant live music venues and festivals in Italy – e.g., Assago Forum, San Siro Stadium, Snai Hippodrome, I-Days Festival, MI AMI Festival, and so on – reinforcing its physical and symbolic centrality for both mainstream and independent cultural production. The vitality of the independent screamo music scene in Milan can therefore be understood as both enabled and provoked by the city's intense commodification of culture. Indeed, alternative cultural production in Milan often emerge as a form of situated resistance against the logics of the creative city: an attempt to reclaim authenticity, collectivity, and self-management within an urban environment shaped by neoliberal policies of cultural branding and consumption.

On the other side, it is a symbolic inspirational model for the other Italian independent collectives, not only for their organizational capacity, but also for the determination with which they negotiate independence, engaging with institutional frameworks and market tools and at the same time attempting to not fully compromise their DIY ethos. These dynamics reflect the broader ambivalence of the centrality of Milan: the same infrastructures that enable cultural production also exposes it to the logics of professionalization and urban commodification. Therefore, the city often operates as both a resource and a model to aspire to, and as a constraint – i.e., a site where the DIY ethos must

be continually negotiated within a broader creative economy that simultaneously enables and threatens autonomy.

From this perspective, the infrastructural and symbolic centrality of Milan reverberates across the national geography of the screamo scene, defining uneven conditions of access, visibility, and recognition that become even more evident when observing the dynamics between the North and South of Italy. However, this centrality also highlights a broader analytical risk: both in the scholarly debates and in public policy discourses, to privilege the urban context as the primary site of creativity and innovation. Although Milan emerges as a gravitational center in the screamo collective imaginary of independence, the empirical material collected during the fieldwork suggests that creativity and cultural production are not exclusive of metropolitan environments.

In an attempt to overcome the so-called "urban bias" (Sorensen, 2009), recent literature on cultural and creative industries has begun to question the assumption that creativity is inherently urban. As Crociata et al. (2024) also argue that "*peripheral regions may also offer a more attractive environment for small- and medium-sized firms to innovate*" (ivi, p. 56), since culture and creativity are not exclusively urban phenomena, but can be driven (differently) from peripheral regions – for example, they can be favored from social capital and community efforts, rather than cognitive proximity (Fitjar & Rodríguez-Pose, 2011; Petrov, 2012). This perspective aligns with the Italian case, where the geographies of CCIs are marked by a fragmented and uneven distribution of resources and opportunities. As Brandano and Urso (2023) highlight, the development and resilience of CCIs across Italy largely depend on local determinants such as infrastructures, human networks, and institutional support. Consequently, from North to South and from central to more peripheral areas (both urban and non-urban) cultural production often operates under uneven conditions. In contexts where infrastructural and institutional ecosystems are weaker, material resources (such as spaces, public or private funds for the establishment of nonprofit cultural associations, and technical tools) tend to be scarcer. This often results in reduced visibility and opportunities for interaction, reinforcing forms of symbolic marginality. Nevertheless, fieldwork observations and interviews suggest that these same constraints can also foster more autonomous and radical practices. In the latter case, for instance, less institutional and commercial pressure may encourage a stronger sense of rootedness of the scene within the territory and the formation and development of informal human networks that arise precisely in the absence of structural support. These networks, in turn, enhance a greater capacity for self-organization, belonging, and mutual care, creating informal ecologies of support in which shared effort and vulnerability become sources of cohesion. In this sense, what might appear as infrastructural weakness can become a resource for cultural resilience and innovation, aligning with

studies that interpret peripherality not as a deficit but as a space of alternative creativity (Fitjar & Rodríguez-Pose, 2011; Petrov, 2012; Crociata et al., 2024). This reflection leads back to the central argument of this section: the geography of the Italian screamo scene cannot be understood solely in terms of urban concentration or infrastructural strength. Rather, it is shaped by a complex interplay between absence and resourcefulness, marginality and creativity – dynamics that reconfigure both the meaning and the value of "centrality" in contemporary independent cultural production.

From this multi-scalar perspective, comparing the metropolitan city of Milan not only with other urban areas in Italy, but also with peripheral and rural areas, addresses the need of understanding the differences in the cultural and countercultural practices at the local and supra-local level of the screamo scene. This comparison makes it possible to question the concepts of "centrality" and "periphery", both physical and symbolic, and to compare how practices of resistance against urban renewal and (self-)commodification vary depending on the context and, thus, the availability of tangible and intangible resources. Indeed, as already discussed, peripherality can also be interpreted as a deliberate choice to reclaim marginality as a space of autonomy, authenticity, and resistance (Bennett & Rogers, 2016). The organization of music events in non-urban or rural areas and self-managed and occupied social spaces thus becomes an expression of the DIY ethos and a critique to urban gentrification processes that often co-opt and neutralize countercultural practices. In this perspective, peripherality can become symbolically desirable and attractive; a process that, however, risks being aestheticized and producing new forms of self-commodification.

6.5. Gentrification and aestheticization of peripherality

Drawing on the previous section, the Italian independent screamo music scene is shaped by urban and regional transformations that can be conceptualized as embedded within the broader context of the neoliberal capitalist system, in which gentrification plays a central role – operating as both an *external* process of spatial configuration, and as an *internal* process of aestheticization of peripherality and self-commodification. In this perspective, gentrification can be understood not only as a form of urban displacement and expulsion, but also as a cultural logic that permeates the practices, values, and self-representations of the scene itself (Zukin, 1995; Kern, 2022).

As seen in this chapter, external gentrification manifests through the material pressures of eviction and displacement, which affect the availability of spaces and their accessibility, and the lack of material resources and infrastructures. As argued, in cities like Milan or Genova the creative city

model has intensified the competition for urban spaces where to cultivate alternative cultural practices of autonomy and authenticity. Independent and informal venues such as C.S.O.A. Cox18 and C.O.A. T28 operate within neighborhoods that have been progressively gentrified, where the increasing value of properties and the institutional reappropriation – e.g., through eviction actions – of alternative cultures make their survival precarious. Within the urban geography of Milan, these venues are celebrated as symbols of cultural diversity but simultaneously exposed to the risk of co-optation for urban branding purposes and to market-oriented logics. In this sense, gentrification can be conceptualized as a strategy of urban governance through which the cultural capital of marginalized groups is mobilized to revalorize urban spaces. It represents a dialectic of attraction and expulsion. The cases discussed in this chapter enlighten on how external gentrification operates asymmetrically across territories, but according to similar logics of appropriation and renewal. Particularly, gentrification depends on cultural difference to reproduce economic values, while eroding the very conditions that make alternative cultural production possible.

At the same time, gentrification can operate as an internal process of self-commodification and aestheticization of peripherality. As discussed in this chapter, some festivals and events such as those held in Santeria Toscana 31 and Circolo Arci Bellezza, while maintaining ties with the independent scene, are also embedded in the dominant cultural and economic circuits of the city of Milan, putting the scene at risk of symbolic absorption and co-optation. This dynamic is closely linked to what can be called as the "spectacularization" of the scene (subject of the next chapter). As discussed, the fieldnotes collected highlight how spatial contexts influence bodily practices and social behaviors. Space, indeed, mediates the forms of expression and visibility through which the DIY ethos is enacted – or, at times, as it will be seen in the next chapter, spectacularized. Particularly, during the fieldwork, in some contexts and occasions, the mosh pit appeared to be more performative, with people deliberately climbing on the stage or initiating a "ritualized" chaos, *specifically* to be documented by video-makers or photographers.

This process of internal gentrification also creates fractures within the scene itself. These tensions often manifest – in terms of practices of resistance at the meso level (see Guerra, 2018; Chapter 2) – as identity battles between sub-groups within the scene for the negotiation of authenticity and legitimacy boundaries, reflecting divergent understandings of what "DIY" should mean in practice. While some participants reject and harshly criticize the perceived progressive spectacuralization of the scene, others consciously engage with visibility as a means of survival and self-promotion. In this regard, professionalism becomes a crucial site of negotiation: within the scene, some participants are not only enthusiasts but also work professionally as photographers, graphic designers, or event

organizers. Their technical expertise and familiarity with dominant cultural industries contribute to a partial professionalization of DIY practices, blurring the boundaries with amateurism. However, as previously argued, these dynamics can reflect a pragmatic adaption to the conditions of urban precarity and cultural competition, through which independent actors appropriate the tools of visibility and organization to sustain the autonomy of the scene.

Gentrification itself, therefore, becomes a battleground for negotiation, where the DIY ethos persists not in isolation from commodification, but through an attempt to consciously manage its contradictions. This perspective highlights the relational and dialectical nature of both gentrification and the practices of resistance enacted by the screamo scene, which does not exist outside these processes and dynamics; rather, it mirrors and reinterprets them, transforming processes of urban renewal into an occasion for a redefinition of cultural resistance. Building on this, the next chapter shifts from the material and spatial structuring of the scene to its social and cultural dimensions, exploring how the tensions surrounding autonomy, visibility, and resistance are enacted, narrated, and embodied within concerts, self-representations, and everyday practices.

Chapter 7. Cultural processes of self-commodification: Spectacularization and affective politics of resistance

In the previous chapter, I examined the spatial and material dimensions of the scene, with a particular focus on the hard and relational infrastructures that support the existence of venues and the circulation of resources, opportunities and people across different contexts. However, to achieve a more nuanced understanding of how the scene defines itself and its political agency, it is necessary also to consider its social and cultural dimensions. The main focus of this chapter is on what can be understood as the soft infrastructures of the scene: the shared values, aesthetic preferences, affective relations, and ethical orientations (e.g., feminism, inclusivity, and veganism) that shape participation and belonging.

Through this lens, the chapter explores how practices of representation, performance, and mutual care operate as arenas in which resistance to commodification is negotiated, challenging both internal and external processes of gentrification – not only materially, but also through the construction of alternative ethical, aesthetic, and affective worlds. Dance practices, body performance, and the visual documentation of events illustrate how visibility can simultaneously reinforce and challenge the values of the scene, revealing the tensions between the DIY ethos and the processes of spectacularization and self-commodification that characterize it (see section 7.2.). Moreover, gender and inclusivity issues emerge as central arenas where resistance is redefined: they expose internal contradictions but also demonstrate the capacity of the scene for reflexivity and transformation (see section 7.3.).

Therefore, this chapter examines how the soft infrastructures of the screamo scene mediate between authenticity and adaptation, autonomy and self-commodification, revealing how resistance is enacted not only through spatial practices, but also through symbolic, affective, and cultural ones.

7.1. The role of self-representations in the construction of the scene

Before analyzing these dynamics, it is essential to understand how the scene defines itself – that is, how participants conceptualize the very idea of "scene", its boundaries, values, and belongings. Building on the fieldwork and interviews, I adopt a participant-centered conceptualization of the scene, that integrates symbolic and emotional dimensions with the material and spatial ones discussed

in the previous chapter. This approach highlights how the screamo scene operates simultaneously across micro, meso, and macro levels: at the micro level, as a set of embodied practices through which individuals express authenticity and affective belonging (Scott, 1985); at the meso level, as a network of places and people through which autonomy and cooperation are sustained (Guerra, 2018); and at the macro level, as a symbolic and discursive field in which shared values, imaginaries, and political meanings of resistance are produced and negotiated (ibid.).

In this regard, one of the richest and most complex definitions of "scene" is:

> I hate and love the term scene, that is, it is an umbrella term. Scene is a movement. I explained it to myself this way: scene is what is there, it is the photograph [of what is there]. Scene includes all these people; it's a general definition. That is, I mean, the scene is "what is there" basically, but it is also the contacts between people; that is, it is also a way of understanding relationships, the network – precisely, the network between collectives, between people. We talk about people in the scene, that is, who are inside this network. So, it is a much more fitting definition in my opinion, this one of the "network". The scene is a network created by the relationships between places and between people who are active within it, that is, people who are active in the DIY. Indeed, we talk about punk scene, metal scene, scene this, scene that. Then they all overlap. But there is a static definition, let's say, the photograph, and a more operational definition, which is the network definition (Interviewee 4, 30/01/2024).

A second, rich definition is:

> In my opinion, it's really a matter of... as well as musical taste, [...] of ideals, that is a bit of a political thing, maybe. That is, if I think about the scene, I think not only about the music, but really about all the ideals behind it, the sharing of these ideals [...]. Generally speaking, I see that there are the same interests from everyone, both political and ethical. For example, I mean I know that in the scene lots of people are vegetarian or vegan and this is something that I think is very different from, I don't know, the metal scene. If I think of the metal scene I don't immediately think of that, whereas thinking of the screamo scene is one of the first things that comes to my mind. Another example is doing DIY concerts. The bands are also very DIY, that is, they arrange everything, for example, they don't need promoters to arrange their tours, they do it themselves. Whereas in terms of the audience, ... there are some political ideals, like being anti-fascist, fighting for the same things, for example. The interest in feminism and gender equality ... not bringing discrimination within the spaces where concerts are organized or where the scene meets. In short, the acceptance of different people, their own personalities, their own beliefs (Interviewee 1, 13/12/2023).

A third and last definition of scene, similar to the previous one, is:

> The scene is something that characterizes, in my opinion, the music genre, in this case. Because anyway maybe there's also the metal scene to tell you, right? However, it's a whole different thing in my opinion. One thing that I noticed in the beginning, when I started to hang out a little bit more in the environment, I don't know, ... emo-punk more than anything else, for example, most of them are vegetarians and vegans. [...] And men have a greater sensitivity to their feminine side, so they don't have ... I don't know, there's a much more affectionate attitude between men, than maybe in other scenes, I mean if you go ... I don't know, for a period ... I also like metal, however a little less. Hanging out with people who listen to metal a little less, metal yes. Because there is this ... a very different aspect in my opinion of people being much more closed about other things. I mean, for example, I also liked to go to Celtic festivals, Celtic music[45]... is a *carnazza*[46]. *Grigliatine*[47]. Eh no, it's already different. I mean, this is the scene. The bubble is really a question of ideal, utopia that limits a little bit, and that makes you feel so good at home (Interviewee 7, 12/02/2024).

In unpacking these definitions, several recurrent themes emerge. All three propose an idea of the scene as a multi-layered infrastructure, operating simultaneously on the material, relational, and symbolic dimensions. Particularly, in the first definition, the scene is explicitly described as a movement, a network between places, people and collectives (Bennett & Peterson, 2004). Elaborating on this, it is also possible to distinguish between a more static (the *photograph*) and more dynamic (the *network*) understanding of the scene, emphasizing that what defines the scene is not only the aggregation of spaces and actors (hard infrastructures such as venues, collectives, and the presence of events), but also the continuous circulation of people and the resources that connect them (relational infrastructures). The distinction between the scene as a photograph and as a network also points to its temporal dimension: it is not a fixed, but rather a constantly evolving entity, shaped by generational changes and the continuous negotiation of its values and boundaries.

In the second and third excerpts, the focus shifts towards the soft infrastructures that underpin the screamo scene: shared values, ethical orientations and affective affinities. Both interviewees highlight the importance of ideals such as feminism, gender equality, anti-fascism, and vegetarianism and/or veganism in sustaining the scene's DIY ethos. These ideals constitute what has been described as a "bubble", where hierarchical relationships are absent (or, at least, not evident) and people can fully express themselves and their ideals. This bubble represents a symbolic space of mutual recognition

[45] This is a reference to the Montelago Celtic Festival, a major Celtic metal music event held in Colfiorito, a village in the municipality of Foligno on the Umbria-Marche border, every August.
[46] *Carnazza* is an Italian expression meaning "difficult", or "not recommendable". In this case, the interviewee is trying to say that Celtic music festivals are non-recommendable places to go.
[47] *Grigliatina* is a diminutive of "grilling" or "barbecue". In this case, it is used in a depreciative manner.

and emotional safety. The emphasis placed on acceptance, inclusivity, and affective openness (e.g., men expressing their "feminine side") reflects the role of these soft infrastructures in shaping the ethical norms and embodied dispositions that guide everyday interactions within the scene. Moreover, "feeling good at home" highlights again the affective dimension of the scene, where emotional intimacy and mutual care function as political practices that sustain belonging and trust.

The importance of soft infrastructures also emerges in the structure and organization of independent collectives – which have been adopted, as argued in Chapter 4, as one of the units of observation to better comprehend, in their role as "social laboratories", the organizational, relational, and affective dimensions of the scene. One of the interviewees states:

> In my opinion, here we have the opportunity to express ourselves at 100 percent. If we want to bring something, we can bring it, whereas in other canals it is more difficult, because maybe there are other people above you who have different ideas. This is a collective. That is, we are all on the same page, and nobody overpowers anybody else, and that's something I really like, compared to maybe having a boss, somebody controlling you, a supervisor. I mean, I like the fact that it's just something done in friendship, where everybody can express their opinion and you can have a dialogue around it. Rather than being scared to express your opinion, because maybe the person above you is not convinced about a certain thing (Interview 1, 13/12/2024).

Here, a clear understanding emerges of the collective's horizontal and non-hierarchical structure, grounded in friendship, trust, and shared responsibility. The boundaries of legitimacy are constructed through everyday interactions and shared histories. As discussed in Chapter 4, my initial difficulties in gaining access to the La Défense collective revealed how trust, the slow accumulation of mutual recognition, and commitment to the group's values and practices shape belonging and participation.

A particularly significant episode that illuminated these internal dynamics occurred during a meeting, when Christian reflected aloud on what it means to "participate" within the collective. He described participation not simply as a symbolic act of adhesion but as a concrete assumption of responsibility – "taking on the burden", as he phrased it – which could involve financial contribution, offering one's labor, or acquiring new skills when needed. His explanation encapsulates the DIY ethos as a process of continuous learning and mutual accountability rather than as a purely ideological stance, where autonomy is sustained through cooperation rather than individualism.

This moment thus revealed how participation is constructed as a form of situated practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), in which belonging is negotiated through actions rather than declared through discourses. Becoming part of a collective, therefore, involves an embodied and relational

apprenticeship in the norms, values, and competencies that define the community – from how tasks are distributed to how decisions are collectively legitimized. In this sense, La Défense exemplifies how trust and shared responsibility operate as one of the relational infrastructures that sustain the scene.

Moreover, in the three definitions of the scene, it emerges that this sense of belonging acquires meaning through processes of differentiation from other musical and cultural contexts, especially the metal one. This can be analyzed as part of the meso level practices of resistance, in which clear boundaries are established – often in oppositional terms – between different scenes. Indeed, strong identity values are invoked to define themselves positively in relation to a negative referent (in this case the metal scene), as has been reported in interview 7, in relation to feminism, veganism, and inclusivity as ethical markers of distinction. Therefore, being part of the scene requires also adherence to shared moral values that distinguish, in a Bourdieusian perspective, insiders from outsiders.

These processes of distinction are not only exclusionary, but they also strengthen internal cohesion. The same moral and ideological boundaries that separate the screamo scene from other music scenes also generate emotional proximity among its members. For this reason, I placed particular attention on the affective dimension of the scene, understanding it as a web of emotional connections (Stahl, 2004). These soft infrastructures are not limited to symbolic identification but are materially enacted through the creation of relational infrastructures. In this sense, I analyzed the interactions between individuals and groups of friends that I repeatedly observed at events and in the organization of events, as well as the exchange of favors between individuals and collectives. Simple questions like “How did you get in contact with the band?”, “How did you manage to book them?” and “Did anyone help you do that? Did you have to do anything in return?” helped to uncover these circuits of mutual help and interdependence through which the scene reproduces itself, highlighting how soft infrastructures can translate into relational infrastructures. These circuits of mutual help emerge through informal cooperative activities – for instance, lending musical equipment, hosting touring bands, and preparing collective meals – that demonstrate how emotional closeness and mutual trust can serve as organizational resources, transforming feelings of intimacy into relational infrastructures that sustain cooperation and resistance.

However, the affective dimension of the scene is not limited to these aspects, but it also invokes the notion of “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983). In the wake of Bennett (2013), scenes are also underpinned by

> a knowingness on the part of isolated individuals that many others are listening to the same music, reading the same music literature, watching the same music-related films and documentaries and – above all – making a similar sort of sense out of what they are hearing, reading and watching, based upon their shared generational memories and cultural experience of that music (ivi, p. 60).

This means that the individuals belonging to a scene can construct and articulate their notion of it in many tangible and intangible ways. In the case of the Italian screamo scene, I found memes as a significant form of self-representation, through which participants collectively define and negotiate the meanings, values, and ironic commentaries of the scene. Particularly, memes can be understood as participatory communicative artifacts that convey meanings through recognizable codes, often characterized by irony, self-reflexivity and intertextuality. In this perspective, they serve as a basis for the construction of a collective horizon of shared meanings, experiences and representations. Examples of memes are the following:

[48]

Photo 7.4. Meme, theskramz
Photo 7.5. Meme, screamo_affirmations

The first meme is a caricature of the average screamo listener alongside some of their main interests: screamo albums, nature (and taking pictures of it), and niche memes – in this case, memes about the screamo scene itself. This makes it a meta-meme, as it embeds other scene-related memes within it with the objective to increase its satirical tone. The second meme features Asuka Sōryū Langley, one of the main characters of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, a Japanese anime series, in a moment of despair. She is surrounded by words and expressions like "sbatti", "Fomo", "chi ce",

[48] https://www.instagram.com/theskramz/, https://www.instagram.com/screamo_affirmations/ (last access: 21/05/2025).

"collettivo"[49], all commonly used by the people belonging to the scene. This meme blends visual and linguistic elements that reflect both the emotional tone and the insider language of the screamo scene. Therefore, I argue that memes (and meme pages) can serve as a dispositive of aggregation and belonging to the scene in affective and virtual dimensions. However, they operate not only as soft infrastructures – crystallizing collective values, imaginaries, and ethical orientations –, but also as digital infrastructures – sustaining trust and complicity through shared irony and mutual recognition. Indeed, by circulating through digital platforms, they connect geographically dispersed individuals, fostering a sense of shared identity and continuity beyond physical spaces of aggregation. Moreover, memes act as reflexive devices, allowing to understood humor as an everyday practice of resistance: an affective strategy to address the tensions within the scene.

Beyond memes, another central element in the shared cultural and symbolic repertoire of the scene is the recurrent reference to Neon Genesis Evangelion. The anime explores psychological turmoil, alienation, thus rendering the series a recurring intertextual and symbolic framework through which members of the scene articulate their sensibilities and shared identity. This influence is not only thematic and emotional, but also aesthetic. A striking example of this is the *Second Impact Festival* organized by the Warmroom Collective in Carpi, as already cited in the previous chapter. The name of the festival itself is a direct reference to a cataclysmic event known as "Second Impact" within NGE. Moreover, the festival's flyer appropriates the same serif typeface used in the original anime title, reinforcing its intertextual resonance. Central to the flyer is an evocative illustration of an Angel ("shito", in Japanese), the antagonistic entities in the series. The angel figure can be interpreted as the embodiment of the DIY ethos, that underpins the festival, as well as the screamo scene more broadly. In fact, just as the Angels disrupt the existing order in *the anime*, the DIY screamo scene has the objective of challenging dominant cultural narratives through its self-organized, emotionally raw, and community-driven practices. This visual reference thus serves a dual function: evoking a shared cultural imagery while simultaneously articulating a form of underground resistance.

The resonance of Neon Genesis Evangelion within the scene can also be explained generationally. In fact, this anime was transmitted for the first time in Japan in 1996, followed by a movie (1997) and a reboot series (2007-2021). The series coincides with the formative years of the millennial generation, many of whom now constitute the core of the screamo scene. For this generation, in an attempt to expand the interpretation, marked by economic precarity, emotional instability, and disillusionment with institutional structures (Fisher, 2009; Milburn, 2019; Hertz

[49] "Sbatti" can be translated as "a hassle"; "Fomo" stands for "Fear of missing out"; "chi ce" is a deliberately incorrect, informal expression used to mimic casual speech and can be translated as "who's there?"; and, finally, "collettivo" simply means "collective", "crew".

2020), NGE offers a symbolic mirror through which feelings of fragility, failure, and existential exhaustion are collectively recognized and aestheticized. These narratives deeply resonate with the emotional atmosphere of screamo, a music genre that channels similar intense emotions through raw performances and cathartic expression. Therefore, NGE does not simply indicate an aesthetic preference; rather, it articulates shared generational experiences in an attempt to establish a sense of community and to find shared values and meanings amid uncertainty, vulnerability, and crisis.

[50]

Photo 7.6. Flyer of Second Impact Fest (May 31-June 1-2, 2024, Carpi)

Not only NGE but also references to *Pokémon*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Magic: The Gathering* can be explained through the generational framework. Magic is a collectible card game launched in 1993 and is part of – together with anime like NGE, videogames, role-playing fantasy literature, and so on – the broader so-called "geek culture": a subcultural domain marked by intensive symbolic engagement, rule-based creativity, and niche communal practices (Jenkins, 1992; Leonard & Guerrero, 2016). The fantasy settings and gothic aesthetics found in many of Magic's early card sets resonate with the visual and emotional atmosphere cultivated in the screamo subculture, from fanzine art and show flyers to lyrical themes. Indeed, although seemingly distinct, geek culture and screamo share important structural affinities when analyzed through the lens of subcultural capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1979). Both rely heavily on forms of specialized knowledge, affective investment, non-

[50] https://www.instagram.com/warmroomcollective/ (last access: 24/05/2025).

normative sensibilities, the refusal of mainstream legibility, and stylistic distinctions that function as internal markers of authenticity and belonging.

As I wrote in the fieldnotes of Can I Scream Fest, held on 17 November 2024 at Santeria Toscana 31:

> […] I also find out, again from stories on the festival's Instagram page, that it is possible to reserve tables to play Magic: The Gathering (a card game). The festival's aesthetic is very nerdy: in fact, the themes are black, white and purple, and one of today's three IG stories is structured as if it was a Magic card. This appeal to geek culture is in any case not new, as already the Warmrooom Collective for the Second Impact Fest (and also for the first one) had references to the world of anime, and especially to Neon Genesis Evangelion (Fieldnotes, 17/11/2024, Milan – Santeria Toscana 31).

[51]

Photo 7.7. Instagram story of Can I Scream Fest (17/11/2024, Milan)

The convergence between screamo and geek culture reveals that generational imaginaries are shaped by hybrid cultural ecosystems where symbolic, relational, and digital infrastructures intersect. Through memes and shared aesthetics, the scene translates its ethos of collectivity and resistance into the digital sphere. As I discuss in the following section, these dynamics are further articulated in the virtual sphere of the scene, where social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have become

[51] https://www.instagram.com/caniscreamfest/ (last access: 17/11/2024).

key digital infrastructures in the maintenance and circulation of the scene's affective and symbolic elements.

7.1.2. Virtual scenes, the role of Instagram and the TikTok (scr)e(a)mo revival

A fundamental role in sustaining the soft infrastructures of the screamo scene is played by its virtual dimension. As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, digital infrastructures draw attention to the multi-scalar and trans-local nature of the scene, allowing it to be analyzed as a fluid assemblage of physical and virtual spaces, as well as individual and collective ones. Moreover, as already argued, digital infrastructures can operate as hard, soft, and relational infrastructures, depending on the analytical lens adopted. They can simultaneously provide the technological means for the circulation of music and information (hard); shape the discourse and aesthetics of belonging (soft); and sustain the affective proximity between geographically dispersed participants (relational).

In this sense, for instance, digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok extend participation beyond the material boundaries of concerts and festivals, enabling forms of meta-presence that reinforce affective belonging from a distance. Instagram Stories[52] shared by attendees enable those who could not attend to experience a mediated sense of "being there". These micro-interactions help to sustain the affective continuity and shared temporality of the scene, allowing dispersed participants to comment, react, and co-construct the collective memory of an event in real time.

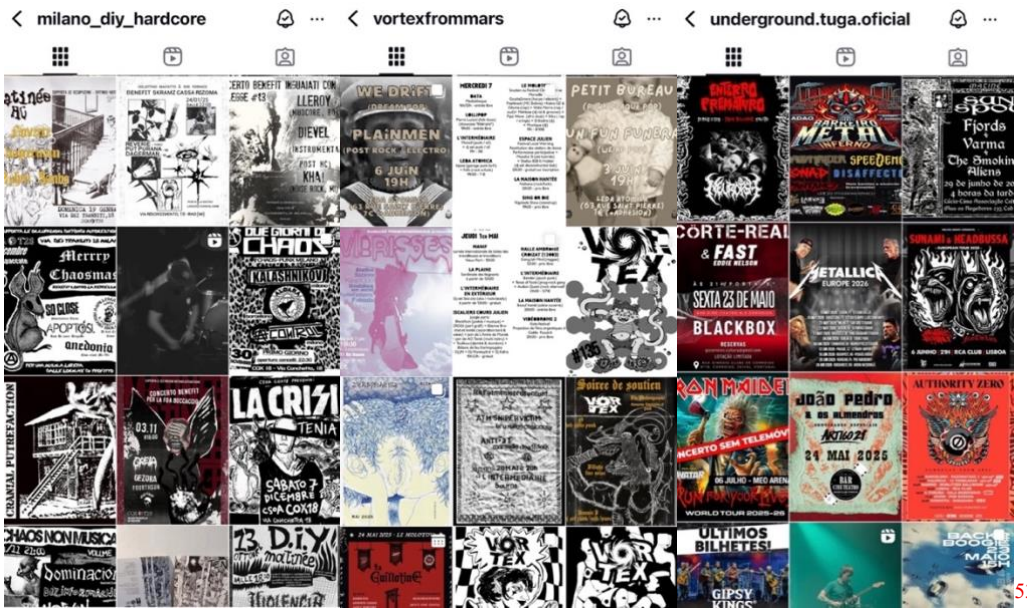
Indeed, as Kruse (2010) remarks, thanks to digital infrastructures "*music scene participants are now more easily able to access and connect with each other, whether they are nearby or far away*" (ivi, p. 632). They also become an "*integral part of the forms of participation to a local scene, superseding older existing music practices (such as physical postering around the city)*" (Magaudda 2020, p. 33). In this regard, Christian talking about how his independent collective was born, refers to how social media has changed the way people gather:

> Why, then? Sometimes, it's the little things that really drag people in. A word said in the right way, an image put at the right time, a logo. Indeed, in 2010, Instagram and Facebook did not exist. So, there was much more. The concept of putting flyers on the street? Until a while ago, it's true, things were different. I mean, I think Facebook was born in 2008 to say, and the collective was born in 2010. So, it wasn't born with a social media-based life a year ago? No, even in our case,

[52] Temporary content (photos, videos, or text) that remains visible for 24 hours on the Instagram profile, unless uploaded to the profile's "stories highlights" (in Italian: "storie in evidenza").

> our logo and concept involved making stickers and covering the city with them. But because you didn't, you had other methods... Shit, it seems like I'm talking about something that happened 30 years ago, but it was only 13 years ago (Interviewee 4, 03/02/2024).

This excerpt illustrates how social media has transformed the organizational practices of independent collectives, particularly in relation to event promotion. Whereas collectives once relied on the physical practice of taping stickers and posters around the city, these activities have now largely shifted online, with digital platforms like Instagram serving as the primary tools for communication, coordination, and audience engagement. The former practice of taping the city can also be interpreted as a practice of resistance – a means of reclaiming public space and asserting visibility outside institutional frameworks. However, with the diffusion of social media, these material practices have diminished and been depowered, while at the same time opening up new possibilities. Indeed, Instagram posts featuring events' flyers have become essential for staying informed and meta-participating in events, even from afar. Although embedded within corporate infrastructures, these platforms have expanded the reach and visibility of independent collectives. In this sense, digital infrastructures simultaneously constrain and empower resistance, reshaping how the scene asserts its visibility and sustains its sense of belonging over distance. Through this ambivalent dynamic, digital infrastructures operate as both soft and relational infrastructures, shaping shared imaginaries while reinforcing the affective and communicative bonds that hold the scene together.



[53]

Photo 7.8. Instagram post of Milando_diy_hardcore
Photo 7.9. Instagram Post of vortexfrommars
Photo 7.10. Instagram Post of underground.tuga.oficial

Concrete examples of this transformation can be found in Instagram profiles that function as nodes for the aggregation and circulation of information. For instance, @milano_diy_hardcore aggregates the flyers of (almost) all the DIY music events that are organized in the city of Milan. In a trans-national comparison, the same does @vortexfrommars for the city of Marseille (France). Finally, the profile @underground.tuga.oficial even collects flyers of all Portuguese events, at a nationwide level, including also non-DIY events. These accounts operate as digital calendars where local and trans-local scenes intersect, creating a shared archive of cultural activities that often transcend geographic boundaries.

As concerns my fieldwork, Instagram Stories have been an essential tool, as explained in Chapter 4, to sound the ground of events, before and after they occurred, gauge the audience emotions and expectations about them, and trace how the collective memory of concerts is constructed online. Furthermore, as economic and time resources were limited to physically map all Italian regions and related events and venues in person, Instagram stories extended the possibilities of observation and knowledge. This kind of content is not only mediatic but also mediated by other points of view, making mine one of the many "situated knowledges" (see Haraway, 1998) within the field[54] – thus

[53] https://www.instagram.com/milano_diy_hardcore/, https://www.instagram.com/vortexfrommars/, https://www.instagram.com/underground.tuga.oficial/ (last access: 22/05/2025).
[54] In fact, it would be interesting to explore in greater detail the possibilities offered by Instagram Stories to conduct a netnography of events, studying the potential of this tool from a methodological point of view, but also the ethical issues that could rise from it.

returning to the importance of understanding the field as co-participated and co-constructed. Once again, digital infrastructures foreground the trans-locality and multi-locality of music scenes, showing how local music activities and identities are co-constructed, mediated and shaped by these infrastructures.

Building on these reflections on the relational, and methodological role, of digital infrastructures, it became increasingly relevant to interrogate how digital platforms also shape the symbolic and generational dimensions of the scene (Bennett & Rogers, 2016). To expand the toolbox for studying music scenes, I therefore examined the role played at multiple levels by digital platforms in the circulation and redefinition of the screamo genre. In this regard, an interviewee explained to me:

> People are being pulled in now in this way [through Instagram]. It used to be in a different way, it used to be about buying the wrong record, playing the wrong part of it, making it start with the words "Fuck, I want to do it". But now is it still like that? Meaning… Obviously, I mean the availability, I mean the features of social media imply that not only you can reach more people, but you can also present stuff in a more desirable way. This is many times a little bit my problem, I mean my… something that I perceive as problematic, because it can inhibit the message a little bit, in the sense, it seems that we, I mean it seems that people maybe want to play because they want to have pictures of themselves with the guitar ... so it means that they haven't understood a shit (Interviewee 3, 30/01/2024).

The focus on the desirability of how screamo is presented through social media drew my attention to the crucial role that platforms play in reinforcing the identity circulation of music genres, and their symbolic and political implications. Indeed, in the wake of Gillespie (2010), the term "platform" itself is not neutral, but is part of digital companies'

> efforts not only to sell, convince, persuade, protect, triumph, or condemn, but to make claims about what these technologies are and are not, and what should and should not be expected of them [establishing] the very criteria by which these technologies will be judged, built directly into the terms by which we know them" (ivi, p. 359).

In this regard, one of the questions that I asked myself during the fieldwork was: "What is the role of TikTok in how the genre is defined, represented and intersected with other music genres?". Particularly, my reflections on the role of TikTok in the Italian screamo scene stemmed from my observations, during the fieldwork, of an increasing number of Gen Z and underage people attending events. TikTok and Gen Z became also topics of discussion at events:

> At the end of the Put Purana concert, as we are walking out to the outside spaces of the venue, El Gatito tells me that he feels incredibly old this evening. He points out to me, in fact, that during Put Purana's mosh pit it was full of very young people, probably even underage. Lisa casually tells me the same thing, adding that if someone at an event calls her 'ma'am', it clearly means for her that it will be time to stop going to concerts: 'it means I'll be too old, it'll be time'. […] As I stand in line at the bar, I ask Billy why he thinks there has been this generational turnover, and when it started. In fact, he had argued earlier that it has become stronger just in the last few months. He replies that he thinks it is the emo wave of the 2000s that is back in fashion and that new bands like La Sad[55] have become popular, taking a large slice of the market and pushing today's youth to think "cool." This, combined with the emo aesthetics promoted on TikTok, has intrigued them to approach this kind of music and this scene. He tells me that certainly this approach and turnover has been strong since the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is just in the last few months that the audience has changed (Fieldnotes, 05/10/2024, Bloom, Mezzago).

As I began searching for articles on these insights provided by some research participants, I discovered that someone else had also asked the same question as me, in the north American context. In the article *The TikTokification of Screamo. Making peace with 'skramz'*[56], the author Dan Ozzi reflects on the fact that in recent years screamo has seen the arrival of a new lever of people belonging to Gen Z revive the genre – which had long been considered "frozen" in 2003, at least in the U.S., with bands like Asking Alexandria and Sleeping with Sirens. As the author states, the term "skramz" (rather than "screamo") is an attempt to appropriate the genre, to make it "their own" in order to experience it. Why has screamo undergone this revival in recent years and since Covid-19? "*It's TikTok [...] The place where all culture goes to be born, revived, or die*" (ibid.). Thanks to platforms like TikTok, indeed, screamo is revived. The reason is to be found in algorithmic data and automated recommendation systems, which shape circulation and musical identities. In fact,

> automated, algorithmic forms of organization of content introduce a further infrastructural layer in music, because new logics of aggregation of sounds, identities, and taste are now emerging from the infrastructure itself, giving rise to a distinctive 'datification of music listening' (Magaudda 2020, p. 35).

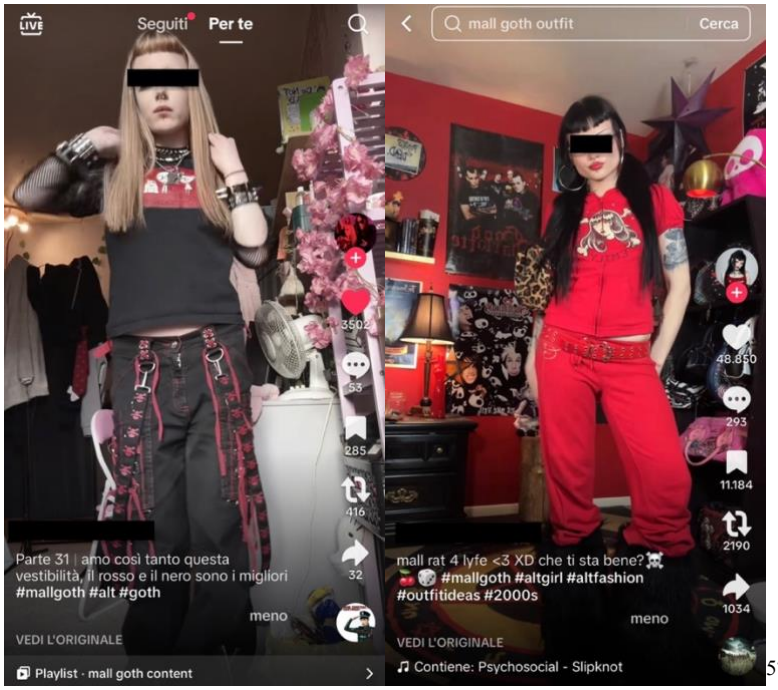
The revival of screamo has been made possible by contents featuring, for example, the hashtags "emo" and "mall goth". On TikTok, this content takes the form of short videos in a vertical format, often with a song in the background. As for early 2000s anime series and card games, the resurgence

[55] La Sad is an Italian band from Milan which proposes itself as the revival of emo music in a contemporary and mainstream key, combining trap and pop punk. Their references are former Italian bands like Dari (formed in 2004 and still active). They gained success because their songs have become trends on TikTok.
[56] https://danozzi.substack.com/p/the-tiktokification-of-screamo (last access: 22/05/2025).

of emo and goth aesthetics can be interpreted through the generational framework. Indeed, for Millennials and younger Gen Z audiences, these cultural references are not simply nostalgic, but emblematic of a particular formative period marked by social marginality and subcultural stigma. Indeed, emo and goth were once associated with being "uncool" or socially peripheral – labels that many young people wore with ambivalence, if not outright shame. Today, social media platforms have enhanced a process of symbolic reappropriation and cultural revision: what were once stigmatized outsider identities and aesthetics are now ultimately legitimized.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish how this revival has been received by different generations. For many Millennials, the resurgence of screamo, emo, and mall goth is a form of nostalgic reappropriation: a way to revisit the cultural codes they inhabited during their youth, marked by feelings of exclusion, and to redeem their past outsider identities. One example of this is the "elder emo" trend: it involves millennial parents sharing their passion for emo aesthetics and screamo music with their children, who are captured in the video while dancing or mimicking the songs. For Gen Z, TikTok often constitutes the first contact with the screamo scene and emo culture. Rather than a return, it is an introduction to these cultures, now presented through algorithmic feeds and aestheticized video formats. While the same styles and sounds circulate between generations, their meanings are filtered through distinct experiential and historical lenses.

Particularly, mall goth aesthetics, characterized by dark clothing, flashy accessories and musical influences ranging from nu metal to screamo (especially from the early 2000s), has found new life on TikTok. Mall goth is a term that describes a youth subculture that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, heavily influenced by the goth culture of the early 1980s but with a more mainstream and accessible aesthetic (hence the term mall, i.e., "shopping center").



[57]

Photo 7.11. TikTok video 1
Photo 7.12. TikTok video 2

TikTok has therefore played a crucial role in revitalizing the genre, providing a platform for creative expression and dissemination of alternative aesthetics. This trend has allowed many young people to rediscover and reinterpret the genre, embedding it within a wider visual language and imagery that includes mall goth and emo fashion. Indeed, as Magaudda (2020) argues, "*algorithms create taste clusters much more to the situational reception contexts, rather than to music genres or their relation to a scene*" (ivi, p.35). In this perspective, social media can influence and transform music subcultures, making them more dynamic and inclusive. The increasing presence of young Millennials and Gen Z at screamo events can also be explained as a direct consequence of this phenomenon.

At stake in these practices of nostalgic reappropriation and cultural reinterpretation there is a search for authenticity, which – in the context of TikTok – can be understood as a performative construct: it is produced, negotiated, and enacted through mediated forms of self-presentation, and enhanced, rather than undermined, by algorithmic logics. In the case of screamo revival, this involves embracing emotional extremity, visual intensity, and nostalgic references, all filtered through a platform that trades in micro-aesthetics and viral resonance. Particularly, the term "micro-aesthetics" (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Abidin, 2021) describes highly and limited visual, stylistic or expressive forms

[57] https://www.tiktok.com/ (last access: 24/05/2025).

that are recognizable within online communities or digital subcultures. These are fragmented, hyper-specialized aesthetics that invoke a precise, emotional, and culturally dense imagery, recognizable by those who share the same background or algorithm.

Summarizing, the digital infrastructures that sustain the scene operate not only as tools of connection and circulation (hard and relational infrastructures), but also as symbolic arenas in which identity, aesthetics and generational belonging are continuously negotiated (soft infrastructures). Through algorithms, shared aesthetics and mediated participation, digital platforms such as Instagram and TikTok allow individuals who often are geographically dispersed to inhabit the scene. However, this visibility also introduces new dynamics of exposure and aestheticization, with aspects of the intimate and peripheral dimensions of DIY counterculture increasingly becoming part of algorithmic attention and the platform economy.

7.2. The spectacularization of the scene

Up to this point, I have examined the self-representations of the screamo scene and its symbolic and affective dimensions, between shared values, aesthetics preferences, ethical orientations and affective relations. As analyzed, a crucial role in fostering these dimensions is played by digital infrastructures, which, however, also participate in the aestheticization and spectacularization of the scene. Photographs and videos not only document or promote events but also transform them into collective visual artifacts: they are instruments of collective memory and historical representation (Keightley & Pickering, 2006; Bennett & Rogers, 2016). Furthermore, the documentation of events concerns not only the collective memory of the scene, but also the places in which it takes place. In the wake of Cohen (2013), it can be argued that musical practices often contribute to the construction of a sense of place and local identity, intertwining memory and space. In this sense, documentation of DIY events also functions as a form of "place memory", preserving and narrating not only the people, but also the histories of the venues and contexts in which the scene unfolds. These visual elements of the scene connect its affective and symbolic dimensions with the material and spatial dimensions in which it is embedded.

However, as anticipated in Chapter 6, visual documentation of events is also agent of aestheticization of the scene, amplifying its visibility and exposing it to processes of commodification. Particularly, aestheticization can be defined as "*the effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life, the collapse of the distinction between high art and mass/popular*

culture, general stylistic promiscuity, and playful mixing of codes" (Featherstone 2007, p. 64). By adopting this definition, Dagalp and Hartmann (2022) state that everyday life has been increasingly aestheticized; that is, commodities are increasingly consumed for the lifestyle that they represent. In this context, the aestheticization of the screamo scene refers to the process through which the visual, emotional, and stylistic codes of the DIY ethos become consciously curated and stylized, often in dialogue with broader cultural and digital aesthetics. Indeed,

> aestheticization also deals with how objects, experiences, and/or concepts are rendered as a specific "form" that appeals to the senses. In other words, aestheticization shapes objects, experiences, and/or concepts by indexing a particular quality of these objects, experiences, and/or concepts (Dagalp & Hartmann 2022, p. 2).

With digital infrastructures, what has changed is not the existence of representation itself, but the scale and speed at which visibility circulates through digital platforms, where authenticity and aestheticization are increasingly intertwined. Aesthetic awareness (particularly among photographers and video-makers who are also professional artists) has contributed to the development of an aesthetic grammar of the scene, shaped by platform logics and algorithmic visibility. What once was perceived as spontaneous and raw – a blurry photo, or a grainy video – is now aestheticized and inscribed within the visual identity of the scene.

However, this aestheticization is not confined to representation; rather, it extends to the live dimension of the scene, materializing in gestures and performances. Indeed, *spectacularization* represents a further step in this process of aestheticization: it is the moment in which aesthetic awareness translates into embodied action. I define as "spectacularized" those gestures during events, especially within the mosh pit, that are enacted with the explicit or implicit knowledge of being seen, recorded and shared. This concept therefore relates to the performative enactment of dance practices, actions and emotions with the awareness, or anticipation, of their documentation and circulation (for instance, through social media platforms). In this context, not only the image is aestheticized, but the very gesture that produces it. Example of spectacularized gestures is the following:

> Today, I found the photographers at the front particularly annoying. They threw themselves at the musicians on stage and, more than anything else, climbed over the people in the front row on several occasions to get a better view of the musicians. As if that weren't enough, as soon as Christopher turned around to photograph the audience, they started to mosh as if on purpose, clearly wanting to appear in the photo (Fieldnotes, 08/04/2024, Casa di Alex, Milan).

One of the photographers of the scene declared in an interview:

> When the audience does stuff, I find it much more interesting than the band. I mean, the audience is where the action is, because the audience is unpredictable. You don't know what the fuck is going to happen. I remember once at Futbolìn at CIQ, they took a foosball table and put it in front of the stage[58].

This photographer – whom I will call Alessandro – became so popular within the scene that he is now known as the "photographer of the scene". He started posting Instagram Stories after every event he attended with the caption "*6 p.m. photos in DMs*" because people were asking for photos of the concerts to such an extent that he created a weekly appointment on Instagram to share them. As he declared in a second interview: "*My photos also played a role: from the first concert I attended, people started asking me for them on Instagram, and from there an inside joke was born in the scene of the wetransfer link out at 6 p.m.*". In this sense, photographs become aestheticized tokens of belonging that can consolidate influence, control access (extending and contracting the boundaries within the scene), and encourage spectacular behaviors. Therefore, Christopher and Alessandro, like many other photographers and video-makers in the scene, can be defined as "cultural intermediaries", that is producers of symbolic goods and services (Bourdieu 1979; 1996; Maguire & Matthews, 2010; 2012).

Particularly, cultural intermediaries are defined by their role in mediating between production and consumption. Maguire and Matthews (2010) state that they shape perceptions and preferences, enacting a symbolic imposition, "*framing particular cultural products as legitimate and, thus, as valuable*" (ivi, p. 408). In short, they have an "*impact upon notions of* what*, and thereby* who*, is legitimate, desirable and worthy, and thus by definition what and who is not*" (Maguire & Matthews 2012, p. 552). In this sense, photographers and video-makers act as both documentarians and active agents in the production of meaning, shaping the aesthetics and performativity of the scene. Their camera acts as both a mirror and a catalyst, prompting participants to express emotions and gestures that can be more explicitly or implicitly spectacularized. In this process, authenticity and belonging themselves become aestheticized. Consequently, the performative dimension of the scene – particularly the practices embodied within the mosh pit – must be understood as deeply mediated, since the act of "being seen" becomes part of the experience itself.

[58] In order to preserve his anonymity, I will not cite the interviews from which I quoted this and the following excerpts.

7.2.1. Performing the scene: embodiment, authenticity and self-commodification

Connected to the aestheticization and spectacularization of the scene, the body emerges as a medium of expression and a site of politics. Indeed, live performances are not only musical events, but also embodied experiences, where emotions, ethics, and identities are physically enacted and collectively negotiated. As such, the body is celebrated, liberated, and politicized through dance and ritual (Thrift, 1997). Through bodily gestures and dance practices like moshing, stage diving and crowd surfing participants perform their belonging within the scene and reproduces its symbolic codes. Therefore, the body is both a medium of authenticity and a stage for performative self-display. Following Driver and Bennett (2014):

> the body becomes critical to our understanding of how music scenes are constructed and maintained over time, the affective fecundity of settings of cultural practice being contingent on the unique composition of participants who are present for their production at any given time (ivi, p. 112).

This attention to body can also be read through the generational framework. As Driver (2011) argues, "*young people's cultural attachments are bound, at least to some degree, by their own embodied histories*" (ivi, p. 979), suggesting that generational identity is lived and remembered through the body. In this sense, authenticity is not merely performed but also "*inscribed on and conveyed through the body* […] *in ways other than dress*" (Muggleton 2000, p. 90).

Particularly, over the thirteen months of fieldwork, I observed a growing presence of younger participants at events. This generational shift can be partially explained by the role of digital infrastructures such as Instagram and TikTok, which – as discussed in the previous sections – have become central in mediating access to the scene, shaping aesthetics, and fostering a sense of belonging that extends beyond physical participation at events. Through the work of cultural intermediaries such as photographers and video-makers, these platforms also enable the circulation of shared imaginaries of what participation at events looks and feels like, encouraging newcomers, particularly younger Gen Z, to reproduce certain gestures and bodily performances that align with the symbolic and affective dimensions of the scene.

Indeed, these dynamics have contributed to a spontaneous process of generational renewal within the scene, amplified following the Covid-19 pandemic, as emerged from several interviews and informal conversations. This convergence of factors led me to investigate how younger participants experience events through their bodies, and whether the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced collective

physicality and bodily gestures and engagement during live performances. In particular, I argue that two forces have converged after the pandemic: on one hand, a return to proximity, reflecting a need for physical connection and collective intensity after prolonged isolation; and on the other, a visual turn, marked by the normalization of documentation at events, which accentuate the performativity (and spectacularization) of bodily gestures. As I noticed in the fieldnotes:

> Given that there were many young people at the concert, either in high school or just out of high school (thus, around 18 years old), a thought occurred to me – that I discussed at length with JO during the evening – about the need for physicality that arose after the Covid-19 lockdown. In fact, my theory – which he also supports – is that teenagers suffered the most from the lockdown. At a stage in their development when they most need to burn off energy, they were unable to leave the house. In the post-lockdown period, therefore, it is as if adolescents had an even greater need for movement than they would have had without the pandemic. This same theme came up in one of the interviews I did with TheCaregiver. The concert is therefore the moment when this need for physicality can be most fully expressed (Fieldnotes, 13/04/2024, Ex Villa Vegan, Milan).

My questions and reflections found an answer in an interview to the "photographer of the scene", in which I read:

> From my point of view, Covid-19 gave rise to a scene precisely at the moment when the very idea of community and belonging was missing. […] Once the pandemic was over, the desire to meet in real life was immense, and the atmosphere that I could breathe felt like an entirely new musical landscape in which to be together.

To this, he also added:

> As a spectator, but perhaps also as a musician, I can't help but notice how the post-Covid music scene is seeing a significant return of people to concerts with guitars. Specifically, I think the emo/core scene, which includes all that emotional punk (hardcore) with the most disparate influences, has benefited a lot from this. […] The scene never truly died, but it certainly wasn't feeling very good in the period immediately before Covid. The pandemic, along with much more serious issues, brought with it acoustic concerts and seating; two things that are difficult to coexist with a world of closeness, even physical, like that of emo. It must have been this (relative) pause that reawakened a strong and profound passion in the Italian music community. […] The sector's meme pages talk about it daily, contributing to the construction of a powerful imagery, rooted in the DIY ethos.

These excerpts encapsulate the re-emergence of the scene as an emotional response to isolation and fragmentation in the absence of community during the pandemic. For this reason, as Alessandro suggested, live music has become the privileged space in which the desire for physicality and togetherness could be reactivated after months of confinement and mediated interactions. This observation resonates with my own fieldnotes, where I noticed that many young participants within the scene, confined in their homes during Covid-19, have subsequently expressed and embodied a need for movement, contact and collectively shared emotions. Therefore, what once was a taken-for-granted form of sociality has become, in the post-pandemic era, a politicized practice of presence.

In this context, the mosh pit could be understood as a relational infrastructure: a space where the ethics of horizontality, togetherness, and the absence of hierarchies – pillars of the screamo scene and, more generally, the DIY ethos – are materially performed. As seen in Chapter 6, mosh pit is a site of negotiation where emotions, mutual care and visibility are continuously embodied. Within this relational space, moshing could be conceptualized as a soft infrastructure: a performative and affective practice that embodies not only proximity, mutual care and affection, but also a form of dialogue between participants, a "ritualized chaos" where intensity and trust can coexist.

However, as stated in the fieldnotes, the physicality of these gestures is not purely spontaneous, but often consciously constructed and spectacularized. If, as Muggleton (2000) argues, authenticity is conveyed through embodiment, then, in the wake of Casey (2001), it is important to consider the role of the body as a medium of affective exchange in the co-constitution of both self and place. This means that authenticity itself is not assumed but negotiated and performed collectively; within the screamo scene, it emerges as a relational achievement. From collision to collective embraces, through these gestures participants negotiate belonging and legitimacy. This is particularly evident in the spectacularization of bodily practices documented during the fieldwork:

> Physicality within screamo events is more constructed than in punk events. At the screamo concerts I go to, when Alessandro arrives and puts the audience at the center of his photographs, the people dancing and moshing take on constructed, spectacularized attitudes. One example is the people at Stegosauro concerts who sit on the ground and imitate the gesture of rowing a boat. This happens because they are seeking the photographer's attention, because people want to feel like protagonists, as they have been accustomed first by him and later also by other photographers who have imitated Alessandro's practice.
>
> Nevertheless, I wonder how violence, especially when it is spectacularized as in the case of the screamo concerts attended by Alessandro, relates to the dimension of care, affection, and

> inclusivity during concerts, all of which are fundamental principles – often repeated during concerts, interviews, and elsewhere – of the Italian screamo scene. There is certainly a very fine line between one practice and another, between moshing and care, between the spectacle of actions and affection. Indeed, the question that arises is whether affection is also somehow constructed, or spectacularized, by the presence of photographers. When people hug each other in front of the stage at concerts, do they do so as a spontaneous gesture or because they know they are being documented? (Fieldnotes, 13/04/2024, Ex Villa Vegan, Milan).

It could be argued that, rather than diminishing the sense of collectivity, this spectacularization often coexists with care and affection, highlighting the ambivalence of the scene's affective politics. The same gestures that risk aestheticization also enact solidarity and intimacy. In this context, mosh pit can be interpreted as a space of care and reciprocity, while moshing as a practice of resistance to neoliberal individualization (McRobbie, 2016). It becomes a way to reclaim the body as a social and affective medium:

> I wonder if moshing and, more generally, physicality, even when spectacularized, are a collective and community response to the Ego, to the individualization increasingly driven by neoliberalism and only accelerated by the pandemic. This is a practice of resistance. And perhaps seeing moshing as a phenomenon that opposes the creation of community is misleading, since community is built through the very instrument of moshing, understood as a symbol of physicality. So perhaps even what X does, in its spectacularization of what happens during concerts, is something that represents, imprints, the becoming-community (ibidem).

However, within the same dynamics that foster collectivity, also lies the risk of self-commodification. Indeed, it can be argued that the spectacularization of dance practices and gestures reflects what Hearn (2008) and Wilson (2018) have described as the progressive commodification of the self: the immaterial labor of self-branding, in which the subjectivity becomes a productive resource to be managed, performed and circulated – reflecting the obsessive culture of celebrity (see McRobbie, 2016). In this sense, authenticity and commodification are not opposing poles, but mutually constitutive forces. Within the screamo scene, the performative intensity of the screamo scene both challenges and reproduces the logics of neoliberal subjectivity. It reclaims the body as a collective medium, but within infrastructures that transform visibility into value.

This observation points to a spatial differentiation within the processes of aestheticization/spectacularization and self-commodification. As I reflected in my fieldnotes:

> Therefore, what impact does all this have on gentrification? And why are these events experienced in such an aesthetic and aestheticized way in Milan? I return to the concept of self-commodification, both conscious and unconscious. This involves making oneself sensitive to forms of gentrification, both symbolic and physical, external and internal, self-induced and externally induced, through spectacularization and aestheticization (Fieldnotes, 08/11/2024, Circolo Arci Bellezza, Milan).

What emerges here is that self-commodification is not only an internal/symbolic process of gentrification, but also an external/spatial one. It is entangled with processes of urban and cultural gentrification and embedded within the broader symbolic economy of the creative city, where independent music scenes like the screamo one, therefore, become catalyst for urban redevelopment (Seman, 2010). In the case of Milan, for instance, I argue that the performance of authenticity (through embodied practices, aesthetics, and gestures of care and inclusivity) risks aligning the neoliberal logics of the city itself, where creativity and alternative cultures are often co-opted by urban entrepreneurialism (Watson & Taylor, 2016). Authenticity can become a marketing tool, and marginal spaces are revalued through their cultural capital. Therefore, I argue that the spectacularization of the scene, and thus its self-commodification, makes it more sensitive to processes of gentrification. The more the visibility of the scene grows, the more it is exposed to the mechanisms of urban valorization and commodification. However, as discussed in Chapter 6, a form of strategic professionalism also emerges, expressed as a pragmatic adaptation to more institutionalized spaces, such as Santeria Toscana 31 and Circolo Arci Bellezza, and as the deployment of visibility to sustain the scene, reach wider audiences and maintain continuity, as well as to preserve and legitimize autonomy and authenticity against eviction and displacement. This tension reflects the everyday practices of resistance that operate within the dominant and institutionalized infrastructures to subvert or reappropriate them, reclaiming visibility in the scene's terms and re-inscribing DIY ethics within infrastructures otherwise governed by market logics.

In this context, the spectacularization of the body mirrors the broader uneven geographies of cultural production (Crociata et al., 2024). In large urban areas, it tends to align with aestheticized forms of self-presentation, while in more peripheral contexts it retains a stronger link with community intimacy and affective reciprocity. In such contexts, I noticed that performances were surrounded by an aura of great symbolism, less spectacularized, and more spontaneous. For instance, in Selva di Trissino I noticed that "*people were very respectful. […] The mosh pit was "inclusive", a collective dance in which you could feel welcome and not in danger*" (Fieldnotes, 22-23/06/2024, Anfiteatro all'Aperto, Selva di Trissino). This is also the case of Cosenza during Ojne's concert, where I noticed that

> it took a while for people to start moshing, but then they all loosened up. Even though it wasn't the kind of mosh pit you usually see in Milan or in northern Italy. People know them, and even now that they've finished, there's been a chorus of "Ojne Ojne Ojne". There were certainly fewer spectacular gestures than in northern Italy or Lombardy, where people climb on stage while Ojne are playing, or grab singer's microphone to sing along with him or in his place. Here, there was a normal mosh pit, I mean not excessive (Fieldnotes, 11/30/2024, Rialzo Social Center, Cosenza).

This also led me to hypothesize that proximity to band's hometown and a perceived "familiarity" with the band and among participants can shape the degree of performativity and spectacularization. Where personal relationships and emotional connections prevail, performances tend to appear more spontaneous, grounded in trust rather than visibility. In contrast, in larger cities, where audiences are more fragmented and scenes overlap, performances tend to become a way to assert presence and belonging through spectacularized gestures.

However, as anticipated in the previous chapter, often the same familiarity that fosters intimacy can produce informal hierarchies of belonging within the scene, that can also lead to forms of elitism and gatekeeping – in contrast to the principle of horizontality on which the DIY ethos is based, thus revealing its intrinsic ambivalence. Being friends with the bands, organizers or photographers often grants participants a more central role within the scene and during events. This can translate, for instance, in free entrance to events and accreditation for festivals.

> Lisa thanks Virginia for getting her accreditation for the concert. "If it weren't for you and other friends who occasionally manage to get me accreditation, I wouldn't be able to go to half of the concerts organized", she said (Fieldnotes, 30/04/2024, Bloom, Mezzago).

These benefits act as token of recognition that confirm one's status within the scene. Indeed, as I reflected in a fieldnote:

> Accreditation is a matter of reputation, in the sense that you need to achieve a certain status and centrality in the network (for example, being very friendly with the organizers) in order to obtain it, and at the same time, having accreditation is a way of confirming this centrality and your status (Fieldnotes, 17/11/2024, Santeria Toscana 31, Milan).

Elsewhere I also noticed:

> The people in the scene seem unapproachable to me because of all the unspoken words and subterfuge between them. It's as if they are only inclusive in appearance or with the people they

choose to be inclusive with. This creates an exclusionary dynamic within the apparent inclusion (Fieldnotes, 13/04/2024, Ex Villa Vegan, Milan).

This perception suggests that sentiments of exclusion do not arise from explicit boundaries, but from opacity, that is the difficulty of accessing the informal social codes that regulate participation within the scene. This dynamic mirrors what Thornton (1995) called "subcultural capital": how people negotiate and accumulate a position within their social worlds, masking inequalities and hierarchies. In the screamo scene, this form of capital is symbolic and relational: it is embodied in friendships, shared histories and trust.

As already argued, however, this process can reproduce the same forms of exclusion that the scene seeks to resist, highlighting the delicate balance between openness and belonging. It is precisely from these observations that the next section moves exploring how inclusivity and gender equality issues intersect in the everyday life of the scene, shaping access, visibility and the affective politics of participation.

7.3. Inclusivity and gender equality issues within the scene

The post-pandemic revival of the screamo scene has reasserted both the centrality of the body and collective intensity and opened crucial questions about vulnerability, care and inclusivity – themes that constitute the ethical core of the screamo scene. As discussed, the same behaviors and bodily gestures that embody solidarity and belonging can also reproduce dynamics of exclusion, particularly along gendered lines. Driver and Bennett (2014) noted that authenticity in hardcore and related music scenes is often articulated through "*body techniques*" which, "*in no uncertain terms, work to marginalize the participation of women (and feminized 'Others') who do not conform to the demands of masculinities that operate as hegemonic*" (ivi, p. 112). The screamo music scene itself is a male-dominated scene. In this sense, the mosh pit can become a space where masculinities are performed and contested.

Masculinity, however, is not a fixed trait. Discussing about the Straight Edge movement[59], Haenfler argues (2006) that "*the definition of manhood changes from generation to generation, culture to culture, and context to context. There is no good way to define masculinity, as there are simultaneously multiple masculinities*" (ivi, p. 194). Connell (1995) defined hegemonic masculinity

[59] It is a subculture of hardcore punk music, born in the early 1980s in US, that advocates for abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drugs.

as "*the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordinate position of women*" (ivi, p. 77). To this definition, Haenfler (2006) adds that

> hegemonic masculinity values competition and hierarchy, individualism, sexual prowess, physical toughness, rationality and emotional distance, dominance, aggression, and risk-taking. It best fits heterosexual, middle class, white males; and those men who adhere most closely to the hegemonic construction of masculinity will reap the most benefits from the 'patriarchal dividend', the privileges ascribed to manhood (ivi, p. 105).

In response, gender studies have long discussed that the concept of hegemonic masculinity frames men as a unitary group (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014), therefore introducing the idea of "*hybrid masculinities*" to indicate "*the selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalized and subordinated masculinities and – at times – femininities into privileged men's gender performances and identities*" (ivi, p. 246). Anderson (2009), in turn, discussed the existence of "inclusive" masculinities, organized horizontally, rather than hierarchically – understood as a resistance to gender and sexual inequality. In this sense, he asserts that

> as such, men are increasingly adopting practices characterized by acceptance of diverse masculinities, opening up the contemporary meanings of "masculinity" in ways that allow a more varied selection of performances to "count" as masculine. This "inclusivity" – like hybridity – is part of a process of incorporating performances that are culturally coded as "Other". Anderson argues that these practices indicate 'decreased sexism' and 'the erosion of patriarchy' (Anderson in Bridges & Pascoe 2014, p. 248).

These new conceptualizations emerged as an interpretative framework for the so-called "crisis of masculinity", theorized by several scholars (e.g., Messner, 1997; Carroll, 2011). Particularly, Messner (1997) located the origins of this crisis "*in the forces of modernization and the rise of women's movements. Modernization, including the closing of frontiers, rapid industrialization and urbanization, and the rise of bureaucracy, has separated boys from father and destabilized the male 'breadwinner' role*" (Haenfler 2006, p. 105).

Discussing about the resurgence of emo subculture, Haenfler (2023) states that "*emo may be a contemporary response to an ongoing crisis of masculinity in which men struggle with the meanings of manhood as the structural foundations of patriarchal masculinity – breadwinning, occupational success, women's subordination, and heterosexuality erode*" (ivi, p. 96). Indeed, subcultures provide

spaces in which men can both contest and reinforce dominant masculine norms. Fieldwork suggests that the screamo scene is divided between these two extremes: one with pro-feminist leanings and one reflective of hegemonic masculinity. The masculinities produced within the scene, and in the mosh pit, are therefore multiple and often contradictory.

> What makes me reflect most on events like this – given that it's not the first time I've attended one, with most of the hardcore concerts organized at T28 in Milan being a case in point – is the fact that the posters often say: "No fascists, no machos[60]". This is a clear statement of intent, including a socio-political intent. They want to distance themselves from a type of hegemonic masculinity, which can sometimes be toxic. However, there are always plenty of machos around. A macho is defined as a man who flaunts the most outward characteristics of masculinity in his behavior, and the term is also used ironically. In this specific context, I would argue that this is evident in the overtly masculine behaviors that exudes strength, if not aggression, during moshing; the way people dress; drinking beer; shouting and all those behaviors that are generally considered to be associated with masculinity, such as having a muscular build or a long, unkempt beard (Fieldnotes, 18/05/2024, Grida dai Fienili, Suzzara).

Therefore, although there is a desire to take an explicit stand against hegemonic masculinity – for example, by using slogans or opening the scene to people who embody different, more egalitarian models of masculinity, or men who embrace their "feminine side" – the mosh pit itself is often not safe for feminized bodies:

> What I'm thinking about is that 'inclusive' doesn't just mean there are more women at concerts, but also that, for example, the mosh pit is a *safe* space, which implies, among many things, that men do not mosh without the T-shirt and do not go to concerts wearing flip-flops (as was pointed out to me in a conversation), that women are not generally treated as *posers* or simply as the musicians' girlfriends (Fieldnotes, 03/03/2024, CIQ, Milan).

However, sometimes the audience space itself is not safe for anyone. For instance, in the case of the Low-L Festival in Piacenza in 2024 – which I could not attend because in the same days I was at Life is Strage Festival in Selva di Trissino, but which I followed through posts and public Instagram stories of those who participate – it emerged that:

> The new Italian hardcore scene champions itself on social media with its etiquette. There are no laws or justice in a mosh pit, it's true, but at least try to be aware of other people's space before turning into a helicopter. You have to be aware of where you are. If you're at a grunge/alternative show, you don't go into the pit and start crowd killing just because you're a fake tough guy with

[60] The translation in Italian is: "No machi, no fasci".

> a superiority complex and it's the only way you can feel cool. If you go after a specific person with your elbow raised with the intention of hurting them, that's not crowd killing, that's targeting. And you're an asshole. If you have to hit someone, do it when there are other people playing the same game as you. Take your anger issues out of the scene. 'Nobody is safe here'. So I've heard (Instagram Stories, 24/06/2024).

Another (female) person commented:

> My two cents on 'the scene' that I've been wanting to express for a long time. I've been going to concerts since at least 2010, and I've always felt like I was in a safe space. Lately, though, there are people who make live shows inaccessible. There are those who grab your shirt and throw you into the mosh pit even when you're on the sidelines and clearly don't want to be there (disclaimer: I weigh 45 kg, if you throw me into the pit, you're putting me in danger). There are those who start throwing elbows and kicking people who are standing on the sidelines, there are those who aren't satisfied with the 80% of space they take up in the mosh pit and come and throw themselves at you with their fists. Over and over again. This is not okay. Respect and consideration for other people must come first, in life in general. Even more so in certain environments where we should all care about certain issues and dynamics (Instagram Stories, 24/06/2024).

These comments were made after that a young man at the sideline of the mosh pit was kicked in the face during a moment of pause between bands. This incident crystallizes how the mosh pit, although the implicit norms that govern it, can slide from a ritualized chaos into non-consensual targeting. The porous boundaries of the mosh pit, here, became a vector of harm. Therefore, Low-L exemplifies a failed governance of the pit: the tacit norms of the scene (when and where violent dancing is appropriate, who is "in" the game, and so on) were neither articulated nor collectively managed. In this case, the mosh pit operated as a space of performativity without care.

In contrast, Life is Strage materializes inclusivity as a soft infrastructure. Indeed, the spaces of the festival were organized in a manner that people could feel at their ease. During the event, a person who identifies as neurodivergent positively commented: "*I am very happy about how the space and the event has been organized. I went complimenting the collective for this reason*" (Fieldnotes, 22-23/06/2024, Anfiteatro all'Aperto, Selva di Trissino). During the event, I also noticed a flyer containing a proper "code of conduct", found in the toilets, which states the following:

> "Hi! We should remember that we are at a punk concert, thus we should respect the environment and people around. Discriminatory and violent behaviors are not tolerated. If you see or experience a situation of distress (panic attacks, meltdowns due to overload, problematic

behaviors, etc.) you can contact volunteers and members of the awareness team at any time (recognizable by the scarf on their arm!). This is more than music! Life is Strage" (ibidem).

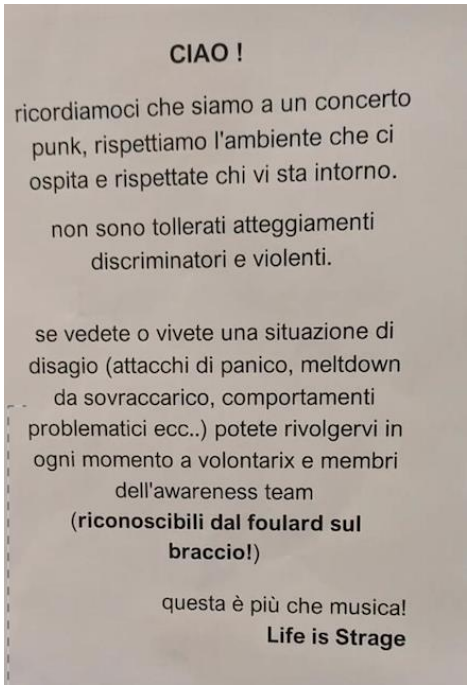


Photo 7.13. Code of conduct, Life is Strage

What emerges from this example is that inclusivity entails a continuous process of self-reflection and deconstruction, both individual and collective, concerning embodied norms that shape participation, which must be discussed and negotiated. Both cases (Low-L and LiS) suggest that, in spectacularized contexts, inclusivity cannot rely on ethos alone and on tacit rules of behavior. In this sense, codes of conduct, the institution of chill zones and awareness teams at events are infrastructures that translate the ethical norms into embodied practice, shifting the burden from individual vigilance to the collective governance of space, intensity and consent.

The attention towards inclusivity can be read also through the generational lens. Indeed, the fieldwork experience allows me to assert that Gen Z organizers – as in the case of Life is Strage – articulate inclusivity not only as a moral imperative, but as a performative and affective practice: a way of setting boundaries, shaping the atmosphere of an event, and making care visible through actions, not only discourses. Conversely, during the organization of Alle Foglie Festival, the collective – mainly composed by Millennials – discussed the introduction of concrete measures, which, however, were not implemented. One reason given for this decision was that "the festival has always been inclusive" reinforced by the idea that "punk has always been like that", while others admitted that they would have felt uncomfortable taking responsibility for situations that they did not

feel prepared to manage. In this case, that of inclusivity remained a discursive value rather than an established infrastructure.

Continuing this line of interpretation, in a fanzine called "Medusa", bought in one of the events I attended during the fieldwork, I read:

> Our experience as socialized women (but also trans, queer, and racialized individuals) with disabilities within the punk scene – and wherever we go – has shown us over the years that there are no safe spaces. The idea of being able to move through a completely safe space is utopian in itself. So what can we aspire to? Over the years, feminist practice has formulated the hypothesis of the Safer Space, a way of experiencing situations that aims, through collectivism and mutualism, to build care and self-defense. Safe spaces are created by the methods that each of us chooses and implements at every moment of our lives, with greater attention to situations in which the quantity – but above all the quality – of people increases the risk of harassment, abuse, and oppression related to our oppressions (gender, race, class, etc.). A safer space is therefore any space where the practices of consent are shared and learned, which are all too often ignored or even ridiculed by men (and not only men, despite statistics showing that cis heterosexual males are the most notorious perpetrators of violence). We are punks and skins, often underdogs who have to deal with situations of marginalization, and we no longer intend to overlook the violence to which we are subjected on a daily basis, which we witness and for which we are belittled in our reactions: violent, hysterical, whiny, victimized, aggressive, squadrist, infamous. Keep your epithets to yourselves.

This excerpt resonates with the reflections of this section. Indeed, it reframes the notion of "safe space" as a collective practice of care, consent and self-awareness. Echoing feminist and queer studies, the text rejects the utopian ideal of a total safe space and embraces the "safer space", which could be understood as a situated practice of resistance: a continuous negotiation of power and vulnerability. In this regard, in a debate on "scene and inclusivity" organized before the festival *Riot Girlz* #1, one of the interviewees stated: "*A safe space is the goal, while an inclusive space is somewhat the method for achieving it*" (Fieldnotes, 06/10/2024, Ateneo Libertario, Milan). Medusa also points out that this form of care is not exclusive to women but includes also feminized "Others" (see Driver & Bennett, 2014) positioned outside what is called as "hegemonic masculinity".

At the same time, this excerpt highlights the persistent tension between ideal and practice. As discussed, the screamo scene remains largely male-dominated, with women and non-binary individuals being underrepresented in bands, collectives, the audience, and the mosh pit. The same

words that Haenfler (2004) used to describe the Straight Edge movement can also be used to describe the screamo scene:

> The almost complete lack of female musicians in bands, the hypermasculine dancing at shows, and the male cliques reinforced the movement's own unspoken gender assumptions that women were not as important to the scene as men and ensured that many women would never feel completely at home (ivi, p. 248).

In this regard, during Riot Girlz #1 Festival, another of the interviewees argued:

> Women still have to prove themselves because they are judged much more harshly than men. Having to justify what we do is one of the legacies of centuries of gender oppression. This is another reason why it can be hard to pick up an instrument and throw yourself into something without really knowing how to do it: you have to provide more explanations than a man would. There are certain female archetypes: the poser, the goth, the Tumblr girl, and so on. When you approach the scene as a woman and start playing, the first reaction is that you are a poser. You are implicitly declaring that it belongs only to men. Another impression is that you're a "pick-me" girl, begging for attention. Some argue that you have to feel very confident and skilled before entering this world. Take singing, for example: if you scream, you're seen as a nuisance, a witch, and so on. Even when you take singing lessons, it seems that women can only sing in a musical, melodic and sweet way, rather than scream or distort their voices. Fortunately, I have never experienced discrimination, but people, especially boomers, are almost amazed that I play or sing, saying things like: "Oh, I didn't expect you to have that voice. I didn't expect you to be able to do that. You're very good for being a woman" (Fieldnotes, 06/10/2024, Ateneo Libertario, Milan).

Starting from these observations, I started reflecting upon

> the privilege of being able to play a musical genre such as screamo, in which, on the one hand, the scene is extremely masculine in terms of 'culture' and socialization (screaming is "usually" seen as an activity for men, while women scream because they are "crazy"), and, on the other hand, women are busy doing other things – that is, they already have to legitimize their existence in a "masculine" scene (ibidem).

The act of screaming disrupts gender expectations – the idea that women's voices should be soft and melodic – and mobilizes what could be called as "politics of noise" (see Rancière, 1999; Kallio, 2012): the scream is an act of rupture and disturbance of the dominant order, constituting a political presence within the screamo male-dominated scene. It is a bodily intervention that challenges the normative distribution of space. As Dickinson (2018) argues, "*the expulsion of feeling through the*

voice, through visceral bodily vibrations, consequently bears the potential to trigger sentient responses within the listener too, responses which vary from elation to the threat of harm" (ivi, p. 166). From this perspective, the scream itself is not only noise, but it can be interpreted as a practice of resistance: it is an instrument to gain visibility and recognition, first within a male-dominated scene, and secondly within the broader society. The scream connects the micro level of (feminized) bodies to the meso level of the scene, and the macro level of resistance to commodification and gendered power. Therefore, through these practices of care, self-awareness and embodied resistance at different levels, the scene negotiates its relationship to inclusivity, reclaiming sound, space and community as intertwined fields of struggle.

That of inclusivity is therefore a practice of resistance within the contradictions of the scene itself, where informal hierarchies, gendered behaviors and normalized aggression continue to shape participation. At the micro level, inclusivity emerges in gestures of care such as helping someone to get up in the pit or checking consent before physical contact; at the meso level, it takes shape in collective choices such as adopting codes of conduct, curating safe(r) space guidelines and creating awareness teams; at the macro level, inclusivity challenges the neoliberal logics of self-commodification and urban gentrification – for example, prioritizing care over performance, and the relational dimension over the aesthetic one. All these practices, together, can be read as a broader critique of hyper-individualism and commodification of authenticity. Operating across scales, they reconfigure the infrastructures of belonging that sustain the DIY ethos.

Finally, the revival of the screamo scene following the Covid-19 pandemic highlights both the potential and fragility of its affective politics. While spectacularization carries the risk of reproducing hegemonic and hierarchical forms of masculinity and visibility, the emphasis on inclusivity, safety and gender equality can help to reclaim the collective body as a shared space of trust and responsibility.

Discussion and conclusions

Analysis in synthesis

In the previous chapters, I have analyzed the Italian independent screamo scene in relation to its physical, symbolic, social, and cultural dimensions. Particularly, in Chapter 6, I analyzed how the scene is materially and symbolically configured across urban, trans-local and national scales, focusing on the tensions between urban renewal and resistance. Here, I adopted two analytical frameworks: the center-periphery metaphor and the external-internal gentrification dyad. By adopting the center-periphery metaphor, I argued that peripherality can be both physical (being removed from the city center and the broader urban context, understood as the availability of space and opportunities) and symbolic (when the urban atmosphere – the ways in which cultural activities are embedded in a territory – is absent or distant). Recognizing the agency of music scenes, I investigated how scene's resistance to gentrification itself can be both spatial and symbolic, highlighting how peripherality not necessarily signals a condition of exclusion, but a political choice. By adopting the internal-external gentrification analytical dyad, I investigated how the scene can co-exist, adapt and/or resist to both external processes of urban renewal and displacement and internal processes of (self-)commodification and aestheticization of peripherality. In Chapter 7, I analyzed the social and cultural dimensions of the scene, focusing on the tensions between spectacularization, self-commodification, and resistance. Particularly, I highlighted how generational changes, gender and inclusivity issues both reflect and challenge broader tensions surrounding authenticity, autonomy, and co-optation. Here, practices of (self-)representation, performance, and mutual care are analyzed as arenas in which resistance is negotiated, challenging both internal and external process of gentrification, and thus reflecting the embeddedness of self-commodification within the symbolic economy of the creative city.

Revisiting the research questions

Building on this analysis, the objective of the present discussion is that of understanding the broader implications of the case study – what screamo can tell us about contemporary process of cultural and urban gentrification and how music scenes react to them –, reflected in the answers to the research questions that guided this study for 13 months of fieldwork.

The first research question is:

> *How do independent music scenes react to gentrification processes, particularly in relation to the cultural co-optation and commodification for urban marketing and branding purposes, as well as to their displacement from the city center, or from the urban contexts?*

The Italian independent screamo music scene reacts to gentrification processes by resisting physical displacement from the urban fabric through the organization of DIY events in peripheral spaces within the cultural institutional geography they belong. Informal venues and self-managed and occupied social centers (such as C.O.A. T28 or C.S.O.A. Cox18 in Milan) maintain their countercultural and autonomous ethos, establishing themselves as "enclaves" of resistance within neighborhoods that are physically central to processes of urban gentrification, producing counter-hegemonic forms of proximity and alternative cultural production. However, the analysis also highlights forms of pragmatic adaptation within the screamo scene when engaging with more institutionalized spaces (such as Santeria Toscana 31 or Circolo Arci Bellezza in Milan) to resist the conditions of urban precarity and cultural competition and to sustain the autonomy and authenticity of the scene. From this perspective, peripherality can no longer be reduced to a condition of exclusion as a result of unequal negotiations with municipal authorities, but it also entails a political choice, rooted in the search for autonomy from neoliberal logics.

However, such autonomy remains fragile: aesthetics and symbols of marginality are frequently absorbed into processes of urban renewal and commodification, both unintentionally and intentionally. Indeed, one of the findings of this study consists in the importance not to conflate spatial marginality with countercultural resistance but, rather, to address the porosity of the boundaries between resistance and co-optation, studying peripheral cultural formations as hybrid configurations that operate within the contradictions of the neoliberal capitalist system. A first example of this hybridity/ambivalence is the "professional turn" within the screamo scene: the appropriation of the communicative and organizational tools of the mainstream music industries to sustain the scene's independence. A second example is the creation of a collective memory of the scene and the places in which it unfolds through the documentation of events. However, this can act as an agent of aestheticization of the scene, amplifying its visibility and exposing it to processes of (internal) commodification – i.e., spectacularization: the performative enactment of gestures during events *specifically* to be documented.

In responding to this question, it emerges that gentrification itself is an arena of negotiation, where the DIY ethos can co-exist with commodification. However, this coexistence is achieved by attempting to consciously manage contradictions, thereby revealing that autonomy in the contemporary urban contexts is a situated practice that must be constantly negotiated and redefined in relation to the infrastructures that sustain it.

The second research question is:

> *How do independent music scenes react when not only is there a lack of physical space in which to aggregate, but also when the urban environment as a cultural and relational resource is distant or absent?*

When the urban space becomes unavailable, both in terms of the distance or absence of opportunities and the urban atmosphere, the screamo scene relies on trans-local networks of collaboration, reciprocity and exchange of resources, which transcend face-to-face interactions and constitute alternative geographies of solidarity, that sustain the existence of the scene in the everyday life and subvert the spatial hierarchies of cultural production and musical legitimacy.

In this context, festivals play a crucial role in transforming peripheral territories, non-urban and rural areas into temporarily symbolic centers of convergence. At the trans-local level, indeed, belonging to a scene is defined less by physical proximity to the urban core and more by participation in shared practices of collaboration, care and resistance. However, these events suggest that independent music scenes not only resist displacement, but transform it into a generative condition, amplifying the affective intensity and collective investment. The virtual dimension of the scene also plays a crucial role in bridging physical distance through relational proximity. For instance, meme pages and photography not only document the scene and its events, but also circulate emotional, aesthetic and symbolic repertoires that keep the scene alive by developing and maintaining human networks and forms of belonging – and (meta-)participation – beyond the physical limitations of urban and more densely infrastructural contexts.

Together, these considerations highlight that independent music scenes are not geographically bounded entities, but trans-local networks. At the same time, centrality and peripherality are not fixed spatial categories, but shifting coordinates within a fragmented cultural geography, continuously renegotiated through alternative forms of belonging and legitimacy.

The third research question is:

How do independent music scenes address the paradox of simultaneously resisting co-optation processes, while risking becoming agents of gentrification themselves?

Within the screamo scene, authenticity and self-commodification are not opposing poles, but mutually constitutive forces. This tension can be addressed by analyzing the role of cultural intermediaries – such as photographers, video-makers, and content creators – in aestheticizing authenticity and belonging. Indeed, the documentation of bodily gestures and dance practices entails a progressive, conscious or unconscious, spectacularization of the scene. This is possible because the body is both a medium of authenticity and a stage for performative self-display, meaning that authenticity itself can be spectacularized and aestheticized through embodiment. The paradox lies in the fact that to be recognized as authentic within requires being seen – documented, shared, and circulated. However, the more the visibility of the scene grows, the more it is exposed to the mechanisms of commodification.

Participants within the scene can engage with visibility as a strategy for survival: a means to preserve and transmit collective memory, to foster generational renewal within the scene, and to ensure that spaces of resistance continue to exist within increasingly gentrified urban and non-urban contexts. However, since visibility and authenticity are deeply intertwined, it follows that authenticity can become an ambivalent tool: the act of "being seen" operates as both a cultural necessity and a political risk, making the scene more sensitive to processes of gentrification, both internal and external. In this case, internal gentrification refers to the symbolic and aesthetic processes through which the scene reproduces hierarchies of visibility, inclusion, and belonging, while external gentrification refers to the co-optation of aesthetics, spaces, and the DIY ethos for urban marketing and branding purposes. In this perspective, for instance, informal venues and squats are revalorized within the narrative of the creative city as symbols of diversity, authenticity and autonomy while, at the same time, censored, neutralized and depoliticized.

However, this paradox is not inhabited passively by the scene. Its agency lies in the everyday negotiation of autonomy and complicity; that is, in the micro-politics of self-organization, friendships, mutual care, trust, and inclusivity. Furthermore, the reflexive awareness of the contradictions of self-commodification means to critically inhabit the neoliberal city. As a politically antagonist presence, the scene produces *noise*, disturbing the dominant order of the sensible and reclaiming space.

In answering these questions, music scenes can be framed through an ecological approach as cultural ecosystems, defined as dense networks of interdependences connecting actors, organizations, cultural practices, and values within and across contexts. These interdependences materialize in

nothing else than the hard, soft, relational, and digital infrastructures that ensure the existence and maintenance of scenes at the local, trans-local and national levels, despite the unequal distribution of cultural capital, economic resources, and spatial opportunities – which often mirror broader geographies of inequality. From this perspective, music scenes can be seen as ecological assemblages of people, affects, infrastructures and spaces – embedded in local contexts, but also circulating fluidly through networks of interconnected localities.

Within this framework, the analysis of the screamo scene sheds light on broader processes of gentrification. The latter can be understood as a strategy of urban governance that operate externally as a process related to urban transformations and renewal, displacing scenes from urban contexts, while, at the same time, also appropriating their cultural capital, branding their aesthetics and practices as tools for urban marketing and "creative city" policies, depoliticizing them. It also operates internally, through mechanisms of self-commodification, aestheticization of peripherality, and informal hierarchies, thus permeating the practices, values, and self-representations of the scene themselves. Indeed, these dynamics are also embodied, consciously or unconsciously, in everyday practices of participation within music scenes, self-representation, and belonging. Therefore, it could be argued that gentrification becomes both a spatial and an affective process, shaping how places, bodies, and emotions are mobilized and valorized within the neoliberal city.

Multi-dimensionality, multi-sitedness, and multi-scalarity

From a theoretical, methodological and analytical perspective, this research was designed to be multi-dimensional, multi-sited and multi-scalar.

Within the theoretical framework, I highlighted the importance of adopting a horizontalist approach in the understanding of neoliberalism, neoliberal urbanization and gentrification, as contingent processes that manifest and are experienced differently across space. At the macro level, this means considering neoliberalism as a political and economic project rooted in classic liberalism. This requires the centrality and authority of the state in imposing a new political and social order, which finds its foundations in a market society based on competition and performance, as well as coercion and violence. At the meso level, it means focusing on both the neoliberalization of urbanism and the urbanization of neoliberalism, since "*neoliberalism does not only land in cities or impact urban governance*", but "*cities are basically crucial cradles of neoliberalization*" (Pinson & Journel 2016, p. 139). Therefore, in the wake of Brenner and colleagues (2010), I understand neoliberal

urbanism as an open-ended phenomenon characterized by variability, trans-locality and multi-scalarity. Here, also emerges the centrality of scaling and rescaling processes in producing fragmented (splintered) urban landscapes, in which gentrification processes play a central role both as a driver and outcome of these spatial transformations. At the micro level, it means understanding how neoliberalism shapes thoughts, practices, and self-conceptions, leading to a process of disembedding of individuals (internal and external individualization) and hyper-individualism.

In this light, analyzing independent music scenes as arenas of resistance to neoliberalism meant conceptualizing resistance as set of multi-scalar and multi-situated practices. To be able to grasp all the multiple dimensions through which resistance takes shape within music scenes, I operationalized it analytically across three interrelated levels: micro, meso, and macro. This perspective makes it possible to observe how practices of resistance to neoliberal logics of self-commodification and urban transformations and renewal are enacted within music scenes, while also highlighting their trans-local character – that is, their capacity of operating as fluid assemblages and networks of interdependences that unfold at the local, trans-local and national levels.

These principles have been translated into the methodological framework, in which I asserted the importance of adopting a multi-sited ethnography to navigate dichotomies across different sites and scales of analysis. This approach emphasizes the necessity of tracking practices, discourses, and networks across different yet interconnected sites, in order to grasp their sedimentation across time and space. To reflect this need, I also focused the attention on the role of the ethnographer within the field, discussing my multi-positionality and the blurred boundaries between participation, observation, and co-presence within the fieldwork.

Finally, within the analytical framework, the principle of multi-dimensionality allowed the analysis to move between physical, social, cultural and symbolic dimensions of the screamo scene – from material infrastructures to soft ones. The principle of multi-sitedness was reflected in the exploration of different geographical and cultural contexts – from the urban fabric of Milan to peripheral and non-urban or rural areas – as well as between the offline and virtual spaces that sustain the existence of the scene. Finally, the principle of multi-scalarity enabled the understanding of the articulation of resistance across different levels: from individual and embodied practices (micro) to collective organization and networks (meso) and broader urban, cultural, economic, social, and political dynamics (macro).

This approach also allowed for a comparative perspective, positioning Milan as both a point of departure and a point of return within the analysis. Indeed, this approach helped considering the city

as part of broader relational, infrastructural, and cultural (uneven) geographies connecting the local and the global, and the urban and the periphery, rather than an isolated ecosystem. In this perspective, Milan can be understood as a laboratory for observing how neoliberal urban logics materializes – through gentrification, cultural branding and creative city policies – while also serving as a field of struggle and negotiation, where practices of resistance unfold. Milan thus becomes both a mirror and a catalyst of broader cultural and urban transformations: a site where the contradictions of neoliberal urbanism are made tangible, but also where alternative cultural formations reclaim visibility, recognition and legitimacy.

Strengths and limitations of the research

While all research projects inevitably encounter limitations, the strengths of this study lie in the theoretical, methodological, and analytical lenses adopted, which enabled a complex understanding of both the processes of gentrification and the practices of resistance to them. Indeed, the integration of multi-sitedness, multi-scalarity, and multi-dimensionality as guiding principles has proven to be a fruitful choice in connecting different scales, sites and dimensions for a more nuanced and broader understanding of the processes and phenomena object of this study.

Another key strength lies in integrating multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork and the Grounded Theory-informed analytical strategy. As I argued in Chapter 4, both approaches can complement each other to significantly improve the quality, validity, and trustworthiness of qualitative research. In this case, ethnography benefited from a clearer analytical focus, while Grounded Theory-informed analysis became more flexible and responsive to the contingencies of the field, enabling theory to emerge inductively from situated knowledge – an outcome further enriched by my prior engagement with the field, which ensured a more sensitive and contextually grounded interpretation of the data. Furthermore, the breadth and richness of the empirical material collected over 13 months provided a solid basis for triangulation and future research developments.

That said, as I have extensively discussed in Chapter 4, this research is not without limitations. For instance, limited methodological expertise in Visual Grounded Theory constrained the analysis of non-textual data; the multi-positionality and emotional engagement with the scene – while contributing to a (self-)reflexive and situated understanding of the field – may have introduced interpretative bias; the prior familiarity with the object and contexts of research may have influenced the processes of data selection, coding, and theorization. Furthermore, the availability of financial

resources, together with the temporal and spatial boundaries of the fieldwork, inevitably constrained the possibilities of observation and participation, limiting the extent to which research could engage with a wider diversity of actors and contexts. Nevertheless, these limitations also reflect the epistemological conditions of ethnographic fieldwork itself, where choices are inevitably situated and contingent on the researcher's multi-positionality, time, and resources. Rather than diminishing the validity of the findings, these limitations emphasize the reflexive and processual nature of ethnographic research.

Future strands of research

Building on these results, several future strands of research could be developed.

A first strand concerns the "politics of noise" and its analytical potential in understanding independent music scenes. Drawing on Rancière's (2000) notion of the *distribution of the sensible* and his broader *politics of aesthetics*, as well as Kallio's (2012) concept of *political presence*, future research could further explore how alternative and independent music scenes enact "politics of disagreement" through sound, disturbing the dominant order of the sensible and reclaiming space. Within this framework, noise can be understood as a form of political presence that asserts itself through the disruption of silence, challenging the boundaries of what is socially recognized as legitimate voice. While the latter presupposes recognition within dominant political and cultural frameworks, noise represents and embodies forms of resistance that emerge from the margins of what is unheard and silenced. Therefore, future studies could investigate how independent and underground music scenes mobilize noise not only as an aesthetics or sonic practice (as in the case of screamo), but as a means to reclaim presence and visibility within neoliberal cities, where the boundaries between sound and noise are continuously negotiated by processes of gentrification.

A second strand could analyze the temporal reconfigurations of urban boundaries, particularly in relation to the "night-time" city and "night-time economy" (see Lovatt & O'Connor, 1995). Future studies could explore how independent cultural events reshape the symbolic and material boundaries of the city, revealing how the center-periphery metaphor acquires different meanings depending on their temporal activation, illuminating the uneven geographies of mobility, transport infrastructures, and perceived safety, which influence the condition for participation within the nocturnal cultural life.

A third strand of analysis could concern comparative research across different independent music scenes. For instance, comparing the screamo scene with the trap music scene, which also emerged in

peripheral and post-industrial contexts – would allow a deeper understanding of how different underground cultures articulate resistance and self-commodification in relation to the social, cultural, economic and symbolic conditions that shape practices of authenticity, visibility and belonging withing uneven geographies of opportunity.

Finally, a fourth strand could extend research towards music tourism, mobility, and broader cultural policies, investigating how independent music scenes can generate alternative forms of cultural travel and temporary mobility. Future studies could explore the alternative and independent music tourism, distinct from mainstream music tourism – for instance, the "swiftieconomy". This comparison would make it possible to examine how independent music scenes sustain micro-economies of travel, sociability, and place making, that operate at the margins of institutional cultural policies, fostering alternative networks of mobility.

More broadly, future research should continue to embrace a multi-scalar, multi-dimensional and multi-sited perspective, that recognizes that resistance is not positioned in opposition to neoliberal logics, but rather inhabited, negotiated, and reimagined within them, tracing ambivalences, processes and tensions as constitutive elements of cultural and urban transformations.

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Appendix 1: Interview outline

(translated from Italian)

Kick-off questions:

- Socio-anagraphical data: age, gender that the respondent identifies with, employment

On independent collectives:

- What is your role in the collective?
- How was the collective born? What people are involved, and what is their role within it?
- What needs does the collective address? (in territorial and cultural terms)
- What does the term "collective" mean? In what way was the name chosen?
- Is there a scale of politicization of Italian collectives?

On screamo:

- What is screamo?
- How has screamo evolved in Italy? (past and present)
- Where is screamo more active in Italy, from a geographical point of view? In terms of territorial spaces but also places.
- Is there an aesthetic of screamo? If so, what are its characteristics?
- What themes are addressed most in screamo lyrics?

On the scene:

- How does the concept of scene emerge when speaking about screamo music? What does the term "scene" mean?
- Is it possible to refer to screamo as a scene nowadays here in Italy? And in the past? If so, what factors influence the existence of the scene? If not, what are the reasons for its non-existence?
- Characteristics;
- People and roles;
- Spaces of the scene: With which venues are there more agreements? How are these arrangements made?

- How does the organization of a screamo event work?
- Challenges and difficulties;
- Description of the national and own city scene.

On resistance:

- What does DIY mean in the screamo scene?
- What motivated you to pursue a DIY ethic rather than pursue a career in the more "institutional" circuits of music?
- Is screamo political? How has this connection, if any, evolved over time?
- What are the economics of DIY?
- How has the digital transformed the approach to DIY and DIY itself?
- What is the cultural climate of the city you live in? How has it changed over time?
- How is the individualism of some screamo proposals reconciled with the community drive given, for example, by the scene or the collectives themselves?

At the end of the interview:

- Could you name five people who are related to the screamo scene? (e.g., musicians, members of collectives, distros, music producers, etc.)

Thank you for your participation and have a nice day! If you have questions or if you want to withdraw your consent to participate, text me and I will do everything is in my power to help you.

Appendix 2: First contact for the interview

Hi! :) I hope to not bother you too much. My name is Marina, I am a PhD student in Urban Studies in Milan and I am carrying out research on the practices of resistance to gentrification enacted by independent collectives related particularly screamo in Italy. I wanted to ask if any of you would like and would have time to be interviewed by me in the next weeks. I would be very grateful, and you would help me a lot! I leave you my cellphone number if you prefer to contact me on WhatsApp, XXXXXXXXXX! See you very soon I hope and thank you even if only for caring to read the message.

Appendix 3: Personal data processing form

Modulo di trattamento dei dati personali per scopi scientifici (per adulti)

INFORMATIVA

Gentile Signor*,

la informiamo, ai sensi dell'art. 13 del Regolamento UE 2016/679 (di seguito, GDPR), che il trattamento dei Suoi dati personali, delle informazioni che La riguardano, delle altre categorie particolari di dati, raccolti nel corso dello studio, sarà improntato al rispetto dei diritti e delle libertà fondamentali e ai principi di correttezza, liceità, trasparenza, minimizzazione dei dati, esattezza, integrità e riservatezza[61] e potrà essere svolto in via manuale o in via elettronica o comunque con l'ausilio di strumenti informatizzati o automatizzati.

In particolare, in riferimento ai dati personali che rivelino l'origine etnica, le convinzioni religiose, filosofiche, le opinioni politiche, l'appartenenza sindacale, nonché a trattare dati genetici, dati biometrici, intesi ad identificare in modo univoco una persona, dati relativi alla salute o alla vita sessuale o l'orientamento sessuale[62], La informiamo che:

- I dati liberamente conferiti saranno utilizzati solo per scopo di studi e di ricerca e non verranno comunicati o diffuse[63];
- Il Titolare del trattamento, cioè l'organismo che determina come e perché i suoi dati siano trattati, è l'Università degli Studi di Milano - Bicocca, con sede in Piazza dell'Ateneo Nuovo 1, 20126 Milano, nella persona della Rettrice Prof.ssa Giovanna Iannantuoni, suo Legale Rappresentante, (d'ora in avanti: Titolare). Potrà rivolgersi al Titolare scrivendo all'indirizzo

[61] Principi previsti dall'art. 5 del GDPR.

[62] Art. 9 del GDPR.

[63] NB: Qualora si rendesse necessario la comunicazione e/o il trasferimento di dati, sarà necessario identificare con precisione i singoli destinatari. Inoltre, qualora si rendesse necessario il trasferimento di dati in Paesi extra UE o verso organizzazioni internazionali, sarà indispensabile fornire all'interessato un'informativa specifica e, nel caso in cui per il Paese di destinazione non sia stata emanata una decisione di adeguatezza, oppure non siano disponibili adeguate garanzie di protezione, richiedere il consenso per procedere con il trasferimento.

fisico sopra riportato o inviando una e-mail a rettorato@unimib.itoppure una PEC a ateneo.bicocca@pec.unimib.it;

- Il Responsabile della Protezione Dati (d'ora in avanti, RPD) a cui si potrà rivolgere per tutte le questioni relative all'esercizio dei suoi diritti derivanti dal GDPR, può essere contattata all'indirizzo di posta elettronica rpd@unimib.it o alla PEC rpd@pec.unimib.it;
- Il Responsabile del trattamento è ……...….[64]
- Il conferimento dei dati è facoltativo e l'eventuale rifiuto a fornire tali dati potrebbe comportare solo l'interruzione della Sua partecipazione allo studio/progetto di ricerca;
- Salvo le eccezioni previste dal Regolamento per l'uso dei dati a fini di ricerca scientifica (Articolo 89 del GDPR e All. A.4 del D.Lgs n. 196/2003), Lei ha diritto in ogni momento di:
- Accedere ai suoi dati personali e ottenere conferma dell'esistenza o meno di dati personali che La riguardano;
- Ottenere la rettifica o la cancellazione dei dati o la limitazione del relativo trattamento;
- Se i dati sono in formato elettronico, richiederne la portabilità;
- Opporsi per motivi legittimi al trattamento;
- Proporre reclamo all'autorità di controllo.

Al riguardo, Lei potrà far valere i suoi diritti rivolgendosi al Titolare del Trattamento e/o all'RPD dell'Ateneo.

- Ai sensi del GDPR, i dati verranno conservati per un periodo non superiore a …… presso…….……sotto la responsabilità del Titolare del Trattamento[65].

Consenso al trattamento di particolari dati personali di cui all'art. 9 del GDPR.

L* SOTTOSCRITT*

[64] Indicare o responsabile del trattamento di dipartimento o P.I.

[65] NB: Qualora non si sia in possesso del dato analitico preciso in relazione ai tempi di conservazione, sarà necessario indicare i criteri utilizzati per determinare il periodo di conservazione del dato; in questo caso, la frase sarà così modificata: "Ai sensi del GDPR, i datise contenuti nelle banche dati del Titolare, verranno conservati illimitatamente Se i suoi dati personali sono contenuti in documenti analogici e/o digitali prodotti o posseduti dal Titolare, sono soggetti ai tempi di conservazione previsti dalla normativa".

acquisite le informazioni fornite dal titolare del trattamento con l'informativa che precede e consapevole, in particolare, che il trattamento riguarderà "particolari dati personali di cui all'art. 9 del GDPR",

□ ACCONSENTE

□ NON ACCONSENTE

al trattamento dei dati necessari allo svolgimento dello studio/progetto di ricerca.

Luogo e data _____

Firma _____

Appendix 4: Research informed consent form

CONSENSO INFORMATO ALLA RICERCA

THE INDEPENDENT SCREAMO MUSIC SCENE AND PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE TO GENTRIFICATION: A MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY IN MILAN AND NORTH-CENTRAL ITALY

FOGLIO INFORMATIVO PER LA PARTECIPAZIONE

Gentilissim*,

Le voglio proporre di partecipare ad una ricerca. È Suo diritto essere informat* circa lo scopo e le caratteristiche dello studio affinché Lei possa decidere in modo consapevole e libero se partecipare. La invito a leggere attentamente quanto riportato di seguito. La ricercatrice coinvolta in questo progetto è a disposizione per rispondere alle Sue domande:

(nome e cognome) (n. telefono)

Qual è lo scopo di questo studio?

Lo scopo generale del presente studio è indagare le pratiche di resistenza al neoliberalismo urbano a livello micro, meso e macro, e più specificatamente rispetto alla gentrificazione urbana (intesa sia come processo legato alle trasformazioni urbane sia come metafora per meccanismi di cooptazione e mercificazione di prodotti culturali e stili di vita), messe in atto dalla scena musicale indipendente screamo a Milano e in Italia. Lo studio sarà condotto attraverso un approccio etnografico multi-situato, adoperando le tecniche dell'intervista qualitativa (semi-strutturata) e l'osservazione partecipante ad eventi (concerti e festival) e dentro collettivi indipendenti legati alla scena screamo italiana.

Come si svolgerà lo studio?

Lo studio sarà condotto attraverso la raccolta di dati provenienti dai social network e di informazioni raccolte attraverso interviste semi-strutturate, previa accettazione da parte dell'intervistat* del modulo sulla privacy e il trattamento dei dati, nonché – laddove si renderà necessario – attraverso osservazione partecipante all'interno di collettivi indipendenti legati alla scena screamo italiana.

Per quale ragione Le propongo di partecipare?

Le propongo di partecipare a questo studio in quanto testimone privilegiat* della scena musicale screamo in Italia, al fine di raccogliere dati di tipo qualitativo sulle pratiche di resistenza al neoliberalismo urbano, e in particolare alla gentrificazione urbana.

Lei è obbligato/a a partecipare allo studio?

La Sua partecipazione è completamente libera. Inoltre, se Lei dovesse cambiare idea e volesse ritirarsi, in qualsiasi momento è liber* di farlo senza dover fornire alcuna spiegazione.

Quali sono i passaggi necessari per partecipare allo studio?

La partecipazione allo studio avviene previa dettagliata informazione sulle caratteristiche, sui rischi e benefici dello stesso. Al termine della fase informativa Lei potrà acconsentire alla partecipazione allo studio firmando il modulo di consenso informato. Solo dopo che Lei avrà espresso per iscritto il Suo consenso, potrà attivamente partecipare allo studio proposto.

Che cosa Le verrà chiesto di fare?

Il progetto di ricerca prevede la Sua partecipazione ad una intervista semi-strutturata mirata all'acquisizione di informazioni circa la scena screamo italiana, sulle sue pratiche di resistenza alla gentrificazione e sui collettivi indipendenti e la loro organizzazione nei contesti urbani. In aggiunta all'intervista semi-strutturata, la ricerca prevede la raccolta di dati attraverso osservazione partecipante, laddove necessario, nei collettivi indipendenti della scena screamo italiana mirata a comprendere il funzionamento di un collettivo e l'organizzazione di un festival screamo. Anche in questo caso, valgono tutte le specifiche fatte fino ad ora per le interviste semi-strutturate.

Quali sono i possibili rischi ed i disagi dello studio?

Non vi sono rischi.

Quali sono i possibili benefici derivanti dallo studio?

Lo studio non comporta diretti benefici per l* partecipante. Tuttavia, lo studio consentirà di incrementare le conoscenze circa i rischi e le conseguenze della gentrificazione urbana, nonché i modi in cui la cultura – e la musica in quanto prodotto culturale – può essere cooptata e strumentalizzata a fini di marketing e branding urbani, e le conseguenze di ciò sulla struttura urbana e, più in generale, sugli abitanti delle città. Inoltre, lo studio informerà sulle pratiche di resistenza e/o di resilienza che le scene musicali, in particolare la scena screamo, possono eventualmente opporre ai processi sopra descritti.

Come viene garantita la riservatezza delle informazioni?

Non sarà necessaria la divulgazione di alcun dato sensibile e, se richiesto, le interviste saranno soggette ad un processo di anonimizzazione attraverso l'attribuzione di codici a specifici ambiti di interesse, preservando così l'identità dell'intervistat*.

Come saranno usati i Suoi dati personali?

I dati raccolti saranno utilizzati in forma anonima ed aggregata, in modo da non poter risalire ai dati dei singoli individui, per lavori di tesi e/o pubblicazioni scientifiche, in accordo a quanto è stabilito nella "Autorizzazione al trattamento dei dati personali per scopi scientifici", che firmerà separatamente, se deciderà di partecipare. I Suoi dati identificativi o personali saranno conservati per tutta la durata della ricerca, in caso sia necessario un secondo incontro o per informare l* partecipanti di un momento di restituzione pubblica dei risultati. Qualora Lei lo richieda, in qualsiasi momento, i Suoi dati personali verranno immediatamente cancellati e in ogni caso lo saranno alla chiusura della ricerca (31 ottobre 2025). Tutte le informazioni raccolte saranno conservate in modo sicuro per un periodo indefinito e saranno a disposizione di ricercatr*, student* e chiunque sia interessat* a compiere studi scientifici sui temi trattati dallo studio. Se richiesto, le informazioni raccolte saranno rese anonime.

Altre informazioni importanti

La informo che lo studio verrà condotto nel rispetto dei principi etici stabiliti nella "Dichiarazione di Helsinki" e nella "Convenzione sui diritti dell'uomo e la biomedicina" (Convenzione di Oviedo).

L'originale del Consenso informato scritto da Lei firmato verrà conservato dal responsabile del presente studio, mentre Lei ha diritto a riceverne una copia.

Durante lo studio, potrà contattare il ricercatore o il responsabile dello studio per qualsiasi informazione.

La ringrazio per la Sua disponibilità.

DICHIARAZIONE DELLA SPERIMENTATRICE

Dichiaro di aver fornito al* partecipante informazioni complete e spiegazioni dettagliate circa la natura, le finalità, le procedure e la durata di questo progetto di ricerca. Dichiaro inoltre di aver fornito al* partecipante il foglio informativo.

FIRMA DELLA RICERCATRICE Data

FIRMA INFORMATIVA

Dichiaro di aver ricevuto informazioni che mi hanno permesso di comprendere il progetto di ricerca, anche alla luce degli ulteriori chiarimenti da me richiesti. Confermo che mi è stata consegnata copia del presente documento informativo.

FIRMA Data

ESPRESSIONE DI CONSENSO INFORMATO

Io sottoscritt* _____

- Dichiaro di aver ricevuto spiegazioni esaurienti in merito alla richiesta di partecipazione allo studio sperimentale in oggetto e sufficienti informazioni riguardo ai rischi e ai benefici implicati nello studio, secondo quanto riportato nel foglio informativo qui allegato.
- Dichiaro di aver potuto discutere tali spiegazioni, di aver potuto porre tutte le domande che ho ritenuto necessarie e di aver ricevuto in merito risposte soddisfacenti.
- Sono stat* inoltre informat* del mio diritto di ritirarmi in qualsiasi momento dalla ricerca stessa e di avere libero accesso alla documentazione relativa alla sperimentazione.

Pertanto, alla luce delle informazioni che mi sono state fornite:

Io sottoscritt* _____

□ ACCONSENTO □ NON ACCONSENTO A partecipare allo studio

□ ACCONSENTO □ NON ACCONSENTO All'audio-video registrazione

LUOGO E DATA FIRMA DEL* PARTECIPANTE

LUOGO E DATA FIRMA DELLA RICERCATRICE