

Social Media Is the New Punk

User Experience, Social Music and DIY Culture

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In the digital convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006) and in the network society (Castells, 1996), the theories of personal branding, social identity, and the two-step flow of communication have become intertwined to create a model through which individuals and musicians share and embrace music. This paper examines the rise of social network for music involving both the practices of use and consumption and those of creation, sharing and distribution of innovative and independents musical reality. Social media have introduced radical changes in social and musical practices increasing the ability of creation from the bottom in contrast to mainstream. Moreover, thanks to performativity, collaboration and participation offering by Web 2.0, fit fully in culture “DIY 2.0” offering an interesting chance for the emerging underground music.

Keywords: social music, DIY culture, social media, neo-tribalism, consumer engagement

Introduction

Music is an active and essential ingredient in the composition of social and identity experience. The alliance between social network and music, as underlined by Digital Music Report 2013, proves itself more and more successful: music, with the TV programs and cinema, is among the most discussed topics on Facebook and Twitter and, according to some research, shows that nine out of ten figures followed on Facebook are music artists. In this field comes true the so-called *Remediation* so music is rewritten, reproduced, socialized and shared in the new digital format and communicative (Bolter & Grusin, 1999).

This article aims to place two analytic issues on the agenda for cultural sociology and cultural studies. The first issue concerns the ways which some applications allow audience to consume, to make participative experience of musical underground practices and to create new creative contents turning in media and distributors. The question here is how Web 2.0 applications are enabling a reconfiguration of the relations and organization of music culture and user experience.

The second issue concerns some case studies of social network that represent an interesting chance for the emerging underground bands to promote music groups unknown or new talent.

Cultural Practices and Users Experience in the Social Network Society

If you do not care about the networks, the networks will care about you, anyway. For as long as you want to live in society, at this time and in this place, you will have to deal with the network society. Because we live in the Internet

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Galaxy. (Castells, 2001, p. 13)

In the twentieth century, the *Social Network Society* takes the place of mass society and is formed by individuals whose relationships are not exhausted in face to face, but they are in the network new spaces community and participatory which are distinguished from those organic and traditional (Van Dijk, 1999).

At the base of the *Social Network Theory* (Barnes, 1954; Milgram, 1967; Granovetter, 1973), there is the possibility to study a social system through the network of relationships of which the social system is formed. The value of a social network is established so not much from the extension of its ramifications, as by the way in which the interaction between multiple individuals unable to shape or modify the relation and the behavior. The theoreticians of the network society say, therefore, that “a growing number of social, political and economic practices of institutions and relations are organized around the figure of the network” (Barney, 2004, p. 27). Within a decade, the network has become the “dominant cultural logic” (Varnelis, 2008, p. 145) and the networks of the network society tend to be completely global, relational, and social.

We are opposite a new paradigm that redraws fully the technological context and the social and cultural practices, in which the same idea of network is not a simple metaphoric representation of the current time, but it appears as the keystone, the pivot around which rotates the entire society characterized by nodes, connections, shares, and ties. We live fully immersed in the social and cultural system different than in the past (even the recent past) in which the dynamics of creation, dissemination, consumption, and sharing of cultural products, based on potentiality evolutionary, fluid, reticular, and informal of networks, triumph. Therefore, the attention is increasingly focused on the processes of social networking and on spread of communicative practices that derive from (*downloading, uploading, UGC, peer to peer, crowdsourcing*).

This digital revolution, in its impact with structures and social practices, clearly involves also the production, creation, storage, and distribution of cultural products and services and causes an intense change in the cultural industries (Garnham, 1990). In effect, there is a change in the ways of production and circulation of symbolic, mythical, and cultural forms of society. A digital Renaissance pervades the horizon of co-evolution between the media system and society (Boccia Artieri, 2008) leading to a *world-media* (Boccia Artieri, 2004). In this sense, media are no longer only technologies, but become environments characterized as real “places” in which to experience daily and structure new social relations, territories of production, and trading of languages and of symbolic forms, contexts for the construction of meanings, individual, and collective, places of cognitive and bodydwelling.

Web 2.0, then, has represented a social and technological innovation and a real discontinuity in the processes of human communication whose main innovation is to be a medium in which “the most evident feature are the people” (Bennato, 2011, p. IX). The Web appears, therefore, as a *social liquid ecosystem*, iridescent and changeable, in which the users are “social migrants” in search of sharing of meaning and sense, as part of the construction of their identity that includes the entire production of the self. Web 2.0 is like a *collective allotment* (Gauntlett, 2011) at the center of which there is the idea that web sites and online services become more powerful if they accept a network of potential collaborators.

First, through the network, the same consumption turns into a collective process, implemented by its culture of participation.

Secondly, the social value of the web is characterized by the personal profile and from the interaction with the other manifesting its own presence. This means that spread new models of sociality, or as Simmel said, of

sociability: “Togetherness, the sheer pleasure of the company of others” (1945). The profound transformations caused by these forms of cultural production lead in the existence of new social spaces, created by the interaction between grassroots media and corporations, between producers and consumers. A time these spaces were limited to the virtual communities analyzed by Rheingold through a metaphor that sees their development compared to the traditional communities, which live the transformation from small agricultural centers in modern society, where, within, form new economies and new ways of sharing and participation (Rheingold, 1993). Today blogs, social networking, and other platforms of the web 2.0 create opportunities for sharing and common coexistence. The community become “networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging, and social identity” (Wellman, 2001, p. 18).

Social media, produced by a *software culture* (Manovich, 2008), represent an umbrella term that encompasses all applications that allow for sharing of user generated content. Tools that encourage communication, collaboration, and participation of the users, have no particular barriers that restrict access, facilitating the formation of community and are connected to each other (Mayfield, 2008, p. 5). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), we can define them as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of User-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

“The web is more a social innovation that a technical innovation” (Berners-Lee, 1999, p. 84) and social media are not merely technological but make a change of perspective that involves many dimensions of life and of human society, inaugurating a new way of thinking about the relationships in the world (Colombo, 2013) and to consider the communicative reality of our lives.

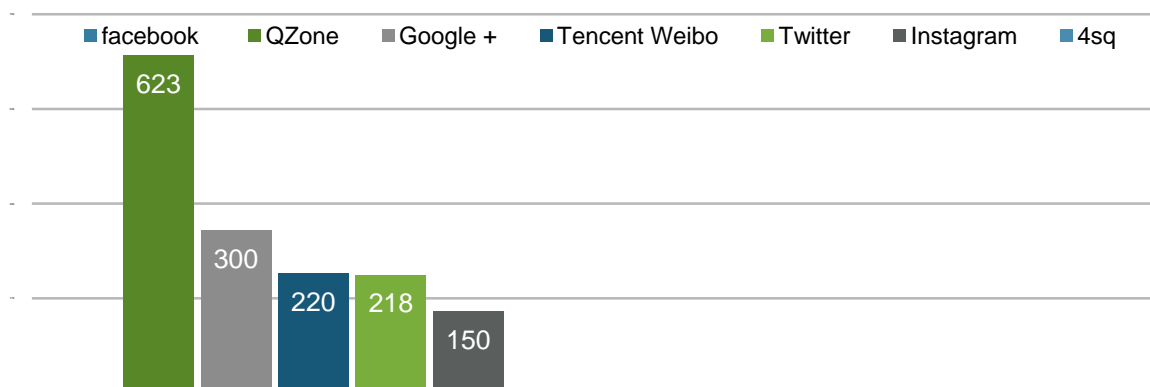


Figure 1. Social media in the world 2014.¹

Data in the report “Social, Digital and Mobile in Europe 2014” (see Figure 1) emphasize the spread of the online world in everyday life by implementing a constant reference between real and virtual and canceling any opposition between online and offline. In Europe there are 293 million active users on social media. The Internet penetration in Italy is 58% while the social network is 42%.

As regards the time spent on social media, Italy is one of the countries in Europe where you spend more time, more or less two hours, about half an hour more a day than the European average (see Figure 2).

¹ Source: Vincenzo Cosenza, <http://www.vincos.it>.

Between social networking sites, Facebook boasts a today a billion of users active in the world and in Italy is used by 82% of individuals (see Figure 3). In this sense, represents a tool “transversal” both from the viewpoint of the user, as under the contents.

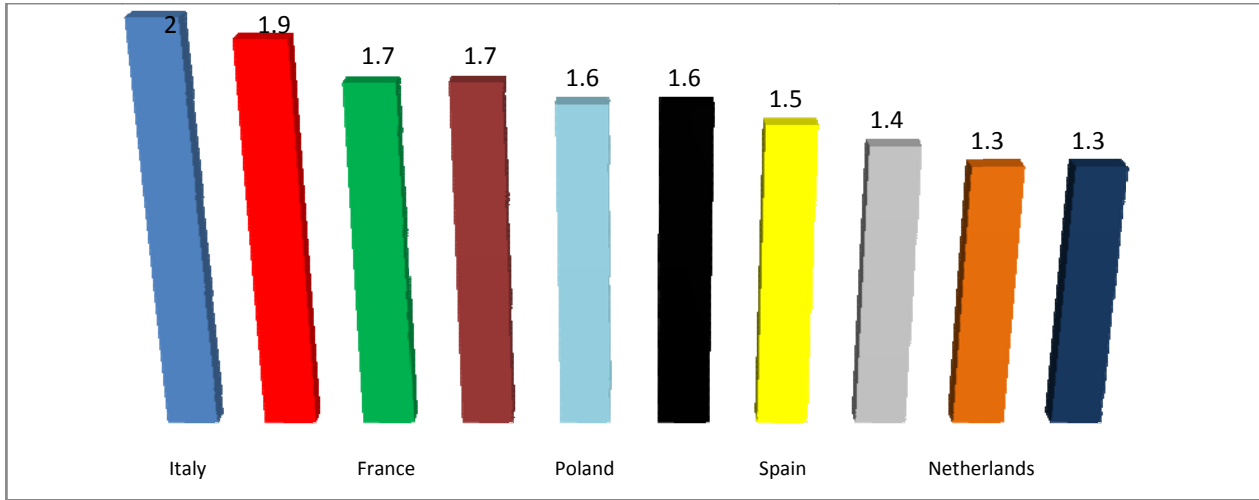


Figure 2. Time spent on social media in Europe.²

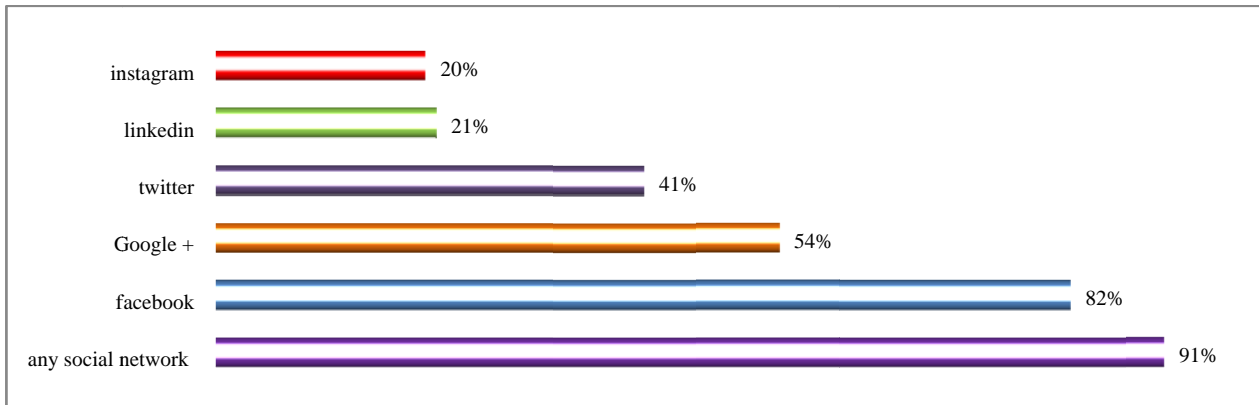


Figure 3. Use of social media in Italy.³

According to data of Report Istat “Citizens and ICT 2011”, 53.8% of Internet users consult a wiki to gather information, 48.1% creates a user profile, send messages, or other on Facebook, Twitter. Social network are not only used as a tool to maintain relationships in their network of friends, but also as a tool for information and communication on social, musical, or political issues (22.8%). Smaller shares are recorded for those who use the web to participate in consultations or voting on social or political issues, such as signing a petition (8.6%), and to participate in professional networks such as LinkedIn and Xing (8.3%).

Almost all the internet users aged six and over can use a search engine (94.2%) and a very high share can send an email with attachments. Over half of the Internet users can send messages via chat, newsgroup, or blog (52.7%) and 41.3% is able to post texts, games, pictures, illustrations, films, or music, onto social networking websites (see Figure 4).

These data demonstrate a maturity of the network capable of becoming social and cultural environment; a

² Source: Social, digital & mobile in 2014.

³ Source: Social, digital & mobile in 2014.

place able to re-mediate not only the technical features of earlier social media (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) but also our identity, our personalities, and codes of production and cultural consumption. Social network, therefore, becomes the condominiums of the network and the individual is absolute protagonist of *reticular creatives theaters*. If it's true that social networking multiplies and innovates the occasions of production and reproduction of social capital, the subject brings more and more tactics of resistance with which revolutionizes objects and code, and takes possession of the space and the use in its own way (De Certau, 1980). User, through social practices in network, is more active, creative, and involved. Not only participatory culture, or prosumers who create contents and placing them in the digital flow rather than individuals, that Bruns calls *produser* (2008), which incorporate media objects (video, images, music, etc.) in their own lives in the very way in which they share, associate them to another object medial, modify them.

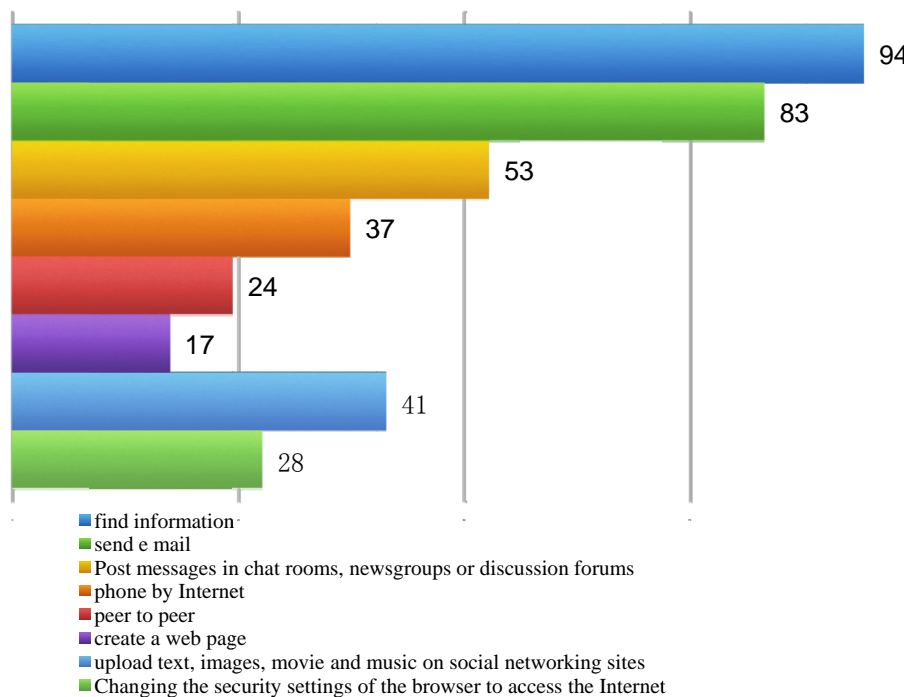


Figure 4. Reasons of use of web and social network in Italy.⁴

Social network are, by now, storytelling of our lives by extending the opportunity to be *anytime and anywhere: perpetually connected audience*. Finally, social media, immersing ourselves in a culture of making, build and share, modify the idea of creativity to be considered as totally as a process. It says a new creativity restless of the *sailors/artists*, consumed *bricolaeur*, nomads, which produce inexhaustible forms of mash-up artistic and pass through the many media territories, increasingly expanded, without owning never one; more and more by tenants. Therefore, develop new routes and new ways to preside over the cultural sense and observe and share musical practices in multiple and relational perspectives.

Underground Music Plays in Social Media

Music is a substantial dimension for experimentation of cultural practices through which new generations are formed, live experience of cultural elaboration, and production of social reality. Music is culture (Merriam,

⁴ See from <http://www.istat.it/en/archive/48743>.

1977, p. 204) and *counterculture*, total social fact (Mauss, 1925), able to characterize those crucial moments of the daily experience. Therefore, the question is not only what music makes users, but also what users make to music and with music. Music is, then, active and dynamic force able to construct paths and lifestyles.

In particular, in the network society practices of creation, promotion and musical consumption tend to new and original convergence. The spheres of the ideation music, through the potential permitted from the “digital revolution”, offer the possibility to create the “your own independent music” through users generated contents which have led to a crisis industrial practices consolidated. Moments of aggregation and collective socialization are multiplied favoring, at the same time, new dimensions of enjoyment and cultural private production that, from the domestic sphere transfer in the public arena. There is a possibility, for anyone, to hear their “digital musical voice”.

The creative and expressive potentiality of the artistic productions and the ways of musical use have undergone significant changes with the introduction of digital technologies and social media. For example, for many consumers search for music, inquire, possibly by probing the opinions of other lovers, taste it (with the “pre-listen to”) and to buy it, have become interconnected operations within a continuous, constant, and collaborative process. In the past, newsgroups and forums have represented the first significant models of instruments for interaction focused on music and for the formation of transnational music communities. The storytelling of the experience of media consumption plays an increasingly important role: connected audience aggregate around a particular theme music and exchange, through “reflective communities” (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994), their music menu and use them to connect with other user-portals.

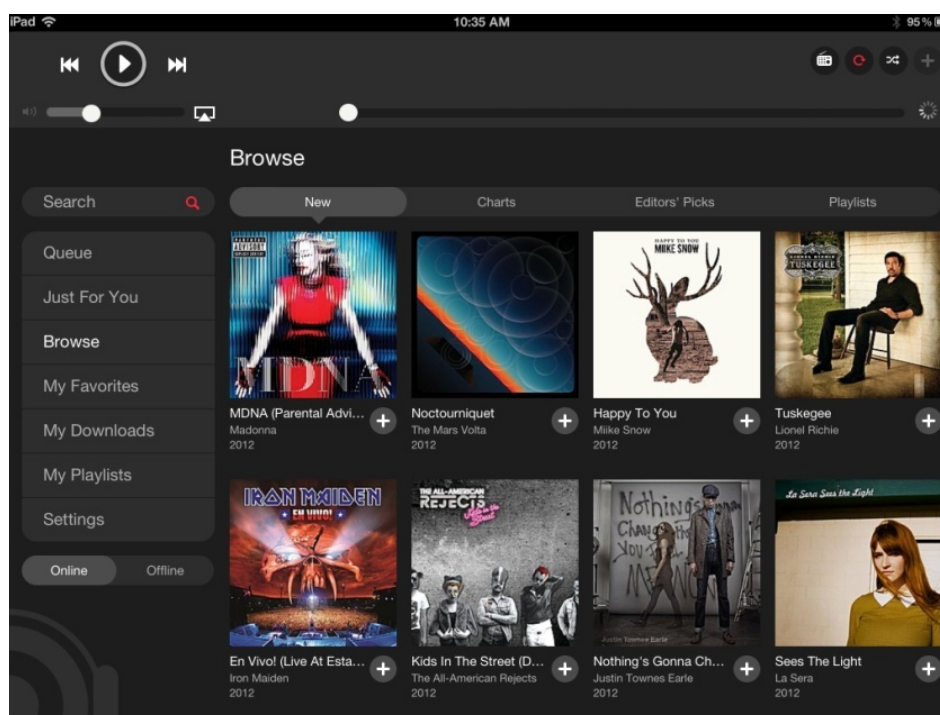
In general, music has always played a leading role in the diffusion of communication technologies and locates in social media its “raison d’etre” as it was born to be consumed, exchanged, and shared. The same file-sharing disseminated thanks to compression format mp3, specially designed for the exchange of music files: activities of “prosumerismo” pre-digital can be traced in the creation of personal compilations by the user. The remix is not born with the digital but, without a doubt, the network allows an extension of the sphere of producers and consumers by putting them in faster and more immediate dialogic relations. Each subject, today, is followed by its own “cloud music” capable to gather content, media, and software tools which we can access at any time and from any place without hindrance going well beyond the channels of free use of music and music videos, such as Youtube.

The users are increasingly performative and use applications 2.0 that expand the possibilities of interaction and cooperation between users. Therefore, the networks become spaces not only in which exchange, share, and buy music without constraints materials, but also co-production environments, implementing the collaborative dimension with the contents generation (see Table 1). It enjoys music without passing through the commercial filters of industry: There is a real “disintermediation” “the formal logic by which new media refashion and improve prior media forms, and prior media refashion themselves to respond to the challenges of new media” (Bolter & Grusin, 1999, p. 15).

Let’s look at some of these applications. *Mog* is one of the most popular social network focused on music. His slogan sets out clearly: “discover people through music and music through people”. The platform allows you to publish a profile with your own preferences, and their audience (by means of software that tracks the music available and heard on your computer) to receive news and tips based on such information, to upload and share songs and music videos accompanied by user reviews and comments, to find *moggers* with similar taste and know what they are listening to (see Figure 5).

Table 1⁵*Digital Ecosystem of Music*

Once	Now
Audience	Users
Computer	Co-creations
Listeners	Contributors
Customers	Peers
Purchase	Production/Promotion

Figure 5. Mog.⁶

Lately, Let's Loop has arrived on the Italian scene of social network devoted to music. The British web site, created by Richard Deans and Chris McEldowney, promises to become popular on the international scene as an integrated platform able to provide the user a listening experience streaming to 360 degrees, totally free, even for non-members. "Discover. Music. Together." is the slogan of this social network in which, once registered, you can create a true music profile online, with favorite artists, publishing and sharing Loop (which may include songs, albums, artists, linkcontent, playlists), and following, as well as on Twitter, people who share the same taste in music.

The most striking feature is the centrality that music takes in every field of the experience: You can buy songs by means of iTunes at any time, or to continue to listen to music through a player outside, to allow you to surf at the same time on other pages. A virtual place wholly focused on music in which follow the events of favorite singers, listen to custom radio, and peep between the pages of each artist with photos, reviews, and events (thanks to Songklick). The social aspect, on the other hand, doesn't seem to pass over the limits of reserve, with settings that can be easily adjusted by the user. A further aspect of Let's Loop concerns the

⁵ Source: Gianni Sibilla 2012.

⁶ See from <http://www.mog.com>.

existence of rankings for songs, artists, users, events that everyone can help update constantly giving your affirmative or negative vote with a simple click (see Figure 6).

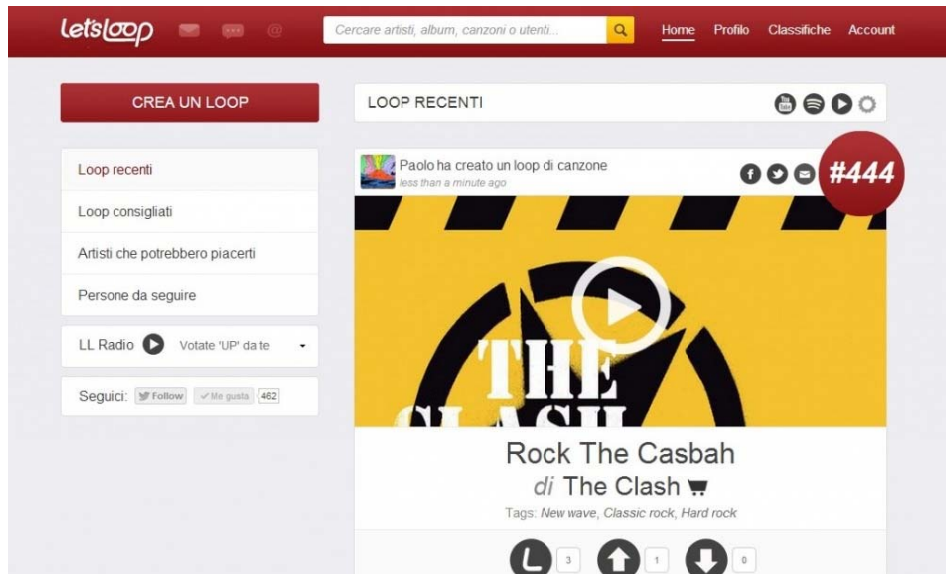


Figure 6. Let's Loop.⁷

Last.fm, then, represents a sort of fusion between an information portal of customized music and social network in which the users are guided in the discovery of a new music based on their tastes. Allows you to tag your music heard, associating it freely to other keywords and thus creating new “folk” taxonomies shareable by other users. From this Web page you can also create a Web radio station, to find information about musicians and see what our friends are listening to (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Last.Fm.⁸

⁷ See from <http://www.letsloop.com>.

⁸ See from <http://www.lastfm.it>.

Pandora was born in 2000 in the United States and is based on the “Music Genome Project”, an initiative brought to baptism by a group of artists and technicians to create a project that would allow to reproduce music as close as possible to the preferences of the listener. Pandora can be, in fact, defined a system of music “DIY”: by means of a registration, the user enters a song, which is cataloged in the Pandora’s archive. From here, through an algorithm, the system gives life to a playlist of songs in line with the tastes of who is using the system. Songs that can be listened to like radio or managed by the user. One of the advantages of Pandora is that it cannot be assimilated to an online radio station, which “passes” the most popular songs of the moment. The system is able to find songs less popular or tracks emerging groups. Of course, all songs are transmitted through licensing agreements with the authors.

With the clouding, in essence, the dematerialization of the music comes to total realization: from music “solid” of LP, passing by the “liquidity” of mp3, to arrive, finally, to a state “gas”, in “the cloud”. Other players of this era are the “net labels”, i.e., record labels DIY that have begun to produce discs, Ep, often distributed only in liquid form on the internet, in mp3, with Creative Commons license.

At the same time, social network is becoming increasingly central to know groups and emerging artists and the realities related to underground music. The forerunner was MySpace: the famous “a place for friends”, created in 2003 by Tom Anderson and characterized by the interconnection of personal profiles, the ability to enter comments and contents, public lists of contacts, allowed users to listen to and download free music, and musicians to reach fans and promote the concerts (Boyd, 2007), but especially to know them through self-promotion. Creating a social place accessible to any musician, MySpace has provided an appropriate tool not only to/from users in search of visibility but also to/from professionals that have scouting activities. The entire underground music is from there.

Then, with the advent and explosion of the other social network, the situation for Myspace crashed dramatically: In a short time, it was literally wiped out from the competitors more “armed” of capital and functionality, even if its experience has served for spread of new platforms dedicated to creation, self-generation and self-promotion music.

An interesting case is Soundcloud, born in 2008 by Alex Ljung and Eric Wahlforss, which is today the largest and most important community of artists, bands, podcasters, and musicians of the world. Everyone can upload and spread its audio material or even collaborate with other musicians around the planet. It is also possible to publish sounds of various kinds (also from objects daily use) to increase acoustic database for the benefit of other musicians. The site’s social features include options to like, repost, and share tracks. Its groups feature allows users with specialized interests the opportunity to share tracks and collaborate on sound creation in a dedicated space. SoundCloud provides a secure, collaborative, and (in the paying version) customizable platform on which users can upload and share audio, access listener statistics, and receive commentary from the SoundCloud community. Thanks to its embeddable players and integration with social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest, one need not be on the SoundCloud website to engage with its users’ content (see Figure 8).

With regard to the underground music scene, there is Jamyourself, social network for band and artists, press offices, record labels, and clubs that operate within the emerging and independent discography. Its objective is to spread in a single space—various protagonists of the scene, offering them an experience of sharing unique in its kind. Through an important editorial activities, Jamyourself allows the artists, labels, agencies, and the fans of emerging bands to advertise and spread their music to a public online vast and

continuous research of new proposals and innovative sounds. A social experience points to the enhancement of links web between users to increase their visibility and increase their audience totally free (see Figure 9).

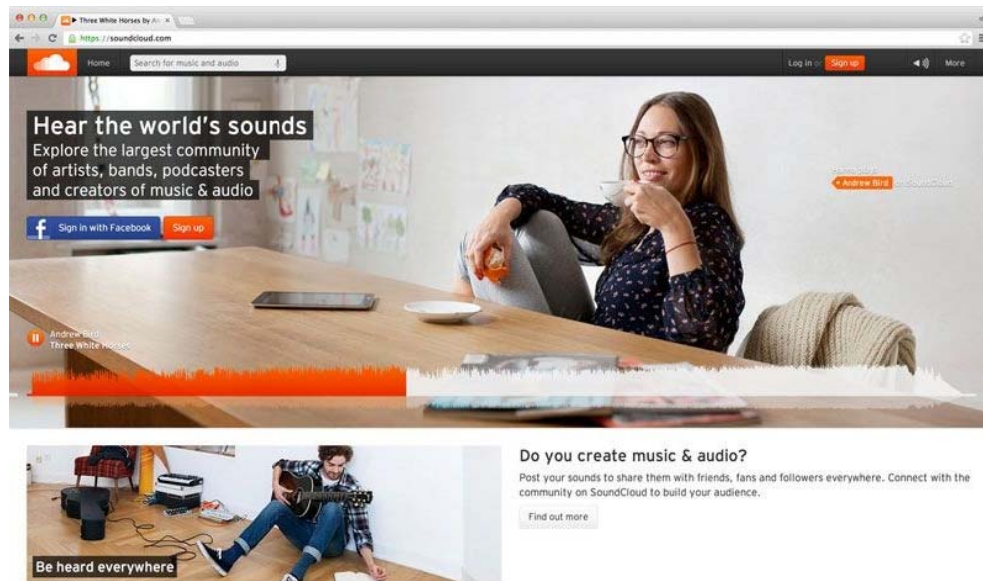


Figure 8. SoundCloud.⁹



Figure 9. JamYourSelf.¹⁰

An interesting virtual community of people interested in music is represented by Bancamusica, a social network designed by Luigi Caliva. A platform of social music that gives the possibility to relate young independent artists, record companies, and press offices specialized (see Figure 10).

⁹ See from <http://www.soundcloud.com>.

¹⁰ See from <http://www.jamyourself.com>.



Figure 10. Bancamusica.¹¹

Artists use these digital tools, of production and spread, as “places of independence”. The digital showcase is able to exploit musicians and musical genres in the past unknown. The network, therefore, puts itself as a true space of underground resistance and social network represents with force places of autogeneration and musical creation from the bottom in contrast to mainstream and the logic of traditional distribution.

To emphasize how much potentiality yet unexplored there are in the role played by social network in favor of creativity DIY as a widespread practice there is to report the debut online, in September 2014, of DIYSKO (D. I. Y. Discover), a social network self-produced dedicated to independent music (see Figure 11).



Figure 11. DIYSKO.¹²

In practice, the web 2.0, through social networking sites, has rediscovered and brought to the fore the ethics of the *Do It Yourself* from the origins punk. The “DIY” means all those small or large manual tasks that people do for a hobby and for personal satisfaction. What passes through the digital culture is of nature more ethics and has seen the light in the years 1970–1980 thanks to different cultures underground, including mainly the “punk”, and was then inherited by other subcultures, such as this ecologist and vegetarian, that of “ravers” and that connected to electronic music.

By the countercultural punk movement, from 1977, that was seeking new spaces expressive asking from the bottom a “gripping the stage” to digital counterculture of network society: thanks to new technologies widespread and cheap, the world of electronics, of creation and music spread has become the new frontier of DIY movement, and was chosen as the primary means for the production and transmission of various forms of

¹¹ See from <http://www.bancamusica.com>.

¹² See from <http://www.diysco.com>.

material, from artistic to information.

The digital future will allow the creation of new underground music through social network and will provide a different way to experience music. Web platforms will give to indie musicians much more power to go direct to the user and vice versa. Because making is connecting. A new subject “public” is born: that produces, create, invent, distributes, and consumes in cooperative and participatory environment.

Conclusion

Social network, then, represents the showcase and the *convivial space* (Illich, 1973) in which coexist *corporate* and *grassroots* convergence in which the independent musical cultures can get to know implementing processes of cross medial sharing that go from the *hic et nunc* of concerts to remix of network. At the same time, user creates and chooses actively custom community according to their own interests and passions responding essentially to the logic of *privatisation of the sociability* that Castells considers prevalent in contemporary society (2001, p. 127).

Digital networks, therefore, constitute a new powerful way to renew the dynamics of production spaces that feeds the years Zero music. Anderson, in this regard, elaborates the thesis of the “long tail” (2006) as a new economic model for cultural industries, based on the transition “from the mass market to a mass of markets”. The set of many niches that sell a little—the long tail—constitutes a much larger market than the one of the few successes of earth. Therefore, the digital media change the dynamics of market combining infinite space of the exhibition, ubiquity of access and killing of distribution costs. Paradoxically, those ideas of freedom, opposition to the dominant system, counterculture, which are the main values of punk and underground movements, seem to find here new strength and contamination. The punk and underground music raised their voice to be heard, to create from the bottom, communicate and connect. The same goes for social media. Today, the fundamental desire of every indie musician is to be known, gain visibility, share and remix critical cultural meanings: a *quiet noise* that crosses social and cross-medial networks (see Table 2).

Table 2

Social Media and Punk

Punk	Social media
Voice	Digital voice
Notice	Visibility
Representation	Share and remix

“Niche” cultures, mosaic, characterized by *digital subcultures*, in which the cultural and social capital is increasingly localized in neotribalism (Maffesoli, 1996), and in social and creative fragmentation. Therefore, social networks are “forces of resistance” (Thornton, 1995, p. 213) as the cultures punk were in the past: open environments that infect their connected audience with the passion and the pervasiveness of their creators and can grow and spread in a sustainable and viral way. Community music, timeless and spaceless, will continue to make revolution with music thanks to technological innovations: *social network* of today as the *punk* of yesterday; underground DIY music cultures such as participatory, creative and identity postmodern rituals.

Passion and participation, keywords of punk, are today the main features of social media and convergence culture of social network society.

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