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The creative city's swan song? The individualisation of the music scene in Bologna, UNESCO City of Music

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Abstract

This paper extends the debate on medium-sized cities as active designers of place-specific neoliberal identities by reporting relevant findings from Bologna, European Capital of Culture in 2000 and a UNESCO City of Music since 2006. The study identifies the formal relationships of collaboration among local musicians (Crossley, 2009) as a relevant proxy to discuss the individualisation of the pop-rock music scene and its variations between 1978 and 2019. For this purpose, formal Social Network Analysis is combined with semi-structured interview analysis and archival research. The findings reveal decreased levels of social cohesion among artists and establishes a link between growing individualisation in the local music scene and an increasing tourist-orientation in the city.

Key words: cultural industries, neoliberal city, urban cultural policies, social network analysis, music.

1. Introduction

The neoliberal city and its main tenets have secured a wide coverage in urban research (e.g. Harvey, 2007; Hackworth, 2007; Whitehead, 2013). While several scholarly commentators tend to frame neoliberalisation as a hegemonic global ideology that can guide academic inquiry as a grand theory, alternative perspectives have been investigating how cities shape place-specific neoliberal identities (Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010). In this view, the challenge

is to empirically capture the “actually existing neoliberalism” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002), namely how neoliberal tendencies become evident in urban policy making that is performed by given cities or particular socio-political contexts. In particular, medium-sized cities can provide a preferential lens to observe how municipal institutions implement, modify or even resist neoliberal policies in different national contexts (Hassen and Giovanardi, 2021).

This paper contributes to this debate by reporting relevant findings from the Italian medium-sized city of Bologna, European Capital of Culture in 2000 and a UNESCO City of Music since 2006. Notably, “Red Bologna” (Harvey, 2007: 12) has implemented policies to harness the vitality of the local music industry, which has contributed so much to its attractiveness. Characterised by a strong municipal socialist legacy and a mounting tourist-oriented marketisation, the city is the ideal place to locate the present paper’s investigation. In fact, the present study considers the cultural and creative industries as a privileged domain where we can scrutinise the implications of a neoliberal agenda in urban policy making. In particular, this paper identifies the formal relationship of collaboration among local musicians (Crossley, 2009) as a relevant proxy to discuss the individualisation of the local music scene and its variations across the last decades.

In line with recent mix-methods endeavours to provide holistic accounts of structural relationship of collaborations in urban settings (Serino et al., 2017), the paper combines formal Social Network Analysis (SNA) with semi-structured interview analysis and archival research. After a presentation of the theoretical background, the main findings are illustrated followed by a final discussion of implications and recommendations.

2. Literature review

2.1 The neoliberal city and tourist-oriented identities

The ideological shift toward a free-market economy that has occurred since the 1970s has facilitated the consolidation of a neoliberal city model (Hackworth, 2007). This model appears to place great emphasis on strategic identity management within a landscape of augmented global urban competition (Lever and Turok, 1999). In this scenario, the creation of business-type organisational identities (Pasquinelli, 2014) or modes of governance (Eshuis and Edwards, 2013) and the implementation of communication programmes (Paddison, 1993) or staged experiences (Johansson and Kociatkiewicz, 2011) can be viewed as materialisations of the same neoliberal ethos in urban management. Arguably, the trickling down of marketing philosophies into the realm of urban management is one of the most notable manifestations of the relevance of such a neoliberal agenda in urban policy making. Here, a more or less tacit market-rationale underpins the proactive resources-seeking attitude of contemporary urban managers, whose effort is to position their cities as entrepreneurial (Jessop and Sum, 2000) and usually tourist-oriented (Dinardi, 2017).

Urban scholars have come to agree on more constructivist notions of “actually existing neoliberalism” (Brenner and Theodore, 2002) or “variegated neoliberalisation” (Brenner, Peck and Theodore, 2010), which better capture the contingency and place specificity of global market-led urban transformations. In any case, even earlier scholarly commentators (Kearns and Philo, 1993) noted that the application of corporate devices, such as marketing and branding, to cities assigns preferential value to the needs of external audiences, for instance tourists, investors or new citizens and promotes a commoditised view of culture. In this respect, particularly meaningful is the concept of tourist-oriented cultural entrepreneurialism (Dinardi, 2017), in which cultural and creative industries are seen as powerful engines to engineer novel alluring products and experiences. The tensions inherent in the exploitation of cultural resources in the neoliberal city model are at the centre of the next section.

2.2 CCIs: A commoditised view of cultural resources

Since the second half of the 20th century, the role of cultural and creative industries within urban economies has become increasingly relevant (Sacco et al., 2013) and are celebrated for their ability to produce content that fits a post-modern knowledge economy, as well as for their capacity to produce spillover effects in urban centres (KEA, 2006). These places, traditionally, have favoured the existence of informal network economies that easily develop and have been appointed with the task of producing cultural contents (Hall, 1998), thanks to the presence of a productive, creative atmosphere – the ‘buzz’, the ‘hype’ – generated by the presence of vigorous activities (Storper and Venables, 2004).

In the rhetoric of creative-based urban competition, culture plays an important role, overlapping with the concepts of innovation and knowledge, which accompany the immaterial sphere characterising the new growth axes of the city. Regeneration projects have favoured the concentration of creative activities in districts and specific areas with revitalisation’s effects one the one hand and gentrification on the other. Creative policies have camouflaged the city’s neoliberal policies. The evolution of Florida’s (2000, 2017) thinking shows us the controversial effects of these interventions. The enthusiastic idea of targeting a “creative class” of highly qualified people with good spending power (Florida, 2002) progressively gave way to the awareness that the social costs deriving from this incoming population were too high to be considered acceptable (Florida, 2017), thereby admitting the weakness of that simplistic approach.

This section has clarified that the cultural and creative industries constitute a preferential engine of capital creation. More specifically, the concentration of artists and cultural firms may ensure a city’s uniqueness over other places, granting a privileged position over other places that translates into what Markusen and Schrock (2006: 166) have called the “artistic dividend”.

2.3 Marketisation and individualisation

The cultural and creative industries would then constitute an ideal playground to empirically observe the implications of a neoliberal agenda. Contrary to the apologetic view that was dominant in the 2000s, there is a sense that the boosteristic and marketised view of cultural industries is resulting in a loss of social capital in that sector, rather than its enhancement, possibly contributing to individualisation. Notably, the creative practices through which neoliberal thinking is implemented often disregard the relevance of historically-rooted social relations in the development of local production networks (d'Ovidio and Morato, 2017). For example, artists and cultural workers may oppose creative city policies, signalling the “divorce between cultural workers and policy makers in charge of creative city policy” (ibidem: 3).

In this context, it would be fruitful to investigate how existing networks of artists and cultural producers change, and whether or not it is possible to observe growing levels of disconnection and individualisation. This is the angle that the present study intends to explore by answering the following research questions: How does social cohesion vary, over time, among key cultural agents such as musicians, while urban policies become increasingly marketised and tourist-oriented? As a relevant unit of analysis, this paper considers the changing level of social cohesion of the music community of artists of Bologna over four decades (1978-2019). The evolution of the collaboration dynamics between and among musicians is evaluated against the backdrop of an evolving policy context across four decades. This is performed by combining archival analysis, semi-structured interviews and formal Social Network Analysis.

3. Research approach and context

Music is a form of social interaction that structures the on-going process of social and urban life (Becker 1982; Crossley, 2019). Successful musical interaction or ‘musicking’ (Small, 1998) demands cooperation between participants and a mutual orientation towards shared conventions (Simmel, 1955). Relationality is crucial for cultural production, facilitating creative relations and providing legitimacy and recognition (Becker, 1982; Storper and Venables, 2004; Pratt, 2000). Therefore, investigating the evolution of relational structures within music communities (Croosley, 2009) allows us to assess some of the effects of policies over time.

In line with recent attempts to investigate artistic relational structures more holistically (Serino et al., 2017), the present paper is based on a mixed-methods approach that combines archival research, semi-structured interviews with key informants and formal Social Network Analysis. Arguments for adopting a mixed-method approach to network analysis are certainly not new, but their implementation in recent scholarship is still underexplored. Section 3.1 provides an analysis of the case study setting based on the triangulation of archival research and twelve semi-structured interviews performed by the authors between June and October 2023 (see Table 1). The table shows the gender of participants but does not reveal their age, with the purpose to preserve participants anonymity. The selected participants are local musicians that appear to be active during at least 2 periods identified in the periodisation illustrated in Figure 1. In sampling participants, researchers sought to identify different entry-points in the local community in order to capture a varied array of perspectives. This allowed researchers to collect insights from both central and more peripheral positions in the network. The prevalence of male participants in the sample is consistent with the dominant role of men in the music industry. The interview guideline included questions investigating the participants’ perception of the dynamics of artistic collaboration in the local music industry;

the factors that enable or inhibit collaboration; the factors explaining change across time; the impact of urban policies on music production; the willingness to leave Bologna in order to move elsewhere as a way to assess their perceived attractiveness of the local music scene. The interview guideline also included additional questions on the role of digitalisation and other industry-related factors that future studies will analyse and report more at length.

Overall, this qualitative inquiry provided a means to contextualise the formal Social Network Analysis and obtain deeper insights into the explicit motivations behind the relational practices mapped out in the study. The interview materials supported the authors in establishing links between domains of urban policies and collaboration dynamics, enabling some forms of process-tracking.

Please insert Table 1 here

3.1 Music production and tourist-oriented cultural entrepreneurialism

City profile. Bologna is a medium-sized city of nearly 392,000 inhabitants and is one of the wealthiest city of Italy. The city is famous for its university, founded in 1088, which attracts a population of about 88,000 students (more or less one-fifth of the resident population). The city has repeatedly warranted the attention of scholarly commentators because of its peculiar socio-economic model, which is characterised by a combination of strong cooperativism and capitalist enterprises (Rinaldi, 2005). The increasing role of market forces and boosteristic policy discourses over the last two decades have been contextualised by urban scholars in the crisis of the traditional Left, suggesting that “Red Bologna” (Harvey, 2007: 12) may no longer be “the showcase city of the Italian Left” (Però, 2005: 832). Characterised by the contrast between mounting neoliberal tendencies and a municipal socialist legacy, Bologna is the ideal

place to locate the present paper's investigation (Giovanardi and Silvagni, 2021). Its civic history and the long-established strong 'visible hand' of local and regional governments provide a meaningful context to observe neoliberal policies in action, as well as their impact on specific urban domains, such as the cultural and creative sector.

Cultural context and policies. The premises of Bologna's cultural industry were endogenously created at the end of the 1970s, since when the industry has been acting as a remarkable driver of urban distinctiveness. The presence of artist communities contributed to a unique cultural climate, providing incoming artists with benefits associated with faceo-to-face contacts (Stomper and Venables, 2004) and the possibility to build reputation through direct human interactions. Only later this spontaneous status of a cultural and knowledge city acquired more formal recognition through various awards and labels, such as the European Capital of Culture award in 2000 and the UNESCO City of Music award in 2006 (Zan et al., 2011).

Despite the spontaneity of its cultural scene and the formal awards, the implemented cultural policies seemed to convey a shift from a city that *produces* culture and nurtures an artistic milieu into a creative city that *exhibits* what Dinardi (2017: 88) calls "tourist-oriented cultural entrepreneurialism". For example, the legacy of the European Capital of Culture has been deemed to be controversial. Notably, the following excerpts show that the European Capital of Culture award did not gain enough attention among cultural producers, such as musicians.

"A pointless event... it was the beginning of the end... an institutional moment, but if you don't create culture from below, where do you think you're going? Culture is generated by other factors, not by this sort of recognition" (Participant 1)

“Disputable... it was done for different ends, to leave the control of music to the institutions and force everyone to listen to the same things” (Participant 3)

“I didn’t realise. A belated recognition that came when everything was changing”

(Participant 4)

Between 1980 and 1985, cultural policies were orientated to develop youth creativity by encouraging the most interesting and innovative trends and respecting the artistic autonomy. Thanks to Sandra Soster in the administrations of Zangheri and Imbeni, the city’s infrastructure offered a ready-made environment for incubating cultural enterprises (Bloomfield, 1993). These policies were oriented to shape the city as a social centre to gather people together also for leisure purposes and raise their cultural awareness through different form of entertainment. The metaphor adopted was one of a cultural laboratory (Bloomfield, 1993). Meaningful are the following accounts where artists elaborate on the years between the late 1970s and the early 1980s:

“Bologna was a radical city, with little interest in the mainstream, the second most important jazz city in the world after New York. Many came to Bologna precisely to experiment... we made friends, there was never any competition and were very prolific.

There were avant-garde movements, punk and rock. That was the choice of those who governed the city” (Participant 4)

“Bologna has been the heart of the avant-gardes, a place of research and innovation. The free cultural offer was extremely vast. Such creative freedom would be unthinkable now”

(Participant 3)

This is in contrast with the tendency observed, before, during and after 2000s, when *cultural production* is instead not explicitly present in local authorities' budgetting (Zan, 2011). Furthermore, starting from the 1990s, a new cycle of urban regeneration policies started, focusing on the inner-city centre, gradually powering down such grassroots community ties, and inducing an increase in re-urbanization and social control in urban spaces (Bergamaschi et al., 2014; Buzar et al., 2007).

In 1994, the "Safe Cities" project (progetto "Città Sicure") was approved under the wide support by the Emilia Romagna Region and Bologna city council (Andreatta and Della Porta, 2005; Pavarini 2006). The mayor, in an effort to launch a 'team-up' of the society (Bagnasco and Le Galès, 1997), was granted increased power in terms of public safety, control of public space and prevention of undesired behaviour that may disrupt the quality of life of residents (Battistelli and Fay Lucianetti 2010: 51). The regulations became more stringent in the early 2000s. The period, known as "the time of edicts", saw the closure of social centres for youth aggregation, restrictive regulations on public clubs and restrictions on the music volume. Ultimately, several clubs were forced to closure, thus decreasing the availability of spaces for music performers and consumers.

"The time of ordinances made it difficult to go out to play because all places had been closed down" (Participant 2)

"The institutions changed the centuries-old face of Bologna. They threw out the musicians from the pubs and from the city centre. There's no creative freedom anymore. When the noose of the 2000s came about, this changed a lot and fast, we stopped working together... where had the friends gone? Those who did not come from rich families started to struggle" (Participant 3)

"With the 2000s, the winds turned, and self-interest increased. Things changed very fast, and we couldn't work anymore. We backed down, and every man for himself. There were serious financial problems and we stopped working together, and even the relationship with friends wore out" (Participant 4)

These policies informed a new cycle of engineering the city's cultural vibrancy through a form of top-down institutional control. This led to a downsizing of some of Bologna's most dynamic, independent cultural spaces into alternative urban culture social hubs (Felicori, 2001) who pursued an ambition to 'control' their creative strength (Calafati, 2015) and re-enact it into more domesticated and institutional forms. The 'cultural engineering' effort undertaken in the 1990s culminated in Bologna's designation as the European Capital of Culture of 2000 and the recognition as a UNESCO City of Music in 2006.

In particular, the UNESCO Creative City of Music award bestowed in 2006 is not exempt from criticism. The appointment officially recognises Bologna as an important musical centre thanks to its heritage, the remarkable presence of musicians and technicians as well as the dense network of organisations active in the industry. The programme of actions designed to obtain the appointment did not only aim to enhance the external visibility of the city and attract tourists, but also to target internal audiences in order to limit the fragmentation of the local music sector in an attempt to promote more internal cooperation and synergies (Zan, 2011). The following excerpts demonstrate that perception of this recognition was rather weak and ambiguous.

"I didn't know. These initiatives are meant to attract tourists... it is very unpleasant to meet them around, I hope it ends there" (Participant 9)

"I didn't know" (Participants 2, 3, 10)

"I didn't know. This recognition is of no use... at least not for those who do music"
(Participant 1)

"We didn't have work opportunities, we weren't put in contact with other music centres... it was a major disappointment" (Participant 11)

"I'm quite bitter about this. Even bothered by it. [...] Could have at least called the locals, right?" (Participant 8)

Evolution of the music scene. Bologna's flourishing cultural productivity is connected to some extent with the presence and impact of two educational institutions: the Fine Arts Academy, and the DAMS course of study at the University of Bologna. DAMS, an acronym for Discipline delle Arti, della Musica e dello Spettacolo (Arts, Music and Performing Arts), launched in 1971, was the first experiment in academia of an entire university degree course focused on arts. The music scene started gaining momentum in the mid-1970s, and when the Fonoprint studio opened in 1976, it quickly became the centre of the city's emerging scene (Toynbee, 2000).

Also central to Bologna's music scene in these years was Harpo's Bazar (later Italian Records), starting in 1979 and involving reputable figures, all of whom were former DAMS students with a strong relationship to the city's political movement that fuelled the 1977 riots. If Fonoprint was mainly tapping into the commercial pop scene, Italian Records was connected to the local alternative culture. Another critical feature of Bologna's alternative music scene was constituted by free radios ('radio libere', see Cordoni et al., 2006), which attracted some of the best creative talents of the Italian alternative culture scene (Briziarelli, 2016). Overall, the city progressively became an established national music production hub during the 1980s and the early 1990s.

"Bologna was a hub that international artists used to attend, there were plenty of gigs "

(Participant 1)

"Many important shows took place here. Patty Smith, Lou Reed, the Talking Heads came to Bologna to perform. Dave Groll lived here" (Participant 12)

"Forming a band was simple. Sharing was interesting and there were venues to do that... We were imperfect but we had a lot of imagination. It was easy to meet... There were

many places where one could pioneer new things and there were people that used to come to Bologna for that (Participant 12)

The defining features of Bologna included a dense relational structure that weaved together small but active communities of musicians, and these relations gained national recognition as a thriving local music scene. Political and social conditions nourished a young, inclusive, multi-ethnic environment, contributing to perceived quality of life and easy living (Bloomfield, 1993). However, several participants agree that this sparkling scenario evolved for the worse, leaving space to decreasing creativity, artistic stagnancy and urban commercialisation. This is how two of them refer to the last decade.

“Bologna is no longer a city that can give you notoriety. Now Bologna is [...] a kindergarten where everyone knows each other. Today the city is very self-referential, it lives in the myth of itself” (Participant 2)

“There is still a lot of music, but only in the suburbs. It is difficult to meet since the centre has been taken away from young people and given to tourists” (Participant 4)

Notably, it seems that music-making has been outweighed by other sources of commercial value that can be understood under the umbrella of an increasing tourist-oriented marketisation. It seems appropriate to propose a preliminary periodisation that describe the evolution of the music scene in Bologna. By integrating previous attempts to spell out different phases in the city’s cultural policies (Felicori, 2013), Figure 1 illustrates three main moments, thus enabling us to observe the trajectory of a marketised city of music in a historical perspective.

Conscious of the problems inherent in agreeing on meaningful historical periodisations, the splitting points of the timeframe have been chosen based on socio-cultural events that influenced profoundly the life of the city. 1978 was chosen as the year marking the end of the traumatic period that culminated in the 1977 riots. 1995 is the first year of period 2 as it constituted a crucial year in several respects. First, it marked the end of the criminal activities carried out by the local “White Uno Gang”, which sparked terror and insecurity in the early 90s. In the same year, Bologna received the first UNESCO award as a Renaissance City and hosted the annual conference of the Eurocities network, thus marking a symbolic step towards a greater integration of European policies and values (Martinese, 2016). This second analytical chunk features several events that started propelling the entrepreneurial character of Bologna, such as the European Capital of Culture award (2000). The second proposed period ends in 2005, the year before an additional UNESCO recognition was awarded to Bologna for its music heritage. During this third period, starting in 2006, an official Destination Management Organisation was launched and we witnessed intensifying marketing policies, such as the participatory project “Bologna City Branding” (Giovanardi and Silvagni, 2021).

Please insert Figure 1 here

This section has established the existence of a link between some of the policy choices undertaken over decades and the collaboration practices of pop-rock musicians. The next session seeks to assess the magnitude of this link, focusing on the level of cohesiveness among those.

4. Mapping out music collaborations

4.1 Understanding social cohesion

The relational structures and the level of cohesion exhibited by performers can be assessed through the tools of Social Network Analysis, that is a method to analyse the local structure of cultural production clusters (Ter Wal and Boschma, 2009). Cohesion is sometimes conceived as a character of an individual tie, but in the structural approach it is a property of the distribution of ties over the members of the network. As a character of an individual tie, cohesion is associated to the strength of the tie between two actors, e.g., in terms of its affective content, or frequency of cooperation, or value of economic exchange and the like. In structural terms, cohesion refers instead to the presence of subgroups of actors such that ties are frequent within each such subgroup, while relatively few ties connect actors who belong to distinct subgroups. These groups are indeed referred to as cohesive subgroups. In this respect, our approach is structural since we are concerned with the existence in the network of relatively separate subgroups of artists and albums, and we do not observe characters of the individual tie, which in this study extends from an artist to an album he/she took part in. However, it is worth noting that these two perspectives on cohesion are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, Granovetter's (1973) influential work on "the strength of weak ties" precisely discussed the association between the content (strength) of the ties, and the network structural pattern that resulted from the property of transitivity of the strong ties. The next sections investigate this property.

4.2 Formal Social Network Analysis: data and results

In this section, we investigate the artistic collaborations implied by the joint participation of pop-rock musicians in the city of Bologna by focusing on the making of published albums. We draw on Social Network Analysis (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Borgatti et al. 2018; Pedrini, Corrado and Sacco 2021) to analyse the structural configuration of these collaborations and their change between 1978 and 2019. First, a list of the more influential pop-rock singers-

songwriters who lived and worked in Bologna during the chosen timeframe was created through archival research. Then, all the studio albums released by them during the chosen timeframe were identified. Overall, we collected 196 albums published and coded the 845 musicians credited as participants¹. Table 1 provides some descriptive statistics that relate to the whole timeframe and to the three periods articulated in section 3, each of which exhibits noteworthy changes in the patterns of artists' collaborations.

Please insert Table 2 here

We observe that 88 out of the 196 albums were published in the first period (1978-1994) by 16 singers-songwriters. This first period is the longest of the three (17 years) and fewer albums were surveyed for next two periods 1995-2005 and 2006-2019, with 52 and 56 albums, by 17 and 20 authors, respectively. However, despite the variations in the length of the periods and in the quantity of published albums, the number of musicians involved in their making (i.e. guitarists, bass players, drummers, pianists, etc.) is similar. This number is the same for the first and last period (350) and reaches a maximum (371) in the middle (and shortest) period, 1995-2005. This pattern is also evident in the average number of artists that participate in each album, that is 10.84 for the whole period of observation. 1978-1994 and 2006-2019 show very similar results (10.4 and 10.3 respectively), while this number is highest in 1995-2005 (12.1). However, the average number of albums in which each artist participated is highest for 1978-1994 (2.61 albums) and around 1.7 for both 1995-2005 and 2006-2019.

For each of the periods we coded a separate binary matrix A , with the albums listed along the rows and the artists along the columns, such that $A(ij)$ equals 1 if artist j was listed in the

¹ The list of selected albums are available on request.

credits of album i , and 0 otherwise. This data structure describes a 2-mode network, where the two modes are the two different sets of entities listed along the matrix rows (albums) and columns (artists), and the ties (the 1s in the matrix cells) are observed only between entities of the two different sets, i.e. no ties are allowed among entities in the same set. In this present study we choose to exploit network methods aimed at directly analysing the 2-mode network (Borgatti and Everett, 1997; Borgatti and Halgin, 2011) without transforming it in a 1-mode. The network for the whole period 1979-2019 is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows the networks for the periods 1978-1994 (A), 1995-2005 (B) and 2006-2019 (C). The layouts of the nodes have been computed by an optimisation algorithm available through the software NetDraw (Borgatti, 2002), which improves readability and interpretability of the picture by implementing three visual preferences: (1) a correspondence between geometric distances among the points in the picture and the geodesic distance between the nodes in the network (the geodesic distance is the number of lines included in the shortest sequence connecting two nodes); (2) points not too close, so that they are not shown on top of each other; (3) equal-length of the lines.

Please insert Figure 2 here

Density indicates the number of ties in the network, expressed as the ratio of the observed ties over the maximum number of ties that may exist given the number of nodes. This statistic measures the volume of the phenomenon of artistic collaborations and depends directly on the number of credits per album (Table 2); not surprisingly, it follows the same pattern. *Transitivity* is a statistic that varies between 0 and 1, and measures the extent to which the network is fragmented in relatively separate cohesive groups, i.e. ties are frequent between artists and albums in the same group, while few ties exist across the groups' boundaries. Transitivity is a

key concept of network analysis: it connects local configurations of ties at the micro-level to global macro-structural properties of the network (Holland and Leinhardt, 1971; Granovetter, 1973; Watts and Strogatz, 1998; Borgatti et al. 2018). We computed the transitivity coefficient as implemented in Ucinet (Borgatti et al., 2002).

The closer to 1 the transitivity, the more the collaborations across different albums tend to be repeated among the same artists. Conversely, null transitivity (transitivity = 0) would imply that two artists never collaborated for more than one album. The closer to 0 the transitivity, the more diverse are the artists collaborations across different albums.

Please insert Table 3 here

Table 3 illustrates both the volume of artistic collaborations and their basic structural features across the whole 40-year timespan of observation and within the three periods. The network density shows a maximum in 1995-2005 (3.3%) but it does not change greatly across the whole period of observation. Further, it is roughly the same in the first and last periods (3% and 2.9% respectively). Despite this relative stability in the magnitude of the phenomenon, *Transitivity* and *Average Distance* (i.e. the average of distance between all pairs of nodes) show that the network structure of artistic collaborations changes notably across the three periods. Research (Watts and Strogatz, 1998; Watts, 1999) has shown how high transitivity (clustering) tends to be associated with longer geodesic distances between nodes due to the sparseness of the ties that connect different subgroups. The *Average Distance* and *Transitivity* values shown in Table 2 confirm this pattern. The transitivity increases from 39% in 1978-1994, to 55% in 1995-2005 and to 63% in 2006-2019, showing that artistic collaborations tend to increasingly segregate within closed circles of artists. Parallel to this is the increase of the distances. In

1978-1994 the average length of the shortest path connecting two nodes (i.e., the distance) was 4.4; in 1995-2005 it increased to 5.5 and to 6.8 in 2006-2019.

Figure 3 shows that the form of the network has changed substantially over time. At first, greater cohesion was visible in the size of the largest component, which represents the group of people who collaborate the most and repeatedly among themselves. Afterwards, this component decreased, leaving room for increasingly more isolated projects. This growing disconnection of the network mirrors the release of isolated records and is accompanied by a lower productivity of the sector.

Please insert Figure 3 here

Finally, it is useful to conclude by focusing again on the overall number of musicians that were active in album-making within each period. Of the 25 singers-songwriters that released records over the whole 1978-2019, 16 are the ‘forerunners’ who were already active in the first period. Of these 16, twelve (namely 75% of them) continued their activity also in Periods One and Two, demonstrating enduring creativity and commercial longevity. Only four new author names appear in Period Two, with the same value going up to 5.0 for the Period Three. The significance of these figures will be discussed in the next section, in an attempt to evaluate the allegedly diminished capacity of the local music community to prosper.

5. Individualisation and marketisation

The results presented in the previous section appear to enrich the periodisation offered in Figure 1, indicating that the gradual takeover of the neoliberal agenda in Bologna’s cultural policies, especially after 2000, may have gone hand in hand with a growing fragmentation in the local

music scene. Table 4 shows the main characteristics of each period, revealing the change in relatedness among artists while the tourist-oriented marketisation encouraged by local authorities becomes more prominent. Assuming that the policy changes promoted by local authorities reverberate on the social dynamics among artists, as evident in the interviews excerpts shown, it is possible to articulate some tentative reflections. In particular, the improvement in the transitivity index and the decrease of the density indicator (even though it remains rather low) show that a modified urban climate might not have contributed to fostering cooperative effects among musicians.

Please insert Table 4 here

Consistently, we can observe a growing individualisation at a time when social cohesion was at its peak in the music community. This has been accompanied by a reduction in productivity, which we can measure through the number of published records. At this stage, the number of musicians was still remarkable, but this factor was not accompanied by a greater productivity in the sector.

“In the 2000s the level of interaction dropped dramatically... there were fewer places where to meet and play. After [the mayor] Cofferati, it became harder to meet up. Up until then, the concentration of musicians was really high. There was the will to do things together... it wasn't the same in other cities. There was less unity” (Participant 1)

“The shutdown of pubs was the worst blow stricken against culture, and institutions were primarily responsible for not giving space to the young people. Today the rehearsal studios are only in the outskirts. It has become more difficult to meet up and do things together” (Participant 4)

A gradual reduction in productivity and the resulting change in the network structure that happened during a time of progressively intense strategies of marketisation and securitisation

mirrors the weakening of the cooperative character that traditionally underpinned music communities in Bologna. In other words, the results suggest that the deployment of neoliberal policies had gone hand in hand with a rising fragmentation in the collaboration among cultural producers, which might be a symptom of the declining capacity of the city's music industry to maintain its vitality over time. Ironically, the presence of a cohesive group of artists could be acknowledged until the year 2000, the year in which the city was recognised as a European City of Culture, when policy makers began to use more extensively urban commercialisation tools and, as some musicians stated, "the end begun".

"Generally, for an art or music scene to flourish, it is enough not to prevent, rather than articulate ambiguous policies of support or development" (Participant 7)

Since then, a decline in the production of cultural content has progressed, while practices of urban commodification, touristification and beautification have continued at a faster pace (Giovanardi and Silvagni, 2021).

"Now Bologna is a swamp from a creative point of view" (Participant 2)

This interpretation is corroborated if we compare the quantity of *new* author names whose records appear on the music scene in the second (only three) and third period (only five). This might be a sign that the commercial and symbolic power of the local music scene is still, so to speak, being built upon giants' shoulders and that the community is lacking the openness that characterised it in the earliest phase during the late 1970s. This represents a possible inadequacy or, at least, an area into which policy makers should look more seriously. For a city of music, in particular, it would be important to rely on engagement activities that would inject fresh energy into musician communities and stimulate cross-fertilisation and innovative

practices. This is a misalignment that research on cultural policies should discuss more intensely in the upcoming years, distancing more critically from stances that postulate the unconditioned deployment of consumption-led perspectives to CCIs.

“It is the social, political, and cultural history of the streets of Bologna that make it a city of music and musicians, more than any official initiative. Music develops along and within the history of human groups, in a way that is spontaneous after all” (Participant 7)

6. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the individualisation of the music scene its variations across the last decades within the Italian UNESCO Creative City of Music of Bologna. Specifically, the paper has examined the formal relationship of collaboration among pop-rock musicians between 1978 and 2019 against the backdrop of an allegedly augmented scenario of urban marketisation, which has driven the city towards major international recognition (e.g. European Capital of Culture). It is ironic to observe that social cohesion among musicians seem to dissipate across decades as the tourist-oriented identity of the cities is given shape by local authorities and the title of City of Music is awarded. Even though further research is necessary to establish a more direct causal link between policy choices and the progressive fragmentation of the music scene, the tendency shown by our findings poses significant worrying questions to music managers and local authorities in general. Notably, in a landscape shaped by the progressive individualisation of the music scene, cultural producers may receive differential opportunities for engaging in fruitful (and profitable) collaboration or, instead, experiencing isolation. For example, the failed retention of existing talents or the exclusion of new, possibly

young, musicians may have negative consequences on future music-related activities in a creative city like Bologna (see Gill and Pratt, 2008). The frustration emerging from the musicians' accounts offers supplementary food for thought in this respect.

Cultural producers such as artists, allegedly the most important generator of attractiveness for a creative city, should be receiving more attention by local authorities when they harness the value of creativity to generate commercial allure. The risk of continuing with the 'business as usual' would lead to a progressive loss of cultural production capacity, which could not be redressed only through the deployment of promotional programmes or the achievement of internationally renown labels. There is evidence that consumer-oriented (and tourism-oriented) policies, if not adequately calibrated, could reduce space for creative production and hinder a city's cultural orientation (Calveri and Sacco, 2021). More can be done in order to gauge and evaluate the actual needs of local artists, for example by identifying benchmark cities that have proved to be particularly successful in attracting and retaining artists communities. This effort may include, but go beyond the provision of physical spaces and infrastructure such as rehearsal rooms. This is the approach that we hope will be pursued with renovated strength by the new policies that the Emilia-Romagna Region has been developing to address the cultural and creative industries sector.

This study has several limitations. First, it should be acknowledged that the change in the cultural practices illustrated in this study has been accompanied by a remarkable shift in how music-related products are created, distributed and consumed. Further research should illuminate the effects that digitalisation and other industry-related factors have on creativity, productivity and social cohesion among artists. Furthermore, future studies should perform an analysis of live albums, which may constitute an even more accurate proxy to map out collaborative relationships and their changes. Additionally, the exclusive focus on the Bologna music scene constitutes a limitation. It would be valuable to extend the analysis to other cultural

sectors, such as the film, comics and publishing industries. Finally, it would be worthwhile to perform multiple-case studies by investigating a wider array of medium-sized cities while they implement, modify or resist neoliberal policies in different contexts (Hassen and Giovanardi, 2021).

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Table 1: Interview Participants

Participant number	Interview mode	Position occupied in the network; periods of activity
1	Phone	Session man repeatedly collaborating with famous recording artists over periods 1 and 3. Position in the network is less central.
2	Phone	Singer woman collaborating with famous recording artists over periods 2 and 3. Position in the network is less central.
3	Phone	Individual recording artis active over periods 1, 2 and 3..
4	Phone	Singer woman with a central position in the network due to collaborations with several recording artists, active over periods 1, 2 and 3.
5	Phone	Session man with a central position in the network due to collaborations with several recording artists, active over periods 1, 2 and 3.
6	In person	Session man repeatedly collaborating with famous recording artists over periods 1, 2 and 3. Position in the network is less central.
7	In person	Session man repeatedly collaborating with recording artists over periods 1, 2 and 3. Position in the network is less central.....
8	In person	Session man featuring multiple collaorations with different recording artists in the network over periods 1, 2 and 3. Position in the network is intermediate.
9	Phone	Session man featuring multiple collaorations with different recording artists in the network over periods 1, 2 and 3. Position in the network is intermediate.
10	Phone	Session man with a central position in the network due to collaborations with several recording artists, active over periods 1, 2.
11	Phone	Session man repeatedly collaborating with famous recording artists over periods 1, 2 and 3. Position in the network is less central.
12	Phone	Session man repeatedly collaborating with famous recording artists over periods 2 and 3. Position in the network is less central.

Table 2

	<i>Albums</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Artists</i>	<i>Av. Credits (Artists) per Album</i>	<i>Av. Albums per Artist</i>
<i>1978-2019</i>	196	25	845	10.84	2.51
<i>1978-1994</i>	88	16	350	10.40	2.61
<i>1995-2005</i>	52	17	371	12.13	1.70
<i>2006-2019</i>	56	20	350	10.32	1.65

Table 3 Network Statistics

	<i>Density</i>	<i>Avg Dist</i>	<i>Transitivity</i>
<i>1978-2019</i>	0.013	5.536	0.343
<i>1978-1994</i>	0.030	4.431	0.393
<i>1995-2005</i>	0.033	5.477	0.552
<i>2006-2019</i>	0.029	6.814	0.626

Table 4. Storying a branded city of music

<i>Periods</i>	<i>Policy context</i>
PERIOD 1 (1978-1994) <i>'Exploitation'</i>	1970s-1980s: the heydays of productivity that granted the city a reputation of being a city of music (Schnoeleben, 1993); as productivity among musicians peaks, consumption-oriented cultural policies begin.
PERIOD 2 (1995-2005) <i>'Glamouring and Security'</i>	1990s: The city prepares its application for becoming a European City of Culture, devoting economic resources to major events (in this phase, a decline in music production begins). The circle of established authors remained quite unchanged as only few new names came to the fore. Security policies were implemented at an urban level.
PERIOD 3 (2006-2019) <i>'The lost contents'</i>	2000s: The city is rich in events and begins to invest resources in professionally brand building, pursuing marketing-oriented attraction policies (productivity of the industry decreases and fragmentation of the local music scene increases). In this phase, the city seems to face issues in keeping its degree of innovation in the pop-rock music content production; this is evident in the few new names of authors that release albums in this period.

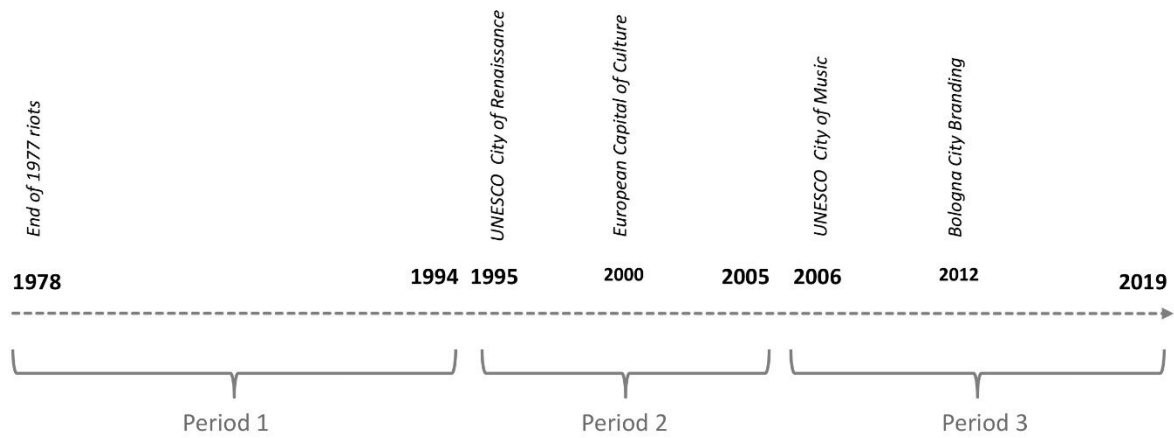


Figure 1. The proposed periodisation.

887x380mm (72 x 72 DPI)

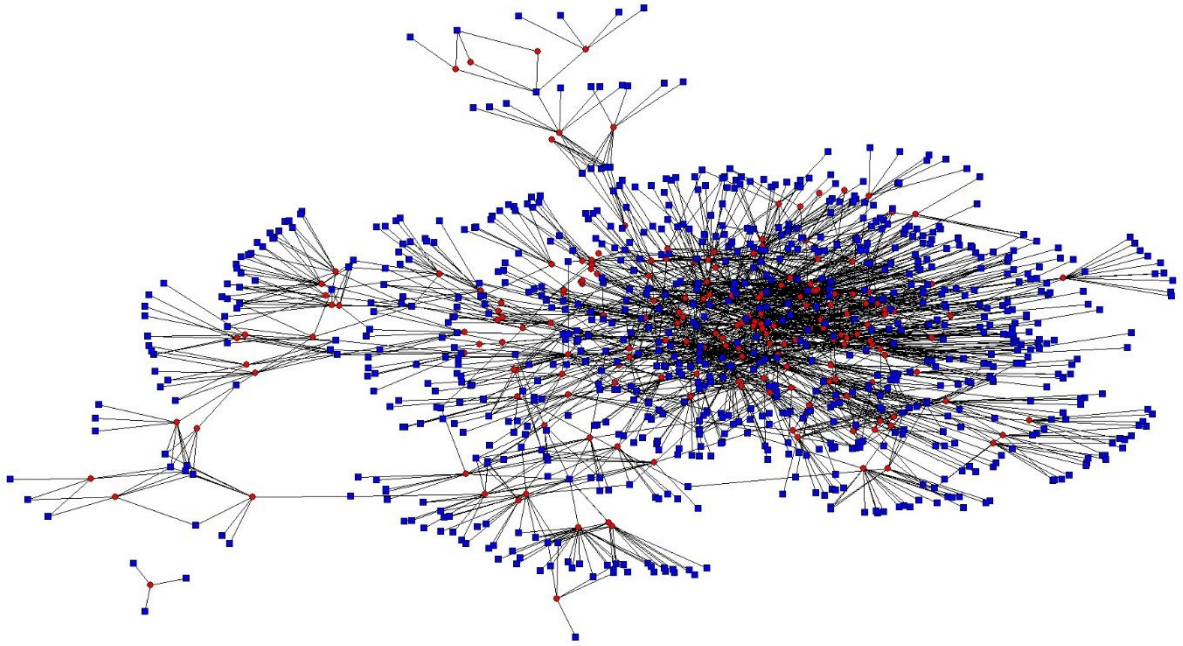


Figure 2. Network of albums and artists for the whole period 1979-2019

627x342mm (72 x 72 DPI)

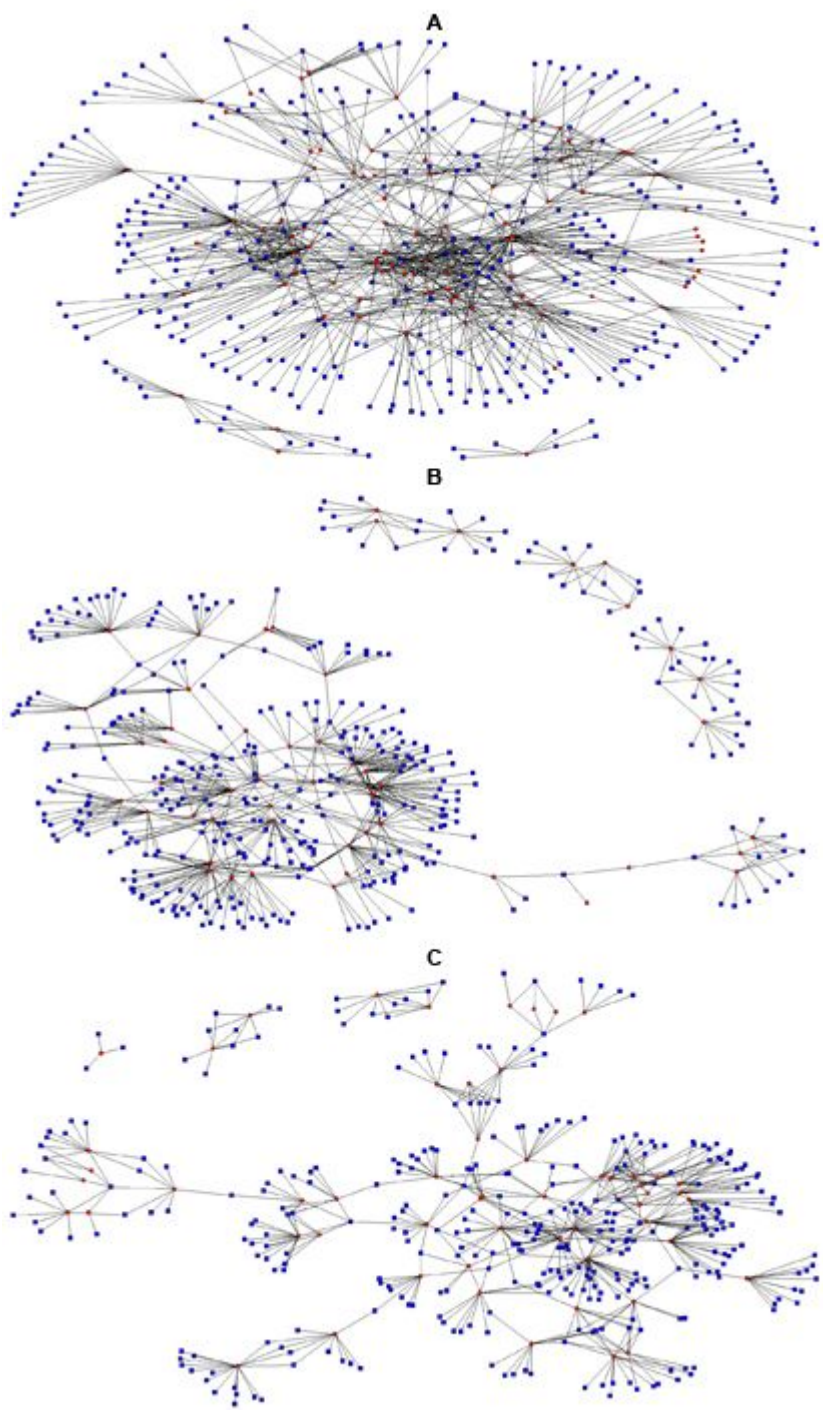


Figure 3. Network of albums (red circles) and artists (blue squares) in 1978-1994 (A); 1995-2005 (B) and 2006-2019 (C).

145x250mm (72 x 72 DPI)