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Nick Crossley, Siobhan McAndrew, and Paul Widdop (Eds.), "Social Networks and Music Worlds." London: Routledge, 2014, 252 pp.

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Networks matter. *Social Networks and Music Worlds* is a very welcome collection of eleven chapters, which has the prime result (among the others) of showing with nine empirical cases the relevance of network methods and theories applied to the sociological inquiry on music.

The title of the book is a brief and effective synthesis of the intellectual research program leading the whole work. In fact the book is not simply about networks and music, but it explicitly deals with music *worlds* (readers familiar with sociology of culture will soon notice this). In the introduction, the editors clarify the adoption of a worlds perspective, instead of a frame more focused on *fields*, *scenes*, or *sub-cultures*, all concepts with a clear relational sensibility. Who is familiar with Nick Crossley's previous work on the difference, and attempt of integration, between networks and worlds will find here a golden mine of empirical analyses bridging the two research areas.

So, why music "worlds"? According to the editors, Becker's worlds account, better than other perspectives, for the geographical variability of cultural systems, being variably local, trans-local, or also virtual; they do not rely on a specific genre or style; they are forms of collective action, in which individual agency is central, together with the interdependence among the participants. The various chapters of the book and their fifteen authors, even if with variable degrees of adherence to the concept, address these issues.

The book shows how networks, and social ties in general, are relevant for several domains that concern a cultural world: gender [chapters 4 and 7], tastes [5 and 10], careers [9], local scenes [6, 8, 10], collaborations [11]; everything with a common relational look. In this sense it is not a book for just music scholars, as the editors say in the introduction; it is also an updated collection of essays that analyze many aspects related to the sociological analysis of culture, and moreover it is a book about the relational dimension of one specific, largely unexplored, field of applied social network analysis, and for this reason it is of interest also for network researchers.

Social network analysis (SNA), briefly presented in chapter 2, is adopted as an effective set of tools for the investigation of the reticular structure of the nine cases. In this sense if the music worlds are the "what" of the book, SNA is the "how" in which they are observed.

It sometimes happens that network practitioners are asked if SNA is more a method or a theory. The right answer of course is that it involves both aspects, but according to the applications one or the other may prevail. *Social Networks and Music Worlds* is a book in which SNA is jointly adopted as a methodological tool and as theoretical frame that inspire hypotheses based on relational mechanisms. There is no space in this review to describe each chapter of the book in detail, rather it is worth to provide some generalizations about these different possibilities: I present here two main (non-mutually exclusive) points, concerning SNA as a theoretical support for the formation of hypotheses, and SNA as descriptive tool for music worlds, with some critical observations.

In the book three cases out of nine use the "homophily-heterophily argument" to describe some relational mechanisms that take place in different social and musical contexts. "Homophily refers to the tendency for nodes to form ties disproportionately with others who share a salient attribute with them" [p. 28].

Studying the (missed) success among British female composers [chapter 4] Siobhan McAndrew and Martin Everett discover how male and female musicians are involved in differentiated patterns of homophilous and heterophilous relations. While male composers show homophily, that is the existence of face-to-face relations with other composers of the same sex, female composers show (induced) heterophily, being tacitly forced to connect with other male musicians in order to achieve their success levels.

Also in the case study on Ladysfest [chapter 7], Susan O'Shea shows how both homophily and heterophily play a role in the structure and evolution of feminist music worlds. On one side the "involvement with Ladysfest increases the opportunity of forming meaningful relationships with others different ethnic groups and places" [p. 141], while on the other side "age, education, class and a non-heterosexual identity have a slight tendency to encourage homophilous ties" [*Ibidem*].

The homophily hypothesis is also applied by Paul Widdop in his analysis of networks and omnivorism [chapter 5]. It is one of the most intriguing applications of network methods to a typical theme of sociology of culture (omnivorousness), particularly because it adds some knowledge to the phenomenon starting from a network-based hypothesis. Widdop shows that a personal network dense of heterophilous relations is associated with a greater level of musical activity. As the author states: "Being active in music is much more complex than simply basing it on theoretical assumptions of class and education; it is fundamentally a social act; the level to which you engage in music and the genres you attach to are somewhat dependant upon the networks you are embedded in and position in the social structure" [p. 99].

In this sense the analysis shows that omnivores have larger and more diverse friendship networks, compared to the denser and family-centered networks of the univores, irrespective of class and education. So while traditional ascribed and class variables are important to observe omnivore and univore behaviors, this chapter is a valid contribution to the empirical research stream that is increasingly showing how consumption and tastes are mediated by network – and social capital – structure.

The second point concerns SNA as an analytical tool applied to music, and in general, cultural worlds. As already mentioned, *world* is an inherently relational category, and this makes SNA a suitable method of observation, which translates apparently individual practices and social structures in formal and measurable systems of relations: this is the scope of Karim Hammou's research on collaboration in francophone rap music [chapter 6] and McAndrew, Widdop and Stevenson's analysis on British jazz world [chapter 11]. The analyses are both based on the same analytical principle: the network is the sum of all the relations among the musicians involved in the music world. In the case of the francophone rap the observed relations are all the "featuring" among singers in a corpus of 500 selected records; in the case of British jazz the relations are made by jazz players who collaborate. In both cases whole networks are constructed starting from artistic collaborations. Whole networks give plenty of possibilities of analysis, that for example involve centrality metrics, core-periphery models, brokerage, density and so

forth. All these measures provide very precise descriptions of the overall social structure of a social world. For example, from the first case we learn that the French rap social structure involves a "centre," localized around Ile-de-France region, which "hosts only 38 per cent of the artistic units involved in the network but it is responsible for 60 per cent of the overall collaborative activity" [p.117]; and a "periphery," which hosts most of the musicians of the network with poor collaboration patterns. About British jazz we know instead that musicians' "success" may be associated with particular variables, such as being also a composer, or may not be associated with others, such as the number of instruments played, having attended formal music education, or more interestingly, being central in the network.

All these information provide precious thick *descriptions* of the structural properties of the fields, but they might sometimes appear over-descriptive, leaving many open questions about the *reasons* of some peculiar phenomena. Thus, if one strength of the book is to give scientific dignity and empirical visibility to the topic of the relations between networks and culture, perhaps the excess of description is one general limit of some analyses provided in the book. It might seem to network newcomers that SNA is more a method to describe than a method to explain social phenomena. On this line, more detailed conclusions within the chapters would have helped the reader, especially in generalizing the results beyond the specific case studies.

Anyhow the book amply shows the numerous methodological possibilities for the analysis of cultural fields through SNA. One undoubted merit is the broad use of mixed method research strategies. In fact almost all the chapters use more than one analytical approach, including, besides SNA, interviews, archival documents, on-line survey, ethnography, longitudinal data analysis and traditional descriptive statistics.

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