



Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Sociologia, Comunicazione  
Dipartimento di Comunicazione e Ricerca Sociale

Dottorato in Comunicazione, Ricerca Sociale e Marketing  
XXXIII° ciclo

Curriculum Comunicazione

The Social Capital of Creative Freelancers  
Networking Practices in Digital and Urban Spheres

Dottorando: Lou Therese Elisabeth Brandner  
Matricola 1792382

Supervisor: Prof.ssa Elena Valentini  
Co-Supervisor: Prof.ssa Stefania Parisi

Coordinatore: Prof. Antonio Fasanella

A.A. 2019-2020

## **Abstract**

This study explores how freelancers in the creative and cultural industries (CCI) create, utilise and maintain social capital in the context of highly flexibilised, deregulated and digitalised labour markets. CCI freelancers organise their own workplace, working schedule and social security. Regardless of widespread precarity, they commonly perceive their working conditions as an autonomous choice to enjoy the privilege of working creatively. In relational, project-based working environments, their main way to find employment opportunities and reduce risk are social relationships. Their networking practices potentially lead to an intertwinement of private and professional spheres as well as digital and physical connections, and therefore to specific forms of sociality.

This project has a qualitative approach, focusing on freelance creatives in Rome, Italy, and Berlin, Germany. Interviews were conducted with 31 creative freelancers living or working in the neighbourhoods of San Lorenzo and Pigneto in Rome as well as Kreuzberg and Neukölln in Berlin. These data were analysed with a grounded theory approach. Additionally, creative freelancers' urban surroundings, networks and social media content were analysed with a network-ethnographic perspective to networking practices in digital and urban spaces.

Findings imply that within the sample, the creation, utilisation and maintenance of social capital constitute continuous tasks throughout the careers of creative freelancers. Berlin's urban space as a networking environment is more professionalised and adapted to the needs of the "creative class" compared to Rome's more improvised yet more tight-knit creative scene. The relationship of social capital and the digital sphere appears to be shifting, with social media platforms increasingly serving the purpose of bonding on a more personal level with audiences through curated displays of intimacy. Constant networking as an integral part of the entrepreneurial ethos of creative professions overall leads to a profound blurring of personal and private spheres for creative freelancers.

## **Acknowledgements**

My thanks go to my supervisors, Prof. Elena Valentini and Prof. Stefania Parisi, for their continuous support, critique and encouragement.

To my interview respondents for their availability and kindness.

To my tried-and-trusted coworker Gaia. Without our writing sessions, the last months would have been a disaster.

To my PhD colleagues Giuliana and Ana; to my friends Ffion, Anna and Anika. Your friendship and advice have been invaluable no matter how near or far we are apart.

An meine liebste Mama, ohne deren bedingungslose Unterstützung ich niemals "Sozialistin an der Universität in Rom" geworden wäre.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1. Literature Review</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 History and State of the Field	12
1.1.1 The culture industry	12
1.1.2 Cultural policies for cultural industries	14
1.1.3 “New Labour” and the shift to creative industries	17
1.1.4 Creative clusters in creative cities	20
1.1.5 Creative class in a digital age?	22
1.2 Theoretical Frame	26
1.2.1 Social capital in distinction to other forms of capital	26
1.2.2 Influential definitions of social capital	28
1.2.3 Applying social capital to creative and cultural industries	32
1.2.4 Social capital in digital versus urban spaces	36
1.3 Discussion: The Social Capital of Creative Freelancers	41
<b>2. Methodology</b>	<b>43</b>
2.1 Case Selection	44
2.1.1 Case selection: Cities	45
2.1.2 Case selection: Neighbourhoods	47
2.2 Methods	51
2.2.1 Interviews	53
2.2.2 Network ethnography through snowball sampling	56
<b>3. The Process of Networking: Creating, Utilising and Maintaining Social Capital</b>	<b>60</b>
3.1 Creating Social Capital	61
3.1.1 “Natural” networking	61
3.1.2 Breaking into structures	66
3.1.3 The role of educational institutions	71
3.1.4 Discussion	74
3.2 Utilising Social Capital	77

3.2.1 Human newsletters	77
3.2.2 “If you contact them, they don’t call you”	79
3.2.3 Spreading the word	81
3.2.4 Discussion	84
3.3 Maintaining Social Capital	86
3.3.1 Out of sight, out of mind	86
3.3.2 Professional friends, friendly professionals	89
3.3.3 Competition or solidarity?	92
3.3.4 Discussion	94
<b>4. Freelance Creatives in Rome and Berlin: Comparing Urban and Digital Spaces</b>	<b>97</b>
4.1 Urban Space	98
4.1.1 The neighbourhoods as perceived by their residents	99
4.1.2 Workspaces	107
4.2 Digital Space	117
4.2.1 The curated intimacy of professional profiles	118
4.2.2 Concealed professionalism of private profiles	124
4.2.3 The idealistic rejection of social media	128
4.3 Will COVID-19 Change Everything?	131
4.4 Discussion: A Dissolution of Boundaries	136
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	<b>139</b>
5.1 Summary of the Main Results	140
5.1.1 Social capital as a continuous responsibility	140
5.1.2 Individualisation and co-operation across different spheres	142
5.1.3 Self-branded, self-entrepreneurial: The figure of the creative	146
5.2 Final Remarks	150
Bibliography	152

## Introduction

*It's strange, no? It mixes sociality with work, a strange kind of work where it seems you are socialising, but actually you are working. It's difficult to define precisely. Maybe you get a beer with someone, but then you talk about ideas or something. It's clear that it's not work, I don't know if you can call that work. Vocation, I don't know...<sup>1</sup>*

The figure of “the creative” occupies a peculiar, often paradigmatic space in contemporary labour discourses. The creative is considered a passionate worker, basing his/her occupation on an artistic urge rather than on economic concerns. Creatives, particularly those who work as freelancers, ostensibly know no working hours, no workplace; their work is their life and vice versa. Socialising and connecting with other creatives, as described by an interview respondent in the above quote, becomes an essential part of their working practices, as they are obliged to create their own professional networks to find clients and collaborators. Having a “vocation” rather than a mere job requires them to commodify their personal and social life in order to further their careers. Creative freelancers thus face specific challenges connected to their image and the circumstances they work in. In this research, I explore creative freelancers as economic actors at the intersection of entrepreneurialism and precarity. The study focuses on social capital as an overarching theme of freelance creative careers, analysing networking processes in urban as well as digital contexts.

The cultural and creative industries (CCI) have developed and increased their economic importance rapidly within the last decades. This development is connected to wider shifts in 21st century labour markets and values as well as ongoing digitalisation and urbanisation processes. With the integration of cultural production into capitalist valorisation mechanisms, creativity has become a commodified asset. The post-Fordist fragmentation of consumer markets in the late 20th century furthermore has fostered the rise of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as well as freelance workers, who largely sustain the CCI as a highly individualised business sector. The CCI overall, and particularly sectors connected to digital media, have increased their economic significance immensely over the last decades. Influential

---

<sup>1</sup> Interview quote from a 34-year old male respondent working as an artist in San Lorenzo and Neukölln.

recommendations by Charles Landry (2000) and Richard Florida (2002) led to a paradigm change in urban policy with an emphasis on fostering creativity in order to increase economic competitiveness. Attracting the so-called creative class, consisting of a creativity- and knowledge-based, highly-skilled and hyper-mobile labour force to cities and regions is now considered a key driver for innovation and growth.

To determine a coherent definition of the CCI, some scholars propose a model surrounding *core* creative industries based on the “purest” expressions of creativity (such as music or visual arts) as opposed to more “applied” creative skills (such as advertising or architecture) (Throsby, 2001). Contrary to this view, others factor out the fine arts as a sector, given their lack of industrialisation (Hesmondhalgh, 2002) or distinguish between the “for profit” cultural industries and the “not for profit” cultural sector (Pratt, 2005). All of these perspectives however attract criticism for recreating dichotomies between “high” and “low” art as well as disregarding the extent to which these various sections are interrelated and linked in the overall commercialisation of cultural production (cf. O’Connor, 2007).

While an exact definition of the CCI will likely never be agreed upon, there has been a growing consensus on which sectors should generally be considered a part of them as “culturally productive industries, activities and practices” (UNESCO; 2009, p. 23). Working definitions include: cultural and natural heritage (museums, archaeological sites et cetera); performance and celebration (performing arts, music, festivals et cetera); visual arts and crafts (photography, fine arts et cetera); books and press; audio-visual and interactive media (film, radio, video games et cetera); design and creative services (graphic design, architecture, advertising et cetera) (UNESCO, 2009). Labour in these sectors, which mostly consists in cultural activities/expressions and the production and distribution of cultural goods, which “convey ideas, symbols and ways of life” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 23), is often rooted in the generation and exploitation of intellectual property (O’Connor, 2007). Caves (2000) emphasises the important role of contracts between creators and facilitators (such as between artist and gallerist, author and publisher or actor and agent) in uniting art and commerce; creative producers face the fundamental uncertainty of not knowing the commercial value of their work until it is ultimately sold.

As mentioned, the CCI workforce to a great extent consists of small businesses and freelancers (O'Connor, 2007). Freelancers are individuals working “on a contractual or temporary basis offering their skills, knowledge and/or expertise to others (people, firms or governments) looking to outsource (and/or add value to) a particular labour cost” (Mould, Vorley & Liu, 2013, p. 2438, p. 2442). Often working remotely and being responsible for their own workplace, working hours and training, these actors embody a shift towards increasingly individualised, networked and digitalised labour markets. Particularly freelancers as entrepreneurial, self-reliant and flexible workers in many ways can be called pioneers of this “new spirit of capitalism” (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

At the same time, their working conditions are often precarious. CCI labour is predominantly project-based, highly flexibilised and informalised in the sense of the creative subject as an entrepreneurial self (Manske, 2016). Precariousness and precarity in the context of work refer to a state of insecurity in the sense of for example temporary or irregular employment in connection with unstable and uncertain living conditions (cf. Gill & Pratt, 2008). The COVID-19 pandemic, starting in 2020, has further revealed the extent of precarious labour conditions in the CCI. It halted the sector's economic growth, leaving a high number of creative workers jobless and experiencing the consequences of a lack of social security. The pandemic not only presents an acute economic crisis, but also has exposed long-term structural precarity within the sector (Comunian & England, 2020).

The particular precarity of self-employed and freelance workers causes a reliance on social networks in the form of relationships as a means to secure job opportunities and therefore a living wage. Networks are sets of interconnected nodes (cf. Castells, 2004) and thus, in the case of freelance labour relations, can be described as social structures consisting of interconnected individuals. Connections within these networks can be of varying intensity and are mostly informal as opposed to institutional. Between their nodes or members, they facilitate the transfer of information regarding for example projects, events, employers, recommendations, et cetera. The dependence of CCI freelance workers on networks leads to a paradoxical situation: On the one hand, freelance creatives are highly self-reliant as they are not in permanent employment and neither have a stable network nor a specific



workplace. On the other hand, they are much more dependent on networks to find clients than regularly employed workers. The practice of networking becomes an essential part of their careers and at the same time of their lives. They incorporate the freelance ethos of flexibility, risk-taking and self-entrepreneurialism into the very fabric of their identity (McRobbie, 2016). In this highly individualised yet relational environment, private and professional boundaries blur.

I chose freelancers working in the CCI as the subject of this study because of this distinctive position in contemporary labour markets. While their sector is glorified as a pillar of innovation and economic competitiveness, their unstable, project-based working conditions and lack of social security render them precarious workers. They are illustrative examples of 21st century labour values, given their self-reliance, flexibility and entrepreneurial spirit. This makes freelance work in the creative industries a particularly suitable field to study manifestations of social capital in the labour market; CCI workers need to find strategies to create and maintain connections with people who could further their career.

This study analyses digital and urban networking practices of creative freelancers in Rome and Berlin. These two European capitals are both regarded as economically rather weak and at the same time exhibit various differences regarding the development of the CCI. Berlin is renowned as a “poor, but sexy” creative hub, while Rome is often considered a late bloomer in regard to CCI innovation and structures. No matter the specific environment, as aforementioned, creative freelance working conditions are highly relational and project-based. This renders social relationships the main way to find employment opportunities and reduce risk, potentially leading to a profound intertwinement of private and professional spheres as well as of digital and physical connections. A comparison between the (net)working practices of creative freelancers in Rome and Berlin appears promising to explore different manifestations of social capital in the CCI.

The research employs a qualitative approach; I interviewed 31 creative freelancers living and/or working in the neighbourhoods of San Lorenzo and Pigneto in Rome as well as Kreuzberg and Neukölln in Berlin. These data were analysed with a grounded theory approach to find patterns and create empirically based explanations of the explored phenomena. Additionally, creative freelancers’ urban

surroundings, networks and social media content were analysed with a network-ethnographic perspective.

Chapter 1 connects the development of the CCI with the theoretical frame of the study. First, the shifting terminology of the creative and cultural industries will be summarised with the background of the recent history of the sector in the 20th and 21st century, alongside relevant economic and policy developments. Then, social capital as the main theoretical frame will be explored, differentiating it from other forms of (neo-)capital. The chapter takes into account specific applications of the concept to the realm of (creative) labour, urban spaces and the digital sphere. Afterwards, the Methodology chapter will explain more in-depth the background of the selected cases and present the chosen methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter 3 and 4 analyse the results of the research. Chapter 3 focuses on networking as a general process, analysing quotes from the interviews and emphasising similarities throughout the sample. It separates networking into three phases: creating social capital, utilising social capital and maintaining social capital. Chapter 3 serves as the background for Chapter 4, which explores manifestations of social capital in the analysed spheres and spaces. This chapter first focuses on urban space, presenting maps of the analysed neighbourhoods and exploring workspaces and of the respondents alongside their perceptions of their urban surroundings. The chapter then moves on to the digital realm, looking at the platforms creative freelancers utilise to network online. It focuses particularly on *Instagram* as a platform to self-brand and create connections. The study concludes with a summary and discussion of the main findings as well as some final remarks regarding the study's limitations and opportunities for future research.

## **1. Literature Review**

The development of the cultural and creative industries in the last decades is closely connected to wider economic and social shifts in contemporary capitalism, which can be broadly summarised as the neoliberalisation of post-industrial economies (Bell, 1972; Harvey, 2005). Theorists have coined numerous terms in the context of these changes, such as liquid modernity (Bauman, 2001), network society (Castells, 1996), information age (Castells, 2000), new capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Sennett, 2006), creative economy (Howkins, 2001) or risk society (Beck, 2000). Connected to the “rediscovery” of cities as economic powerhouses of a new global infrastructure of flows (O’Connor, 2007, p. 34; Sassen, 1991), regional and national policies identified CCI as economically valuable and regenerative. This triggered “waves of marketisation” and therefore the rapid growth of the creative sector (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005, p. 7). In a post-industrial knowledge and service society, the CCI are considered an important economic motor.

The objective of this literature review is to first give an overview of policy paradigms and influential discourses regarding CCI policies in the 20th and 21st century. A large body of sociological research and theory has developed alongside political, cultural and ideological shifts that relate to notions of creativity and labour. Afterwards, social capital is explored as a concept and outlined as the main theoretical frame of this study. I will conclude the chapter by summarising the notions most relevant to the conducted research in connection with the figure of the “creative freelancer”.

## **1.1 History and State of the Field**

Interest in the cultural and creative industries by both academics and policy makers has increased immensely over the last years and decades. Academic writing in this area indubitably has influenced the implementation of cultural policies; vice versa, policy developments of course have had considerable impact on academic attention. The following chapter explores this intertwining, providing a historical basis for the theoretical frame of the research, which will be outlined afterwards. Focusing on Europe, I will tell a compressed modern history of the CCI alongside impactful academic and policy approaches. As we will see, the shift in terminology from “cultural industry” over “cultural industries” to “creative industries” and “cultural and creative industries” is connected both to political and academic discourses.

### **1.1.1 The culture industry**

Creativity as a concept has its roots in western, bourgeois individualism, rendering the power of creation a human quality rather than a divine ability. It is an essential characteristic to distinguish the work of “genius” artist-intellectuals from mere manual labour (cf. von Osten, 2007). Starting from the 18th century, art increasingly becomes a commodity, with the market mediating between artist and public (O’Connor, 2007). This development presents a devaluation of the supposed intrinsic merit of artistic work into a mere product, but at the same time an opportunity for artists to gain financial independence (Williams, 1981). The commercialisation of culture in capitalist societies accelerates around the turn of the 20th century, with mass education and growing spending power leading to new waves of cultural production and consumption (O’Connor, 2007). Economic, technological and ideological shifts stimulate even faster growth of the sector in the second half of the century (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005).

Horkheimer and Adorno coin the term “culture industry” in 1947, analysing the commodification of art and culture in post-industrial societies and their incorporation into a monopoly capitalist economy (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2002). Driven by observations during his exile years in the United States, Adorno harshly criticises how the entertainment industry as an ideological tool backs

America's capitalist economy by distracting the public, increasing conformity and social control; "every visit to the cinema leaves me, against all my vigilance, stupider and worse" (Adorno, 1951/1974, p. 25). In the Frankfurt School view, which adopts Marxist concepts of commodification and alienation, popular culture in the form of entertainment – examples of the period were radio shows, magazines, cinema, jazz music – represents the prolongation of work into leisure hours: "Amusement has become an extension of labor under late capitalism" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2002, p. 145). As such, it prevents critical thinking, distracts and relaxes the worker, preparing him or her for another day of work.

The singular form of the term "culture industry" emphasises its referral to the industrialisation of culture, "to the standardisation of the thing itself [...] and to the rationalisation of distribution techniques, but not strictly to the production process" (Adorno, 1991, p. 100). Separating this notion from terms such as "mass culture" or "mass society", which imply that culture arising from the masses "vulgarised" traditional high-brow art, the culture industry produces entertainment for the masses in order to control them, therefore constituting an antithesis to "authentic" art; mass-produced and -distributed culture, instead of having a democratising, pluralising effect, spreads capitalist ideology, pacifies citizens into passive consumers and hinders critical thought (Adorno, 1991).

Adorno's contemplations unintentionally play into post-war fears of a mass culture "americanisation" of European artistic traditions. During the following economic boom, however, the Marxist cultural pessimism of the Frankfurt School loses traction (Sassoon, 2006). An at least partial democratisation of cultural production and distribution due to new technologies such as cassette and video recorders soon make the theory of a singular industry appear antiquated. But the culture industry remains an impactful early critical view of the commodification of art and changing importance of cultural production; as such, in the late 1960s it is rediscovered and revived, albeit with considerable alterations, under the term "cultural industries" (Garnham, 2005).

### **1.1.2 Cultural policies for cultural industries**

The 1970s cultural turn in sociological academia is also reflected in the emergence of the term cultural industries, often moving away from Marxist economics and towards the analysis of culture (Garnham, 2005). Cultural production is now less viewed as a singular, unified apparatus manipulating the masses and more as a dynamic and democratised process, rooted in a collective social basis (Lee, 2013a; O'Connor, 2011). The Frankfurt School's cultural pessimism and focus on political control is replaced by an emphasis on the active role of the audience in shaping popular culture, not least through subversive and counter cultural practices (Garnham, 2005). The boundaries between cultural industries and "authentic art" appear less clear-cut, allowing for complex discussions of both structure and agency within cultural production.

The cultural sector by this point has grown considerably due to, for instance, rising prosperity in the Global North, more spare time and growing importance of cultural consumer goods such as TV sets and hi-fi. Technologies like cassette and video recorders, cameras or printers become more affordable and widely available, diversifying and democratising commodified and non-commodified cultural production. Countercultural and avant-garde movements, utilising art as a medium of opposition and resistance, render the idea of a singular, standardised cultural industry more and more obsolete (O'Connor, 2007; Williams, 1981).

The increasing importance and meaning of cultural industries is part of broader societal and economic developments. Post-Fordist fragmentation of consumer markets goes along with the growth of SMEs and self-employed or freelance workers. Consumption transcends the satisfaction of material needs such as food and shelter; consuming goods and services with symbolic value such as artisanal niche products now also serve the construction of social identity and constitute a "lifestyle" (Garnham, 2005). For workers in the cultural sector, their growing autonomy leads to an oversaturated market and therefore to insecure working conditions (Miège, 1987).

From a policy point of view, culture up until this point is mostly considered a concern of national heritage. Writing for UNESCO in 1982, Augustin Girard underlines the need for renewed thinking about the interrelation of cultural policy

and the developing cultural industries, emphasising their potential for economic growth, innovation and increasing the quality of life in urban spaces. Some particularly impactful approaches are developed in the United Kingdom; Nicholas Garnham plays an essential role in shaping what is considered the first comprehensive local cultural policy strategy, the work of the left-wing Greater London Council. In 1983 he states:

*[M]ost people's cultural needs and aspirations are being, for better or worse, supplied by the market as goods and services. If one turns one's back on an analysis of that dominant cultural process, one cannot understand the culture of our time or the challenges and opportunities which that dominant culture offers to public policy makers. (Garnham, 1990, p. 155)*

One of the influences on the GLC approach is Italian Communist Party (PCI) local government, mobilising citizens through culture. From the second half of the 1970s, Renato Nicolini, Rome's *assessore alla cultura*, aims to revitalise the city and unite its people through cultural events such as open-air rock concerts (Bloomfield, 1993; Parisi, 2019). Even though this strategy fails to combine its efforts with policies for the city's cultural production and distribution sites, it presents an innovative attempt to address a young, urban audience through cultural policy. Inspired by the Roman example, many Italian city governments follow Nicolini's strategy of making culture accessible, also in order to increase political visibility and electability (Bianchini, 1987; 1993)

Garnham, along with Williams (1981), is part of the political economy school of cultural industries analysts. They on the one hand criticise Adorno's account as reductive in its assertion that culture only benefits the ruling class. On the other hand, the political economy school focuses on the *industries* part of cultural industries analysis, emphasising the need for continued economic analysis of cultural production conditions (Garnham, 2005). This also entails underlining the importance of distribution technologies, which profit from the original producers of cultural commodities and essentially control who has access to the market (Garnham, 2005, p. 20). Writing for the GLC, Garnham thus advocates for developing a democratic cultural policy through an informed audience, creating demand for local cultural producers (cf. O'Connor, 2011). He defines cultural industries as:

*[...] those institutions in society which employ the characteristic modes of production and organisation of industrial corporations to produce and disseminate symbols in the form of cultural goods and services, generally, although not exclusively, as commodities. (Garnham, 1987, p. 56)*

Garnham attempts to reconcile markets with culture, arguing that commercial cultural consumption had long overhauled the traditional cultural sector. This goes against leftist traditions of viewing art as completely separate from capitalist valorisation. But according to Garnham, supporting artistic production without finding an audience for it would only create economic gaps filled by subsidy (Garnham, 1990). Given that in 1986 the GLC is disbanded by Thatcher's conservative government, its policies, albeit influential, are never fully implemented (Bianchini, 1987).

Mulgan and Worpole, associated with the GLC and later with the Cultural Industries Unit of the London Enterprise Board, publish their influential book "Saturday Night or Sunday Morning?" in 1986. Following the GLC line and explicitly addressing the Labour Party, they highlight the cultural sector's contribution to creating jobs, advocate for linking traditional arts with new technology and stress the importance of local government to fund, foster and regulate cultural industries (Mulgan & Worpole, 1986). An often referenced case of an early, successfully implemented cultural policy is the innovative "Culture Industries Quarter" by the Sheffield City Council's Employment Department. Noting that cultural industries not only present an opportunity to generate jobs but to also provide the city with a creative image, this early prototype of the "creative city" and urban regeneration through arts and culture is developed in 1981 (cf. Frith, 1993).

The approaches of the 1970s and 80s view arts and culture as no longer purely aesthetic, but as useful economic tools with a social, community-building function. The boundaries between culture and economics increasingly blur. Following the discussed early examples, cultural industries policy become an essential part of urban planning strategies all over Europe, particularly as an instrument to stimulate local economy by creating places of cultural consumption (O'Connor, 2007). Public art is now perceived as a "rejuvenating", "rebranding" factor for post-industrial urban areas. As described by Harvey (1989), city governance transforms "from



managerialism to entrepreneurialism”; cities, in competition with other urban areas, become more focused on generating local development, trying to appear creative and innovative to increase the quality of life and attract investors and tourists. Displaying cultural diversity through festivals and events, museums and galleries turns into an instrument to create attractive urban imagery, ultimately enabling, sustaining and normalising a “culturally tinged form of neoliberal urbanism” (Peck, 2012, p. 464).

### **1.1.3 “New Labour” and the shift to creative industries**

While early cultural policy advocates such as Girard, Garnham as well as Mulgan and Worpole emphasise the importance of regulatory intervention to protect culture from full commercialisation, this perspective is more and more abandoned in the 1990s (Volkerling, 2001). This change is also reflected in the rebranding of cultural industries as “creative industries”, a policy term first used in 1994 in the *Australian Creative Nation* report and enthusiastically adopted in 1997 by the UK *New Labour* government under Blair and Brown (Lee, 2013a). The concept of creativity, formerly criticised by the left for being an individualistic romanticisation, comes back into fashion (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 6). New Labour embraces the shift from state to market introduced by the conservative Thatcher government, with labour ideals such as the “self-made man” and the “enterprising self” (Garnham, 2005; O’Connor, 2007). The *Creative Industries Task Force* (CITF) is founded as a central division of the *Department of Culture, Media and Sport* (DCMS), formerly the *Department of National Heritage*. The CITF establish the creative industries as a central contributor to innovation and economic growth, as stated in the *Creative Britain* report:

*Given the levels of growth already experienced in these fields, given the flow of changing technology and digitalisation, given our continuing ability to develop talented people, these creative areas are surely where many of the jobs and much of the wealth of the next century are going to come from.* (Smith, 1998, p. 25)

The European Union (EU) observes the cultural sector growing faster than other industries and that more culture workers had a university degree and were more frequently self-employed or in temporary contracts than the general workforce (KEA, 2006). Many European states at first remain suspicious of the “creative industries”

terminology and prefer formulations such as cultural industries or cultural sectors (Flew & Cunningham, 2010); German policies, for example, separate “cultural industries” and “the arts” (Volkerling, 2001, p. 441). But it is not only the Labour Party who embraces economically liberal values; other traditionally centre-left parties in Europe as well introduce reforms emphasising for instance an activating welfare state, labour participation and more self-reliant citizens (Dean, 2014; Harvey, 2005).

The DCMS define the creative industries as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of economic property” (1998, p. 3). They thus encompass many heterogeneous industry subsectors under the common denominator of “individual creativity that could take the form of intellectual property” (Flew & Cunningham, 2010, p. 2). As mentioned before, most definitions include for instance television, film, arts and crafts, fashion design, computer games, antiques, architecture and advertising, raising questions about definitional coherence.

Pratt (2005) assumes the change in terminology happens due to a desire to separate the centrist, market-oriented direction of New Labour from the more left-wing tendencies of “old” Labour local councils such as the GLC. Garnham (2005) argues that the use of the term “creative” was meant to most of all refer to the information society and policies supporting its development. By including the computer software subsector into the creative industries, their economic revenue and growth potential could be artificially inflated. Creative industries terminology promotes “the shift to and reinforcement of ‘economic’ and ‘managerial’ language and patterns of thought within cultural and media policy” (Garnham, 2005, p. 16). Arts and culture, instead of being seen as dependent on state subsidies, are now considered key sectors for economic success (O’Connor, 2007).

Famously described by Castells (1996), the economy of the late 20th century is highly decentralised, globalised and networked with a free-market orientation. Castells characterises this state as a network society, in which networks serve as the organisational basic structure of all societal spheres. Van Dijk (1999) conceptualises the network society as an individualised information society permeated and

organised by social and media networks. In a network society, solidary groups transform into individualised networks, impacting where people are positioned in communities and which resources they can access (Wellman, 2001). Careers become increasingly “boundaryless”, which means they for instance depend on extra-organisational networks, ascend traditional reporting and advancement hierarchies or that workers have more than one employer (Arthur, 1994). This development is facilitated by the rapidly increasing usage of microelectronics-based information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Castells, 2004, p. 3). According to Sennett (1998), working relations become “serial” instead of linear: sequences of short-term contracts and projects lead to a loss of lasting relationships and trust between colleagues, as well as between (short-term) employees and organisations.

The emergence of the world wide web has a revolutionary impact on culture and economics; for the cultural and creative industries, the internet creates an enormous wave of demand for online text, design and music. With most of the focus of the creative industries paradigm lying on the digital realm, the cultural sector – consisting in traditional cultural expressions such as arts and crafts – is at a disadvantage as public funding gives way to open market competition (Garnham, 2005). Employment conditions in the “new economy”, closely connected to digital technologies and the “information” or “knowledge economy” (O’Connor, 2007, p. 42), are flexible, temporary, autonomous, with creative knowledge workers often being “free agents”. SMEs and highly-skilled freelance or self-employed workers are central to the creative industries, with the image of intellectual “starving artists” providing “bohemian glamour” (Ross, 2003). The creative industries thus pioneer wider trends in 21st century labour values, in which low hierarchies, flexibility, self-reliance and entrepreneurialism are revered (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Bridges, 2017; Christopherson, 2008; McRobbie, 2002).

Distinct from blue-collar manual workers and white-collar office professionals, this new conception of labour relations in the late 20th and early 21st century has been dubbed “no-collar” (Ross, 2003). Labour conditions in no-collar jobs are also precarious, with the responsibility to constantly search for new working opportunities and improve one’s skills. But even this lack of security plays into the

often glorified image of no-collar work, associated with entrepreneurial freedom and self-realisation; while having a lot of leisure used to be desirable, it is now “prestigious to be too busy” (Ross, 2003, p. 44). Due to the flexible and individualised character of their occupations, it can become difficult for self-employed no-collar workers to distinguish between work and leisure, private and professional lives. The traditional organisation of labour that assumes a separation between living and working dissolves; without an official end to their workday, every hour of the day can become a working hour, without a workplace they might work everywhere and everyone they meet becomes a potential cooperation partner. Their lives become “inseparable from work” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 137).

#### **1.1.4 Creative clusters in creative cities**

As mentioned before, while urban cultural policy used to have mostly social and political objectives of increasing access to culture, between the 1970s and 1980s there is a shift towards viewing it increasingly as an economic instrument for urban rejuvenation and renewal (Bianchini, 1993). Zukin (1982) observes that in New York City, a high concentration of artists creates an attractive bohemian atmosphere, which leads to rental and property values rising rapidly and ultimately to the displacement of residents. As a regeneration strategy, integrating art and cultural consumption opportunities into urban spaces becomes a way to raise the quality of life, create new jobs and attract tourists as well as investors. European cities utilise cultural policies to improve their reputation; they help in finding new economic niches, increasing a city’s cultural standing or conveying an image of modernity and innovation (Bianchini, 1993, p. 15).

Spatially, the networked character of CCI labour relations results in a “clustering” effect, particularly in an urban context. Detailed mapping of creative industries, started by UK cultural consultation agencies such as *Comedia*, indicate that creative businesses, SMEs and freelancers tend to cluster and that these creative clusters are usually centred in larger metropolitan areas (O’Connor, 2007, p. 30). Apart from the hypothesis that cities benefit from creative industries, this implies that vice versa, the city offers advantages to creative sector activities. Urban creative clusters do not only provide advantageous economic conditions to creative

businesses; the symbolic content of creative products also draws on local urban imagery and lifestyles (James, Martin & Sunley, 2008). This presents valuable implications to urban policy makers, and the purposeful development of creative clusters becomes a popular policy strategy.

Already in the late 1980s, Charles Landry, an influential urban planner and the founder of Comedia, coins the term “creative city”. In 2000, he publishes “The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators”, a call to plan and manage cities around a “culture of creativity”. According to Landry and the creative city paradigm, cultural quarters, festivals, alternative markets, et cetera help regenerating deindustrialised local economies and render cities more competitive, but also more participatory and inclusive.

In 2002, “The Rise of the Creative Class” by economist Richard Florida continues Landry’s course. Florida argues that the key to the economic growth of cities is prioritising the preferences of members of this emerging “class”, including not only writers, artists or designers, but also for instance engineers, lawyers and scientists; people who are “paid to use their minds” (Florida, 2012, p. 8f). The creative class as a concept is too broad to make its way into sociological theory as a well-defined term. It attracts criticism for its vague conceptualisation, for conflating creativity with education and for declaring a correlation between the presence of the “creative class” and economic growth despite a lack of empirical research supporting this claim (Markusen, 2006; Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2008). It nevertheless is highly influential as a policy tool. Landry’s and Florida’s recommendations lead to a paradigm change in urban policy with an emphasis on fostering creativity in order to increase economic competitiveness. Attracting the so-called creative class, a creativity- and knowledge-based, highly-skilled and hyper-mobile labour force to cities and regions is now considered a key driver for innovation and growth. This is an illustrative example of how an academic discourse finds its way into implemented policy. Florida’s causal hypothesis of a “creative class” presence stimulating economic growth leads to creative clusters becoming an urban and regional planning tool for economic growth, urban renewal and community development (Bagwell, 2008; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Minichbauer, 2011; Pratt, 2008). From a less

optimistic perspective, it is also important to take into account the negative effects of creative clustering such as gentrification and displacement processes (Zukin, 1982).

Mommaas (2004) criticises the frequent conflation of various discourses around creative clustering strategies into one “discursive knot”, despite having different, sometimes contradicting objectives: 1) The revitalisation of urban space through place-branding, 2) linking cities more closely with the “creative economy”, therefore making them more adjustable to innovative, globalised markets, 3) an entrepreneurial approach towards arts and culture to attract financial resources, 4) reutilising buildings and sites with a cultural heritage perspective and finally, 5) stimulating cultural diversity and democracy. Empirical studies furthermore indicate that the characteristics of the CCI are far from universal; factors such as growth and innovation might instead be place-specific (Rozentale & Lavanga, 2014). Regardless, the popularity of approaches viewing the relationship between creative industries and the city as symbiotic and mutually beneficial is evident. Far removed from Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the commodification of culture, the creative city policy narrative is celebratory in tone.

### **1.1.5 Creative class in a digital age?**

As described in the last section, with the growing attention of politics and policy makers towards the development of the creative and cultural industries, they have become a sort of cure-all strategy for struggling economies and deteriorating inner cities. They have been presented as an instrument for increasing social inclusion and cohesion, even for improving physical and mental wellbeing in communities (Health Education Authority, 2000). As a consequence, governments foster creative and cultural industries, leading them to grow rapidly. The EU adopts policies in line with the “creative class” paradigm, using culture for competitiveness and putting more emphasis on supporting the cultural and creative sector (Bodirsky, 2012). The CCI increase their economic importance more than any other European business sector in the 21st century (van Antwerpen, Fesel & Kaltenbach, 2015).

It is thus not surprising that in the digital age and particularly after the millennium change, creativity turns from a discourse into a “doctrine” (Schlesinger, 2007), promoting the highly individualised and idealised notion that everybody can

“make it” through creativity (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Lee, 2011). The often dire conditions of this new “precariat” (Ross, 2009; Standing, 2011) are concealed by a narrative of self-determination and liberation from the traditional “9 to 5” workday. Economic security and stability become secondary to being passionate about one’s job and the ability to express oneself creatively (Mazali, 2017). Creative producers create *art for art’s sake* and are therefore more likely to accept low wages and be viewed as a source of cheap labour (Caves, 2000).

Mould, Vorley and Liu (2013, p. 2438, p. 2442) define the figure of the freelancer as “an individual who works on a contractual or temporary basis offering their skills, knowledge and/or expertise to others (people, firms or governments) looking to outsource (and/or add value to) a particular labour cost”. CCI freelancers themselves often perceive and/or describe their conditions as an autonomous choice to enjoy the privilege of working creatively (Manske, 2016). This phenomenon has been described as self-exploitation, “neoliberal subjectivation” and “self-precarisation” (Lorey, 2006), particularly in the context of digital platform labour (Armano, Mazali & Teli, 2020). Low- or unpaid jobs, long working hours and stress are justified under the guise of passion and having a “cool” job (Arvidsson, Malossi & Naro, 2010; Ross, 2003). Even if they often struggle to earn a living wage, freelancers hesitate to view themselves as precarious workers in a neoliberalised economy. They instead consider themselves artists, entrepreneurs, innovators, with a desire to operate more or less independently and outside of traditional employer-employee hierarchies that outweighs considerations of economic security (Gandini, 2016; von Osten, 2007). Only the employers who exploit them recognise them as “intellectual proletarians” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 136):

*Work in this new creative environment becomes a site of intense personal satisfaction, of reflexive self-organizing, of affective pleasure; yet it is simultaneously sometimes exploitative, certainly precarious and prone to ethnic, gender and class inequalities. Failure is individualized.* (Lee, 2013, p. 9)

The emphasis on choice, autonomy, self-organisation, informality, flexibility and entrepreneurialism in many ways renders freelance creative workers “pioneers of the new economy” (McRobbie, 2004) or of the “brave new world of work” (Beck, 2000). The shift from a former social responsibility towards an individual choice constitutes

a step within the capitalist liquefying of the old social order through the creation of new, invisible structures (Bauman, 1999).

With growing economic importance, the academic interest in creative industries increased as well, producing a diverse body of theoretical approaches and empirical analyses. In doing so, the terms “cultural industries”, “creative industries” and “cultural and creative industries” are commonly used interchangeably outside of their historical context.<sup>2</sup> “Place” has remained an important factor, with influential studies focusing for instance on the aforementioned clustering (Pratt, 2004), gentrification (Zukin, 2010) or globalisation (Scott, 2005). Others explored organisational structures of cultural production (Randle, Blair & Culkin, 2003), the sense of self of creative workers (Giddens, 1991) as well as sexism (Christopherson, 2008; Gill, 2002; 2014), racism (Thanki & Jeffries, 2007) and other structural inequalities in the CCI. Researchers have examined working conditions in creative sectors such as television and film (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012; Lee, 2011; Randle, Blair & Culkin, 2003; Randle, Forson & Calveley, 2015; Ursell, 2000), fashion (Arvidsson, Malossi, & Naro, 2010; McRobbie, 1998; Neff, Wissinger & Zukin, 2005), publishing (Bridges, 2017; Ekinsmyth, 2002), music, (Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; van Heur, 2010) and new media (Gill, 2007; Pratt, 2002; Ross, 2003). A common thread running through these discourses are networks as the “ubiquitous organising dynamic” of the cultural industries (Lee, 2013a, p. 4). Through accessing, creating and maintaining networks, creative workers can build social capital, find new projects, share and improve their skills and manage risk.

The practice of networking as a “justificatory regime” is a crucial part of the creativity doctrine (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005), particularly for freelance or self-employed workers; in the absence of stable employment and social security, workers need to entirely rely on their own planning, organisation and skill. Individuals must become their own structures (Giddens, 1991). Building connections becomes vital in order to secure new jobs and therefore one’s income. Numerous studies have found a connection between networks and professional success in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Within this study, “cultural and creative industries” (CCI) is preferred as the most comprehensive term. At times, “cultural industries” or “creative industries” are used when referring to studies that employ these terms.



creative and cultural industries (for example: Apitzsch, 2009; Baumann, 2002; Bridgstock, 2005; Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Gandini, 2014b; 2015; Gill, 2014; Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2011; 2012; Lee, 2011; Lorey, 2011; Manske, 2016; McRobbie, 2002; 2016; Menger, 1999; Pratt, 2002; Randle & Culkin, 2009; Randle et al., 2016; Ursell, 2000). Ursell (2000, p. 813) points out that in creative milieus such as the television industry, “those who do not or cannot network are substantially disadvantaged”. This creates new and complex forms of discrimination, given that so much of a person’s success depends on their willingness and ability to socialise (McRobbie, 2002). A concept at the centre of this phenomenon is social capital, “the resources created and accessed through relationships” (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012, p. 1311). As the main theoretical frame of this study, an in-depth analysis of the theory surrounding networks and social capital, particularly in connecting with CCI freelancers, will be provided in the coming chapters.

## **1.2 Theoretical Frame**

With the background of the discussed literature and history, in this chapter I will analyse social capital and related concepts as the main theoretical frame of this research project. Social capital is broadly defined in terms of how “networks, norms and trust” facilitate individuals and communities to “be more effective in achieving common objectives” (Schuller, 2001, p. 4). It has become a sort of cure-all for a broad spectrum of sociological contexts and even outside the academic realm. Due to the diversity of topics it has been applied to but also given its inherent complexity as a social phenomenon, many theorists have questioned its precise definition and meaning (Adam & Rončević, 2003; Foley & Edwards, 1999; Lin, 1999a; Portes, 1998). It however remains a “timeless” concept (Rothberg, 2001), which has demonstrated its usefulness in numerous empirical studies. To apply social capital in a meaningful manner, it needs to be conceptualised coherently depending on the respective area of research (Adam & Rončević, 2003).

The coming sections will explain and compare influential definitions of social capital in distinction to other forms of (neo-)capital. I will furthermore explore applications of the concept to the field of labour, freelance creative labour in particular, and to social networks in offline and online spaces.

### **1.2.1 Social capital in distinction to other forms of capital**

The notion of social interaction being an essential function of society and beneficial to individuals and groups is fundamental to sociological thought. It can be traced back to the very founders of the discipline in Marxian descriptions of class consciousness (1867) or Durkheim’s view of social relations (1893/1984). Social capital constitutes an attempt to conceptualise social relationships as a form of non-monetary capital and therefore a source of power, influence and inequality. As introduced by Loury (1977), it is contained within relationships between persons and therefore depends on the stability of social structures.

In classical Marxist theory, capital refers to the strictly financial process of capitalists accumulating money through collecting surplus value generated by labourers and investing in the production and circulation of commodities (Marx,

1867). “Neo-capitalist” theories extend these conceptualisations and blur the lines between capitalists and the dominated class by attributing workers or “the masses” the ability to acquire capital, invest and generate surplus value (Lin, 1999a). Human capital (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1962) for instance views education as an investment with the expected return of a higher salary. It however relies on monetary investments – such as tuition fees or the equivalent of working hours spent on building a skill – and, as a highly individualistic concept, neglects “the structure of the differential chances of profit” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). Bourdieu argues the return from educational investments largely depends on the cultural capital that is transmitted on a hereditary basis along class lines; cultural capital is “the formal educational credentials that an individual possesses and the more intangible complex of values and knowledge of cultural forms in his or her demeanor” (Portes, 2000, p. 2). It consists of sets of symbols and meanings, in the “embodied”, the “objectified” or the “institutionalised” state. Knowledge or taste – habitus –, for instance, are reproduced and inherited by the dominant class and attribute members of dominant class families a higher societal status (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social capital constitutes another form of neo-capital; Loury (1977; 1981) describes it in the context of limited intergenerational mobility of young African-American workers, given that not only economic opportunities but also professional networks are often inherited. The strength of social capital is the possibility to illuminate power structures and dynamics in comparison to individualistic economic concepts such as human capital: “The social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly conditions what otherwise equally competent individuals can achieve.” (Loury, 1977, p. 176).

Bourdieu underlines that the different forms of capital are transferable. Cultural capital, for example, can be translated into social capital by facilitating networking (Lee, 2011). To obtain social capital by establishing ties with other individuals, one needs to be equipped with cultural knowledge and material resources (Portes, 2000, p. 2). Since for instance parental connections can facilitate an individual’s education, social capital helps produce human capital; vice versa, individuals with a higher grade of education will more easily gain access to social circles and thus to social capital (Lin, 1999b, p. 484). Bourdieu argues that economic

capital is ultimately at the root of all forms of capital, but while social capital can be derived from economic capital, there are for instance resources that can only be accessed through relationships (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 253f; Portes, 1998). The main objective of collecting social capital is therefore profit; according to Bourdieu, this profit does not necessarily have to be economic, but is reducible to economic profit.

### **1.2.2 Influential definitions of social capital**

While Loury does not conceptualise social capital in detail, Bourdieu is the first to analyse it systematically. He describes it as “a capital of social connections, honourability and respectability” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 122) and more specifically as

*the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition ± or in other words, to membership in a group ± which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.* (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248)

Social networks are constructed through investing in group relations. Members of a group, which can exist both in a purely practical or a socially instituted state, provide each other with collectively owned capital. The volume of social capital depends on the size of someone’s network and the volume of capital his contacts possess. It is thus 1) the relationship itself that determines social capital as well as 2) the amount and quality of relationships. Since social capital is consequently both the cause and effect of positions of actors, it can perpetuate social inequality: The dominating class reproduces and reinforces itself by mutual recognition and acknowledgement.

While Bourdieu thus views social capital as a class good, other theories consider it a collective asset. As an influential approach, Coleman (1988) attempts to consolidate economic rational theory with sociological functionalism, adopting Granovetter’s (1985) notion of embeddedness. Social capital is embodied in relations between persons, which separates it from financial or human capital. Coleman distinguishes three forms of social capital: obligations and expectations dependent on the trustworthiness of the social environment, the information-flow capability of the social structure and norms accompanied by sanctions (Coleman, 1988, p. 119). For the existence of effective norms as well as for trustworthiness – which is a

condition for the proliferation of obligations and expectations –, closure is a necessary feature of a social structure (Coleman, 1988, p. 107). According to Coleman, social capital constitutes a public good within a structure, benefitting all members of said structure instead of only the actor generating it. This can lead to an underinvestment in social capital, since actors might be unwilling to focus on the creation of a resource that they can only capture a part of, but it also renders social capital potentially productive for marginalised groups. While for Bourdieu, economic mechanisms are at the root of social capital, for Coleman it is a resource dependent on individual free will. Since Coleman views social capital as universally productive, he ignores that it can also be a source – and consequence – of inequalities. It is important to take into account that a lack of professional connections as a resource impacts economically and socially disadvantaged groups in particular (Portes, 1998).

Influenced by Coleman, Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone" (1995) made the concept of social capital known beyond the academic realm. Putnam's political science approach, supported by the World Bank, describes social capital in "features of social organisations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1993, p. 35). Putnam relates social capital to civic engagement or "civicness", creating a direct connection between social capital and democratic involvement. He thus expands social capital from a feature of small communities to a collective measure of inclusion and trust across entire societies. According to Putnam, it is both a cause and an effect of civicness, functioning as the "universal lubricant" of social relations, linked to the amount of trust available. Putnam contradicts Bourdieu's analysis insofar that he considers a high amount of social capital at the basis of economic success, while for Bourdieu, norms and wealth relate the other way around:

*These communities did not become civic simply because they were rich. [...] They have become rich because they were civic. The social capital embodied in norms and networks of civic engagement seems to be a precondition for economic development, as well as for effective government. (Putnam, 2001)*

Both Putnam and Coleman have been criticised for giving tautological or circular descriptions of social capital. Coleman equates social capital with the resources whose acquisition it facilitates; this neglects the important distinction between a

resource itself and the access to said resource through a social structure. Putnam, whose formulation is based on Coleman, similarly conflates the cause and effect of social capital without systematically analysing under which circumstances networks present one or the other (Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998). The relationship between social capital itself, its sources and its consequences is, after all, not uni- but multi-linear (Adam & Rončević, 2003, p. 178).

Since Putnam treats social capital as an aggregate trait on a macro level, his formulation is not suitable for the purpose of this study. A relevant contribution however is his argument that social capital facilitates processes in modern economies by operating as “bridging”, which expands networks, or as “bonding”, which increases cohesion (Putnam, 2000). The process of bonding, however, can also lead to negative social capital when a group becomes too closed, excluding outsiders and limiting the liberty of members (Portes & Landolt, 1996; Wacquant, 1998). Nan Lin (1999a) argues that closure is not a precondition for social capital. It is necessary for “preserving or maintaining resources”, for instance in the sense of privileged classes reproducing its advantages within a closed network. However, closure can hinder the acquisition of new resources such as a new job – extending bridges across networks is more important for reaching this goal. According to Lin, coming from a network analysis perspective, it thus makes more sense to examine empirically under which conditions open or closed networks generate better returns. He defines social capital as “resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions” (Lin, 1999a, p. 35). Differentiating a person’s position within a network from embedded resources (such as contacts) and outcomes (such as a better job) renders the concept more quantifiable and tangible.

Burt (1995; 2001) follows a similar approach, introducing the notion of “structural holes”, meaning the absence of ties within a network. Building on Granovetter’s strong and weak ties, Burt argues that structural holes are the source of social capital because they ease the “constraint” within networks, facilitate individual movement as well as the flow of resources and information. The methodological rigour of utilitarian network approaches such as those of Burt and Lin avoid tautological statements regarding effects and sources of social capital; but as a quantitative measure operationalising social capital as purely utilitarian on an

individual level, it cannot discern when social capital turns negative and leads to distrust or the weakening of a network (Adam & Rončević, 2003, p. 169; Portes, 1998).

Common measures of social capital popularised by Putnam are expressed trust or participation in civic engagement such as memberships in associations, churches or political parties (Schuller, 2001, p. 4). Coleman (1988) measured social capital in families by how much attention children received from parents. But treating social capital as a measurable aggregate trait leads to a number of methodological issues. As a concept highly dependent on context, social capital is difficult to operationalise and it is impossible to find a universally valid measure of it (Adam & Rončević, 2003; Portes, 1998). It does not accumulate linearly in the way that economic capital does; more social connections do not necessarily result in more or “better” social capital (Tzanakis, 2013, p. 13). Any measure of social capital should thus be treated with caution.

Bourdieu did not attempt to measure social capital empirically, emphasising its intangible and context-specific nature. While having been called reductionist for grounding all forms of capital in economic capital (Jenkins, 1992; Siisiäinen, 2000), his formulation is considered the most theoretically refined one (Portes, 1998). Bourdieu’s definition of social capital is suitable for qualitative examination, given that he conceptualises social capital on an individual level rather than adopting a macro approach. He views networks as the micro-structure in which individuals act, taking into account individual efforts and wider societal circumstances. This means that according to Bourdieu, the resources individuals can access through networks depend on 1) their exact position within the network and 2) the socio-economic position of the network (Bourdieu, 1986; cf. Foley & Edwards, 1999, p. 165). A person with a strong position in a network, who however lacks resources due to for instance economic marginalisation, will not have access to many resources because of this network. For example, as Portes and Landolt (1996) illustrate, a student in need of tuition money might have a supportive social circle, but that does not mean that his/her network can afford the expense. Strong social ties in a marginalised neighbourhood can help a person to an extent, but they do not suffice to alleviate poverty (Fernandez-Kelly, 1994; Wacquant, 1998). This also supports Bourdieu’s

hypothesis that economic capital ultimately is at the root of social capital; it constitutes “the acquisition of economic return via the management of social relationships” (Gandini, 2016, p. 126). Taking into account aspects of other theorists’ contributions, such as Putnam’s bridging versus bonding and Lin’s network approach, this study in sum adopts a Bourdieusian definition of social capital.

### **1.2.3 Applying social capital to creative and cultural industries**

With the background of the discussed theory, how can the concept of social capital be applied to workers, specifically freelancers, in the cultural and creative industries? A network, as described by Castells (2004, p. 3), constitutes “a set of interconnected nodes”. None of these nodes are at the centre of the network, but their relevance within the network varies depending on their ability to contribute to its objectives. Ineffective or useless nodes tend to get removed and replaced. As highly dynamic structures, networks are thus “appropriate instruments for a capitalist economy based on innovation, globalization and decentralized concentration” (Castells, 1996, p. 470).

Part of the ability to contribute to a network’s goal can be conceptualised as the existing social capital a person carries into it. The access to networks in the context of furthering one’s career depends on several factors such as existing human capital in the form of parental job status, pre-existing social ties, education and former job experience (Lin, 1999b, p. 471; p. 473); but also on aspects such as geography, gender or socio-economic background (Grabher, 2004; Portes, 1998; Lee, 2011). Then, social capital must be actively mobilised by utilising one’s contacts to acquire professional benefits, for instance a better-paid job or a new client. In the context of professional networks, weak nodes sooner or later getting removed also refers back to issues of inequality and exclusion. A worker without much experience or without contacts in the right industries might for example encounter rejection from groups of other professionals, given that she/he is less likely to provide new resources to the network.

It is well-established that informal networks generally provide resources for finding jobs and furthering careers (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Granovetter, 1974; Light, 2001; Lin, Ensel & Vaughn, 1981; Lin, 1999b). Professional networks circulate



information and knowledge, capital, labour as well as clients and products (Wittel, 2001, p. 57). Early studies on the importance of networks specifically for creative workers include Becker on jazz musicians (1963), Bourdieu on photographers (1965) or Hirsch on cultural industries (1975). Autonomous Marxist writers regard creative work as immaterial labour, which produces immaterial goods “such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge or communication” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 292). Consuming immaterial goods means consuming most of all a piece of information rather than a traditional product. Immaterial labour is “not defined by the four walls of a factory” and exists largely “in the form of networks and flows”, with subjectivity being its central component (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 136). For workers in this sector, particularly freelancers, a large part of their labour consists in managing social relations. The immaterial cycle of production often only comes into operation for the duration of a project before it dissolves, and the worker needs to obtain a new source of income. This results in “precariousness, hyperexploitation, mobility, and hierarchy” and renders self-employed immaterial workers “intellectual proletarians” (Lazzarato, 1996, p. 136).

Viewing creative work as a “field”, Bourdieu considers creative workers as constrained by their position within networks (Bourdieu, 1983; cf. DiMaggio, 2010, p. 286). As described before, in an increasingly network-based and decentralised information age, labour relations are characterised by entrepreneurialism, autonomy and flexibility (Castells, 1996). Without fixed employment, employment benefits and employer-provided training, networks become essential to secure new jobs and projects. In artistic labour markets, networks for instance facilitate hiring procedures by conveying trustworthy information about suitable candidates and providing casual recommendations (Menger, 1999, p. 549). They thus commonly replace formal application and evaluation processes. According to Lin (1999b), informal job channels often result in less status attainment than formal hiring processes; in the CCI, they are however often the only available channels. In informal hiring processes, social resources in the form of the status of a person’s contacts lead to advantages (Lin, 1999b, p. 482). Particularly for freelancers, value in many ways consists in the marketing of an entrepreneurial ethos as part of their identity (Bandinelli &

Arvidsson, 2012; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Gandini, 2016; Lee, 2013a; McRobbie, 2002; 2016).

What kind of contacts are thus beneficial to CCI freelancers? Granovetter (1973) introduces the concept of weak and strong ties in the context of career advancement; “When a man changes jobs, he is not only moving from one network of ties to another, but also establishing a link between these” (p. 1373). It might appear counterintuitive that building weaker connections, i.e. acquaintances and superficial professional contacts, can lead to better job opportunities than strong ties, i.e. deep bonds with close friends or family, who might feel less competitive and be more eager to help; but Granovetter argues that weak connections make the search for new jobs easier since they create ties between different networks and thus open up new resources, enable a flow of information and communication: “Whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people, and traverse greater social distance (i.e. path length), when passed through weak ties rather than strong” (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1366). In this way, it can occur that professionals receive relevant career information from people they had entirely forgotten; weak ties provide a wider spectrum of contacts. In that way, they can connect even distant nodes within networks, thus overcoming information asymmetries (Burt, 1995). Coming back to Putnam (2000), strong ties indicate “bonding” social capital, while weak ties are more associated with “bridging” social capital. They involve more superficial encounters, based on their potential professional benefits, in line with an entrepreneurial “getting ahead” culture (Lee, 2011).

Freelancers “require an active and effective communication network” to find work (Pratt, 2002, p. 42). Since they do not remain with a fixed employer but change projects, which are usually rather short-termed, they frequently switch between networks and should be able to create more weak ties than regular employees in a relatively short amount of time. As described by Wittel (2001), the so-called “network sociality” is particularly prevalent in cultural industries. It is based on “individualization and deeply embedded in technology”, an exchange of data, temporary, “ephemeral but intense encounters” (Wittel, 2001, p. 51; p. 71). Wittel’s network sociality perspective differs from Castells’ network society insofar as Castells analyses the economic macrostructure, while Wittel focuses on networking as a

practice through a micro lens, being interested in how people build and maintain social ties in the information age (Wittel, 2001, p. 52). In a network sociality, such as project-based labour environments, social relations are primarily designed to exchange knowledge and to “catch up” (Grabher, 2004, p. 115). A traditional community, on the other hand, is characterised by proximity and a collective narrative, thus rather on strong ties and “bonding” social capital.

Affirming this observation, creative workers often do not comprehend themselves as a cohesive class of people or a collective with the same interests. They instead, in the sense of networked individualism (Wellman, 2001; 2002), view their peers as a network of individuals who collaborate while also competing with one another (Gandini, 2016; Grabher, 2004; McGuigan, 2010; McRobbie, 2002; 2016). Both a cause and a consequence of this is the lack of labour organisation and trade unionisation in the deregulated creative sector (Gill & Pratt, 2008, p. 28). In this individualised state, workers have to actively create social bonds instead of automatically being part of for instance a community of colleagues (Beck, 1999). But at the same time, their working practices are highly dependent on networks. Without building and utilising social capital, they lack resources to identify and secure working opportunities, enquire about popular locations and events as well as to promote themselves. Freelancers are obliged to use their networks “to identify and to exploit emerging strategic opportunities to showcase their transferable work skills and gain new ones” (Bridgstock, 2005, p. 44). Through a word-of-mouth “referral system” they accumulate and use social capital “across and between different professions within the industry” (Randle et al., 2015, p. 600). In a highly relational and informal environment, social relationships become their main way of finding employment opportunities and reducing risk (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2011; 2012; Lee, 2011; Randle et al., 2015).

The active creation and utilisation of social capital in the realm of freelance creative labour can thus be described as a strategy against precarious working conditions with little regulation (Apitzsch, 2009; Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Gill & Pratt, 2008; Manske, 2016), even as vital for survival (Lorey, 2011). Compared to fixed employment with formal hiring procedures, social capital therefore potentially plays a particularly big role for the professional success of CCI freelancers. Network

culture holds considerable discursive power over CCI workers, who internalise networking as an essential, mandatory part of their work lives (Lee, 2011). “Working practices become increasingly networking practices” (Wittel, 2001, p. 53)

#### **1.2.4 Social capital in digital versus urban spaces**

Social networks of course can refer to both physical and digital space as well as to an intersection of the two. Given that this thesis aims to compare the networks of creative freelancers in both realms, I will discuss here how the concept of social capital potentially relates to them.

The internet has radically transformed media relations and communication within capitalism (Castells, 2000; 2004; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Rossiter, 2006; Sennett, 1998; 2006). The maintenance of networks is grounded in spatial mobility, with communication systems functioning as spatial networks through which workers establish focused social and professional connections. Virtual networks “uncouple” social and physical mobility (Kesselring, 2005); technology-driven interactions can substitute physical networks, which in the context of work potentially saves time and money. The rise of mobile devices such as smartphones, smartwatches and tablets as well as social media platforms and applications within the last decade has generated new ways of communicating and networking at a rapid speed; inside a network sociality, they present an essential tool for professional success. In general, there is evidence of a positive relationship between internet use and social capital. It presents the most convenient and inexpensive mode to communicate particularly with weak ties (Neves, 2013). Beyond an exchange of information, creative workers can utilise digital platforms to foster cooperation and collaboration (Fontano, Nemmo, & Valentini, 2013), even to crowdfund projects (D’Amato & Miconi, 2012). But the fact that due to the internet it has never been easier and faster to connect with peers and clients potentially also increases competition (Bridges, 2017). The digital realm is associated more with “bridging” than with “bonding” social capital, presenting an effective way to create weak ties, increasing interpersonal activity and organisational involvement while potentially decreasing commitment and community (Wellman, Haase, Witte & Hampton, 2001). Considering that weak ties are an important resource of professional social capital, this renders the internet a crucial location for

creating networks: “In the cyberspace economy, the commodification of goods and services becomes secondary to the commodification of human relationships” (Rifkin, 2000, p. 97).

In connection with the general tendency to create a “lifestyle” based on the consumption of symbolic goods, Giddens (1991) describes how self-identity has become a reflexive, actively constructed project; not only relationships have turned into commodities, the self has been commodified. This applies to personal social network profiles, on which individuals can build a persona, conveying a certain image, but is particularly prevalent in a professional context. Building a brand out of oneself – “self-branding” – has become an explicit form of labour for entrepreneurial success (Hearn, 2008). The internet does not only facilitate the creation of connections, but also branding and advertising oneself as a creative worker, which in turn helps creating even more connections. A curated online presence, for example on professional websites or social networks, can be utilised to create ties and find clients.

Self-branding cannot only be seen as a source of social capital, but as a constitution of social capital itself, given its crucial role in securing employment in digital knowledge economy conditions (Gandini, 2015; 2016). Hearn (2010, p. 422) argues that online social capital “can be aggregated and expressed as [someone’s] digital reputation”, conceptualising reputation as “the general public feeling or sentiment about a product, person or service”. The digital freelance economy has thus also been called a “reputation economy” (Gandini, 2014b; 2015; Hearn, 2010). Particularly on social media, self-branding constitutes “performative practices of sociality that exist around a shared notion of reputation as the cultural conception of value” (Gandini, 2016, p. 124). Social media facilitate the relative measurement of reputation by rendering the size and quality of a network visible through for instance numbers of *followers*, *views*, *likes*, *shares*, et cetera: “What used to be private or ‘intimate’ information is now becoming a public parameter that can, and is, deployed in evaluating the overall social worth of a person or organization” (Arvidsson & Peitersen, 2009, p. 18). The digital realm, while often advertised as egalitarian and participatory, thus also produces its own forms of hegemony and inequality (Miconi, 2013). Self-branding is furthermore unpaid labour that freelancers undertake with

the intention to foster future income. It is therefore an essential part of freelancers acting as entrepreneurial selves. Curated social media profiles in summary can be instrumental for finding clients through networking, increasing one's audience and creating a professional reputation. Analysing freelancers' online presence can thus provide valuable insights into how they build social capital. Do they actively self-brand? If yes, how so? How do they utilise the connections they create online?

Given the tendency of CCI to cluster geographically (Pratt, 2002; 2004; Scott, 2005; van Heur, 2010; Zukin, 1995; also described in Chapter 1.1), physical networks remain an important source of social capital as well. Cities have always been central to cultural production (Scott, 1997). While creative workers use digital tools to communicate and create a professional reputation, offline, personal networks are essential to foster their work (Mazali, 2017). Particularly large cities provide CCI workers with a bigger audience and a denser infrastructure of potential employers, making it easier to secure opportunities (Lingo & Tepper, 2013). Creative clusters, consisting of locations of creative production, attract related locations of consumption such as bars, restaurants and retail stores (Mommaas, 2004). Successful CCI networking also depends on frequenting the right events, associations, bars and clubs (Lee, 2011; Markusen & Johnson, 2006; McRobbie, 2002; 2004). This is true for professional gatherings such as networking events, fairs, conferences as well as for informal happenings. Working hours and leisure blur, "schmoozing" during after-hour events and dinner parties becomes quasi compulsory (Neff, Wissinger & Zukin, 2005). Higher education institutes for instance actively encourage art students to network and promote themselves outside the classroom by going to parties and industry events within the creative scenes of their cities (Lee, 2013b; McRobbie, 2002).

Network sociality milieus are particularly visible 1) online, 2) in urban environments and 3) in cultural industries (Wittel, 2001). Combined with the fact that CCI are more prevalent in cities, urban clusters of creative industries present an ideal setting to observe contemporary networking practices. Networks and networking are ultimately at the root of how CCI clusters emerge (Pratt, 2002). Even events that are officially dedicated to networking commonly create a more informal frame, somewhat concealing their specific purpose (Wittel, 2001). While it is easy to

assume that in comparison to virtual connections, face-to-face communication creates strong ties rather than weak ones, this is thus not necessarily the case. Relationships built in person might appear less commodified and instrumental, but this is potentially based on a social need to, at least seemingly, connect with people in an “authentic” way, not on actual strong bonds. A large part of these social interactions occurs in an informal setting, outside of traditional working environments, which also means potential discriminatory practices are hard to track (Gill, 2002). Getting recruited often depends on casual knowledge and contacts, on getting the right people to “like you” (McRobbie, 2002). Physical networks might thus be harder to access than virtual ones, but, when accessed successfully, potentially also lead to more benefits.

As opposed to these views, Banks (2006) argues that the instrumental nature of urban networking practices is limited. Cultural workers are often embedded in a strong local community, sharing narratives and experiences. Abusing network sociality in a too profit-driven way contradicts their perceived social responsibility and would furthermore damage their reputation. Even if bridging social capital is common also in a face-to-face setting, this implies that strong ties and therefore “bonding” social capital are common in urban networks.

Lastly, there is of course no clear boundary between virtual and offline networks. They interconnect, intertwine and often blur into one another. Cyberspace first of all is not an entirely separate world, but always exists in relation to physical space. Interactive social media platforms reflect and refer to offline realities; close online relationships tend to be close offline as well (Hogan & Quan-Haase, 2010). Virtual networks are “seldom sufficient on their own; they may enhance, and/or be enhanced by material communication” (Pratt, 2002, p. 38). Face-to-face communication can initiate online communities and vice-versa. This also indicates that discriminatory practices that are prevalent offline permeate online spaces as well (Gill, 2002). Pratt (2002) describes new media production as “hybrid network-spaces”, in which online and offline activity blend. This is particularly visible when observing the way people network contemporarily. Participatory practices in today’s cities are inseparably connected to online communication (Marinelli & Parisi, 2019). After meeting offline, individuals and groups remain in

touch online through social networks and/or messaging applications; others connect and organise on social platforms or networking apps first before meeting physically. It has indeed become rarer and rarer to establish a stable relationship with a person without being their *friend* or *follower* on social media as well. Creative workers, often being “digital nomads”, use numerous platforms, apps and programmes to navigate their contacts, clients and projects as well as to initiate collaborations (Bourdreau et al., 2014; Liegl, 2014).



### **1.3 Discussion: The Social Capital of Creative Freelancers**

This chapter overall presents an attempt to connect the development of the CCI in the last decades with relevant applications and manifestations of social capital. It identifies the CCI as a business sector that in many ways exemplifies larger socio-economic processes impacting labour relations as well as definitions of creativity, work and leisure. Given that the CCI are largely powered by the labour of small businesses and freelancers (O'Connor, 2007), these actors find themselves at the core of discourses in a networked, digitalised and globalised, yet at the same time deeply urbanised labour market.

The real-life working conditions of these workers do not necessarily coincide with the narratives surrounding their occupations. Creative workers, for example, commonly operate in geographically confined, mainly local parameters rather than as globalised, digital nomads (Mazali, 2017). While they are indeed “passionate” workers, they furthermore often – increasingly? – are conscious of the exploitative and precarious mechanisms of their industry. But no matter the term or specific subgroup one chooses for workers in the “new economy” – creative workers, knowledge workers, digital workers, et cetera –, they have in common that despite their indisputable commonalities as an occupational group, they do not constitute a cohesive “class” of people. Apart from the fact that they do not recognise themselves as a class, their material socio-economic conditions additionally differ widely (Armano & Murgia, 2013).

A focus on freelancers thus allows for a more cohesive analysis; regardless of their self-identification, in times of economic crisis, freelance workers are particularly vulnerable as they lack employment security and are thus often forced to lower their prices and accept disadvantageous contracts (Armano, 2013). As a group, they are almost inevitably dependent on social networks, and therefore on social capital, to secure working opportunities.

Their laptops, smartphones and tablets keep them constantly connected to the digital sphere, impacting their working routines but also their sense of self as they continuously monitor their online performance (Armano, Mazali, & Teli, 2020). Even traditional education and employer-provided training is increasingly replaced

by autodidactic online resources (Chiappini, Porro & Valentini, 2013). In the physical sphere, the labour conditions of a project- and platform-based economy find expression in changes of the urban fabric, for example in the aforementioned phenomenon of creative clustering. Freelancers commonly work from home, in so-called semi-public “third spaces” such as libraries or cafés (cf. Florida, 2002) or in shared studios. This renunciation of the traditional office space also has led to the emergence of business models designed to cater to and profit from remote and freelance workers such as coworking spaces. Coworking spaces in distinction to other shared workspaces such as open space offices temporarily rent out workstations to individuals and can often house hundreds of “coworkers”, providing them with an internet connection, a kitchen, spaces to socialise et cetera (Merkel & Oppen, 2013). They are presented as a remedy against the dissolution of spatial, temporal and social boundaries prevalent in freelance work (Brown, 2017).

As conceptualised before, social capital, defined as the resources created and accessed through relationships (Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012), is an essential tool to manage a creative freelance career at this intersection of digital platforms and creative neighbourhoods. As working practices become networking practices in a highly relational but individualised network sociality (Wittel, 2001), creating and managing social relationships in intertwining spheres turns into a daily professional task that creative workers are not necessarily trained and skilled in. The somewhat contradictory state freelancers find themselves in as autonomous, individual actors who at the same time are more dependent on contacts than workers in traditional employment relationships raises numerous questions in relation to social capital. How do CCI freelancers build and maintain social capital in physical and virtual spaces? How do these networks compare and converge? Does social capital established in online spaces transfer to the offline world and vice versa? How do these practices impact their lives, how they relate to their surroundings and the online realm? It becomes clear that contemporary freelance creative labour, given its organisation around generally informal, interconnecting networks, presents a complex and compelling context to research manifestations of social capital.

## 2. Methodology

Taking into account the discussed literature, the proposed project builds on a Bourdieusian understanding of social capital, exploring the networking behaviour of creative freelancers considering physical and digital connections. The primary method of qualitative interviewing is supplemented by an analysis of the respondents' networks, workspaces and social media profiles. As a comparative case study, the research focuses on Kreuzberg and Neukölln in Berlin (Germany) and San Lorenzo and Pigneto in Rome (Italy). Following this approach, my project can illuminate the strategies creative freelancers use to create and develop social capital through physical and digital networks. The first research questions consequently are:

*(1) How do freelance creatives in Berlin and Rome create, utilise and maintain social capital through networking?*

*(1(1)) Which role does urban space play in their practices?*

*(1(2)) Which role do digital platforms play in their practices?*

During the data collection, I particularly realised how profoundly intertwined the personal and professional spheres in my respondents' lives are. Since this proved to be a crucial aspect throughout the interview narratives, the second research question is:

*(2) How do the respondents' personal and professional lives intertwine due to their networking practices?*

Question (1) will be examined in Chapter 3 and questions (1(1)) and (1(2)) mainly in Chapter 4. The exploration of question (2) pervades all analysis chapters. In the following paragraphs, the case selection as well as the chosen methods will be further explained and illustrated.

## 2.1 Case Selection

Given current political and economic developments within the EU as well as traditional cultural and social constitutions, I consider a comparison between Germany and Italy promising for the topic at hand. The CCI are continuously gaining importance within the European economy. In 2016, there were more than 6.7 million CCI workers in the EU, with 95% of CCI businesses being small or micro entities (KEA & PPMI, 2019). The European Commission states:

*Cultural and creative sectors are important for ensuring the continued development of societies and are at the heart of the creative economy. Knowledge-intensive and based on individual creativity and talent, they generate considerable economic wealth; more importantly, they are critical to a shared sense of European identity, culture and values. They show above-average growth and create jobs – particularly for young people – while strengthening social cohesion. Cultural and creative sectors drive innovation, acting as a catalyst for change in other sectors – and stimulate invention and progress across Europe’s diverse cultural landscape. With the emergence of progressively complex, creative and intertwined business models, the cultural and creative sectors are increasingly becoming a decisive component of almost every product and service.<sup>3</sup>*

Thus, the European Commission has a framework project – “Creative Europe” – dedicated to the support of the CCI with a budget of 1.46 billion Euros.<sup>4</sup>

In Germany, the gross value generated by the CCI grew from 74.2 billion Euros in 2009 to 100 billion Euros in 2018, constituting 3% of Germany’s gross domestic product (GDP). Out of roughly 1.2 million people working in the CCI as their primary occupation, more than 256.000 (21%) were self-employed or freelancers (BMW, 2018; 2019).

In Italy, more than 1.5 million CCI workers contributed 90.7 billion Euros or 5.7% to the GDP in 2019 (Fondazione Symbola - Unioncamere, 2020, p. 74). 47.2% of Italy’s creative workers are “independent”, with 25% being freelancers and 16.2% self-employed (Bellini, Burrone & Dorigatti, 2018). Overall, CCI account for 5.9% of Italy’s employment in 2019, growing by 1.4% compared to 2018 while the rest of the economy grew by 0.6% (Fondazione Symbola - Unioncamere, 2020, p. 78). The country is particularly specialised in fashion and architecture (Boix et al., 2016).

---

<sup>3</sup> cf. [ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/cultural-creative-industries\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/cultural-creative-industries_en) (accessed 10/05/2020).

<sup>4</sup> cf. [ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe) (accessed 10/05/2020).

Within the last decades, both Italy and Germany – as well as the EU as a whole – have undergone labour market and welfare reforms that fall in a neoliberal governance framework of citizens’ productivity and self-reliance (Dean, 2012; Manske, 2016; Pavolini et al., 2015). In 2002, the same year as Florida’s *creative class* paradigm was published, the *Hartz* concept was submitted to reform the German labour market as part of the *Agenda 2010*. Schröder’s social-democratic governance fostered a “culturalisation of the economy, as well as an economisation of culture” (von Osten, 2007, p. 51). The reforms continued the course towards an activating welfare state, marking the political and ideological transition to more self-reliant citizens, whose responsibility to themselves and society is to strive for productivity (Manske, 2016, p. 102). In Italy, labour market reforms in 1997, 2003 and 2012 led to a rapid spread of temporary, self-employed and project working contracts, profoundly impacting employment relationships specifically for highly-skilled workers (Armano & Murgia, 2013). As opposed to Germany, Italy in addition is particularly challenged by the consequences of the European debt crisis, austerity measures and high youth unemployment, worsening pre-existing precariousness (Marelli & Signorelli, 2015; Samek Lodovici & Semenza, 2012). Furthermore, informal labour networks are particularly prevalent in Italy, especially in small businesses (cf. Pistaferri, 1999; Ponzio & Scoppa, 2009).

A comparison between these two EU nations, which have similar numbers regarding the CCI but significant economic and cultural differences, is thus overall promising. The choice of the two capitals and more specifically the four studied neighbourhoods will be explained in the next sections.

### **2.1.1 Case selection: Cities**

The research was conducted in four neighbourhoods of Italy’s and Germany’s capitals. Rome is traditionally considered a city of arts and culture. It has a particularly large audio-visual sector and the CCI get promoted through projects such as *Roma Provincia Creativa*<sup>5</sup> (Bellini et al., 2018). The presence of the *Cinecittà* film studios makes the city Italy’s centre of cinema production. Rome provides 13% of Italian CCI jobs (Lazzeretti, Capone & Boix, 2012) and has the highest amount of

---

<sup>5</sup> cf. [www.romaprovinciacreativa.it/](http://www.romaprovinciacreativa.it/) (accessed 10/06/2020).

*creative class* potential of all Italian cities, according to economists (Tinagli & Florida, 2005). By contrast, has mostly since the fall of the wall transformed into an increasingly important location for art, architecture, design, fashion and music, with 10% of all workers being in creative fields (Manske, 2016; Weidenhiller, 2015). If Rome is “the classical capital of the world”, Berlin is “the capital of the 21st century” (Weidenhiller, 2015).

Interestingly, compared to many other nations, neither Rome nor Berlin are their countries’ financial capitals. With a more strategic position in the north of Italy, Milan and the Lombardy region are much more economically powerful than Rome and Lazio. This circumstance is also represented in the geographical distribution of CCI businesses, with Rome being second to Milan with 7.3% versus 8.7% (Bellini, et al., 2018, p. 5). With its complicated history of the East/West division, deindustrialisation and social segmentation, Berlin has summarised its image into the slogan “poor, but sexy” (cf. Manske, 2016). Germany would be 0.2% wealthier without Berlin. The city is therefore the only European capital which has a negative impact on its country’s economy.<sup>6</sup> Rome is in the second to last position; Italy would only lose 2.1% of per capita income without its capital.

But in comparison to Rome, Berlin is considered the creative centre of Germany. It has adopted cultural policies after Florida’s model in order to attract creative workers and businesses to low-income, multicultural neighbourhoods (Smith, 2007). Culture has indeed been considered a strategy to overcome the city’s socio-economic struggles (Bordirsky, 2012). Also as a result of Berlin’s development and image as a creative hub, it has been extensively studied in connection with CCI (for example Färber, 2008; Grésillon, 1999; Jakob, 2010; Krätke, 2013; Lange, 2007; Manske, 2016; McRobbie, 2012; Merkel, 2009; Ward, 2010). Research has been conducted on Roman CCI as well (for example Andò, Farro, Marinelli & Parisi, 2019; Battaglia, 2014; Fiorentino, 2018; Gemmiti, 2008), but in comparison to Berlin, the city is understudied in this regard on an international scale. This comes as no surprise, given that Milan is the city usually regarded as Italy’s creative centre and the “home” of the event economy (Parisi, 2019, p. 30).

---

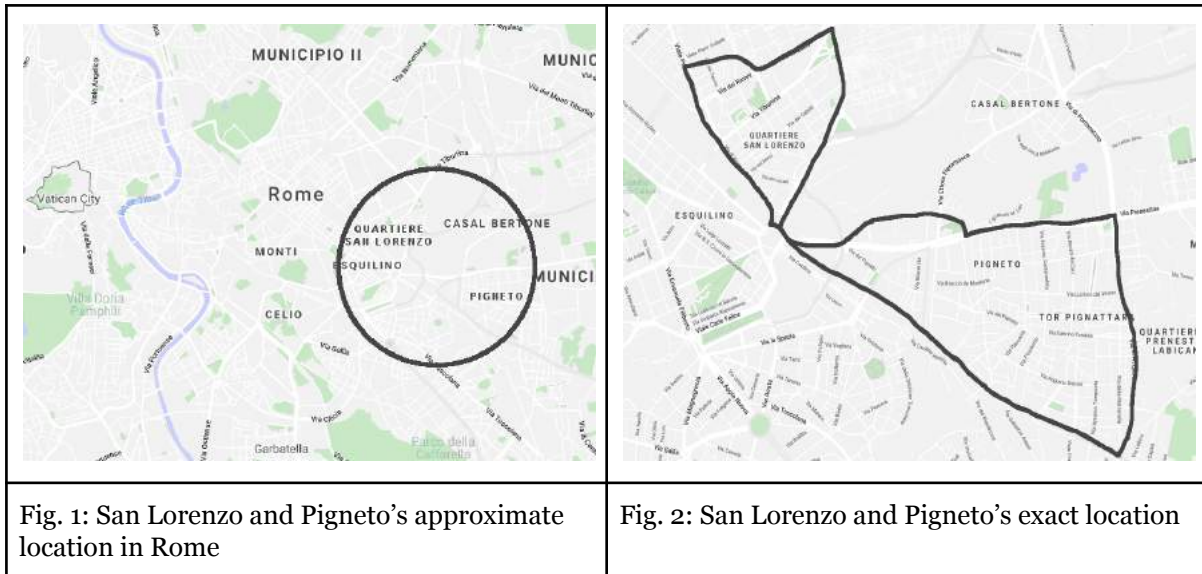
<sup>6</sup> cf. Cologne Institute of Economic Research, [www.iwd.de/artikel/der-wohlstandseffekt-der-hauptstadt-294893/](http://www.iwd.de/artikel/der-wohlstandseffekt-der-hauptstadt-294893/) (accessed 15/05/2020).

Similarly to Berlin, Rome has a rather negative and unusual reputation for a capital city, often being described as corrupt, abandoned, peripheral (Diletti, 2019). The city has been deeply affected by the 2008 crisis, which reinforced pre-existing issues such as a weakened infrastructure and productive structure (Coletti & Rabbiosi, 2020). Rome has the highest “Creativity Index” of all Italian cities (Tingali & Florida, 2005), composed of the “three T’s of growth” (talent, technology and tolerance), but its potential does not correspond with real-life economic conditions. While the city has undertaken efforts to create creative clusters in order to requalify former industrial areas and change its reputation towards a “creative city”, it lacks “tailored and place-based planning policies” (Fiorentino, 2018, p. 118).

Given that the conditions of creative freelance workers in Rome are understudied, Rome presents the primary case of this research. Berlin as a city that has been more researched in this context serves as a comparison; particularly since the two cities are similar in size and both underdeveloped financially as capitals, a comparison between a well-known creative hub and a city lacking “a structured cluster of innovation” (Fiorentino, 2018, p. 118), appears promising.

### **2.1.2 Case selection: Neighbourhoods**

The project’s focal points are the neighbourhoods San Lorenzo and Pigneto in eastern Rome as well as Kreuzberg and Neukölln in southern Berlin. The selected neighbourhoods respectively have a working-class history and have subsequently undergone gentrification processes. Their contemporary reputation positions them as creative hubs with a high number of CCI workers, cultural associations and nightlife locations (Annunziata, 2010; 2014; Stors & Baltes, 2018). Neukölln and Pigneto are more peripheral than Kreuzberg and San Lorenzo and have a large migrant population (Montuori, 2007; Siemer & Matthews-Hunter, 2017).



San Lorenzo and Pigneto are “new cultural clusters [...] embedded in artistic quarters” in eastern Rome (Tremblay & Battaglia, 2012, p. 60). The two neighbourhoods join on the Porta Maggiore square and are separated by a freight yard on San Lorenzo’s southern and Pigneto’s northern boundaries. Rome’s neoliberal economic restructuring in the 1990s, with the abolition of rent control and alienation of public property, enabled gentrification processes that have affected both neighbourhoods (Annunziata, 2014, p. 26). Both San Lorenzo and Pigneto have been associated with a high crime rate, particularly due to drug dealing, as well as with urban decay (Clementi, Ricci & Cannavò, 2004; Postiglione, 2008), but also with antifascist resistance (Dines, 2019).

San Lorenzo, part of Rome’s Municipio II, was built as part of the city’s development after the Italian unification (Annunziata, 2014). As the only neighbourhood in Rome, the neighbourhood was severely bombed during World War II and used to house mostly workers. Given its vicinity to Sapienza university, it is considered Rome’s main student neighbourhood. It has a high concentration of nightlife locations and a considerable population of artists and creatives (Clementi et al., 2004). Attempts at state-led gentrification have led to resistance in the neighbourhood (Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo, 2017).

Pigneto is part of the eastern Municipio V, a densely populated district with a high concentration of immigrants. A former peripheral working-class *borgata*, idealised by Italian intellectuals such as Pier Paolo Pasolini in the 20th century,



Pigneto has become a relatively central neighbourhood (Postiglione, 2014). It has been experiencing gentrification processes, with an influx of artists, students and young professionals and a reputation as diverse, authentic and vibrant (Annunziata, 2010; Coletti & Rabbiosi, 2020; Dines, 2019; Parisi, 2014). Particularly the pedestrian zone in its northern triangle has become a popular nightlife location with numerous bars, pubs and restaurants.

Neukölln and Kreuzberg “stand for the invasion of international creative pioneers” (Holm, 2013, p. 171). Both neighbourhoods used to be parts of the West Berlin enclave, are situated in the south of the city and constitute traditional inner-urban, working-class neighbourhoods (Mayer, 2004). Kreuzberg is more central than Neukölln, which borders it to the south, and used to be West-Berlin’s artist neighbourhood (Manske, 2016). After Germany’s unification, both districts became notorious for high unemployment rates, poverty and crime (Bodirsky, 2012; Stors & Baltes, 2018). The neighbourhoods have large concentrations of immigrant populations and have long been depicted by the media as violent “no-go areas” (cf. Mayer, 2004). This is particularly true for Neukölln, which had the reputation of a crime-filled “ghetto” (Holm, 2013). However, after the millennium change, Kreuzberg experienced a renaissance as “the place to be” for artists and creatives (Manske, 2016). Neukölln subsequently underwent gentrification processes as well, starting with an inflow of “pioneer locations” such as clubs, galleries and subcultural bookstores (Holm, 2007; 2013, p. 174).

Particularly northern Neukölln – whose intersection with Kreuzberg is colloquially called “Kreuzkölln” (Siemer & Matthews-Hunter, 2017; Stors & Baltes, 2018) – with areas such as Schillerkiez or Reuterkiez “has become a new urban hotspot and gained an enormous attractiveness for ‘creative’ people worldwide” (Holm, 2013, p. 180). Regional government policies have supported the “revitalisation” of low-income, multicultural neighbourhoods such as Kreuzberg and Neukölln, attempting to attract creative industries through “the fostering and marketing of a cosmopolitan, tolerant city flair” (Bodirsky, 2012, p. 458).



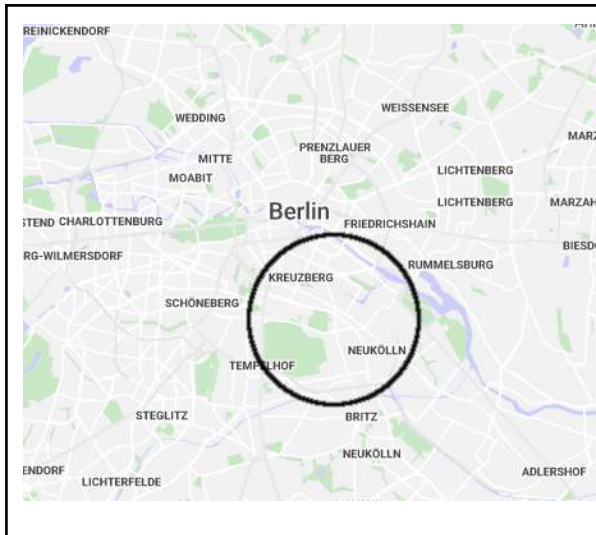


Fig. 3: Kreuzberg and Neukölln's approximate location in Berlin

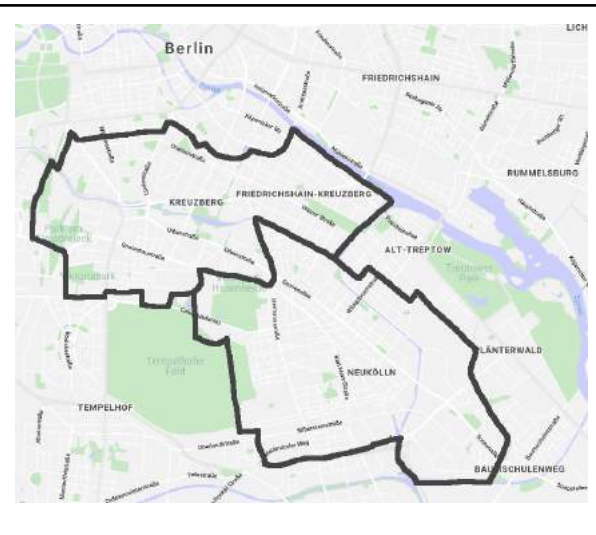


Fig. 4: Kreuzberg and Neukölln's exact location

The four neighbourhoods have thus been chosen as cases due to their attributes that fit into what economists consider a “creative neighbourhood” (cf. Florida, 2015); they are relatively close to the core of their cities, are densely populated and have an abundance of consumption amenities. All of them have undergone gentrification processes, which have resulted in a high amount of creative workers and businesses present. In the media, blogs and tourist guides, they are often described as “creative”, “cool” and “hipster” neighbourhoods.<sup>7</sup> Particularly Pigneto is at times compared to Berlin, being for example referred to as “the Rome equivalent of Kreuzberg”<sup>8</sup>. The selected neighbourhoods thus appear comparable in regard to their working-class histories as well as current gentrification and reputation as “creative” neighbourhoods. This renders them appropriate locations for this research.

<sup>7</sup> For example: San Lorenzo and Pigneto: [www.turismoroma.it/it/quartieri/pigneto-sanlorenzo](http://www.turismoroma.it/it/quartieri/pigneto-sanlorenzo); [www.romeing.it/san-lorenzo-neighbourhood-rome/](http://www.romeing.it/san-lorenzo-neighbourhood-rome/); [www.buzzinrome.com/2018/05/17/discover-alternative-rome-in-san-lorenzo-the-student-and-young-artists-district/](http://www.buzzinrome.com/2018/05/17/discover-alternative-rome-in-san-lorenzo-the-student-and-young-artists-district/); [theculturetrip.com/europe/italy/articles/the-best-things-to-do-in-pigneto-rome/](http://theculturetrip.com/europe/italy/articles/the-best-things-to-do-in-pigneto-rome/); [invececoncita.blogautore.repubblica.it/articoli/2018/11/01/noi-che-non-scendiamo-in-piazza-a-san-lorenzo/](http://invececoncita.blogautore.repubblica.it/articoli/2018/11/01/noi-che-non-scendiamo-in-piazza-a-san-lorenzo/) Kreuzberg and Neukölln: [www.theguardian.com/travel/2013/nov/29/a-day-in-kreuzberg-berlin](http://www.theguardian.com/travel/2013/nov/29/a-day-in-kreuzberg-berlin); [theculturetrip.com/europe/germany/articles/kreuzberg-s-top-10-sights-visiting-berlin-s-hippest-district/](http://theculturetrip.com/europe/germany/articles/kreuzberg-s-top-10-sights-visiting-berlin-s-hippest-district/); [www.visitberlin.de/en/districts/neukolln](http://www.visitberlin.de/en/districts/neukolln); [www.timeout.com/berlin/things-to-do/navigating-neukoelln-your-guide-to-berlins-hippest-hood](http://www.timeout.com/berlin/things-to-do/navigating-neukoelln-your-guide-to-berlins-hippest-hood) (accessed 01/06/2020).

<sup>8</sup> [www.buzzinrome.com/2012/06/11/pigneto-romes-borough-where-local-meets-global-and-the-outcome-is-very-cool/](http://www.buzzinrome.com/2012/06/11/pigneto-romes-borough-where-local-meets-global-and-the-outcome-is-very-cool/) (accessed 01/06/2020).

## 2.2 Methods

The study has a qualitative approach, focusing on interviewing techniques analysed with grounded theory methodology. Additionally, the respondents' networks were entered and analysed through snowball sampling with a network-ethnographic approach. Written and visual content from respondents' social media profiles, focusing on the platform Instagram, were analysed as well. These techniques overall aim to provide a comprehensive insight into the respondents' networking practices.

The target group of the data collection were freelancers working in the creative and cultural industries. They were viewed as individual nodes in interdependent relationships. Respondents were supposed to match the following profile:

- Freelancers who predominantly earn a living through their freelance activity;
- Working in the creative and cultural industries with a predominantly creative profession;
- Active in one or more of the analysed neighbourhoods (i.e. living or working in those neighbourhoods, ideally both).

I decided not to focus on particular sectors within the CCI to explore connections between different professions, but also because many freelance creatives work in more than one sector (for example, part photographer/part artist; part architect/part graphic designer; et cetera); more than half of all self-employed creatives have additional sources of income (Merkel & Oppen, 2013, p. 3). Potential respondents were contacted through the following channels:

- Personal contacts (there were no close relationships between the researcher and any of the respondents prior to the study);
- Online; for instance *Instagram* profiles or *Facebook* groups;
- The professional networking platform *Bumble Bizz*; only in Berlin, given that in Rome it does not have a significant user base;
- Snowball sampling through other respondents; the new potential respondents were then connected through Email, *Whatsapp*, *Facebook* or *Instagram*.

The initial sample – before snowball sampling – consisted of seven respondents in Rome and six respondents in Berlin. Posts describing the study and searching for

respondents were published in the Facebook groups *Freelancers in Rome, Berlin Freelancers, Freiberufler-Freelancer Berlin* and *Berlin freelance artists*. However, only one initial respondent was found through this method; four potential candidates answered to the post in the Roman group, but two of them did not fit the research criteria and another one stopped responding. Nobody responded to the posts in the Berlin groups.

It was quickly discovered that having a preexisting personal connection was a more efficient way to reach respondents, either by knowing each other before the research or through a referral by a shared contact. Twelve respondents of the initial sample were found through personal connections (Rome: four through direct contacts, two through referral; Berlin: four through direct contacts, two through referral). After snowball sampling in Berlin proved to be largely unsuccessful<sup>9</sup>, six respondents were recruited through the smartphone application *Bumble Bizz*. Overall, the Rome sample consists of 17 respondents and the Berlin sample of 14 respondents.

Respondent	Neighbourhood	Lives/Works <sup>10</sup>	Profession	Age	Sex	Origin
<b>Andrea<sup>11</sup></b>	Pigneto	+ -	Editor	34	m	Italy
<b>Cristina</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Photographer/visual designer	32	f	Italy
<b>Marco</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Photographer	35	m	Italy
<b>Massimo</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Photographer	36	m	Italy
<b>Oznur</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Photographer/artist	37	f	Turkey
<b>Sabrina</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Actress	31	f	Italy
<b>Salvatore</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Musician	36	m	Italy
<b>Sandra</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Graphic designer	31	f	Italy
<b>Sara</b>	Pigneto	+ +	Motion designer	31	f	Italy
<b>Alana</b>	San Lorenzo	+ -	Production/social media manager	30	f	Armenia
<b>Alberto</b>	San Lorenzo	+ +	Artist	52	m	Italy
<b>Antonio</b>	San Lorenzo	- +	Artist	35	m	Italy
<b>Fabio</b>	San Lorenzo	- +	Artist	? <sup>12</sup>	m	Italy
<b>Jonathan</b>	San Lorenzo	+ +	Digital marketer	51	m	UK
<b>Leonardo</b>	San Lorenzo	+ +	Artist	34	m	Italy
<b>Maria</b>	San Lorenzo	- +	Architect	30	f	Italy
<b>Neno</b>	San Lorenzo	+ -	Architect/graphic designer	39	m	Serbia

Table 1: Respondents in Rome

Respondent	Neighbourhood	Lives/Works	Profession	Age	Sex	Origin
<b>Gal</b>	Kreuzberg	+ +	Animation filmmaker	28	m	Israel

<sup>9</sup> This complication will be further explained in 2.2.1.

<sup>10</sup> This column refers to if respondents live and/or work in the respective neighbourhoods.

<sup>11</sup> All names are fictional in order to maintain the privacy of my respondents.

<sup>12</sup> Fabio did not tell me his age. He however is retired and has his artist studio in San Lorenzo since 1986.

<b>Johanna</b>	Kreuzberg	+ +	Illustrator	24	f	Germany
<b>Maja</b>	Kreuzberg	+ +	Animation filmmaker	29	f	Poland
<b>Simone</b>	Kreuzberg	+ +	Architect/musician	44	m	Italy
<b>Ulrike</b>	Kreuzberg	+ +	Graphic designer	55	f	Germany
<b>Vadim</b>	Kreuzberg	+ +	UX designer	32	m	Turkey
<b>Vincent</b>	Kreuzberg	+ -	Actor	31	m	Germany
<b>Anika</b>	Neukölln	+ +	Journalist	33	f	Germany
<b>Anita</b>	Neukölln	+ +	Comedian	30	m	Germany
<b>Besim</b>	Neukölln	+ +	Musician	44	m	Turkey
<b>Ella</b>	Neukölln	+ -	Project/event manager	35	f	Poland/ Ger
<b>Leonardo</b> <sup>13</sup>	Neukölln	+ +	Artist	34	m	Italy
<b>Rita</b>	Neukölln	+ +	Radio host/musician	38	f	Germany
<b>Tov</b>	Neukölln	+ +	Music producer	22	m	Israel

Table 2: Respondents in Berlin

### 2.2.1 Interviews

Seventeen semi-structured interviews with freelance creative workers were conducted in Berlin and 14 in Rome. The objective of qualitative interviewing is to develop an analysis based on the information supplied by participants (Creswell, 2009). My aim was to identify and explore the respondents' social networks in the digital as well as urban space and their practices regarding these networks. A semi-structured approach was chosen because it provides more detail-richness than structured interviews and more consistency and comparability than unstructured interviews (May, 2011). The questions of the protocol were mostly open and non-directive, leaving the respondents room for their own thoughts:

#### Interview Protocol

##### 1. General information

- 1.1 Age
- 1.2 Nationality
- 1.3 Place of residence
  - Since when?
  - Where lived before?
- 1.4 Profession
  - Career path
  - When started freelancing?
  - How would you define your current job situation?

##### 2. Working practices

- 2.1 How did you enter this profession?
  - Did you plan on freelancing?
- 2.2 Can you describe a typical workday?

<sup>13</sup> Leonardo lived and worked in Neukölln for over six years. In 2019, he moved back to Rome and settled down in San Lorenzo. I modified the interview protocol to take this unique situation into account and interviewed him regarding both neighbourhoods, which is why he is included in the samples of both cities.

- Working hours
- How many hours per day/week typically?
- Regular place of work? How many hours?
- Alternative places? How many hours?
- 2.3 What kind of clients?
- How do you find clients?
- How do you keep in touch? Physically, digitally? How often?
- 2.4 Do you collaborate with other freelancers?
- What kind of professions?
- How do you find other freelancers?
- Do you feel competition between freelancers with similar profiles? If yes, in what ways?
- 2.5 How long do you work on a project typically?
- 2.6 How long do/can you plan ahead?
- 2.7 How satisfied are you with your job situation? Why?

### **3. Networks in the urban space**

- 3.1 How did you decide to live in this neighbourhood?
- 3.2 Does your neighbourhood play a role/is involved in your job practices?
- In what ways?
- 3.3 Which places in your neighbourhood are/have been relevant to your job in any way?
- Explain how
- Informal and formal venues?
- Clients and partners in the neighbourhood?
- Outside of it?
- 3.4 Has the prevalence of relevant spots changed since you moved here?
- For you personally and in general?
- 3.5 Do you actively seek out connections in your neighbourhood?
- How?
- Are there specific professional networking venues you are using just for the purpose of networking?
- 3.6 Do/can you separate between working hours and spare time when navigating the neighbourhood?
- Do you connect with potential clients/partners also in your spare time?
- How/where?

### **4. Networks in the digital space**

- 4.1 What role does the internet play for your work?
- 4.2 Which platforms do you utilise for work?
- And in private?
- Distinction between professional and private platforms/accounts?
- Can I have a look at some of your profiles/posts?
- 4.3 Do you actively seek out digital connections?
- How?
- Do people contact you digitally for working opportunities?
- Are there specific professional networking sites you are using just for the purpose of networking?
- 4.4 Do/can you separate between working hours and spare time when navigating the internet?
- Do you connect with potential clients/partners also in your spare time?
- How/where?

### **Additional questions:**

- Do you have anything to add?
- Would you be available for follow-up questions in the future via email?
- Can you name other creative freelancers from your network that I can contact for an interview?

The listed questions are not to be seen as a strict guideline but as a flexible reminder of the most important topics. While talking to the respondents, the protocol was individually adjusted to the conversation. Interviews were led in Italian, German or English. They were audio-recorded and then transcribed directly into English to allow a cohesive analysis of all collected material. This process resulted overall in circa 270 pages of text. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face; four of them were conducted over the phone. The interviews' length varied between 30 and 70 minutes, with an average length of 45 minutes.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its profound consequences for people's freedom of movement and professional lives, I recontacted several respondents to add reflections on how this event has impacted them. I conducted additional short interviews with two individuals in Berlin and three in Rome. The interviews were conducted over the phone or in written form via email. The objective was to investigate how the pandemic has impacted my respondents' careers and social networks, and how they utilised their contacts to mitigate potential damage. The additional questions asked were:

#### **COVID-19 Questions**

1. Did the COVID-19 pandemic impact your work, working practices and conditions?  
→ If yes, how so?
2. Did it impact where you work?  
→ If yes, how so?
3. Did it impact the way you communicate with colleagues and clients?  
→ If yes, how so?
4. How did you react to any impairments?

The collected in-depth material was analysed following a grounded theory approach to extract repeating patterns. Grounded theory as a method to build empirically based theories allows a flexible analysis interrelated to the collection of data from different sources. Since it requires extensive documentation during the research process as well as a continuous reflection on the findings, grounded theory methodology can increase the internal validity of the research. By turning raw material into codes, this method facilitates interpretable and potentially reproducible results, showing underlying patterns, similarities and differences in narratives. Concepts are discovered and expanded during the data collection; hypotheses are

thus not fixed from the start but can be modified, revised or discarded completely (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Through the first *open* coding stage of grounded theory, codes are conceptualised by finding keywords within the interviews (Strauss, 1991, p. 57). The terms are summarised into preliminary categories. During the next step, *axial* coding, the categories are enhanced to a higher level of abstraction, giving them the necessary density (Muckel, 2007, p. 345). In the last step of *selective* coding, a core category is identified, which determines the central phenomenon of the analysis (Corbin et al., 1990, p. 14). A conceptually sound theory should have emerged, explaining as many aspects of the examined phenomenon as possible.

The qualitative data analysis software *QDA Miner* was used for material from the interviews. Qualitative data analysis software helps to evaluate and interpret qualitative data systematically. It allows the researcher to code text fragments and organise them in different categories and subcategories in order to find patterns and connections within single interviews or sets of interviews (Creswell, 2009). For this project, two interview sets – one for Rome, one for Berlin – were coded separately and then compared to illustrate commonalities and differences.

### **2.2.2 Network ethnography through snowball sampling**

“Artist populations” are chronically challenging to sample due to their frequent informality (DiMaggio, 2011, p. 288). Creative freelancers are, as discussed, highly individualised and non-unionised. They communicate largely informally through a word-of-mouth system of personal referrals. They thus somewhat fall into the category of a “hidden population”, albeit without the stigma of traditional hidden populations such as HIV-positive people (cf. Heckathorn & Jeffri, 2001). Where possible, the respondents’ networks were thus accessed through snowball sampling, which can be useful for studying social capital in highly relational environments (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Snowball sampling is a recommended method for research that focuses on networks of individuals (Coleman, 1958). It follows the sociometric relations of a specific community and is therefore an effective method to enter hard-to-reach groups. Snowball sampling expands the overall sample of the study from a population of individuals towards “one of relations among individuals” (Coleman, 1958, p. 29). As a chain-referral method, it can reach respondents that are



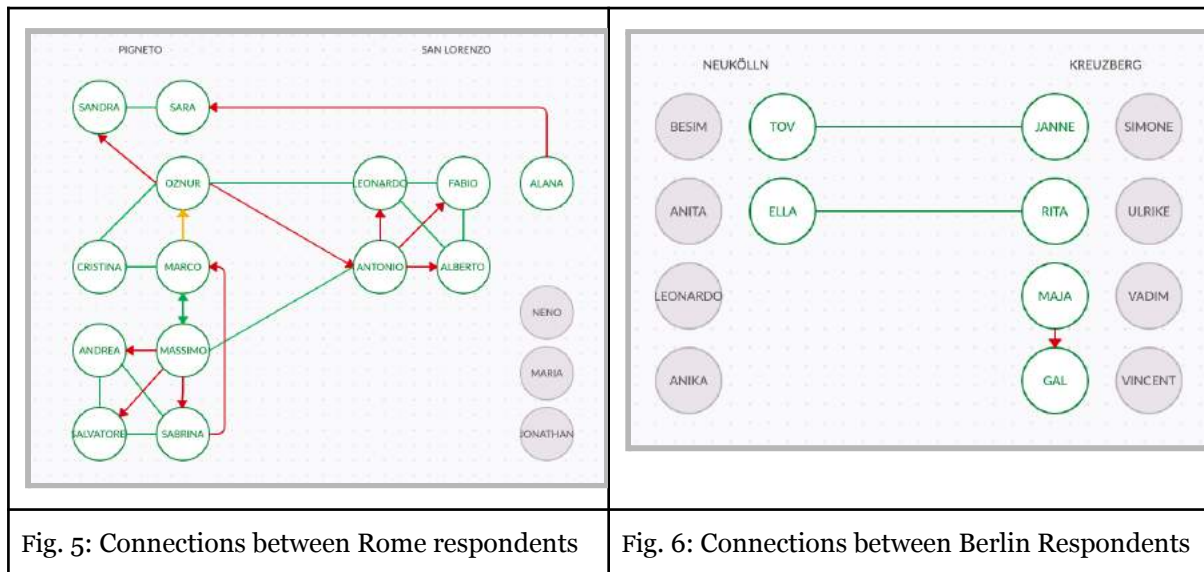
not accessible through other sampling strategies (Heckathorn & Jeffri, 2001). All respondents were thus asked to provide further contacts from within their professional networks as interview partners. The emphasis overall were existing connections between the interviewed respondents (offline and online). Similar approaches have also been called “network ethnography”, emphasising the qualitative nature of the research (Howard, 2002).

In addition, the selected neighbourhoods and the online realm were assessed as networking spaces. For urban space, interview respondents were asked to name spaces in their cities that relevant to their (net)working practices; spaces such as studios, bars or associations were taken into account and mapped manually. After the interviews, I decided to focus the online analysis on the social media platform *Instagram*, since it is the most widely used social platform among the study participants. To gain an in-depth understanding of digital networking efforts, respondents’ *Instagram* profiles and posts were thus analysed. For this purpose, screenshots of profiles and posts were taken with the respondents’ consent and, where necessary, anonymised by blurring data such as names, faces and recognisable artwork.

The study’s snowball approach led to some auto-ethnographic considerations, which were not part of the original research design; attempting to contact and meet freelancers through referrals from others enabled me to experience the networking process as an “insider” instead of from an outside perspective. It is important to take into account that this is only true to an extent, since I got in touch with the respondents as a researcher, not as someone from their industry whose contact could be professionally beneficial to them. In any case, it provided valuable insights into networking channels, behaviours and etiquettes.

Snowball sampling comes with inherent difficulties. As to be expected, many referred candidates did not respond, or an interview appointment was not scheduled successfully. In Rome, out of 19 contacted “snowball” candidates, ten were successfully recruited and interviewed. In Rome, the snowball sampling strategy proved to be significantly more complicated: Out of 15 viable referrals, only one was available for an interview. Given the limited time frame of the study, I started contacting creative freelancers on the networking application *Bumble Bizz* to raise

the number of Berlin respondents. The following graphic shows the connections between the respondents in both cities after the data collection:



In this graphic, green lines indicate a mutual connection between respondents (i.e. they know each other personally, are *friends/followers* on social media or both), red arrows indicate a snowball sampling referral and yellow arrows a one-sided connection (i.e. the respondent knows the other respondent, but not the other way around). In Rome, only three respondents remained without a trackable connection to others in the sample. Two particularly tight-knit groups, in which four respondents all know each other, were found. In Berlin, on the other hand, eight respondents – and therefore the majority of them – do not know other candidates. There are several likely reasons why the snowball sampling in Berlin failed:

- The active data collection phase in Rome lasted five months between June and November 2019; in Berlin, I only had a one-month research stay in December 2019 to recruit most candidates. Even though several candidates were contacted before arrival and the possibility for phone interviews after departure was given, the shorter time spent in the field inevitably impacted the recruitment of interview partners.
- Starting from February 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began to noticeably lower candidates' availability, as freelancers were particularly hit by cancelled

projects and the resulting financial insecurity. This resulted in the cancellation of several scheduled interviews.

- The last probable reason is connected to the research findings, with Berlin's creative scene appearing much more loosely connected in comparison to Rome's tight-knit communities. This means that Rome candidates commonly had closer relationships with each other, while the candidates I was referred to in Berlin were mostly distant professional contacts or acquaintances. This phenomenon will be further discussed in the results.

### **3. The Process of Networking:**

#### **Creating, Utilising and Maintaining Social Capital**

This first analysis will focus on responding to the first research question: *How do freelance creatives in Berlin and Rome create, utilise and maintain social capital through networking?* To examine repeating patterns in the respondents' narratives, the transcribed interviews were coded as described with a grounded theory approach. During the first, open coding stage, both in-vivo codes taken directly from the interviews and conceptual codes were used. Axial coding then resulted in the creation of categories drawing relationships between the codes. Three main categories were found that encompass how the respondent network: creating social capital, utilising social capital and maintaining social capital. Theoretical saturation was reached when no new relevant categories emerged after adding interviews to the analysis.

In the following sections, these main categories will be investigated in-depth alongside selected citations from the conducted interviews<sup>14</sup>. Of course, the process of creating, utilising and maintaining social capital is not as linear as presented here; for instance, contacting an old colleague because she knows a potential client simultaneously 1) utilises existing social capital with the aim of being introduced to a new client, 2) maintains the existing social capital with the former colleague and 3) creates new social capital with the potential client. The breakdown into three distinct stages can merely present an approximation with the intention to analyse the concept of social capital in application to freelance creatives' working practices.

---

<sup>14</sup> Some of the citations have been lightly edited for clarity, without modifying their meaning.

### 3.1 Creating Social Capital

My sample includes respondents who have been working as creative freelancers in their respective city for years as well as others who have just moved there or just started working freelance. Because of this, different stages of the creation of social capital can be observed; some of the respondents are urgently looking to enter the right networks, others are starting to benefit from their connections and some have built a reliable network that continuously provides them jobs and opportunities. This chapter will explore the respondents' statements regarding the creation of social capital.

#### 3.1.1 “Natural” networking

It would be reasonable to assume that one of the first steps of a freelance career was to actively advertise, for example by visiting networking events or building a website to showcase skills and offer creative services. In reality, an often repeated sentiment in the interviews is that to the respondents, self-promotion appears necessary, but does not feel “natural”:

*I think I have to work on myself a bit for that, promoting myself is something that doesn't come naturally to me, I always have to force myself a bit. So far, I have been quite lucky that I just know people who actively say “Come on, I'll introduce you to XY”.*

Anita<sup>15</sup>, 30, comedian, Neukölln

*And for some it's easy, for me not that much, that you always have to present yourself to the outside world, you always need to have new people on the hook and always have a commission up your sleeve, because it can always happen that a client disappears [...].*

Anika, 33, journalist, Neukölln

Especially at the beginning of a freelance career and given the often precarious relationships with existing clients, advertising and presenting oneself is necessary. At the same time, it is a bothersome task to many respondents, and they do not know how to approach it. Sandra, a graphic designer in Pigneto, specifies that the online part of self-promotion does not appeal to her:

---

<sup>15</sup> A list of all the interview respondents with their relevant data can be found in chapter 2.2.1 of the Methodology.

*[...] I need to start advertising for myself, which at least for me is the most difficult thing. I talked a bit about this with some people, not everyone is good at presenting themselves. And besides, now if you need to advertise, the only way to do it seems to be Facebook, Instagram, Behance, all these... Well, I'm going to try. But it's really hard promoting oneself [laughs]. I need to see if it works.*

Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto

Sandra describes promoting herself less as a learned skill and more like a personality trait. As a graphic designer, she chose her profession based on her perceived talents and asserts that self-promotion is not one of them. While she wants to make an effort to advertise on websites, which she assumes is “the only way”, it does not appear very promising to her – she has to “see if it works”. Advertising too much furthermore can also clash with the reputation freelance creatives want for themselves:

*[...] Within my job, I'm in the public eye, even though I'm not super known, but at least a bit. So I need to balance myself out a bit and protect myself, because if I'm on every platform saying “hey, I'm looking for jobs”, it seems needy. If as a show host you have a LinkedIn and want to get booked urgently, I think that appears too desperate.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

In a profession so tied to one's personality, putting too much effort into promotion can come off as “desperate”, “needy”. Respondents want to appear as if they get booked effortlessly, solely based on their skills and talent, not on advertising themselves heavily. The implication is that if someone is good at their job, they do not need to advertise it. Marco, a photographer living in Pigneto, has tried paid advertising and did not find it very efficient:

*I'm trying to find connections on the internet. [...] The client as such, no, I don't succeed in finding him. I tried advertising via Facebook, it brought me many likes and no clients.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

While online advertising has resulted in more “likes” for his Facebook page, actual working opportunities have failed to materialise. The number of people liking his page arguably also constitutes a form of social capital which makes his online presence appear more popular and professional, but Marco struggles to create connections that result in actually getting booked. This confirms that a network's size, particularly online, does not necessarily translate into a high amount of social capital. In Marco's view, the more time-consuming way of going to events and talking to people proves to be more promising:

*Where do I meet people? I don't know, I swear. Either through other connections, you go to some events, or through friends you already have. You go out and they introduce you to other people who might be interesting. Or a few weeks ago, I went to a theatre festival in Ostiense and all of Rome was there, practically "ciao, ciao, ciao". So events, friends and at the same time in the neighbourhood where I live, sometimes just walking around you meet somebody and talk, if you have time.*  
Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

Marco mentions industry events such as theatre festivals as important touchpoints for "all of Rome", i.e. the city's creative scene, to reconnect and introduce one another. They thus function both as occasions to actively meet strangers and to indirectly be introduced to them through shared contacts. At the same time, Marco specifically mentions his neighbourhood as a useful space to run into acquaintances. These encounters however have to remain somewhat casual:

*[...] You don't want to go to the parties like... you just want to meet nice people, you could ask "Oh, you got some jobs, what are you doing right now?", but like, I don't like this impression, that it's all about networking and jobs.*  
Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Not appearing too "needy" or "desperate" thus not only applies to the online realm, but also to events. Respondents do not consider meeting other creatives as professional meetings, but rather as friendly encounters with professional benefits. Inquiring too openly about job opportunities can give the impression that everything revolves around "networking and jobs". This somewhat collides with the perspective that freelancers adopt an entrepreneurial ethos as part of their identity (Bandinelli & Arvidsson, 2012; Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Gandini, 2016; Lee, 2013a; McRobbie, 2002; 2016). This entrepreneurial spirit however might just be more implicit; explicitly connecting with people for the sake of networking clashes with the image of a passionate artist who just wants to meet like-minded people instead of acting like a corporate, career-minded professional. While potential opportunities evidently are a significant motivator, it is important not to appear opportunistic. Informal events like dance parties as a part of "leisure culture" commonly replace official networking events, serving the purpose of casual "word of mouth" socialising in the cultural sector (McRobbie, 2002). It therefore makes sense that networking events are seen as more or less useless in the eyes of many respondents. Particularly in Berlin,

respondents mention these kinds of events, especially organised through the website *Meetup.com*, but at the same time doubt their efficiency:

*I've been told there are Meetups, this app where you can find artists and so on, but so far I haven't done it. I wouldn't say no, but something is telling me that it wouldn't be for me anyway [laughs]. And that I would waste my time, driving there for hours and then sitting around and it's all also people who aren't...I mean, if they were amazing people, they wouldn't need to sit around with strangers. [...] But I kind of imagine it like online dating, you don't know how it will turn out and then it's weird.*

Johanna, 24, illustrator, Kreuzberg

Johanna is at the beginning of her career. She is thus actively looking to build a network, but assumes that planned events mostly attract people who are at the start of their career as well. Those who are “amazing” do not need networking events, in her opinion. Vadim, an experienced UX designer, used to go to Meetup events and confirms that they do not lead to “quality connections”:

*Sometimes I still get invitations either to talk or just to attend, sometimes I go because some of my close friends are going. But I never see the advantage of going there, in a way that I get some knowledge or I learn something. I just feel like most of the time it's a place where people talk to advertise their own company or they're looking for some brainfood. And most of the time I don't like to network just for the sake of it. Normally I try to avoid them, because for me it's mostly fake knowledge sharing and I don't believe that such networking would bring quality connections.*

Vadim, 32, UX designer, Kreuzberg

As a more experienced professional, Vadim can be selective with the events he frequents. He perceives that him attending public meetups would be more valuable to other, less advanced creatives than to him; they would be able to promote their business and get inspired by him (“brainfood”), while he would not learn anything useful. Alana, an Armenian expat in San Lorenzo, similarly describes her experiences with networking events in Rome as “not very helpful”:

*In the beginning I was going to some networking events in Rome and then I found they are not actually very helpful. [...] I kind of didn't feel it, maybe because when you really know that you're going to network it's kind of not natural. You already know you need to meet people, you need to talk to people and that doesn't come naturally. But when you just go to the club to have fun and you relax and you meet people it comes so naturally. I don't find these events very good to network.*

Alana, 30, production/social media manager, San Lorenzo

Alana repeats what others have said before: Networking for her has to feel “natural”, and it only does whenever it happens spontaneously instead of at a planned and



scheduled event. This however also means that leisure activities, such as going to clubs, become intertwined with professional networking. Going out after work becomes a compulsory activity to socialise with industry contacts in an informal setting (Neff, Wissinger & Zukin, 2005). As Wittel (2001) describes, the commodification of social relationships for professional networking is clear, but needs to be concealed; creative freelancers want their connections to be “authentic”, not purely instrumental.

It is thus not surprising that creating social capital is a process that many of the respondents find hard to define; places where networking actually takes place are not explicitly designed to serve that purpose while contexts that are – i.e. advertising, networking events – often do not lead to the expected results. Maria, an architect living in San Lorenzo attempts to describe how she builds her network:

*A: Always in dialogue, always speaking. Showing my face. Look, it has happened to me thanks to jobs I have done at home, small adjustments done with artisans or carpenters, construction workers, painters, given that they saw how I work, that I have passion, we maybe exchanged contacts. Let's say I always try to open up links. Or just speaking, when it happens. At the fruit shop rather than at the supermarket.*

*Q: So it's something casual?*

*A: Yes. Maybe I'm just not that good, I don't know [laughs]. When you ask me those questions, I'm also asking them myself. Interesting.*

*Maria, 30, architect, San Lorenzo*

Maria cannot precisely define how she networks because it is not a clearly defined process. Casual encounters maybe result in a connection, maybe not. She bases the success of her networking attempts on her visible passion for her job, which convinces her collaborators to connect with her; not on the effort she puts into networking itself. At the same time, she worries that she is “not that good” at networking and could put more targeted effort into it.

Overall, these accounts confirm the notion that freelance creatives tend to emphasise their artistic calling while understating the extensive managerial effort that goes into their day-to-day working practices (cf. Arvidsson, Malossi & Naro, 2010; Gandini, 2016; Manske, 2016; Ross, 2003). Networking for them has to happen casually, naturally and based on sympathy and skills, not through planned events and targeted advertising attempts.

### 3.1.2 Breaking into structures

CCI freelancers are confronted with a large pool of competitors that clients can freely choose from. Their talent and skills alone do not suffice in finding them projects:

*[...] You have your creative abilities and some skills and maybe some means of production, like this computer. But the problem is, how to sell yourself and how to find the client. So how to get in contact with the client, how to convince them that you are the one, when there is really this huge sea of possibilities on the global market. And that's also lowering the price at the end of the day and it's also mixing functions, so now designers are architects and, like, engineers are architects and architects are... I don't know, something else. Everything became a big and un-understandable mess.*

Neno, 39, architect/graphic designer, San Lorenzo

Neno, who is originally from Serbia and has been living in Rome for 15 years, himself works both as an architect and a graphic designer, which makes him an excellent example of how creative freelancers “mix functions” to offer a wider array of services. He asks himself how he is supposed to convince clients to book him with the overwhelming amount of cheap competition; it is an often-expressed sentiment within the interviews is that CCI are a hard to understand, opaque, fixed field that one has to “break into”:

*The biggest issue isn't competition, more this feeling, this challenge to break into structures. I rarely am jealous regarding colleagues who started with me, I feel it more when I'm in an author session and look at the established veterans thinking “Why are you here? How did you manage to do that?”.*

Anita, 30, comedian, Neukölln

Anita suspects that some of the established individuals in her profession did not attain their status based on their merit. Being a good comedian on its own is not enough. One has to enter a more or less closed circle, which she perceives as a challenge. In her opinion, the issue is not the competition itself, but finding a way to evade it. Besim, a Turkish musician living in Neukölln, asserts that talent alone is usually not enough to become successful in his industry:

*Nothing happens out of nowhere, we're not living in Beethoven's times anymore. [...] Either you really have to have a really good plan about what you're doing, you're using your talent in the perfectly suitable way [...] or you're just going to have to be a genius, a musical genius. But still it can also not be enough, if you're, like, shy about yourself. Right now in this fast-paced world where information is, like, eaten and spat out in seconds, you have to just be able to do that. And I know a lot of people who are incredible musicians, but they shy out.*

Besim, 44, musician, Neukölln

In Besim's perspective, success thus relies less on talent and more on personality. If a musician is "shy", i.e. does not promote his work to the outside world, even being a "genius" might not be enough to succeed, particularly in a fast-paced information age. This indicates that human capital alone does not suffice for a successful freelance career: Social capital facilitates the realisation of human capital's potential (Schuller, 2001). Maja, an animation filmmaker from Poland, similarly describes how she perceives the competition in Berlin:

*I was even surprised about how many artists there are in Berlin [laughs] and I think maybe at the first moment it makes you feel like there is a lot of competition. [...] Maybe I don't feel this competition, but I know how it works, that you need to get this first contact and then you'll get into this network. And if you don't have it, you won't get those jobs, or you need to have an amazing, amazing portfolio.*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Answering Neno's question on how to get booked despite the overwhelming competition, Maja describes social capital in the form of connections within the local industry as directly interchangeable with convincing potential employers through one's work. Her explanation of "how it works" is an illustrative description of social capital: To be successful as an artist in Berlin, one needs a "first contact" to get introduced to a network that will lead to access to jobs. The professional status of one's contacts is what determines one's success (cf. Lin, 1999b). The only alternative to this approach would be an "amazing, amazing portfolio", making someone stand out from the competition. To an extent, networks thus also function as substitutes for artistic skill or experience. This reinforces the notion that those who do not or cannot network suffer substantial career disadvantages; success is highly dependent on a freelancer's ability to socialise (McRobbie, 2002; Ursell, 2000). The way Maja networks in Berlin is mostly through informal get-togethers with other animators:

*Sometimes I hear from other animator friends that there's some kind of meetup, like you know, just a meeting of animators, maybe connected with some screening. But those are not considered professional meetings, just people, like, friends-of-friends meeting. But then you can meet people working in some studios or there are also a lot of freelancers like me.*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Maja works in a small, privately organised coworking space in Kreuzberg with her Israeli boyfriend Gal and a few other animation filmmakers. They both arrived in Berlin a year ago. He talks about the consequences of not yet being known in the city:

*What helped me in Israel is that people know what I can do. People around me saying “Gal knows how to do this and that, maybe it will be good” and people can actually see my work, without knowing who I am before. Here it's a problem, here I'm starting from scratch. Nobody knows, even people here in the [coworking space] don't really know what I can do.*

Gal, 28, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Nobody knows Gal's skills and how good he is at his job without a network, which means nobody recommends him to relevant studios. In Rome, I interviewed another creative couple<sup>16</sup>. Unlike Gal and Maja, who immigrated to Germany, Sabrina and Massimo are both native Italians. However, Sabrina, who works as an actress, lived in Los Angeles for a few years before moving to Rome. She now lives in Pigneto with her boyfriend Massimo, a photographer. To the question, if she already had a network in Rome before moving there, Sabrina responds:

*No, I had to start over with everything. I didn't know anyone, I only had one close friend who was a director, not a famous one, I had only him. So it was difficult starting over, because I was coming from a city with a very different culture [Los Angeles]. There is an industry, there I did four, five auditions a day, here I have one audition a day if I'm lucky. That's my situation, because I'm not know yet. You need to put a lot of effort into it, you need to search things yourself. So it was very traumatic. But slowly, slowly, with that director I did a short film, then a web series which won the Roma Web Festival, then I started knowing people. Like that. Then I met people with whom I did a theatre show, met other people, slowly. Because not knowing anyone here in Rome, I really had to start from scratch.*

Sabrina, 31, actress, Pigneto

Sabrina describes the efforts that go into entering the film industry in a city where she had almost no prior relationships. Her only contact with a film director led to an award, which led to more connections. She describes this process as creating as many ties with people in the industry as possible, so that opportunities emerge from some of these new contacts. She however still perceives herself to be in the starting phase of her career in Rome:

*Let's hope that I will have more opportunities, that I will have more work. The moment you get the first job, you also get the second job, your name starts to make rounds. Look at Massimo, Massimo is always working lots, because everybody knows him as a photographer. So it's word of mouth, no? I'm still in the phase where nobody knows me, so I need to push a lot, I need to make myself seen, known, I need to meet people.*

Sabrina, 31, actress, Pigneto

---

<sup>16</sup> All individuals were interviewed separately to avoid that their answers would influence one another.

Unlike her boyfriend, Sabrina still needs to “push a lot” to actively build a network in order to find more opportunities and further her career. The phrase “the moment you get the first job, you also get the second job” is particularly interesting, as it indicates that one most of all needs to find a way to enter the industry; from that moment on, new opportunities ideally appear automatically. Massimo, who by now is a well-established photographer, describes his beginnings as similar:

*Living in a place like [Pigneto], it's easier finding the right contacts. And then let's say, before the book I had some difficulties finding jobs, nobody knew me and everything. I changed my lifestyle a bit and started to be more open with people, going to... now I don't do that anymore, you know? Going out every evening. By now I have made a name for myself, now... But I needed to do that, to make myself known.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

Massimo needed to change his social life to improve his professional life. This is an interesting example of how in freelance labour, working hours blur into leisure time. Massimo overcame his professional difficulties by going out more, making himself known to people. Living in a neighbourhood with a high CCI concentration helped because it enabled him to get the “right”, i.e. professionally useful, contacts. Now that he is established in his profession and has enough clients, he does not have to go out that often anymore; this means that his more extroverted, nightlife-focused lifestyle was based on professional considerations instead of being a voluntary decision. As Neff, Wissinger and Zukin (2005, p. 323) confirm in their interviews, many CCI workers “hate” compulsory networking, but consider it something that “has to be done”. Sabrina describes how she attempts to broaden her network through friends or other connections:

*Well, trying to do workshops, which is a way to meet new people, or friends. Saying “Ah, you know this person? I would like to meet her”, because like that maybe you can create a professional relationship, a collaboration. “Ah, you know this director, can you introduce me? Because I know he's making this film, maybe he's looking for someone like me, with my physical characteristics.” So yes, I'm searching very actively.*

Sabrina, 31, actress, Pigneto

Rather than contacting influential industry personalities directly, she needs to find an “in” through a middleman. In order to do that, she even spends money on workshops; actively building a network is an investment of time and money. The goal is often not to directly communicate with potential clients, but to find intermediary

contacts who will introduce or even recommend her. Her spare time and private life become interwoven with professional considerations.

Especially those who came to Rome as immigrants describe the city's CCI as very closed structures with implicit rules and procedures. As foreigners, these respondents likely perceive cultural particularities in their chosen cities more distinctly. Their accounts thus provide valuable reflections on local conventions, which natives cannot offer in the same way. Alana, who recently moved to Rome from Armenia, and Neno, who is Serbian, explain their frustration with the local scene:

*A: I understood it's really a very closed circle. Here it's... maybe it's everywhere like this, but it's really difficult to enter, no one will consider you, no one will look at your CV, even though it's a good CV and you have good experience.*

*Q: They all already know each other?*

*A: Yeah. All the time, you have to know someone. Everyone is telling me, if you want to find a good job, you have to start to network first, find contacts, build contacts and then they will consider you. Otherwise, just sending a CV, no one is even opening these emails.*

Alana, 30, production/social media manager, San Lorenzo

*But Rome is a particular kind of surrounding, where people do this through the connections they already have. And they kind of tend to keep it to the family or close friends. It's a very closed circle and that's the biggest problem of architecture, it always tends to be this kind of special, secret, I don't know, society thing. It's like that.*

Neno, 39, architect/graphic designer, San Lorenzo

Starting a career as a creative freelancer in Rome as a foreigner means finding a network first. Rather than a good CV, one needs "family or close friends", which of course foreigners are less likely to have in Rome than those with Italian origins. Without these intermediary contacts, many projects will remain inaccessible. Besim, a musician from Turkey living in Neukölln, talks about his experiences:

*Here it's not so easy to get into any circle, especially if you didn't study here. Because there's some patterns and some ways of thinking, about how you explain ideas [...]. So it's a different thing for me, which is alright, but it took a long time for me to understand. Like OK, this guy talks about it this way...*

Besim, 44, musician, Neukölln

Similarly to the Rome respondents, Besim sees differences in the way people think and communicate in Germany compared to his home country. But despite more immigrants having been interviewed in Berlin than in Rome (7 versus 4) – which is

in line with Berlin's status as a more international "expat" destination –, observations regarding how difficult it is getting into CCI circles in a specific city were expressed much more in Rome. This implies that there must indeed be certain differences between Rome's and Berlin's networking culture, likely connected to broader cultural differences between Italy and Germany. Another interesting aspect Besim mentions is the importance of where somebody went to school or university. This notion will be explored in the coming section.

### **3.1.3 The role of educational institutions**

A clearer and more institutional way to establish connections and create social capital is one's place of education. Many respondents mention their school or university as an essential pool of social capital and starting point for their careers:

*The starting point is mostly the school, if you haven't done anything else before that. Often it's also people who already have artistic parents or so, so they kind of have a circle. With me, it's really mainly through the school and through teachers most of all, because I was a well-behaved student [laughs]. No, but since i recognised this early on, the nice thing is if you also "click" personally, people keep you in mind. And that was more my thing always anyway, to know people and ask them. And I got offered two other jobs back then, when I was still in acting school, which I couldn't even do because I had no time. Through teachers who recommended me somewhere.*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

For Vincent, his private acting school was of particular importance, given that he does not have "artistic parents" who would provide him with their own contacts. Being a good student then turns into more than a means to achieve good grades; it becomes an effective way to receive teachers' references and recommendations. This is a valuable illustration of how human capital in the form of parental job status, pre-existing social ties or education facilitates the entrance into individual networks (cf. Lin, 1999b). Maja reports similar things about her education, but emphasises her university friends' influence rather than her teachers':

*[My university] was not really a competitive environment, I would not call it competitive at all, but people were very ambitious and they let you do a lot of things. So, like, my friends were getting some small jobs, doing something, so we could kind of help each other and connect this network. Because of my friend I got a freelance job and I'm cooperating with that studio up until now, once in a while. So I think this is how it works, you get the first freelance job, then people see if you're working nice and they like what you're doing, so they will recommend you further also.* Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Maja is referring to her Polish university in this quote. This further explains why she mostly has clients in Poland rather than in Berlin/Germany: She started her career with her friends' support while studying. Her network developed from there, with clients being satisfied with her work and recommending her further. Apart from impressing teachers, socialising and building friendships at university presents a valuable networking opportunity as well. It thus makes sense that higher education institutes actively encourage students to start networking during their attendance (Lee, 2013b; McRobbie, 2002). But what happens to those who did not study their profession?

*So far, honestly it's been a mystery to me how the media landscape works exactly. Because as I said, there are a lot of set, fixed structures, so of course people who study screenwriting at the big film universities, it's clear that they will wind up somewhere. But when it's not about classical screenwriting but something like comedy, where there isn't a clear education, it's a bit mysterious to me how people get there. [...] The most obvious thing would be people from production companies going to clubs and looking around, but that doesn't happen, it's more about recommendations and references. [...] [From people] with whom you've done something before.*

Anita, 30, comedian, Neukölln

Anita's education was not related to her chosen profession as a comedian and evidently did not provide her relevant connections. Instead of getting jobs through prior contacts, she thus gets them through other jobs, which is a more tedious and opaque process, and for her in many ways "still a mystery". Similar things are observed by Johanna, an illustrator living in Kreuzberg, and Antonio, a San Lorenzo artist, who are both self-taught in their professions:

*My problem is more that I want more contacts, that I want to get in, since I very much have the feeling that I'm coming from the outside and that without having studied it, I need to first of all understand this whole world.*

Johanna, 24, illustrator, Kreuzberg

*I have to say, I started from zero, without contacts in the art world, neither friends nor collectors nor people with money, I come from a context...my friends are people who don't buy art, they can't afford to buy art. [...] And I found [clients] slowly, slowly, with exhibitions, people who have seen my work and liked it. It was really step by step, no? From zero.*

Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

Having no networks from university means "starting from zero", "coming from the outside". Johanna only started working as a freelance illustrator a year ago, which is



why she is still trying to understand the industry and has few contacts. Antonio on the other hand has started doing street art in the late 1990s and slowly moved towards classical painting from there. He thus has many connections in the art world, but knows how slow and tedious networking is without having gone to university or having an artistic family background. An “outsider” in their view is somebody who has not studied a creative subject. Education matters also in terms of geography, i.e. where somebody studied, as Leonardo reiterates:

*What I think happens to many artists who live in Berlin but are not from Berlin, not everyone obviously, but only a few manage to work in Berlin. At least that's the experience I share with many people, [...] that they live in Berlin, but do exhibitions elsewhere and that's what happens a lot if you haven't studied there. The place where you studied is generally often where you do exhibitions [laughs].*

Leonardo, 34, artist, San Lorenzo/Neukölln

Leonardo is from Rome, lived in Neukölln for several years and has recently moved back to San Lorenzo. As he describes, a significant obstacle for professional success in Berlin was that he did not study there. He studied Fine Arts in the Netherlands and, due to this fact, still has exhibitions there despite having left; this reinforces how important the place of education can be. It appears that educational institutes present a shortcut to creating a high amount of social capital without having to network specifically. Particularly for people who do not already have a network in a city or country, such as immigrants, studying is an effective way to create contacts. This demonstrates that the creation of social capital does not solely depend on personal effort, but also on external factors such as one’s socio-economic background; educational institutes can for example counterbalance a lack of existing social capital in one’s family and social circle. They are however not accessible to everyone, given monetary and educational obstacles. Someone starting a creative freelance career without family ties to the creative industries and without having studied a creative subject will undoubtedly have to invest a significant amount of time into creating a network of clients first and will therefore find it much harder to earn a living.

### 3.1.4 Discussion

I want to conclude this chapter with two accounts of respondents who can point more precisely to where their professional networks started and how they succeeded in creating valuable social capital. Both respondents describe their networks as having grown “naturally”, through chance encounters rather than planned meetings or advertising. Oznur, a Turkish photographer and artist in Pigneto, considers herself “lucky” from the beginning:

*I was very lucky, I decided in April 2012 [to quit my corporate job] and everybody asked me “But what are you going to do now?” and I said, well, let's see what happens, like destiny. I believe in destiny and I was waiting for something. I left my job in April 2012, I had an exhibition and a girl came and asked me to take photos. And then she promoted me a lot. In the sense of word of mouth. And in the end...I didn't have time to search for work [laughs]. I have never searched for work. Somebody has always brought me work.*

Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

For Oznur, it is easy to name a specific person who started promoting her after she did her first photography job for her. From this contact, her network branched out through word-of-mouth promotion. She does not even feel the need to search for work opportunities because the opportunities come to her, seemingly effortlessly. This constitutes an illustrative example of how the successful creation of social capital can in the long run simplify freelancers’ work. For Oznur, this was “destiny”; she evidently perceives her career as something that simply happened because she believed it would. It is however likely that her personality and leisure behaviour have played a significant role in the creation of her network, as her social circle even before becoming a creative freelancer included people from the industry and she often frequented industry events such as exhibitions. Antonio, an artist living and working in San Lorenzo, gives a more detailed account of how he built his network:

*Because I got to know a gallery through those who sold me paints, they liked my works and we did a collective exhibition. Then they did a competition and I won and did my first solo show there. And from there, I exhibited in collective exhibitions, for example with another artist who lived in the Ghetto Ebraico. He did an exhibition in his studio there, a gallerist down there saw my works and from there...it was really by chance. It was always through someone who saw my work and then relationships emerged, all through the work. Which is more exhausting compared to other aspects, it's not like I wouldn't like to have 1000 contacts already included, it would be more comfortable. But it simply hasn't been like that.*

Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

Antonio, similarly to Ozgur, can name the encounter that facilitated his entrance into the industry. In his opinion, his career developed “by chance”, but it is evident that him exhibiting his works constituted an investment into networking. While those with prior connections in the art world in Antonio’s view have a start-up capital (“1000 contacts already included”), his contacts emerged purely through his work. Working opportunities not only emerge through social capital, but also vice versa. Weak ties (cf. Granovetter, 1973) and therefore “bridging” social capital (cf. Putnam, 2000) appear to play a significant role in this process, as in the early stage of a freelance career one’s network has to expand and intertwine so that new resources and opportunities open up. After recognising this, networking for some turns into a very conscious decision and process:

*And I think I've gained a whole other awareness of the meaning of networks. For example, I will now become a member of [an art association], because I want to move more towards art and there are a lot of people that are interesting to me. So the whole term of networks has taken on a whole new meaning for me as compared to before. I control it much more actively and I can control it much more actively. It's not like, oops, I met someone randomly. You can very consciously go to places where like-minded people go, who are interested in meeting you because you can also offer them something.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

Using one’s spare time to participate in associations or events where other CCI professionals are likely to be present becomes a mandatory activity; at the same time, creating connections needs to appear like a “casual” and “authentic” process. The boundaries between private and professional lives blur.

As this chapter demonstrates, creating social capital is absolutely essential to enter the CCI successfully as education, skills, talent alone do not suffice. Given the complementary relationship between human and social capital (Schuller, 2001), generating social capital is at the same time connected to human capital in the form of for example education and family background (cf. Lin, 1999b). Those without these resources have to work significantly harder to create a network – also because merely making contact with someone does not automatically create social capital. One has to “offer” something to professional contacts, such as skills or access to other networks, to create a mutually beneficial relationship. It is thus reasonable to assume that many freelancers fail to collect the necessary social capital for their careers to

survive this early stage. At least at the beginning of a freelance career, working practices become networking practices (Wittel, 2001).

## 3.2 Utilising Social Capital

Oznur's and Antonio's accounts in the last chapter already touch upon how the created social capital has been useful for their careers; in a word-of-mouth mode, connections either tell them about potential opportunities or recommend them to potential clients and collaborators. In the best case, they never have to actively apply for projects because their social capital works for them:

*I always say, I'm working thanks to my friends. It's always my friends who gave me contacts, otherwise I would wait at home. [...] If nobody would search for me, of course I would search for them, but in the end they have always searched for me.*  
Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

The creation of social capital consists of generating resources that can be accessed through relationships; the utilisation of social capital is then the active or passive use of these resources (cf. Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2012). Created social capital must be mobilised in order to yield benefits. This process will be analysed further in this chapter.

### 3.2.1 Human newsletters

As mentioned earlier, existing social capital can be utilised to create more connections and, therefore, new social capital sources. Gal likens his close contacts to "human newsletters":

*I know a sweet guy here, [he] is a good friend of mine and has always given me a heads up, like "Hey, this studio is looking for something", so it's kind of like subscribing myself to a human newsletter, it gives you really nice opportunities. Going to his party, I got to know the director of the studio that he's working for and this director has some interest in me, working for them. So it's really like the "guerilla" way of going to directly meet people, especially with Germans, to take them a bit out of their comfort zone, like "Ah! He comes with demands and requests!", that's the best way.*  
Gal, 28, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Gal's friend provides him with insider information of Berlin's animation scene to which he otherwise would have no access. But truly benefitting from this existing social capital requires further effort, going to parties and talking to people. Gal calls this the "guerilla" way of finding job opportunities, as it does not involve official channels such as applications. It however requires confidence to take people "out of

their comfort zone” by approaching them with professional demands. In Gal’s view, it still has several advantages compared to official applications; in this quote, he describes how he got a project with a big German animation studio:

*And applying is so different from friends, from networking, like a one-on-one network, because applying...most of the time you will come to a kind of protocol that really filters you out. And maybe I'm not as attractive as other people by the protocol, by simply reading black and white. But when I contact a friend, he knows me...he didn't know my stuff, I showed him my stuff, because that was the opportunity to show him my work, and then, like, it was really easy. The guy really liked my stuff and the way to really getting the job was super simple. I didn't have to do any interview, just to understand when I will start.*

Gal, 28, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Gal perceives applications and “one-on-one networking” as opposite processes, asserting that he is more convincing in person than in an official application. While a CV and cover letter might highlight what he cannot do, explaining one’s work in person highlights what he *can* do. He presents networking as a “super simple” short cut, which skips the interview part of job applications. This demonstrates how especially in artistic industries, networks facilitate hiring processes: Even without necessarily having the credentials a traditional evaluation process would demand, Gal’s friends convey information and casual recommendations that their employers deem trustworthy (cf. Menger, 1999). Nevertheless, it is essential to consider the negative implications of this. Gal indicates that traditional applications do not suffice for finding jobs in the industry. He *needs* a personal contact before he can demonstrate his skills to the right people. Maja confirms this:

*I don't know how it really works, sometimes out of curiosity I would apply for some job adverts from animation studios, but even yesterday I talked to one guy and he said it's a lot of effort, it's a bit of a risk to take people from adverts, so you would always first find friends of friends of friends or, like, people you've been working with before. Because it's more comfortable I guess, faster [laughs].*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Informal hiring through contacts is not only easier for the respondents, but also safer and more convenient for companies. It is reasonable to assume that it is more cost-effective than official application procedures involving employees studying applications and interviewing candidates. Maja further explains how she bypasses traditional applications:

*Very often, like, sometimes [the studios I work with] would ask me if I have free time, or if in a couple of months I would be free to do something, so we can kind of*

*plan it in advance a bit. It's nice for them, because they don't need to look for anyone last minute. For me it's also nice, because I'm calm, I calm down and I know I have this job coming. [...] But actually, I never ever got a job applying for something. It works so far, it's strange [laughs].*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Rather than going through application processes, Maja has continuous collaborations with small animation studios that request her when needed. This pool of more or less steady clients so far suffices in keeping her “calm” about her professional future. She has never felt the need to apply for a job; as described in 3.1.1, she found her first clients during her studies in Poland and remained in contact with them or remained inside their networks.

### **3.2.2 “If you contact them, they don’t call you”**

In essence, the successful creation of social capital results in indirect connections through which clients and other creatives can find and approach the respondents. Clients approaching them – instead of them approaching clients – is often indeed the only possible way to get hired for new projects.

*A: [My clients] find me. Through word of mouth, by now. By now I have a name, fortunately. Because it wasn't always like that.*

*Q: So normally you don't contact them?*

*A: No. Because if you contact them, they don't call you [laughs], they have to contact you. By now it has turned into word of mouth.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

Massimo had to “make a name” for himself so that clients would find and hire him. He perceives contacting clients as entirely useless, as in his experience it does not result in getting hired. His “name” in this instance can very well be equated with his social capital: He has built a reliable network through which his positive reputation reaches the right people who can then contact him. This highly relational word-of-mouth “referral system” is his primary mode of finding job opportunities, reinforcing other studies’ findings (cf. Grugulis & Stoyanova, 2011; Lee, 2011; Randle et al., 2015). He has now reached the point where “his name”, his social capital, works for him to acquire new clients and he no longer has to network actively to be successful.

*Sometimes if I see a potential client, I will try to contact him. But I'm trying not to be pushy or anything, because I know that it doesn't help and it's also not nice and I don't like it the other way around, so I'm trying to be as calm as possible. And*

*actually, right now also my girlfriend started freelance work, not in music, she's translating. But she told me recently "This client, he's not purchasing, what should I do? Should I message him or anything?" and I told her, no, just relax. I know it's scary because it's your only income now, but you should just relax. Because I told her that if she'd message him and be pushy, it's like, 100% not going to happen.*

Tov, 22, music producer, Neukölln

Tov, an Israeli music producer living in Neukölln, specifies that it is vital to remain "relaxed" even after the first contact with someone is established. Being "pushy" by urging potential clients to make a decision might alienate them. This puts creative freelancers in a difficult position since they have to wait patiently for clients to choose them. Particularly at the beginning of a freelance career, one's income can therefore be extremely precarious.

*I think 90% of the time, it's people contacting me. Like, since I started freelancing, almost all of the clients I had were through my previous contacts. In the case of [company XY], I had some touchpoints with them before. Or some people that I worked with before in other companies contacted me or referred me to other people.*

Vadim, 32, UX designer, Kreuzberg

Vadim similarly describes that he rarely contacts clients himself. Since he used to be regularly employed before becoming a freelancer, his network mainly emerged from former colleagues and employers. Vadim thus did not have to make a name for himself when he started freelancing; his existing work experience helped launch his self-employed career and he avoided the most precarious stages of freelancing. Like Massimo, he does not have to actively network anymore since people recommend and contact him on their own.

*In 99% of cases, I am found by [my clients]. For example, I also do coaching, interview practice for bands, and then for instance a band or a label commissions me and they send me to the next band and so on. So it's always like that, you build a reputation and then people come to you through that. With the radio station in Potsdam, I actually applied. Because I always knew I wanted to be a radio host there. That's an exception to the rule. But in my experience, things that I push myself towards often don't work out. I've always had to wait for something to come my way.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

Q: *So, all your clients basically come from contacts you at some point created personally?*

A: *Exactly. Yes, or that they recommended me further and they actually just email me and then sometimes we don't even get to know each other, because they're in another city or something like that.*

Ulrike, 55, graphic designer, Kreuzberg



Rita reinforces points made by other respondents: Traditional applications are often not effective in her industry as she largely depends on her reputation leading to referrals and recommendations. Her approach resembles Massimo and Vadim's: She mostly waits for "something to come [her] way" instead of networking purposefully. Similarly, Ulrike, a graphic designer living and working from her home in Kreuzberg, relies on contacts that have emerged from her initially actively networking; these contacts have passed her along to others, which again pass her along, and so on. New clients "just email" her, without her playing an active role in creating a relationship, which evidently is convenient and timesaving.

### 3.2.3 Spreading the word

Ella, a production and event manager living in Neukölln, describes her approach as much more strategic and planned than other respondents. This might be connected to her profession and industry, which are less artistic than those of other respondents; she furthermore consciously decided to freelance after being employed for some time and started working as a freelancer roughly a year before our interview:

*[...] I found a job with an agency for content marketing and worked there for two and a half years. At some point, I didn't like it anymore and quit. [...] And in the agency I had noticed there was a big demand for freelancers, so I decided to try being a freelancer. And from the first day on, it actually worked great.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

From the start, Ella had a clear vision and strategy for her freelance career. She thus offers a perspective that describes in great detail how a freelancer in an early stage of his/her career might approach networking. She did not enter her profession out of artistic passion, but saw demand for freelancers in production and event management. Here, she explains how she started utilising her network:

*A friend, who back then worked for an NGO, [...] was looking for freelancers in the area of event and project management. I wrote to him while I was still traveling, saying that I'm not at home but would otherwise do it. And then he was the first to contact me, saying "I still need someone, are you free now?" and I spread it in my circle of friends that I was searching and people contacted me pretty quickly. The next bigger job I got was similar. I was back here and did something with friends, told them all of course that I was going freelance, "If you hear something, let me know". And through a friend who works as a creative director for a design agency, I got my first longer job.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

Ella used the contacts she had collected before starting to freelance to find her first clients. She instrumentalises her friendships with professionals in similar industries to gain entrance, also because direct applications do not succeed in her experience:

Q: *You don't approach [clients] directly?*

A: *I've tried that twice or so, but so far the experience was that it doesn't work.*

Q: *So you kind of need a middleman?*

A: *Yes. Somebody who introduces you, who vouches for you. Who stands behind you, so to say.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

Directly contacting potential clients does not lead to satisfying outcomes. Ella needs the aforementioned “middlemen” who will introduce her to clients and vouch for her. At the time of our interview in December 2019, Ella had not yet acquired projects for 2020:

*And if I don't have anything new, up until now my assumption was that I will go on a trip, drop everything and then actually use February to find a new job. So I will acquire new projects in February, call people, get a bite with them... A freelance job is a very networking-intense job in the end, you have to be out and about a lot and position yourself, meet people, spread the word.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

Even though Ella evidently has an extensive network in her industry, she still perceives her job as “network-intense”. She planned to utilise the entire month of February to connect with potential clients, which demonstrates the tremendous importance of networking for her profession. Some respondents rely on passive word-of-mouth recommendations, whereas for Ella, her existing network is the starting point to create further connections actively. She specifically targets contacts she deems promising to meet them and signal her availability casually; her usage of her existing social capital appears more target-oriented.

But while other respondents’ approaches were less strategic at the beginning of their freelance careers, they ultimately are equally dependent on social capital. Massimo, Rita and Vadim depend on it to be found by clients; Ella depends on it to actively use intermediary contacts, leading her to clients. They all utilise social capital to avoid having to directly contact potential clients, which would likely result in being rejected. Respondents instead “spread the word” to potential middlemen, who then can “introduce” and “vouch for” them. They wait for clients to approach

them after being referred in a word-of-mouth way through mutual contacts. Massimo, for instance, throughout our interview emphasised that publishing a photography book about Pigneto was a significant turning point in his career. It made him more widely known as a photographer and provided new clients. This opportunity emerged from a casual encounter:

*For example, the job for the book I got from playing football. A guy from there is an editor, which I didn't know before. And he said "Why don't you make a book about Pigneto?". Why not? During football. It's like that. I was very lucky, that's for sure. But luck is also to be sought.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

A leisure activity led to Massimo coincidentally meeting an editor, Andrea<sup>17</sup>. Andrea became a friend and valuable professional contact who helped Massimo to publish his book. Massimo describes this encounter as "lucky", but also emphasises that luck is "to be sought". Lucky encounters still require effort to establish a connection, convince the other person of one's skills and realise projects together. Comparing the way Massimo networked in this instance with Ella's general approach, the difference lies solely in the intention; Ella consciously "spreads the word" about her skills and availability inside her circle of friends and acquaintances, Massimo incidentally encountered a life-changing opportunity by meeting Andrea. They nevertheless have in common that they build and utilise their social capital through casual, amicable connections rather than professional channels. Vincent, who organises events with other actors reading out plays to an audience, explains how they find collaborators:

*At our readings, except at one, we always had a pianist, a composer... And you always have that, mostly it's cross references. At our last reading, somebody dropped out and we needed someone extra, and in the end it was someone from the theatre roadshow I did during the summer. So it's always like that, you ask around in your circle of acquaintances, "Do you know somebody who can do this and that?" or who would be free or who matches XY, like that. You quickly get a feeling for the profiles you need or what you need when you create something yourself, and then you basically ask around.*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

Vincent here describes an opposite perspective to the ones analysed before. In this scenario, he is the one providing a project instead of searching for an opportunity. Without being in his circle of acquaintances, one would have little chance to join the reading group, given that free spots are filled by informally "asking around" instead

---

<sup>17</sup> Massimo referred me to Andrea, who is a freelance editor. He is part of the sample as well.

of officially announcing them. His acquaintances for instance come from former jobs of his, such as the theatre roadshow he mentions.

### **3.2.4 Discussion**

The utilisation of social capital is of course tightly connected to the creation of social capital. But the creation of social capital described in 3.1 focuses on “starting from zero”, i.e. getting the first valuable contact(s) inside one’s chosen industry; this subchapter, in comparison, explains what happens afterwards. Contacts start to build chains, branch out and intertwine into a network of references and recommendations. Ideally, CCI freelancers can stop searching for clients and instead are “found” by the clients through this network, which functions as a word-of-mouth referral system (cf. Randle et al., 2015). The following interview citations elaborate on this process:

*So this travel business I worked in, it was a small, very small, slightly non-professional lifestyle business. And there was a nice community that worked there and we became friends. One of my ex-colleagues is one of the owners of this [coworking space], by the way. One of my ex-colleagues went off to work for another company and then another guy who runs a tourism company asked her “Oh, I really need help with my web presence, my website is broken, it doesn't look very nice”, so she put him in touch with me and he has been a client for all these years. Carlotta [who works in the same coworking space] was a client here; that's just from working here, just from networking, having lunch together, having coffee together and so on. Then another one is, I have a couple of interns working with me who are ex-students from [the private university I taught at] and after their internship they go and look for proper work and they have referred me to their employers on a couple of occasions.*

Jonathan, 51, digital marketer, San Lorenzo

In this quote, Jonathan focuses on three pools of social capital: 1) his former job at a lifestyle business, 2) his current coworking space and 3) his interns, which he recruits from the private university where he used to give courses. These sources have branched out to lead him to new projects and clients, which then again might result in further recommendations. Having a network emerging from multiple sources at the same time means that Jonathan does not have to rely too much on a specific branch. Cristina, a photographer and visual designer living in Pigneto, reiterates a similar narrative:

*Mainly through a network of connections. In the sense that the starting point was making myself known through a free collaboration with a theatre blog. And*

*through that I've created contacts within theatres or contemporary art. And then, with people knowing the work I do, I usually get contacted. [...] So yes, it definitely was a crossed network, in the sense that some of them I know from the blog. But also from my master's programme here in Rome, various contacts emerged with cultural institutions and associations. For some time, I also collaborated with an association about artistic curatorship, which was definitely important for professionalising my type of work and my competences, as well as for deepening my network of contacts. It has definitely worked really well to cross more working environments, more contexts of acquaintance, so the network wasn't always the same one, but had points of contact while coming from different starting points. [...] For some time I also collaborated with a company working with education, and in that case the job was offered to me through a contact instead of me searching for it, even if I already knew them and was interested in them. So it was a contact that was already developed, but then the offer came from them.*  
Cristina, 32, photographer/visual designer, Pigneto

Cristina names three main pools of social capital as well: 1) the theatre blog she collaborated with when she started to freelance, 2) her master's programme in museum management and event planning, and 3) an artist association. In her view, these sources have led to several distinct networks which intertwine. Through these networks, potential clients and collaborators hear about her and contact her. Traditional applications become mostly obsolete, as jobs inside the CCI are commonly assigned through informal channels (cf. Menger, 1999). Respondents mobilise their created social capital by "spreading the word" about their availability within their network, leading to relevant nodes acting as "middlemen" or "human newsletters", informing them about open positions and recommending them to relevant clients. In later stages, with a well-established network, respondents can ideally more passively rely on these recommendations without having to search for jobs and projects actively.

### 3.3 Maintaining Social Capital

This chapter will analyse how my respondents maintain social capital, separating it as clearly as possible from its creation and utilisation. For this purpose, I define the maintenance of social capital as all acts that specifically aim to remain in contact with other creative freelancers, collaborators and clients, with whom a connection has already been established. In contrast to how respondents enter or utilise their network, social capital maintenance describes how they stay inside their network.

#### 3.3.1 Out of sight, out of mind

The often short-term character of freelance work means that without actively sustaining the connection with a collaborator or client, it might dissolve after one project, and the freelancer has to seek new income sources. According to Lazzarato (1996, p. 136), the transitory nature of project-based labour is what renders immaterial workers precarious, hyper-exploited “intellectual proletarians”. It is thus of course in the interest of the freelancer to maintain contacts beyond a single project and to remain inside of networks long-term for continuous working relationships:

*Maintaining contacts is very important, but especially if you work with people who aren't even in the same city as you... I cannot proactively stay in touch all the time. But I notice that when I walk through the radio station because I have another appointment, it happens that I meet someone who says “Oh, can you do this and that next week?” and through that I have a new job. And if I'm not at the office, then maybe this person wouldn't have the idea to call me, not necessarily.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

Rita's steadiest freelancing job is hosting for a radio station in Potsdam. As described by her, this collaboration helps her maintain connections inside the station beyond her usual tasks; however, without showing her face, these jobs might not get offered to her. With clients that she cannot see physically, she tries to stay in touch online:

*So gaining attention is super important, but I stay in touch with people on Facebook and Instagram, because most of them are in other cities. But maybe they are also a bit like “out of sight, out of mind”, so the work I've done for them must be so good that they approach me again. But sometimes I don't hear from them for a year and then I see them again.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

In conditions where meeting each other regularly is difficult, Rita's delivered work must be of exceptional qualities so that clients remember and rebook her. It occurs that she does not get contacted by them for months before hearing from them again; this is a good example of "weak ties" as described by Granovetter (1973), which are more superficial connections that lead to a broader spectrum of contact. Cristina similarly describes the "sporadic" character of her collaborations:

*[...] Especially regarding photography and cultural work in general, with this kind of subject it's difficult to create a continuous collaboration. Instead it's sporadic, in the sense that if there is a festival with an annual frequency, maybe every year they call me again, but a festival lasts a week, it's not a job that covers me all year. But maybe if there are some other situations, if they liked working with me they call me again, or they give my contact to somebody else in their network... So basically, there are many nodes that have developed in an organic way. It's many subjectivities for small, episodic jobs, let's say.*

Cristina, 32, photographer/visual designer, Pigneto

Cristina relies on a network with "many nodes", which mitigates the fact that her jobs are "small" and "episodic". Both Rita and Cristina "might" get booked again or recommended to others if they deliver good work. Even then, bookings are commonly sporadic, with long periods of no contact between them and their clients. Both Rita and Cristina thus maintain relatively weak ties with these clients. As Granovetter (1973) predicted, these weak ties enable a flow of information; Cristina mentions that they recommend her to others, therefore potentially opening up new resources through a flow of information between networks. However, weak ties also leave both respondents with a high amount of uncertainty. To mitigate this uncertainty, they maintain social capital with many occasional clients, ensuring that they stay financially covered for the entire year. For this purpose, Rita for instance participates in industry events solely because she thinks she "should be present":

*Sometimes I force myself to go to these things, like music awards for example. Because I know everyone will be there and I should be present. Most of the time, I find it awful when I'm there [...]. And I don't feel as much like a part of the gang as I would like to. But I do go and sometimes it's great and I see a lot of people I know and I'm happy. [...] I'm also too old to find it exciting, you know? It's not like I'm 18 and think, wow, I'm at an award show.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

Rita perceives not showing up to these events as a risk, given that "everyone is going to be there". Not being present means missing out on maintaining relevant contacts.

At the same time, she mostly finds being there “awful” and feels somewhat excluded, not “part of the gang”. This illustrates the emotional toll the constant maintenance of networks can take, especially if freelancers partake in these kinds of events purely out of social pressure instead of out of personal interest. Not only the creation of networks thus can be perceived as compulsory socialising, as described by Neff, Wissinger & Zukin (2005), but also the maintenance of social capital. Other respondents describe how they stay in their clients’ memories:

*I think it's more like, these people that I already know, like my network of people. [...] Sometimes, if it will be that I don't get enough jobs, then I will write to them and remind them about myself and be like “Hey, do you have something now?” and they will say yes or no.*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

*Next to us<sup>18</sup>, there is a woman who is one of my clients. We meet here, “Ciao, ciao, how are you? Blablabla”, and then when she needs a photographer, she remembers me. This neighbourhood for me is also packed.... It's good for getting jobs. Lots of people know me.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

Maja and Massimo have quite different approaches; Maja directly contacts her collaborators to ask about potential bookings. Massimo, on the other hand, prefers subtly using coincidental encounters in the neighbourhood to strengthen ties with clients. He thus extends the maintenance of social capital with clients to his spare time, for instance when he frequents a café or bar in his neighbourhood, which is “good for getting jobs”. At first glance, Massimo’s relationship with his clients might appear more amicable. But on closer inspection, Maja’s approach implies a higher level of familiarity, given that she is not afraid to alienate her clients by openly asking to be booked. The relationship with a client must be relatively close and stable for these inquiries to be successful. They both however present illustrative examples of “network sociality” in their social behaviour; their encounters – in Maja’s case digital, in Massimo’s physical encounters – are designed to swiftly “catch up” with clients and to stay inside their memory (cf. Grabher, 2004; Wittel, 2001). The maintenance of their social relations is grounded in the exchange of professional information.

---

<sup>18</sup> In the café in Pigneto where we were conducting the interview.



### 3.3.2 Professional friends, friendly professionals

It has been established that friends are an essential source of professional connections. This also implies that the private lives of creative freelancers inevitably intertwine with their careers. Ella answers the question if she makes a clear distinction between working hours and free time:

*Yes and no. [...] But honestly, not that much, I know that my circle of friends is also an important networking pool for me. Now they all know that, but when I was starting, of course at first I told all of them.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

Ella's circle of friends was the first focal point for promoting her freelance career. Sustaining the relationships with her friends thus simultaneously sustains this "important networking pool". Vincent at least partly picks his social circle based on his profession:

*A: Sometimes you do maintain contacts more within the scene, because you think they could potentially create a job for you, or it comes from that direction.*

*Q: That you kind of don't want to waste your spare time with people who won't get you anywhere [laughs]?*

*A: That sounds super evil, it's not like that of course, but surely you always search for a circle where you say, this brings me the biggest benefit. No matter in which respect, in friendship and not. [...] My circle of friends did indeed shift a bit towards artistic people.*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

Vincent's private relationships are evidently highly interrelated with his professional life. He emphasises that his friendships are not purely instrumental, but they are at least partly based on the potential professional benefits they provide. While they are not exclusively grounded in sympathy, this in turn also means that Vincent needs to create friendships with people who might be useful. As McRobbie (2002) stated, successful networking also depends on getting the right people to "like you". Respondents also mention how they bond, i.e. strengthen their connection, with clients:

*And I'm basically, with everyone I have worked with...there's definitely friendly relationships. Today for example I'm going to the Christmas party of an agency where I used to work. I'm invited, so I'm going. And I know their boss, we're friends, so it does blur, I have to say. Up until now it wasn't necessary for me to utilise that more proactively, because people have approached me rather than the other way around. Because they already knew. For example, in September, when I was looking where to apply, I texted some people I knew, with whom I was friends or*

*acquainted, and said “Hey you, I'd like to apply to XY, do you know anybody there?”.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

This citation demonstrates both dynamics: Ella approaches friends and acquaintances to act as intermediary contacts to introduce her to potential clients. She also places importance on maintaining friendly relationships after concluding projects, for example by participating in corporate events in her spare time. In comparison to quotes from the last chapter, the relationships these respondents describe fall more into the realm of *strong* ties in the sense of Putnam (2000). The social capital maintenance Ella describes leads her to “bond” with existing professional contacts and thus creates more cohesion within her network. Former bosses and colleagues become friends; the boundaries between her private and professional life “blur” in her own perception. Even though she has not proactively utilised this bonding social capital yet, she recognises its usefulness for approaching clients. Other respondents put even more emphasis on personal relationships with clients:

*For example, I work for a very old lady who in theory wants to write many books about the history of the priests in some place in the centre. And she is really very old. Before, we hadn't even met [laughs]. But we always exchange things. It's an informal acquaintance, I don't know how to say, it's not professional because I'm basically friends with these people. And every now and then, I'd like clients who are a bit less affectionate, less friends, more distanced. But actually, I like... I like being inevitably in contact with someone.*

Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto

Sandra contemplates that keeping a professional distance and thus weaker ties might have advantages, but she appreciates the closeness and familiarity she has with some of her clients; she even calls their relationship “not professional”, an “informal acquaintance”. She enjoys being in contact with them and maintains their relationship through a constant “exchange”. Ozgur further elaborates on how these kinds of friendly relationships to clients facilitate her career:

*They always write to me, even when they have children, when they're pregnant, they write me a message “Ah, I'm pregnant! Merry christmas! Happy new year!” I forget to write them, but they always write to me. The photos are very intimate because I enter into a story of their lives, I tell a part of their lives. I don't see it as a product, I take a photo and done, in the end I witness their lives. Sometimes they call me for family things as well, “we want to take photos at home all together”, a family portrait. [...] It's a really intimate relationship, yes. Because I really enter the families. Ozgur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto*

“Intimate” relationships with clients are both a cause and a consequence of Oznur’s photography career. She mostly photographs private events and occasions such as weddings, causing her to “enter” clients’ families, which creates intimacy to an extent. She brings these relationships to an exceptionally personal level, not seeing her photos as products but as witnessing clients lives. As a result of this amicable contact, her clients commonly remain in touch with her and keep her updated about their lives. This leads to other jobs since they are more likely to book her again when they need a photographer for personal occasions. In her case, sustaining social capital with clients is particularly tied to keeping her ties with them strong. She does not necessarily consciously calculate this consequence, but certainly welcomes it.

Furthermore, it is important to take into account that merely building friendships with collaborators and clients is not necessarily enough to maintain social capital. Several respondents emphasise that they continuously have to prove their skills and professional merit inside these relationships to yield results from their networking efforts.

*Yes, very important. A good relationship with friends. Also with the work; if your friends don't like your work, maybe they don't call you, they don't recommend you. Your work is also important. That you are on time, that you don't miss the deadlines. You need friends, but then you also need to do the work. If you don't do the job well, if you're not on time, if you lose the files, maybe you also don't work well.*

Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

Oznur here emphasises that while her friends are often the ones recommending her, they only do so because they are also convinced of the value of her work. She has to demonstrate her work ethic by being punctual and reliable. Without delivering results, the created social capital can be lost again; friends will stop booking or recommending her. Vice versa, the respondents also need to be cautious about whom they recommend to clients:

*I'm not jealous of other photographers. If there is a job I cannot do, I always find a replacement, basically. It's not like they have to thank me, but anyway I hope they would do the same thing for me. It doesn't happen often, you know? But there are two, three people that I can trust, which can do the job instead of me. [...] So no I'm not jealous, but you know, fact is I cannot just send any photographer. I send someone who I know will do the job well. Otherwise I also lose face. So I only send solid people.* Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

Massimo therefore does not simply recommend someone based on an existing friendship; they need to demonstrate their skill and trustworthiness first. Otherwise, having suggested someone unreliable can reflect badly on Massimo as well, resulting in him “losing face” in front of his clients. This adds another level to the maintenance of social capital: Having a supply of recommendable professionals ensures clients' satisfaction in case one cannot accept or has to cancel a project. As Castells (1996) states, weak nodes of a network will sooner or later get removed or replaced. Inside CCI freelance networks, individuals that do not deliver the desired results or are not trustworthy at some point will stop being hired, referred and recommended, and therefore lose their position.

### **3.3.3 Competition or solidarity?**

Massimo's quote in the last chapter alludes to the topics of reciprocity and competition between creative freelancers. He hopes that if he recommends somebody, they would “do the same thing” for him and is therefore not “jealous” of other photographers' success. The aspect of mutually supporting one another is another level of social capital maintenance that many respondents mention:

*Yeah, you have to [work with other freelancers]. [...] Two years ago, 2017, we had a show [at a festival], we as a band, and then we had a projection, a 40 minutes video, and for that I had to hire a friend of mine who's doing animation and sketches [...]. And then vice versa, if she gets a project, “Oh, OK, maybe you can do this, too?”, it's like, you know, solidarity, sort of. [...] That's how things happen. But you need to initiate these vibrations, it doesn't work otherwise, you cannot get noticed, it's not anymore like that.*

Besim, 44, musician, Neukölln

Besim illustrates the importance of support between creatives of different professions across industries. Hiring his friend to create an animated film for his band performance means that she will more likely hire him when she needs music for one of her projects. This “solidarity”, which can be translated into maintaining a mutually supportive relationship, is necessary to “get noticed”. “Initiating vibrations”, i.e. actively using and maintaining social capital with other freelancers by involving them in projects, makes “things happen”. Anita describes mutual support between creative freelancers inside the same profession:

*I think there's kind of a... not an expectation, but I think all people that I'm closer friends with and who I work with closely, there's kind of a basic understanding that*

*we help and recommend each other. Especially for female comedians. I think we're all highly aware that we have to draw more attention to ourselves and make people remember us. So it's a bit of a matter of honour to recommend others, especially other women.*

Anita, 30, comedian, Neukölln

Massimo, Besim and Anita emphasise that reciprocity is an implicit expectation more than an explicit one. Rather than a demand, there is an unspoken understanding that one will reciprocate favours. Anita particularly mentions a sense of community between the female comedians she knows. Since their industry is heavily male-dominated, they support one another as “a matter of honour”. Members of this community maintain connections with each other and simultaneously help each other to maintain social capital with clients. Other respondents, however, describe higher amounts of competition, particularly between creatives with very similar professions:

*There are definitely people that you meet again and again who do the same thing. And there's a kind of love-hate relationship, because they are similar to you, you have things in common and like each other, but you like each other the most if you don't cross paths. [...] That's just how the business goes and especially in media, everybody wants to do media, and I often experience that people get sent to things just because they don't cost anything. And there are some fixed competitors which I encounter again and again.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

Building too close relationships with direct competitors can be dangerous. If they join the same networks, they might seize relevant bookings, especially by offering lower prices. Even though relationships with similar freelancers are personally rewarding, they might be professionally damaging. For this reason, in Rita’s opinion, it is in their best interest not to “cross paths”. Cristina, in comparison, emphasises the value of supportive relationship between creatives of the same industry:

*We kind of share between the few people we are [laughs], in the sense that for theatre photography, we are not even that many for the demand that's there. So within the demand, we divide a few pennies, so for that it's a bit... this war between the poor exists, but it's not very fierce. On the contrary, there is also the possibility to create a network of relationships for support, we pass on jobs... It's not a formal network, but through contacts you know who works well, so if there's a possibility, you pass on a job. So in that sense, there's quite a lot of solidarity.*

Cristina, 32, photographer/visual designer, Pigneto

Particularly in a field that does not pay very well, such as theatre photography, solidarity through mutual support can also mitigate precarity in Cristina’s opinion.

Instead of emphasising competition, which exists but is "not very fierce", Cristina highlights that she knows "who works well" and therefore whom to refer to jobs through the maintenance of this informal network. In return, others will pass her on to potential jobs as well.

Competition and solidarity between freelance creatives are overall both phenomena described in the interviews; while some respondents avoid maintaining relationships with potential competitors with the purpose of not losing social capital with clients, others underline that sustaining these kinds of relationships leads to mutual professional support, recommendations and referrals. This confirms that some creative freelancers perceive their peers as a network of individuals who compete with one another (cf. Gandini, 2016; Grabher, 2004; McGuigan, 2010; McRobbie, 2002; 2016). Others however describe a higher amount of solidarity and tend to describe their network as a collective with the same interests. This is especially true for Anita, who perceives solidarity with other female comedians given they experience the same discrimination, and Cristina, who in the very precarious field of theatre photography prefers to "support" others rather than competing with them. While some respondents such as Rita or Marco avoid socialising with direct competitors because they fear losing jobs, others describe sharing resources and opportunities with similar freelancers as a strategy against precarity. This confirms the ambivalent social and economic role freelancers find themselves in regarding their peers, positioning themselves between competition and collaboration (Gandini, Bandinelli, & Cossu, 2017).

### **3.3.4 Discussion**

This chapter demonstrates that the maintenance of social capital is particularly intertwined with my respondents' private lives. Maintaining social capital means becoming friends with professionals and behaving more professionally with friends at the same time. In this way, the respondents' professional lives become personalised and their personal lives become professionalised. Friendships are a vital tool for social capital maintenance. This is true in two senses: One's personal circle of friends and acquaintances gets professionalised, while at the same time, professional relationships are taken to a more personal level. As analysed, this indicates that

strong ties play an important role for social capital maintenance within the sample. Weak ties result in an expansion of networks and potentially more far-reaching referrals, but also in more sporadic and insecure bookings. They are highly useful for the creation phase of social capital, where networks need to grow and branch out. But deepening connections, “bonding” after the first contact causes more reliable recommendations and ideally a sense of community and solidarity. Sustaining stable, friendly relationships with clients leads to more casual, relaxed interactions and can secure future bookings. Circles of friends to an extent get shaped according to professional needs:

*But in some way, the network is constructed more in the sense of being every day [...], being active socially in a network of collaborators. Not so much other photographers, because then immediately a kind of competition develops. [...] It's difficult to truly be friends. It's more with parallel lives. I have lived with actresses, met other actresses, then you go to the theatre, tell them what you do, they like what you do, they follow you [...]. Creating a, how to say, a substance in everyday life. [...] You cannot collaborate with another photographer, if you work, I don't work; if I work, you don't work.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

Marco describes the maintenance of connections with collaborators as continuous, everyday socialising. He emphasises that he prefers socialising with creatives of other professions to avoid competition, choosing his social circle to an extent based on their potential impact on his career. His spare time becomes profoundly intertwined with professional considerations.

Without maintaining social capital adequate, it can be lost again; weak nodes sooner or later get removed from networks (cf. Castells, 1996). For instance, not sustaining amicable relationships with professional clients can lead them to forget – and therefore not rehire – the respondent. Simultaneously, not proving one’s professionalism to friends can lead to a loss of social capital as well, because they might not recognise the respondent as a trustworthy contact to recommend to others.

*People know me. It's not like they call me because we're friends, they call me because they have seen my work, what I do. I have never been recommended. Now they call me, because I can do their projects the right way.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

What Massimo expresses when he says “I have never been recommended”, is that he has earned his clients through his work, not through nepotism. He is friends with clients and collaborators, but nobody favoured him out of pure sympathy; instead, he continuously proves his professional merit by “doing their projects the right way”. Therefore, the maintenance of social capital is also connected to factors outside of social behaviour, such as professionalism, reliability, and entrepreneurialism.

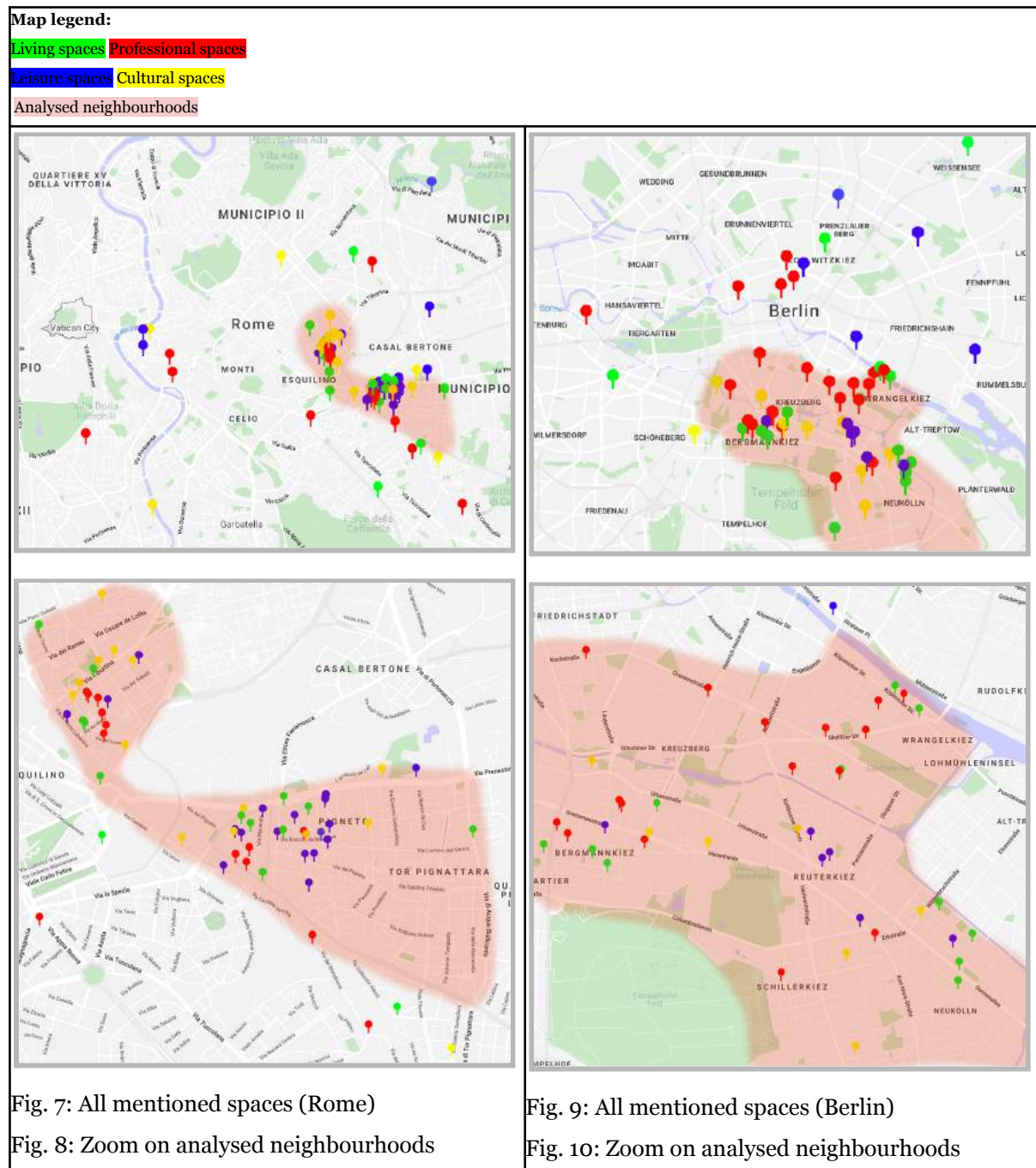


#### **4. Freelance Creatives in Rome and Berlin: Comparing Urban and Digital Spaces**

This chapter will analyse the working and networking practices of my respondents with a comparative approach. While the last chapter mostly disregards where respondents live to focus on the networking process in-depth, the following sections will lay more emphasis on differences between the Rome and Berlin sample. Chapter 3 describes in detail the process of networking as the respondents experience it. This chapter, in comparison, explains the different frames or contexts in which these processes occur against the background of the initial analysis. The chapter will first focus on physical networking in urban spaces, specifically discussing the respondents' perception of their cities and neighbourhoods in this regard, as well as their workspaces. Afterwards, digital networking practices will be explored, illustrating particularly the online profiles and content respondents create.

## 4.1 Urban Space

To gain insight into urban networking practices, all respondents were asked to name spaces connected to their professional activities, such as workspaces, relevant businesses, bars, et cetera. Based on the responses, the following maps<sup>1</sup> were created:



<sup>1</sup> All maps in this chapter were created with the online tool [www.snazzymaps.com](http://www.snazzymaps.com), with the map data being sourced from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

Without taking into account the living spaces of the respondents (17 in Rome, 14 in Berlin), 57 spaces were named in Rome versus 43 in Berlin<sup>2</sup>. Green pins represent the respondents' homes, blue pins leisure spaces such as bars, cafés and clubs (22 in Rome, 11 in Berlin), red pins professional spaces such as clients' offices, studios and coworking spaces (18 in Rome, 22 in Berlin), and yellow pins cultural and educational spaces such as libraries, cinemas and museums (17 in Rome, 10 in Berlin). The distinction between these spaces of course is somewhat artificial, since many respondents utilise their own homes, cafés or libraries to work. For instance, four respondents in both cities state that they predominantly work from home. But dividing the mentioned locations into the chosen categories demonstrates the kinds of spaces that are deemed relevant by the respondents when asked about places connected to their professions.

Comparing these maps, it is evident that the respondents' working and networking are highly concentrated in the analysed neighbourhoods. Out of 57 spaces in Rome, 16 spaces are outside of San Lorenzo and Pigneto, with two of them being in the immediate surroundings of Pigneto. In Berlin, 11 spaces are outside of Kreuzberg and Neukölln, with two being in their immediate surroundings. Given the smaller size of Pigneto and San Lorenzo compared to the Berlin neighbourhoods, especially in their central areas we can observe a dense concentration of CCI-related spaces. The coming chapters will analyse the concrete roles these locations play in the respondents' day-to-day (net)working practices.

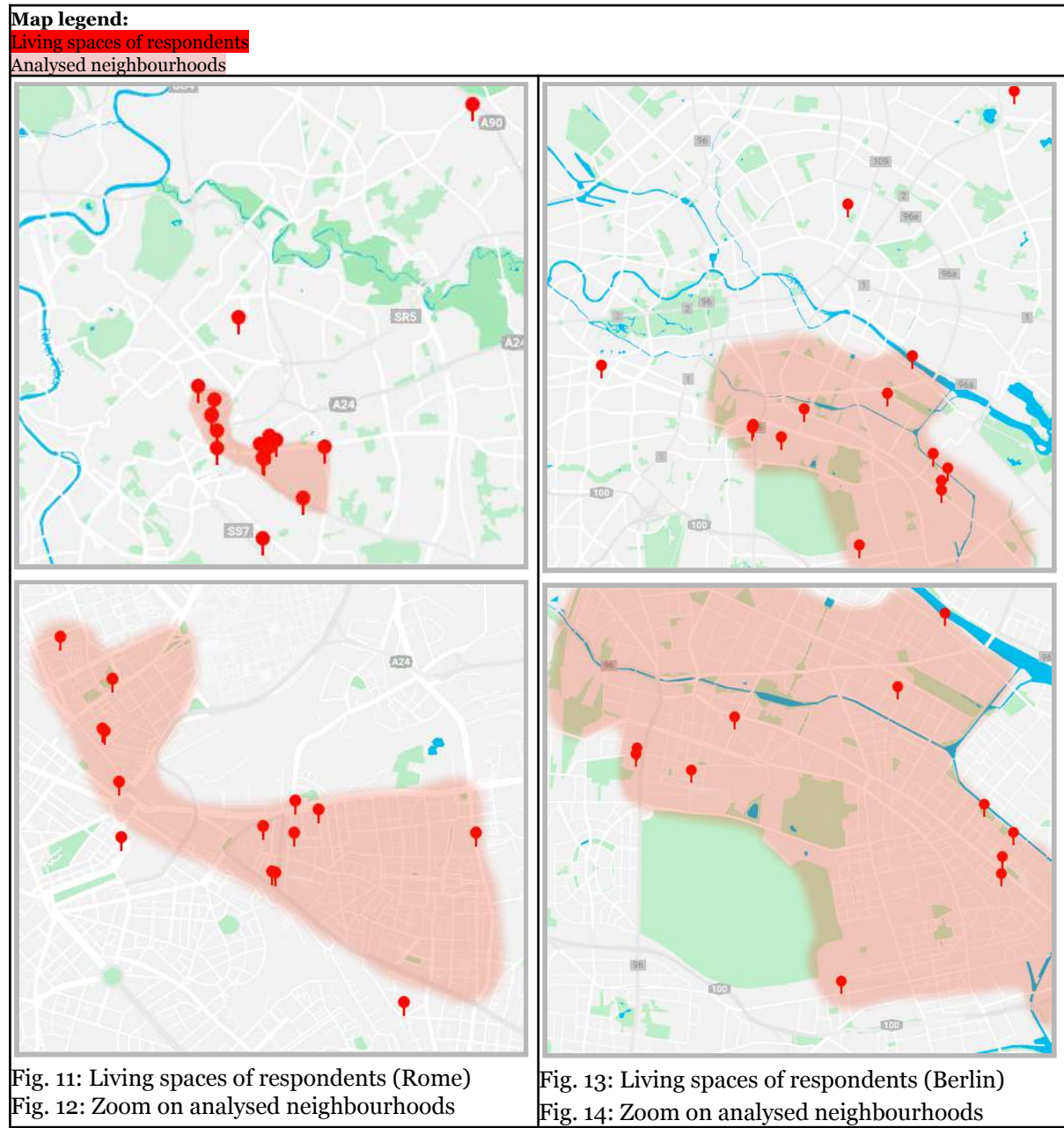
#### **4.1.1 The neighbourhoods as perceived by their residents**

This chapter will take a closer look at how the respondents perceive San Lorenzo, Pigneto, Kreuzberg and Neukölln. It will focus on those respondents who reside in the analysed neighbourhoods and explore their reasons to choose their place of residence. Particular attention will be paid to descriptions that relate to creative and

---

<sup>2</sup> This analysis is based on my sample and focuses exclusively on spaces the interviewed freelancers deem relevant for their networking and working practices. The maps are therefore by no means meant to be exhaustive; of course, a multitude of other, similar spaces exist in both cities.

cultural industries as well as networking. The following map shows where the respondents live:



In Rome, eleven respondents live directly in the analysed neighbourhoods. Eight respondents live in Pigneto and four in San Lorenzo. Two respondents live between San Lorenzo and Pigneto (in the area of Porta Maggiore) and one in close proximity to Pigneto in the adjacent neighbourhood of Torpignattara. Three respondents live outside of the analysed neighbourhoods; all three are professionally tied mainly to San Lorenzo. In Berlin, six respondents live in Kreuzberg and five in Neukölln. Three respondents live outside of the analysed neighbourhoods. Two of them are

professionally tied mainly to Kreuzberg and one to Neukölln. In both cities, a couple living together has been interviewed (one in Pigneto, one in Kreuzberg).

The following interview quotes will explore how these neighbourhoods are perceived in connection with working and networking practices. Comparing for instance how Gal talks about Kreuzberg and Neukölln with how Leonardo talks about San Lorenzo demonstrates some similarities:

*We got the apartment from friends, but I knew before [...] that Kreuzberg, Neukölln would be the choices, I would not even bother to look for other names, like what is Moabit, you know? [...] When you hear about Kreuzberg or Neukölln you get an image that you just cannot disconnect from, and this image in a way fits our desire from the city. In the beginning we were laughing about it, all of the hipsters and stuff, but I don't know, hipsters mean quality in a way [laughs].*

Gal, 28, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

*I like San Lorenzo, it's a neighbourhood full of artists, the Kreuzberg of... [laughs] Yes. I used to live here, so... It also kind of happened that I came here, [...] in the end a friend told me about this studio and that's it. [I moved here] due to the studio, due to the people.*

Leonardo, 34, artist, San Lorenzo/Neukölln

Firstly, Leonardo, who moved to Rome after spending some years in Berlin, describes San Lorenzo as the Roman equivalent to Kreuzberg: In his view, both neighbourhoods are “full of artists”. He decided to move back to San Lorenzo based on the existing studio space in Via dei Lucani. Similarly, Gal and his girlfriend Maja moved to Kreuzberg because they found an apartment there through a friend; but it was one of the only options they considered, because Neukölln and Kreuzberg match their expectations of hip, creative urban surroundings. The prevalence of other creatives and CCI-related spaces appears significant in what attracts creative workers to these neighbourhoods. Antonio, who is one of the artists sharing the studio with Leonardo, actively attempts to increase the amount of artists in San Lorenzo:

*[...] Every time a studio becomes free, I do everything to make [artists I know] take it. So within the last few years, we have built something, it has changed because we brought ten young artists to the neighbourhood. [...] On the other hand, filth, deterioration, crime... Constantly more pubs and bars are opening and when a healthy neighbourhood business closes, a workshop or something nice, something completely useless opens like a minimarket, a new bar or a restaurant.*

Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

In Antonio's view, attracting more artists to San Lorenzo is a direct measure against the neighbourhood's ongoing commercialisation. Sharing a studio with other artists

and actively (re)building a creative community in San Lorenzo in his opinion does not only impact San Lorenzo but also his working practices and social dynamics:

*So I got to know this aspect of the neighbourhood, which was full of artists, and I had just started, so I took an apartment here. [...] And the shared studio also influences the dynamics that are created, the influence of other artists, the relationships you create, the exhibitions for example, but yes. The fact that I'm here has created many things that influence my work. [...] It's really a village, a family, each morning I see people at the bar to have breakfast with, it has a familiar dimension which is very rare to find here in Rome, maybe impossible.*

Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

San Lorenzo as a relatively small neighbourhood facilitates the creation of a shared narrative between local artists; Antonio's vision of the neighbourhood emphasises its familiarity and communality. Both on the level of workspaces and of the neighbourhood itself, San Lorenzo is characterised by close relationships rooted in sharing and exchange in these descriptions. In the interviews, San Lorenzo is often described as a place undergoing negative changes with gentrification and deterioration; building new, auto-organised creative spaces is presented as a remedy for this situation. Similar opinions also exist about Pigneto:

*They started opening many bars, when I arrived here it wasn't like that. [...] I like that this is a neighbourhood also historically that resists. I know that in the last few years, it has kind of become a place for hipsters, that's also nice, but if it becomes too much... when you consume instead of create, in my opinion that's what art is, resisting, doing something different.*

Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

Oznur views the increasing gentrification of Pigneto with many places of consumption as contradictory to a "creative" neighbourhood, which in her perspective is connected to counterculture and political resistance through art. But in comparison to San Lorenzo, most Pigneto respondents describe the state and recent development of their neighbourhood in a more positive light. Andrea, an editor, explains how he moved to the neighbourhood:

*It was a coincidence. In the sense that I moved to Rome with my girlfriend at the time who lived in Pigneto. Then with the years it became a choice because Pigneto is one of the spaces in Rome which is taking off, there are many cultural and creative energies. A big part of those who work in the creative sector live in Pigneto. So for me also as a network of relationships it's very important. [...] Given that in Pigneto there are many venues, for example there is a library called Tuba, in which many who work in this sector meet for an aperitivo, for dinner et cetera... As a creative person, if you go out you always meet someone, so for one thing for exchanging*

*information about emerging projects et cetera, but you also expand your network there.*

Andrea, 34, editor, Pigneto

After moving to Pigneto incidentally, Andrea recognised it as a very useful location for creating and maintaining professional networks. In his perception, a high percentage of Rome's creative workers lives in Pigneto, which facilitates meeting and exchanging information with them. Nightlife locations such as Tuba, which is a library bar, serve as networking spaces. This is also mirrored in what Anita, a Berlin respondent, says about her decision to move to Neukölln:

*It happened randomly. [...] But it's a lucky coincidence, because the club where I perform the most is five minutes by foot from my apartment. So it's also the focal point of my work. [...] It's also where I got to know most of the people that I work with now. And it has a pretty strong community around improv comedy. Because of that it's a focal point, for performances but also for networking, if you want to call it that.*

Anita, 30, comedian, Neukölln

This confirms that even for those who “randomly” move to a creative hub such as Pigneto or Neukölln, these neighbourhoods often end up playing a significant role in their professional success. Their networks increasingly concentrate locally, and their urban surroundings thus become the focal point of their work. Massimo similarly states that residing in Pigneto was not a conscious choice but became one over time:

*I used to hate this neighbourhood, because not knowing it well, I thought it was full of people who don't do shit from morning to evening. Now I realise that it's full of freelancers, so it seems they don't do shit, but actually they do a lot of activities, like me, one might think I don't do anything but from morning to evening I do a thousand things. [...] Now I would never live anywhere else, only if another city would give me what I want.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

Massimo's description is an illustrative example of the freelance “lifestyle”. After moving to Pigneto, he realised that while at first glance not appearing to be working, other creative freelancers are constantly occupied with their careers, working from cafés, networking on the streets, in the bars and cultural associations of the neighbourhood. Several respondents, for instance Sabrina and Sandra, emphasise that their networks are very intertwined with Pigneto; Sabrina responds to the question if Pigneto is useful to her professionally:

*Yes, yes, yes, because it's a very creative neighbourhood. There are many people here like me, so it's easier to meet people who have the same interests as you, who are in the same community. So for example, Massimo once said "I'm taking photos of these actors, maybe you know them?", so we went to their house and had dinner and maybe we can create something together. Pigneto is a neighbourhood that gives you these possibilities. Many creative people live here with whom you can create. [...] So it's a neighbourhood that's always dynamic. There is always something artistic or cultural happening. It's rebellious. I like it a lot.*

Sabrina, 31, actress, Pigneto

*My network developed particularly since I came to this neighbourhood. I came to this neighbourhood to work in typography. And here I found a network of people from anywhere. And then working opportunities started developing basically.*

Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto

Sabrina's account illustrates the informal way in which new connections emerge on a neighbourhood level; her boyfriend Massimo's photography job led to them having dinner with a group of actors, with whom she might collaborate in the future. A high concentration of creative workers and the frequency of cultural events create many opportunities to network. Sandra goes on to specify which spaces play a particular role for her network:

*At the moment, [my shared studio], then the typography studio because it's a hub of connections. The bar Zazie nel Metrò is a nice hub of connections. And then actually many initiatives. One time I found a job going to an evening history lecture about the resistance in Centocelle. I met a girl who needed a logo, who is a friend of a girl I met at another workshop. So basically, in the end you always create these networks, in many contexts. Which can be the square, or an evening of study, social centres... All these things that I now don't remember. The public library in Via del Pigneto [laughs].*

Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto

The spaces Sandra uses for networking are not limited to professional locations such as her shared workspace or the typography studio where she used to work. Instead, leisure activities such as frequenting bars or educational events can lead to professionally valuable encounters. As a creative freelancer, living in a location like Pigneto means that one's neighbourhood inevitably becomes intertwined with one's professional practices:

*Because then in the end, work becomes something... there is often a difference between work and social life. And here, these things mix a bit more. They are less defined. So you find work in the neighbourhood because you have created a network, because somebody has seen your work and then they tell someone else about you. So you create a network of friendships and solidarity and of work, too.*

Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto



Coming back to Berlin, Neukölln and Kreuzberg are similarly relevant to the working and networking practices of the respondents:

*Whenever I go to a meetup, it's either located in Neukölln or Kreuzberg, sometimes in Mitte. But mostly Kreuzberg or Neukölln. And most of my previous clients were also located there. [...] I have also done some small projects with companies in Kreuzberg, actually most of them.*

Vadim, 32, UX designer, Kreuzberg

*[Kreuzberg plays a role for my job] insofar as there are thousands of clubs and many concerts, only that opened up this job branch of being a concert critic. [...] And this location brings me jobs, because the things I can report on are here.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

*For example, there are "drinking and drawing" sessions, a lot of Israelis here. [...] Nothing paid, but it's like, stuff is happening here. [...] It's really good because it brings those specific people that are interested enough.*

Gal, 28, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Kreuzberg and Neukölln are saturated with CCI-related places of consumption and networking opportunities. As opposed to Rome, Berlin is much more established as a "creative city". In Rome, respondents focus to a greater extent on the mentioned neighbourhoods, specifically choosing them as their place of residence on the basis that they contain a high percentage of the city's CCI. In comparison, Berlin as a whole is commonly chosen for its famous cultural and creative scene as well as its professional advantages:

*I came here because I felt that I have better chances of going forward with my art project, my music project here. Because there are more musicians here and I think there is more of a scene. In Israel, there is a music scene but not really in my genre.*

Tov, 22, music producer, Neukölln

*I found Berlin exciting and everything else in comparison to Berlin seemed boring. I wanted to delve into the techno scene and do something exciting, "big city"-like. And when I moved here, I wasn't necessarily planning to become a freelance illustrator, to focus on that. But it definitely is also good for that.*

Johanna, 24, illustrator, Kreuzberg

*But just to say, Berlin... I always found the weather shitty and other things as well. I just came here because it's the most international and, regarding media and music, the most promising city. And it's true that the contacts I have here are worth their weight in gold.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

Some, like Johanna, move to Berlin first and foremost because it appears "exciting" and subsequently start a freelance career. Other freelancers, like Rita, solely live

there to optimise their career opportunities despite not enjoying the city. Berlin's creative reputation precedes it; some CCI workers even move there without first-hand experience, solely based on its reputation:

*And then we thought like, I didn't even know Berlin. I've never even been here before, I just heard from friends that it's a good place for artists. But really, not much of a plan, not much of information [laughs]. So we just came here from one day to another and we're here now since one year [laughs].*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

To some respondents, on the other hand, the city appears too focused on commerce and technology:

*Berlin is a city with a lot of tech going on, but... they call it creativity, for me it's not creativity. [...] It's not inventing, creating for example any new art movement, design movement, architecture movement, you know what I mean? [...] So in my opinion, I really miss creativity in this city, there is too much tech going on, but what do you want to say [regarding] the arts, the graphics, design, architecture?*

Simone, 44, architect, Kreuzberg

*[...] With all the new stuff happening, for example here there is a company which keeps on growing, all these young dynamic people, they're developing apps or making concepts or something, they all only speak English and I don't actually know what they're doing. Those are job sectors about which I feel completely clueless, because I think, oh God, what is that?*

Ulrike, 55, graphic designer, Kreuzberg

This fast-evolving, international environment is perceived as somewhat alienating, leaving behind traditional notions of arts and creativity in favour of innovation. Contrasting this with what respondents said about San Lorenzo and Pigneto, while Berlin potentially offers more opportunities to creative workers, Rome as a less modern, more slow-moving setting appears to provide more scope to actively shape one's neighbourhood and create a sense of community with peers. To conclude this section, Leonardo, who has lived in Neukölln and San Lorenzo, compares both cities in this quote:

*A: San Lorenzo is smaller and has around a hundred ateliers, which is a ton for Rome, in Neukölln there must be, like, a thousand. So here, it's easier to know everyone, I imagine. I don't know everyone, but I imagine it's easier. It's a different thing, [in Berlin] there's a lot more people, a lot more artists, no doubt. And so many scenes, not one scene, there are many scenes. [...] Yes, at least that's what I found, there are many different groups of people who do different things, people into sound and media, stuff like that.*

*Q: And in Rome, or in San Lorenzo, there is only one scene?*

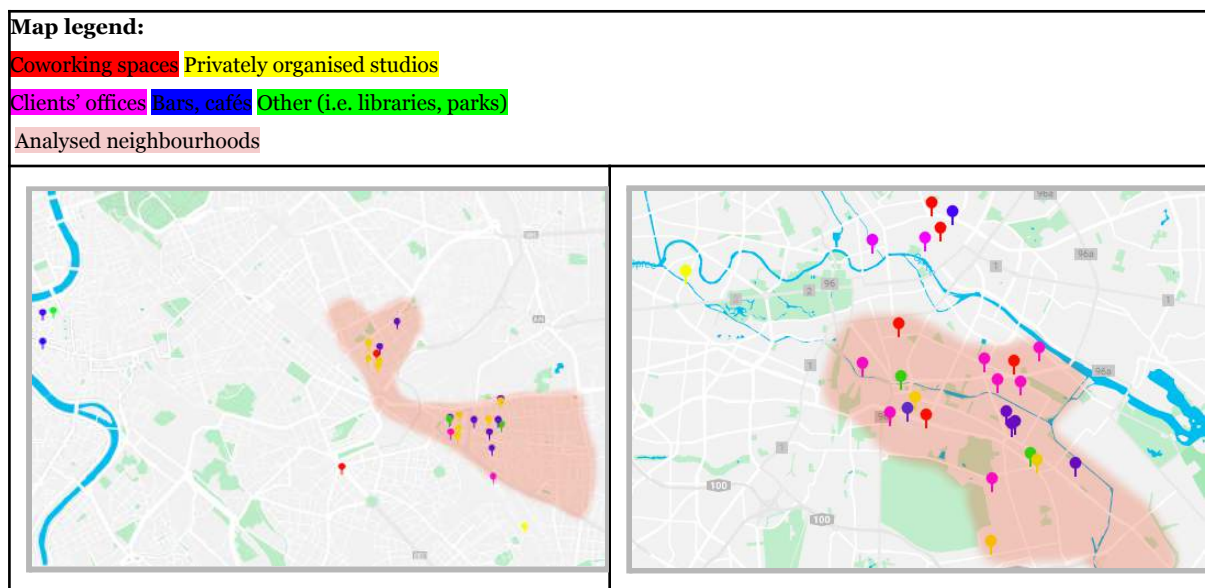
*A: I don't know, but given that there are less people, numerically... It's clear that there are also people who do media et cetera, but when you go to an opening, you*

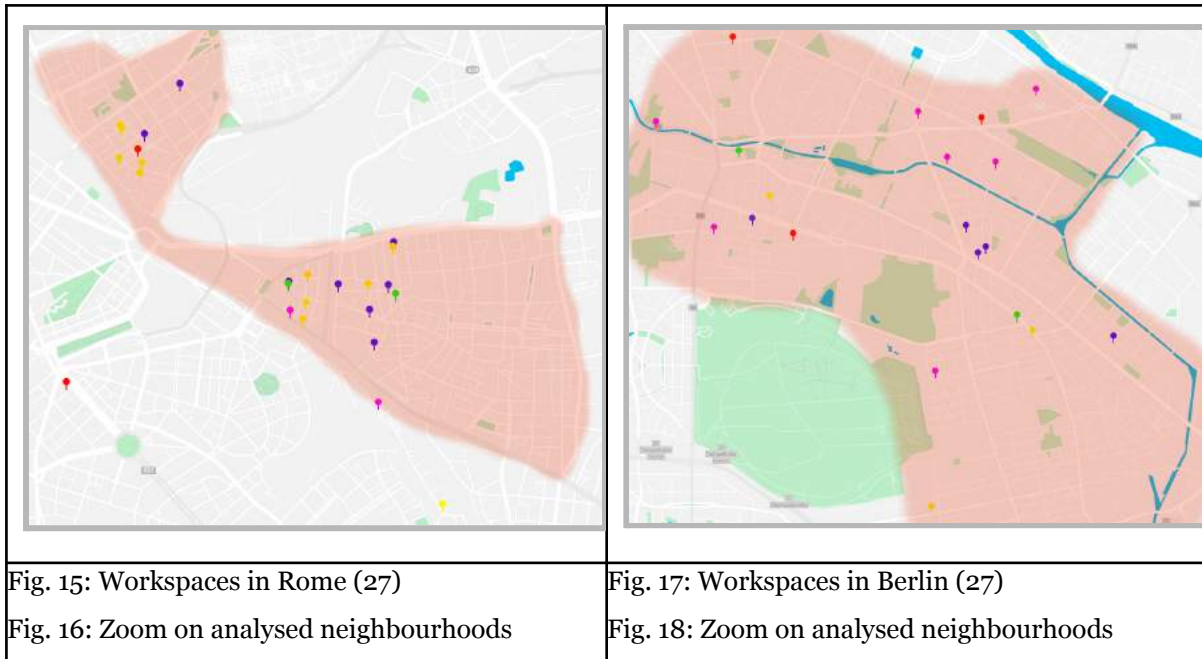
*meet many people. There are fewer places, so you meet the same people more often.*  
Leonardo, 34, artist, San Lorenzo/Neukölln

This comparison reinforces the premise that Berlin and Rome produce different forms of sociality between creative workers. Berlin as a renowned creative hub provides a multitude of settings to socialise and network; Rome's scene appears much more reduced, concentrated in few, small neighbourhoods, but more cohesive. The next chapter will discuss this dynamic further, focusing on workspaces.

#### 4.1.2 Workspaces

The fact that creative freelance work is often not dependent on specific places has led to innovative forms of workspaces. Phenomena such as coworking spaces have a profound impact on how creative freelancers relate to one another and how they interact with urban space. The following maps show where the respondents work:





Despite many respondents partly or mainly working from home, their residences have not been considered in these maps; the analysis is meant to focus on spaces where freelancers potentially meet others. Red pins represent official coworking spaces (2 in Rome, 5 in Berlin), yellow pins studios that freelancers manage themselves (11 in Rome, 4 in Berlin), blue pins cafés and bars (10 in Rome, 6 in Berlin), pink pins clients’ offices (2 in Rome, 9 in Berlin) and green pins other spaces, which include libraries and parks (3 in Rome, 2 in Berlin).

It is evident from the maps that the landscape of workspaces in the two cities are significantly different: In Berlin, respondents mention more professional spaces such as coworking spaces and clients’ offices. In Rome, respondents tend to work in self-organised spaces and cafés or bars. This indicates a higher grade of professionalisation and adaptation to freelancers’ needs in Berlin. Even working in a café in Berlin has a more professionalised character:

*Because in Berlin there was a certain type of space where it was easy, normal. There was a bar on two floors where it was normal to do coworking, where all my colleagues went, here it's not like that. A bar is a bar. You go there with your computer, but it's a bar.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

Marco has studied in Berlin for some time and observed that spaces there are designed to accommodate workers, while in Rome, “a bar is a bar”, even if one goes there to work. This corresponds with Berlin being more professionalised, more

adjusted to freelance labour. In comparison to Rome, there is notably a higher amount of large, corporate coworking spaces; the respondents mention five which they have frequented, among these for instance the chain *WeWork*. They are perceived as a relatively recent phenomenon and symptoms of more extensive transformation processes, particularly in Kreuzberg and Neukölln:

*I think the first time I was here looking for a job was about 2013, 2014. And it still had a bit more roughness, it still has it, but compared to what it was it's now becoming a bit more "startup" [...]. Not only in Kreuzberg but also in Neukölln, full of cafés, so that people can work. And another thing I've increasingly seen are coworking spaces. When I first moved to Berlin it was just a couple of places that were like Betahaus et cetera. But now, in every corner you can find some boutique coworking spaces or some large ones like WeWork or in Kreuzberg there is this Factory, too. Next to Görlitzer Park. And inside there are like hundreds of people, freelancers. So yeah, these places didn't exist before.*

Vadim, 32, UX designer, Kreuzberg

*In six, seven years, Berlin has really completely changed. [...] A lot of people moved here and exactly these coworking spaces started to be built here, there, there, there, there, [...] a lot of buildings came up like mushrooms. And also in Kreuzberg, I saw a lot of building restoration, new places, concert halls opened, [...] a lot of clubs. I think it's a continuous change.*

Simone, 44, architect, Kreuzberg

Coworking spaces are thus perceived as signs of gentrification in connection with the increasing development of luxury apartments, startup businesses and places of consumption. Thus, the respondents seem to reject coworking spaces somewhat; in line with this, it is important to note that none of the interviewed creatives currently work in a corporate coworking space. Most of them prefer working from home, from their clients' offices or in small, privately organised shared workspaces. Anika, for example, used to work in a coworking space in the neighbourhood Mitte and specifies why she stopped:

*In the beginning I had a space, it was organised for me when I received more tasks, but it was pretty expensive in my opinion and I wasn't there for long [...]. It worked well for some time, until I had the idea that they could pay me a bit more, so I arranged with my boss that he wouldn't pay the space anymore, which in the end is just a table and a chair, put that money on my invoice instead and I would work from wherever I wanted.*

Anika, 33, journalist, Neukölln

Anika only frequented a coworking space because one of her clients paid for it. She overall perceived it as a waste of money, which in her opinion was better spent on her

salary. In her experience, coworking does not fulfil the purpose of connecting freelancers for networking:

*And we were not enough people to socialise a lot. The idea of coworking spaces is also that you get together and meet new people and get new ideas, but I had the feeling that many people just went there to not be stuck at home, they work off their tasks and then leave. You can do the same thing in the university library.*

Anika, 33, journalist, Neukölln

Vadim, who also used to work in a coworking space, similarly did not find it suitable for his needs:

*I didn't like it because as I said, I like to work standing and talking to myself and walking around. And it's not easy to do such things in a public environment. I actually tried to find a private office in a coworking space, so I can still feel like I'm in an office, but it's discrete, and this was impossible. Either they were all booked or they were like 1000 Euros a month, so it wasn't really easy.*

Vadim, 32, UX designer, Kreuzberg

Coworking spaces thus in this perspective are not necessarily suited to the highly individualised working practices of creative freelancers, who have their own routines. Additionally, they are perceived as too costly for what they offer.

Some respondents choose to share self-organised and self-managed studios with other freelancers. This practice is similar to but distinct from corporate coworking spaces where workers pay a daily, monthly or annual membership fee (cf. Merkel & Oppen, 2013). Maja and Gal work in such a studio in Kreuzberg with a few other animation filmmakers. In Maja's view, this arrangement results in "free time and working time" becoming profoundly intertwined, to such an extent that she feels her entire social circle consists of her professional peers:

*Then there is no distinction between free time and working time, it's just like... This person can become your friend or can become a contact for work. And also we hang out a lot with animation people and sometimes it's like, maybe let's try to meet other people and not only animators? Because you realise it's a bit hard, like how do I find those people, how do you meet those other people [laughs]?*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

But this intertwining does not automatically lead to collaboration within the workspace:

*We don't cooperate much, actually we haven't cooperated, because there's something... this pure offset we all have. I'm working now, I'm going to finish with my deadline around twelve. My colleague could have used my help while I was doing this job, but now that I'm going to be free, he's going back to work. [...] So I'd*

*say that this collective was based on that idea, but it just comes to a very technical point of view when stuff like this doesn't really happen.*

Gal, 28, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Freelancers' schedules can be so flexible and unpredictable that they do not manage to coordinate them with one another. Due to these "technical" difficulties, the vision of artistic exchange and collaboration in shared workspaces often does not come to fruition. Maja reiterates that working in a shared space does not necessarily mean she feels more connected to the creatives in her neighbourhood:

*I don't think I'm really connected to my neighbourhood in this matter. [...] It's mostly these really individual jobs, everyone gets their own projects and is a bit closed with this and working on them. And it would be good to do something together, but I think it just depends on what offers are appearing.*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

Maja perceives the creative scene as somewhat fragmented and isolating. The projects that she is booked for are work-intensive and not suitable for collaborating with others. While she works in the company of other animation filmmakers, she still perceives herself to be on her own. Indeed, other research confirms that while coworking leads to peer-to-peer communication, it does not necessarily result in professional collaboration (Merkel, 2015); coworkers rather work "alone, together" (Spinuzzi, 2012). Creating a "collective" of freelancers furthermore can constitute a branding decision. An image of collaboration, artfulness, "coolness" is consciously constructed to attract clients:

*A: In Germany, I got familiar with this concept of artistic collectives. Which sounds super cool and is probably just a group of people sharing a working space. And if it happens that they do something together, they would not call themselves a studio, they wouldn't register a company or anything like this, but they would call themselves collective. So I think it's a very smart marketing thing to do a group like this. [...] It probably also sounds more serious for some customers.*

*Q: Sounds more artsy?*

*A: Yeah. But it's so much about this, if it sounds artsy, what your website looks like, if you have a cool Instagram.*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

This illustrates furthermore how even the organisation of workspaces is linked to conveying a specific image. Creating shared studios and collaborating with other freelancers is connected to both social capital and self-branding.

Ulrike adds the perspective that working with other freelancers is not always desirable. Asked if she collaborates with others, she responds:

*No, not really, that's kind of all too exhausting for me. [...] For example, I'd like to have someone as a copywriter, I would actually like to develop something with a small team. But it's really difficult to find something where it feels right together, where it matches. Because I'm really good at just working for someone, no problem, but if you work together on an equal footing, everyone needs to kind of have the same goal and that's really difficult. Already as an artist I found that difficult, in these atelier communities, where they always say "we're all totally equal" but some were more equal than others and cherry-picked what was best for themselves.*  
Ulrike, 55, graphic designer, Kreuzberg

Being used to working independently in an artistic fashion, Ulrike finds it difficult to compromise with collaborators. The individualised working practices of creative freelancers mean that they can often freely select with whom to work. At the same time, in the absence of clear hierarchies, Ulrike has felt taken advantage of in a group setting. She therefore prefers working on her own, even though she admits that this means missing out on potentially valuable contributions from other professionals.

Looking at Rome, Jonathan is the only respondent working in a coworking space. He found his space because a former colleague manages it. According to Jonathan, coworking spaces are becoming more popular in the city:

*And the idea of the coworking space is getting bigger and bigger. There are new spaces opening, particularly at Piazza Bologna all the time. Also in the city centre, there is a space which looks super posh, I'd love to explore that and find out, but the marketing is done the Italian way, as in they won't tell me any details. I want to know the price, opening hours, what do I have to do? Just tell me and I'll come and I'll pay. No, can't do that, I don't know, they need to establish a personal relationship first or something like that.*

Jonathan, 51, digital marketer, San Lorenzo

At the same time, he emphasises that they are managed "the Italian way", which means connections are required to gain access. These spaces are thus not necessarily accessible to perceived outsiders. This phenomenon appears to be common in Rome, where workspaces are commonly self-organised and shared between creatives who know each other; access to these studios is commonly gained through acquaintance or friendship. This leads to small, cohesive groups that are quite closed and not open to the public, as a commercial coworking space would be. As a result, some respondents feel excluded from having access to more communal workspaces:

*I would prefer being in a studio over being in a house, like coworking [spaces], I think they're good, because you do have this exchange of information and competences of different sectors. But I don't do that because Rome doesn't have good coworking. [...] I know there are a couple studios around, but there's mostly*



*people that gather together and they rent a space, but there's no coworking in the open, where you can go and there are many people and the place is pleasant as well.*  
Neno, 39, architect/graphic designer, San Lorenzo

*I don't feel there is a community, because everyone works for themselves. There is no communication, coworking, collaborating, co-creating, which is very bad actually, because for me collaboration is the most important thing, you never know what you can learn. But I don't know, I have the feeling that everyone prefers to do their own stuff.*

Alana, 30, production/social media manager, San Lorenzo

These respondents lament that Rome lacks sufficient workspaces. Due to this, they feel somewhat isolated from creative processes, which prevents them from furthering their skills and getting new ideas. For Neno, who works from his home in San Lorenzo, this lack of exchange with other creatives leads to a sort of dissociation from his urban surroundings:

*A: I actually don't know a lot of people in San Lorenzo altogether.*

*Q: So you do not actively seek out those places in this neighbourhood?*

*A: No, I don't, because there are none. I don't know if there is anything.*

Neno, 39, architect/graphic designer, San Lorenzo

As a vivid example of this dynamic in Rome, I had the chance to explore a tight-knit network of artists in San Lorenzo; while interviewing Antonio, who lives and works in San Lorenzo, he told me about his group of artist friends with whom he has lunch every day:

*So the network is one of the most important things for me, for example there's another studio where we have lunch every day. We are six, seven, eight artists who meet every day in Via dei Latini. [...] It's something that I have always cared about, having a network, so yes. Every time I have the opportunity to unite people... but I do it out of egoism, in the sense that I like it and I always need it, so I prefer sharing a studio with people instead of having one on my own.*

Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

The group meets for shared lunches in an artist studio in Via dei Latini, which belongs to one of them. The participants do not necessarily join every day, but the lunch takes place daily in changing compositions. Antonio emphasises that having a stable network of relationships in his neighbourhood is not only a lucky coincidence, but a need that he intentionally fulfils by creating shared spaces with like-minded creatives. He describes the group as not selective about who can join; in his perception, becoming a member is a rather organic process:

*People think “Ah, but how do things happen, how do you build them?”, but in the end it depends on your willingness. For example, if someone living in San Lorenzo or Pigneto says “I like this situation” and he starts coming to lunch every day, he becomes part of the situation. It's something intentional. [...] There is a natural selection, because it has happened that somebody came and we didn't get along. And it's not like we say “we don't want you”, they simply don't stay because they don't fit into the environment. We have had these lunches for five years, every day. From young people to people from the world of art and cinema, from Oscar awards to emerging artists, the young painter, the famous painter. There are no levels, it's the attitude that interests us.*

Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

According to Antonio, it is thus mostly sympathy and continuous socialising that leads to joining this group. While in his perception, this means that it mostly depends on a person's “willingness” to join, this process is also much less transparent than for example signing a contract for joining a coworking space. It furthermore depends much more on a person's character and how they spend their spare time than on professional qualifications. These highly relational labour practices thus result in professional success depending on qualities such as social behaviour and emotional skills (cf. Chicchi & Roggero, 2009).

After accompanying Antonio to the lunch for a day, I interviewed three other artists out of the group (Alberto, Fabio and Leonardo). The informal lunch get-togethers are evidently a source of personal as well as professional support for its members; as Alberto puts it, together, they create a “complicity” that is otherwise hard to find:

*Look, in Rome it's not easy. It's not easy finding complicity, right? This happens also in other cities probably. [...] Maybe because you are part of a certain closed circle, so in the end you collaborate, you find ways to exchange – not favours, but basically complicity et cetera. So with them, I feel very good. In other situations, I noticed that it's not that easy. [...] For us it's very easy in the end.*

Alberto, 52, artist, San Lorenzo

In Alberto's view, this group of artists provides its members with the opportunity to collaborate and exchange ideas. On the one hand, the group appears highly informal and based on friendship, but on the other hand, it provides numerous professional advantages. Alberto also notes that the circle is “closed”; he describes this closure as required for the kind of intimate, friendly relationship that facilitates “easy” mutual support. Alberto and Fabio, who has worked as an artist in San Lorenzo since the 1980s, both describe Rome's contemporary art scene as highly individualised:

*The artistic context, for example during the Roman school in the 1960s, there was a lot of sharing. Maybe because they were difficult years, also economically, but now it's the same. But there was cohesion, the will to share, there was complicity. [...] And that's not OK, no? Also for artists' personal artistic growth, in my opinion.*  
Alberto, 52, artist, San Lorenzo

*[...] Until the 1980s, 1990s, the artistic environment of Rome was more cohesive. Admittedly always lightly, artists were jealous of each other, but nevertheless they happily formed groups of movements, which allowed working collectively. [...] Now none of this exists anymore, every artist works individually on their own. And it's true that it's also about the burden of advertising oneself, carrying the discourse out into the world, who is better, who is worse. [...] Now it has become a bit deteriorated.*

Fabio, artist, San Lorenzo

Alberto and Fabio state that Rome's art scene has lost cohesion; in their opinion, this might be due to economic difficulties, competition and the growing pressure to advertise oneself and one's work. This development hinders individual artistic progress as well as communal collaboration. Being a part of the San Lorenzo artist group might, to an extent, substitute a larger artist community; Fabio's description of his friendship with Antonio and the group reinforces this assumption:

*We met, I don't know how many years ago, he's younger than me as you know. He came, we met, "Can I come to your studio to see your works?", then he came here, saw my works, we became friends. We have friends in common here in San Lorenzo, we see each other to eat together, to talk. It's nice, isn't it? Being together, exchanging things, telling each other that there's an exhibition here or there, going there together, sharing projects, no? Saying "Look, there's an exhibition to do, I work with them". There is an exchange, which is interesting.*

Fabio, artist, San Lorenzo

For example, the members of the group introduce one another to other artists and inform each other about exhibitions and potential shared projects. Their continuous amicable exchange, which is for instance expressed in the shared lunches and visits to their respective studios, maintains and deepens their connection.

The San Lorenzo artist group constitutes a traditional community; its members share a collective narrative and bond while spending time together during working hours and in their spare time. This "bonding" social capital increases social cohesion within the group instead of necessarily expanding networks like the "bridging" social capital of weak ties (cf. Putnam, 2000). The group thus remains small, somewhat closed and is highly cohesive. Ozgur, for example, laments the fact that the Roman creative scene is fragmented into small, closed circles:

*The only thing that I miss between artists – maybe between two, three artists it exists, but not between all artists – [...] is that they do something all together. If we all did something together that would be beautiful. I know there are actors, directors, photographers, they all live in this neighbourhood, but I have never heard of an organisation that unites all these artists. [...] Maybe actors do something among each other, directors, photographers, blablabla. [...] There are small, small art studios or architecture studios that I know of, but they are always among each other. Three, four, five people, not more.*

Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

In Oznur's perspective, creatives in Rome remain in small, specialised groups that mostly do not interact with one another. Even though she knows that her neighbourhood, Pigneto, is full of creative freelancers, she perceives it as fragmented into individuals and small studios instead of as a cohesive community.

Antonio, despite having his own closed collective, shares this observation:

*In the long run, I believe you win more than you lose by being together, without a doubt. But in Rome, it's a bit... It's all small circles, where everybody tries to create their own things, very closed. [...] If you arrive from the outside you're a threat instead of an opportunity. So that sucks in my opinion.*

Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

Overall, the workspaces respondents in San Lorenzo and Pigneto mention are mostly small, privately organised studios instead of larger coworking spaces. The creative scene in these neighbourhoods is organised into small groups that are highly cohesive, and therefore relatively closed. Without friendly relationships, it can be difficult for creative freelancers to gain access to these kinds of spaces and therefore to widen their networks; these freelancers can thus feel excluded from artistic circles and separated from their urban surroundings, as if there is “nothing going on” in their neighbourhoods. Even for those who have strong networks, the lack of a larger collective emphasises competition and results in missed opportunities for collaboration and exchange.

## 4.2 Digital Space

Similarly to the mapping of urban spaces in which the respondents (net)work, they were also asked to name the digital platforms utilised in connection with their work. Of interest were all platforms that mostly serve a networking purpose; excluded were platforms mostly or exclusively used to communicate with already established contacts (such as *Whatsapp*, *Slack*). Included were the respondents' own professional websites, if present, given that they were often mentioned as important for establishing connections.

Platform	City	Rome 17 respondents	Berlin 14 respondents	Total 31 respondents
Instagram		14	11	25
Facebook		14	9	23
Own website		9	7	16
LinkedIn		8	4	12
Bumble Bizz		0	6	6
Twitter		1	3	4
Behance		2	1	3
Xing		0	3	3
Meetup		0	3	3
Soundcloud		0	2	2
Tumblr		1	1	2
Reddit		1	1	2
Youtube		1	1	2
Dribble		1	1	2
Others <sup>3</sup>	e-TALENTA Photography platform		Angellist, Artilist, Crew United, Fiverr, Theapolis, Torial, Upwork, Vimeo	10
<b>Platforms</b>		16	22	24
<b>Mentions</b>		54	61	115
		3.12 platforms / respondent	4.36 platforms / respondent	3.71 platforms / respondent

While more respondents were interviewed in Rome, Berlin respondents mention more digital platforms. Respondents on average are active on 3.12 platforms in Rome and on 4.36 in Berlin for professional purposes. Some of the named platforms, such as *Youtube*, *Vimeo* or *Soundcloud*, serve dual purposes as social networks and file-sharing platforms or aggregators (cf. Mazali, 2017). Several platforms used within the Berlin sample are not utilised by any Rome respondent, namely *Bumble Bizz*, *Xing*, *Meetup* and *Soundcloud*. While *Xing* as a Germany-focused equivalent to

<sup>3</sup> Platforms mentioned by only one respondent.

*LinkedIn* is generally not widespread in other countries, the other named platforms are available in Italy. Berlin respondents furthermore mention eight additional platforms once, Rome respondents only two. This indicates that Rome respondents' social media usage is less varied and specialised, more concentrated on fewer platforms. Berlin respondents have more platforms at their disposal and use more websites that are specialised in freelance work.

It is important to take into consideration that the high number of Berlin respondents using *Bumble Bizz* is also a result of this platform being utilised to recruit respondents. Subtracting these mentions and the respondents' own websites, the most popular platforms in both samples are *Instagram*, *Facebook* (both owned by *Facebook*) and, to a lower extent, *LinkedIn*. While a wide array of networking platforms focused on freelancers and creative work such as *Dribbble*, *Upwork* or *Behance* exists, it is thus interesting that overall, respondents in both cities rely on the much less specialised global leaders among social networks. This confirms the assumption that, similar to in urban settings, even in spaces with many available networks, web traffic tends to cluster around a small number of hubs (Miconi, 2013). Additionally, *LinkedIn* is the only job network that respondents in both samples mention more than three times. However, this network is still used less than *Facebook* and *Instagram*, which do not have a professional focus. This implies that networks designed for mostly private use serve professional purposes, too. The following paragraphs will look at this phenomenon more in-depth.

#### **4.2.1 The curated intimacy of professional profiles**

This chapter will explore the responses of interview candidates who view social media as essential for their labour practices. I will illustrate selected interview quotes with depictions from the respondents' *Instagram* profiles. *Instagram* was chosen as the example digital platform since it is the most popular social media platform within the sample. The taken screenshots include the respondents' profile photos, *follower* count, short descriptions, *story highlights* if present, and the last nine photos they published. To the question of what role the internet plays for their work, respondents state:

*I think my job wouldn't exist without the internet. [...] But it's also my worst enemy. I feel a lot of times that I'm too addicted to my phone [laughs], so yeah. But yeah, it's really important to me.*

Tov, 22, music producer, Neukölln

*It's fundamental, one hundred percent. I owe what I have become to using social media the right way.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

*A big one, I'd say. First of all, it makes it much easier to network. I have the possibility through several networks, including Facebook, to see who I'm friends with and who could help me. [...] It helps me to present myself, next year I will build a website. It's also much easier for others to see who I am, where I'm from.*

Ella, 35, production/event manager, Neukölln

[laughs] *Without it, nothing would work. [...] It's so to say my office, it doesn't work without it. It's much more important that there you are able to move around freely and to approach people. Since one, two years I also do a lot via Twitter, where I have established many contacts. [...] Basically the most important thing, without it nothing works.*

Anika, 33, journalist, Neukölln

As Anika points out, moving freely online for many creative freelancers is much more important than moving around in the material world. Especially for those without fixed workspaces who work remotely, the internet can become their office and main pool of connections. However, this chapter will not focus on this well-studied and rather obvious fact, but on the way respondents position and brand themselves in digital spaces to create networks.

While social media are highly relevant as networking spaces for many respondents, this does not mean that they enjoy using them. Particularly when used for professional purposes, their usage is often not perceived as pleasant but as a compulsory chore:

*Personally, I don't love Instagram, I am aware that it also turns into a drug, but it's important having it for this line of work. It's also a way to network. [...] The only reason I'm on social media is for work reasons, otherwise I would do it less.*

Sabrina, 31, actress, Pigneto

*Before, I was pretty enthusiastic [about social media], now with how the platforms are evolving towards knowing everything about my life, using them bothers me more and more. I use them in a more discontinuous way, but I find them very important and I realise first of all the perception of my work, how others perceive it, changes depending on how I use social media [...]. I realise that communicating regularly and well through social media makes a big impression about what you're doing and who you are.*

Cristina, 32, photographer/visual designer, Pigneto

Presenting herself on social media appears somewhat intrusive to Christina. At the same time, she has found that sharing insights into her personal life profoundly impacts how others perceive her work. A majority of the respondents is active on both platforms and utilises them in professional and personal contexts. The two spheres mostly intertwine, with the boundaries between private and job-related content becoming blurred. This is often intentional as curated private insights can be professionally advantageous:

*Actually, it's also a bit difficult to detach the personal from the professional [on social media], exactly because the audience, the clients are very interested in the private sphere. That's often the way to hook them up, to make yourself more appealing. It has happened to me that I received proposals from people [...] who were probably attracted by what I published about my personal stuff. That happens a bit on Instagram and on Facebook, they ask me "Why don't we collaborate?" and it happens on my profile, not on my page.*

Cristina, 32, photographer/visual designer, Pigneto

It is precisely the “private sphere” that potentially attracts clients and collaborators. Knowing this, Cristina consciously utilises personal details to create a relationship with her audience. While she has both private profiles and professional pages on social media, she noticed that personal profiles more commonly lead to proposals. Marco has similar observations:

*I don't have private profiles anymore [laughs]. I have a Facebook, a personal one and a fan page, but the fan page as such doesn't create me the movement that the personal one does. On the personal one I post jokes for friends, but let's say, I don't manage to really separate them, because I repeat, the professional one doesn't really create clients for me. On Instagram, I don't have a personal page anymore. Only photos for work. But the stories can be a bit more personal, they create more of an interrelation with potential clients.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

Professional “fan pages” do not generate clients in Marco’s experience. It is his personal profile filled with friendly “jokes” that leads to better connections. On *Instagram*, he utilises the *stories* feature, which enables users to post images and short videos that are automatically deleted after 24 hours, to add personal information to his otherwise professional account. This creates a more amicable relationship with his audience. Given the influence of private matters on professional success, separating the two spheres online thus becomes impossible.

*I try to connect with all the people that I would like to make plans with for working together, to keep in touch with them, because Facebook is also somehow a personal*

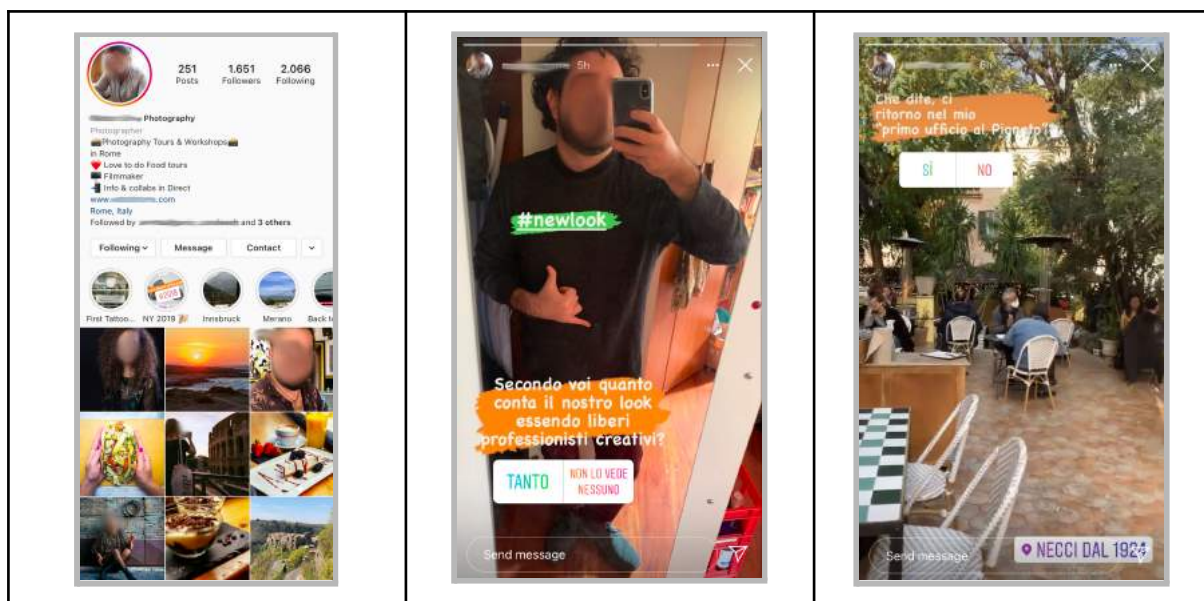


space and when you share your personal space with someone, you already are one step ahead. Kind of sharing some intimate things.

Alana, 30, production/social media manager, San Lorenzo

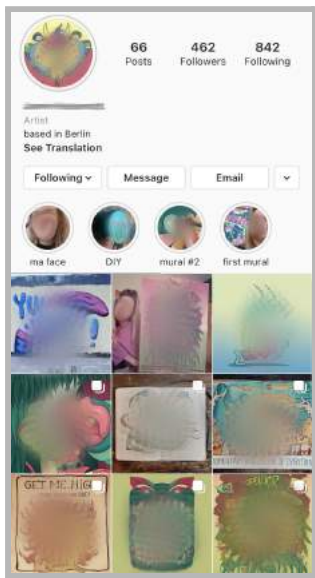


Alana similarly is consciously utilising her private *Facebook* profile to create a form of intimacy with individuals with whom she would like to collaborate. After meeting them personally, connecting on social media becomes a tool to strengthen ties; she strategically shares personal details to advance relationships. These respondents have in common that they purposefully deploy private information where necessary to connect on a more personal level with formerly superficial contacts. Thus, social media do not necessarily only constitute the first touchpoint between clients and freelancers (Gandini, 2014a). Contrary to the notion that digital networking creates mainly “bridging” social capital (Neves, 2013; Wellman et al., 2001), personalising social media profiles might instead present as a first step to “bond” with clients and collaborators.

The following screenshots from respondents’ *Instagram* profiles support this narrative. These respondents’ public profiles at first glance appear professional: They for example name their profession, mention their contact details, professional websites or profiles on other platforms in their short descriptions and mostly post content, such as photographs or illustrations, that is in line with their jobs. The content published in the *stories* feature, on the other hand, often provides a glimpse into their private lives:



<p>Fig. 19<sup>4</sup>: Photographer (Pigneto).</p> <p><i>Photographer Photography Tours &amp; Workshops in Rome. Love to do Food tours. Filmmaker. Info &amp; collabs in direct. [Website link] Rome, Italy</i></p>	<p>Fig. 20 &amp; 21: His <i>stories</i>.</p> <p><i>#newlook In your opinion, how important is our look as creative freelancers? Very – Nobody will see it</i></p>	<p><i>What do you say, should I return to my “first office in Pigneto”? Yes – No</i></p>
--	---	--

This respondent’s profile focuses on his work as a photographer and filmmaker with occasional private insights into his everyday life, travels and interests. He jokingly references his occupation as a creative freelancer in his *stories*, surveying his viewers about his outfit or naming a café in Pigneto as his office. Interacting with his audience through humorous surveys, he plays with the image of creative workers as artistic and well-dressed people sitting in cafés.

		
<p>Fig. 22: Illustrator (Kreuzberg).</p> <p><i>Artist based in Berlin</i></p>	<p>Fig. 23 &amp; 24: Her <i>stories</i>.</p> <p><i>I'm your Avril Lavigne quarantine dream xx</i></p>	<p>Repost from her collaborator’s <i>story</i>.</p> <p><i>Sellin' prints and books at [location] on Skalitzer Straße til late with [respondent]</i></p>

This Berlin respondent almost exclusively posts her art on her public profile but uses the *stories* and *story highlights*<sup>5</sup> to show her face and personality, making a more personal connection with her audience. She furthermore gives insights into her work life, advertising events she participates in and linking to creatives she works with.

<sup>4</sup> All figures in this chapter are sourced from the mobile application of *Instagram*.

<sup>5</sup> *Story highlights* are *stories* that users decide to save as permanent elements of their profiles, seen as circular, clickable images below their descriptions.

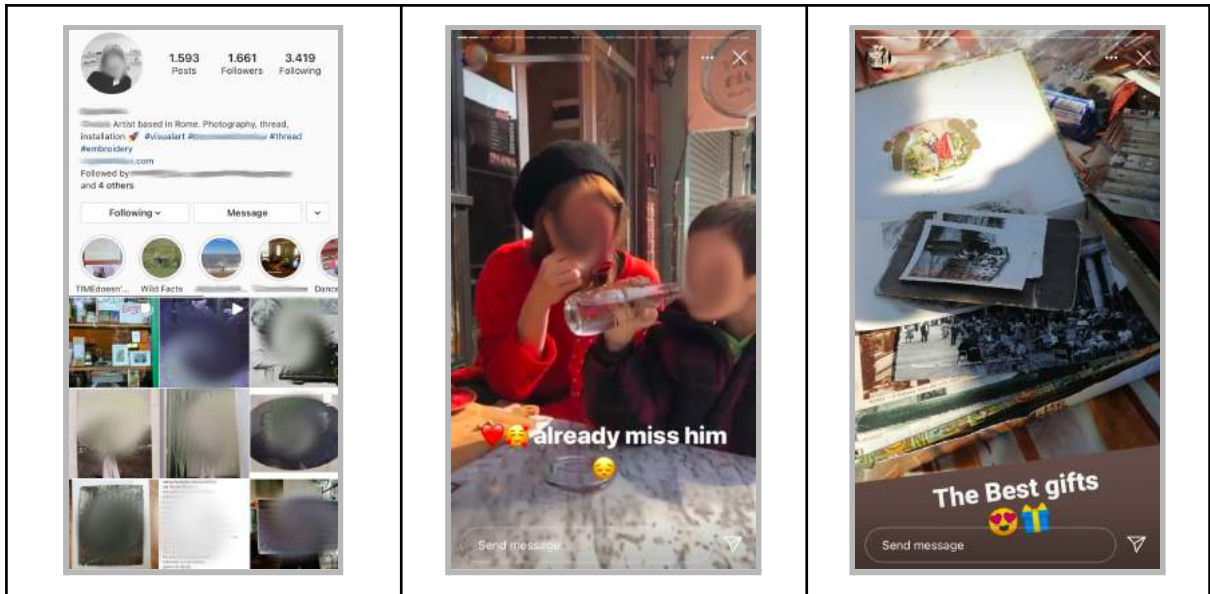


Fig. 25: Artist/photographer (Pigneto).  
 [Nationality] Artist based in Rome. Photographer, thread, installation. #visualart [recognisable hashtag] #thread #embroidery [Website link]

Fig 26 & 27: Her stories.  
 Already miss him

The Best gifts

This Rome respondent similarly has a mostly professional account on which she posts artwork, exhibitions, inspirations. In her *stories*, she shares private moments, some of which further support her artistic self-presentation. But also without utilising *stories*, respondents give personal insights on their professionalised profiles. The following depictions show accounts that appear mostly professional but include more personalised content in their uploaded content:

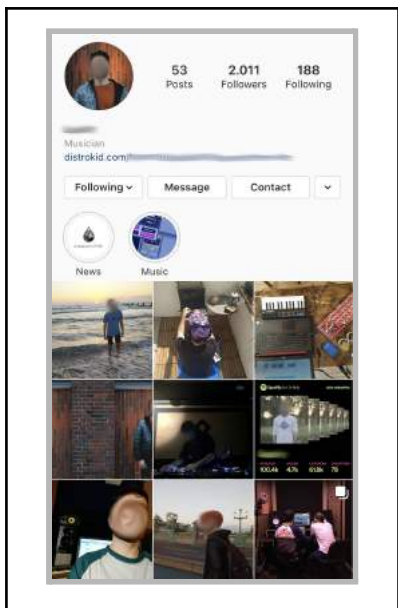


Fig. 28: Musician, Neukölln.  
 Musician [Distroid link]

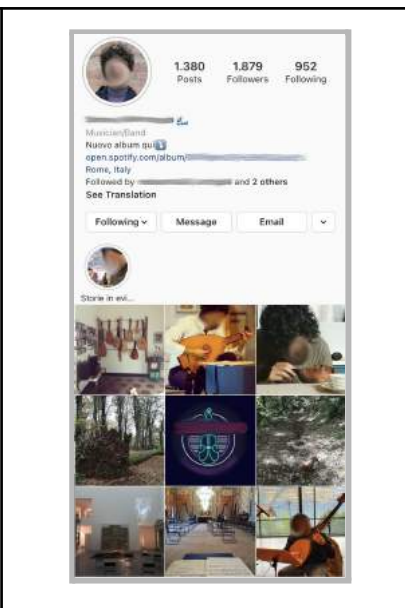


Fig. 29: Musician, Pigneto.  
 Musician/Band New album here [Spotify link] Rome, Italy

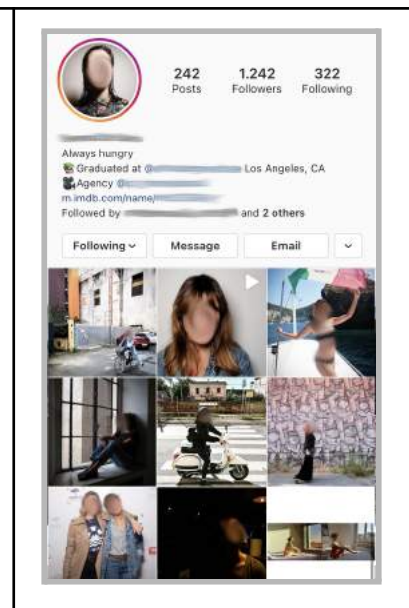


Fig. 30: Actress, Pigneto.  
 Always hungry. Graduated at [acting school]. Agency [xy]. [International Movie Database link]

These profiles mainly revolve around the respondents' profession. Both musicians publish content about their music and provide links to it on other platforms. The actress posts photos from film festivals and videos of her acting. They all however include private moments and details as well, for example in the form of casual vacation photos or pictures of their pets. Looking at figure 30, the respondent links to her university and agency; above these professional credentials, she chose to add the title "Always hungry", adding a playful, relatable element to an otherwise rather formal description.

These profiles illustrate the aforementioned crafted, curated intimacy: Professional content is mixed with personal touches, giving onlookers insights into the respondents' personalities while still branding them as professional and creative. In this way, respondents market themselves as likeable, amicable people who do not take themselves too seriously, but who are passionate and skilled. This intimacy is always somewhat one-sided; while creative freelancers reveal personal details about themselves to attract an audience, the audience consists, for the most part, of anonymous onlookers.

#### **4.2.2 Concealed professionalism of private profiles**

As analysed, the examples in 4.2.1 are professional-appearing profiles that respondents enhance and embellish with private details to create a relatable and creative persona with whom the audience wants to engage. A second, related dynamic can be observed in profiles that appear private but serve concealed professional purposes.

*If I post something personal, I don't do it publicly. [...] I understood that it's really important to know what kind of [public profile you have]. People really check it. You see what kind of character, what kind of public figure you are.*

Alana, 30, production/social media manager, San Lorenzo

As opposed to the phenomenon described in the last paragraphs, this strategy does not revolve around adding personal touches to rather work-focused profiles, but around making personal profiles appear more professional in a seemingly casual way. Alana creates a public persona on her profile that conveys the image she wants potential employers to see. Only once a connection is successfully established, they

gain access to her private content and therefore the “intimate” details she publishes to strengthen relationships. Vincent further describes how seemingly private social media content can in reality have professional purposes:

*Instagram has the best user activity and is very representative if you put it on your profile. People love to look at it, because you can make little videos of yourself, images, you quickly get very good insight into a person. [...] It intertwines a lot for actors. You so to say need to professionalise your personal life. [...] You have to show who you are, what you represent, which characters you could play, so that people get an association. I think it intertwines a lot.*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

Vincent explains this with him being an actor, which as a profession is more focused on the worker's physical aspects. However, it is reminiscent of what other respondents such as Cristina stated; creative freelancers need to “show who they are”, give insight into their private lives and personalities on social media to attract customers. The constant presence of professional onlookers also means that they need to be highly aware of things they should *not* publish:

*I try to hold back with very personal comments, because you never know if they can harm you. [...] I think it's also difficult to separate it so precisely, to really differentiate between them if you are kind of in the bubble already. You cannot split your personality completely.*

Anika, 33, journalist, Neukölln

Sharing personal details and opinions can be extremely useful if the respondents win their audience's sympathy. But at the same time, this strategy can have profoundly damaging effects, too; with much of freelance recruitment relying on getting people to “like you” (cf. McRobbie, 2002), potential clients *disliking* freelancers' online personas can present a career obstacle. The respondents thus must achieve a balance between private and professional by getting their audience to relate to them personally without deterring their desired audience while simultaneously upholding a professional, creative image. Thus, the respondents must balance between private and professional by getting their desired audience to relate to them as individuals while simultaneously upholding a professional, creative image. As Anika reiterates, this results in a perceived “split personality”, which can be challenging to maintain. This dynamic reveals a power imbalance between the self-branded creative and her client: While the client can anonymously observe and evaluate the freelancer's online performance, the freelancer exposes herself to the audience's judgment

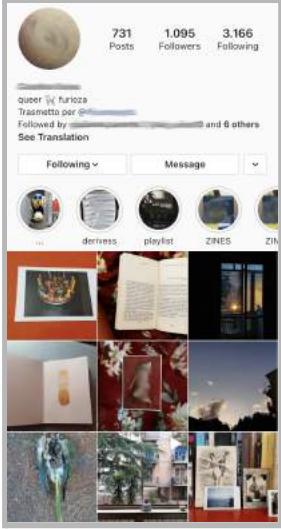
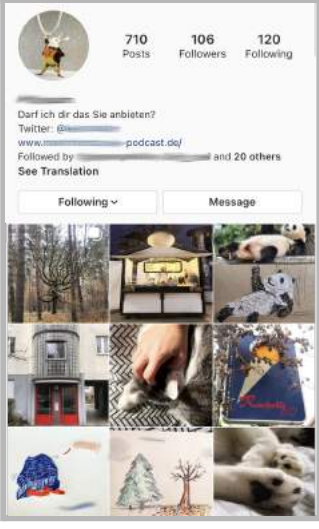
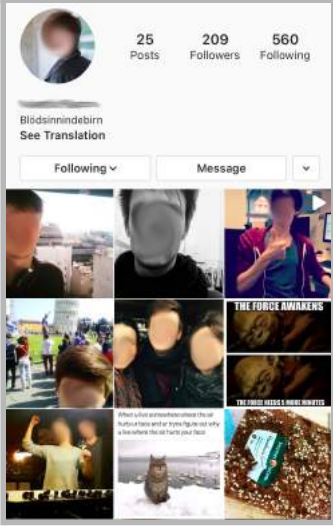
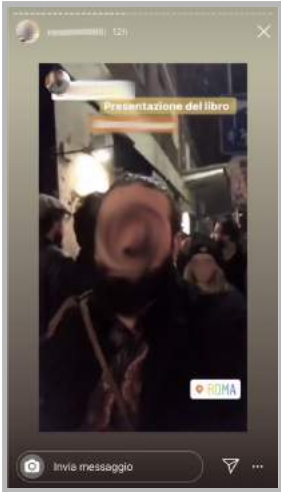


		
<p>Fig. 31: Designer/photographer, Pigneto. <i>queer – furious. I transmit for [Youtube channel link]</i></p>	<p>Fig. 32: Journalist, Neukölln. <i>May I offer [informal you] the [formal you]? [Twitter: [Twitter link] [Podcast link]</i></p>	<p>Fig. 33 Actor, Kreuzberg. <i>Nonsense in the brain</i></p>

Figure 31, 32 and 33 are examples of accounts that at first glance appear private. With the background of the discussed quotes however, it is apparent that all of these respondents include professional elements into their profiles. In Figure 31, the respondent links to one of her projects in her short description and to others (such as *zines* she has worked on) in her story highlights. Her photos appear curated and connected to her profession as a visual designer and photographer. Figure 32 shows a Berlin respondent’s profile, who links to her *Twitter* account and podcast, apart from posting mostly private photos and drawings. The actor, to whom the profile in Figure 33 belongs, publishes private photos and *memes*, but uses a professional portrait as his profile photo as well as often publishing photos and videos of himself. While certainly not all of these instances are intentional choices to appeal to clients and collaborators, it is reasonable to assume that some of them present the conscious professionalisation of private profiles, as described in the interview quotes. This is reminiscent of Wittel’s (2001) contemplations about the “concealed” purpose of networking. Physical networking events are made to appear informal through drinks, music, casual attire, et cetera; digital profiles that serve a networking purpose are made to look less instrumental through seemingly casual, private insights.

Lastly, particularly in *Instagram stories*, respondents commonly advertise each other’s projects by (re)posting photos or videos from events. The following

depictions are *stories* that one respondent, a photographer from Pigneto, reposted from two other Pigneto respondents, a photographer and an actress:

		
<p>Fig. 34: <i>Story</i> of photographer (Pigneto).  <i>Presentation of the Book</i> [title]          [Tagged location: Rome]</p>	<p>Fig. 35: <i>Story</i> of actress (Pigneto).  <i>Today my partner in crime</i> [link to his profile]  <i>presented his new photography book</i> [title]</p>	<p>Fig. 36: <i>Story</i> of photographer (Pigneto).  <i>This evening at [event] the new video of [band]</i>  <i>will be presented, directed by [respondent] and</i>  <i>with... ME!!! We are expecting you at</i> [Tagged          location: Marmo bar/club]</p>

In Figure 34, one Pigneto photographer visits a book release party. He publishes a *story* about it, which then gets reposted by the book’s author, another Pigneto photographer. In Figure 35, the author’s girlfriend, who is an actress, posts a *story* about the book, which the author reposts to his own stories. Figure 36 shows a *story* about a different project, for which the actress-photographer couple collaborated with a band for a music video; the actress publishes the *story* first, which is then reposted by the photographer. These examples show 1) how urban and digital networks intertwine as well as 2) the effect of networking in action; all of these respondents know each other in person from living in the same neighbourhood as creative freelancers. After meeting, collaborating and visiting each other’s events, they post digital content about these offline encounters. They link to each others’ profiles, geo-tag locations such as bars and repost one another. Through these reposts, the posts reach other audiences. These connections thus prove to be professionally useful to advertise projects and spaces as well as for self-branding purposes. Online self-branding can thus indeed constitute a collaborative practice in which freelancers mobilise social capital from their friendships and acquaintances to market themselves and others at the same time.

The dynamics analysed in 4.2.1 and in this chapter overall constitute interesting examples of online self-branding (cf. Hearn, 2008; Gandini, 2016). Creative freelancers consciously display their personality, opinions and lifestyle to 1) convey an artistic, professional persona and 2) generate a form of curated intimacy with clients and collaborators. The respondents' urban and digital networks intertwine and impact one another. For example, creatives who know each other in person connect digitally and market each other's projects, or digital audiences become aware of and participate in events because of promotional posts. Seemingly casual, private insights are mixed with professional content to mitigate an all-too-marketing-oriented, commodified appearance and to connect with audiences on a more personal, sympathetic level.

The respondents perceive their social media presentation and content, even on seemingly private profiles, explicitly as labour. At the same time, the professional nature of their social media activities is concealed as much as possible. Furthermore, this labour is of course unpaid in the sense that freelancers cannot bill anyone for the hours they spend on social media to present and market themselves. This type of self-branding on social media is thus a form of unaccounted, invisible labour, performed to increase professional visibility (Arvidsson, Gandini & Bandinelli, 2016).

### **4.2.3 The idealistic rejection of social media**

A third, connected phenomenon is the rejection of digital networking practices based on personal values. As opposed to those respondents who embrace digital platforms as spaces where they can share their personalities and create some form of intimacy with their audience, some perceive the digital realm as mutually exclusive with authentic relationships. This attitude is mostly found in Roman interviews and therefore reinforces the assumption that Rome respondents are less reliant on digital technology. Maria, a San Lorenzo architect is thinking about starting to network also digitally, but has some reservations:

*I am considering the idea. Because it could be a successful step nowadays, given that people basically don't meet face-to-face anymore. I'm a romantic [laughs], I still believe in real connections.*

Maria, 30, architect, San Lorenzo



While Maria recognises that creating connections online could be a promising career step, it contradicts her self-characterisation as a “romantic” believing in “real connections”. She therefore generates a dichotomy between real, physical contacts and fake, online contacts. This attitude is mirrored in other respondents’ accounts. Sandra for example justifies her aversion to digital networking based on her personal relationship with the internet:

*Well, it's not like I think the internet is evil. But I don't really believe in constructing working relationships through the internet. I need to try it. [...] But on the level of work, inevitably you need to transform to face-to-face. To know, to see. It's a bit against the current, actually in my discipline I have made a choice about what I will do and what I won't do. Also in respect to my relationship with the internet and the digital world. I prefer paper, books et cetera. The ideal is really to do that.*  
Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto

For Sandra, being “against the current” is an active choice to pursue her “ideal” career. Her preference for tangible things such as books translates into a reluctance to embrace digital platforms to promote her work. In her opinion, face-to-face contact is necessary to build professional relationships. A particularly strong-worded statement regarding this topic comes from Antonio:

*If you're really interested, you come here. If you only need Instagram, I don't give a shit about you. If you think this is the only way to know me or if that is enough for you, that means you stop at the surface. And I'm not interested in superficial relationships. They're useless, a waste of time.*  
Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

The quote is about professional relationships but could just as well be about close, personal friendships. Antonio appears to make little difference between knowing his work and knowing him as a person, merging his profession with his personality. Both require more than “superficial” contact on social media. He expects his connections to meet him and see his works at his studio in person. His statement that superficial relationships, even professional ones, are a “waste of time” might appear exaggerated, since not every successful contact with a client necessarily requires a stronger bond; but in the following statement, he specifies why this sentiment:

*[Digital networking] is very useful, no doubt, so I'm not criticising those who do it, on the contrary. I criticise myself for not doing it. But I like it when people come to the studio to talk about my work. So maybe I create this filter intentionally; if you're interested, you come here. [...] But it's only meant as a first level, I don't think you can understand my work via social media, I don't like that. [...] I repeat, I'm the one who misses out. But then, the few relationships that remain are very stable.*  
Antonio, 35, artist, San Lorenzo

What Antonio describes in this quote is a vivid illustration of intentionally favouring “strong tie” professional relationships given their higher stability and reliability. Antonio recognises the usefulness of social media as professional networking tools, but consciously chooses to disregard them. If anything, they can only present a “first step” for him, which then needs to be followed by a personal encounter and conversation to understand his work properly. He knows that he forfeits numerous potential contacts due to this, but relies on those that persist despite his conditions.

The respondents quoted here hold highly idealistic views of their professions and professional relationships. Their sense of self appears deeply connected to their work and how they choose to promote it. They desire authentic, “real” connections even for professional purposes and reject online contacts as superficial, fake. As opposed to the respondents of the last two chapters, who often utilise social media specifically to deepen the relationship with their audience, these respondents rule digital platforms out as a way to create “real” connections. They favour strong, personal ties over weak ones also in a professional context, therefore placing particular importance on the quality of the social capital they create. The rejection of digital technology also becomes part of the image these creatives build for themselves; they actively construct their self-identity (cf. Giddens, 1991) around being “romantic”, idealistic. Similar to the respondents who actively self-brand on social media, their emphasis on authentic relationships can be interpreted as a performance of the “authentic self” as an instrument of personal branding (Hearn, 2008).

However, despite his reluctance, Antonio in fact occasionally uses *Instagram* and *Facebook* to spread updates and announcements about his work and studio. Furthermore, while Sandra at the time of the interview did not network actively on social media, she stated that she needed to “try it”. She by now has created an *Instagram* account on which she shares some of her projects. The expressed opinions therefore do not necessarily result in a complete rejection of digital platforms. Using them to some extent is necessary for most creative freelancers, given their enormous importance in contemporary labour practices. Entirely renouncing them is a luxury only those with an extraordinarily stable and loyal set of clients can potentially afford.

### 4.3 Will COVID-19 Change Everything?

The COVID-19 pandemic is indubitably one of the most globally impactful events in recent history. It has profoundly affected social, cultural and economic relations worldwide. Italy has been particularly struck by the pandemic, with one of the highest numbers of cases and deaths in Europe.<sup>6</sup> The Italian and German governments have imposed measures to confine the spread of the virus, with both countries undergoing lockdowns during the first wave between March and May 2020, as well as less drastic restrictions starting from October 2020 during the second wave of the pandemic. While due to a lack of fixed contracts and social security, freelancers are particularly at risk in times of economic crisis, changing perspectives on remote and project-based working might also benefit and lead to new opportunities for freelance workers; economic reports for instance see an increase of freelancers in the US workforce overall (Edelman Intelligence, 2020). At the same time, the European CCI lost 31% of their turnover, making it one of the most affected industries in Europe after the air travel and before the tourism industry (Lhermitte et al., 2021).

With five respondents (three in Rome, two in Berlin), additional short interviews were conducted between October and November 2020 to investigate the pandemic's consequences for their work and their strategies to respond to these changes. A first, somewhat surprising sentiment is that for some respondents, nothing of significance changed:

*Look, since I've always worked remotely with colleagues and clients, the way I communicate with them hasn't changed a lot. In the last few months after the summer I have also received job offers connected to that, in the sense that maybe they asked me to give some lectures on the software I use. [...] Actually I haven't had more delays than usual, my work has never been on a schedule.*

Sara, 31, motion designer, Pigneto

*I can say that the pandemic hasn't really affected me professionally. The animation industry hasn't been really affected by the lockdown, nor by restrictions concerning work on the shooting plan. I haven't felt any difference in the number of commissions I was getting. On the contrary, as a lot of shooting plans were not allowed during the lockdown, some customers would decide to choose animation instead of live action.*

Maja, 29, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

---

<sup>6</sup> cf. [www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/](http://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/) (accessed 01/12/2020).

For Sara and Maja, their already existing network of clients has mitigated any potential damage; they even gained additional projects due to the restrictions. Being already established remote workers with flexible schedules ultimately aided them in maintaining their working routine. Both of these respondents also continued working in shared spaces:

*[My shared studio] was closed from March to June, but we stayed in touch and from summer on we began to frequent it again and have done some collaborations. [...] It's nice to have the possibility to leave the house and come here to work, also because in the meantime we have created very nice relationships and it's like being among friends.*

Sara, 31, motion designer, Pigneto

The relationships built with coworkers in Sara's case led to more projects and helped with the potential isolation of working remotely during the pandemic. For others, such as Marco (who in fact contracted COVID-19), working outside of his apartment was not an option anymore, which led to considerable mental strain:

*It bums me out a bit. I'm someone who needs human contact. And I'm very used to going to the centre, [...] being in bistros, meeting people from all over Europe and beyond, very stimulating. Being at home on the other hand is not really the same thing. I guess you understand me.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

Compared to Maja and Sara, other respondents in general were much more tangibly impacted, particularly those whose industries and working routines depend more on working locally:

*I used to do a lot of photography for tourists and experiences with tourists and the moment the first lockdown came, tourism disappeared. So from that moment on in March, there was no work anymore.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

*The pandemic impacted my work a lot. During the first lockdown, all scheduled performances were cancelled or postponed to autumn. That means at first I had nothing to do, full stop.*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

*In the end of February I came back to Italy, I had been in Turkey. In March I had many jobs scheduled with tourists, photos, families, weddings. Instead, nothing.*

Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

In terms of the resulting financial instability, respondents in both cities mention that they requested aid from the government or were supported by their families. To the

question of how they reacted to the drastic changes in their work schedule on a practical level, they respond:

*My way to bypass the impairments... [...] It's not bypassing, it's confronting. Thinking in a solution-oriented way, seeing that you can construct other concepts. Thinking about it is easy, executing it is difficult. I work more digitally, of course, we did digital workshops and digital performances for example.*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

*In this phase, I can say that everything has turned more local. [...] The market now is not anymore an international market, but much more concentrated locally in Rome. Anything you do, you do it here. Right now I am starting to create a team to start a communication agency. With a website and social media marketing. But it's all obviously connected to workers from Rome.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

*I came back here to Pigneto, because I spent the quarantine in [a small village], so I came back to Rome and they started calling me to do an exhibition. I went to Viterbo for an exhibition with that project. Then Basilicata, an artistic stay for a week. Then I came back, friends in an artist collective invited me because they won a competition in Ancona, we did an artistic stay there. Now I'm working, people buy my book or my original photos. And that's it, that's all the work I'm doing. I did two photography jobs, two or three. There is nothing else.*

Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

On the one hand, working practices evidently become more focused on the digital realm, with many jobs typically based in cultural institutions such as theatres moving online. On the other hand, as Marco explains, markets become more local. His work is more than ever based in Rome and rooted in collaborating with other local freelancers. Being in close contact with peers is also described as a strategy against the psychological strain of the situation:

*How you deal with it, it's also a bit of spiritual welfare. [...] You realise that with your language and communication you also need to care for people a bit. That you're also there for other things. [...] You need to get a bit closer, talk to each other in a more empathetic way when it's not just about everyday business. It brought us closer together.*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

A more local character is also prevalent in Oznur's narrative; after her working opportunities as a photographer drastically reduced, she started focusing more on the regional, Italian art scene with support from her existing contacts in the industry. However, for Marco, finding collaborators for his agency depends on a first contact through social platforms and then mobilising this social capital:

*So I was already in contact with many people [on Instagram], because I am very present on it. And then after this continuous dialogue, we remained in touch, like, I feel good with this person, also with this one.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

While working practices become increasingly dependent on online spaces, local clients and collaborators appear highly important. These accounts have in common that respondents quickly attempted to find practical solutions to mitigate the situation. As freelancers, they are used to being highly self-reliant and come up with new ways to sustain themselves. Their entrepreneurial working ethos becomes particularly evident in these quotes:

*But I tried to immediately find solutions. Being creative workers, we are always trying to find a way out in creative ways. [...] This period is shit, but from shit you can also grow new things.*

Marco, 35, photographer, Pigneto

*I saw it as a period of closure, focussing on making art. [...] We don't know how we will live in the next years. In my opinion, those who are creative, those who have imagination and fantasy, will find solutions to live. [...] But I'm also happy that it happened like that, in my opinion it didn't happen randomly, it helped me.*

Oznur, 37, photographer/artist, Pigneto

No matter how struck they are by radical changes and deep financial insecurity, creative freelancers trust in their ability to “find a way out”. They perceive their creativity as a unique quality and selling point, helping them persist even in extremely challenging periods. They even see positive aspects in their struggles, reinterpreting them as a chance to start over, to refocus and to create new opportunities. These perspectives are in line with observations about the “new spirit” of capitalism, where creativity is idealised as an individual cure-all strategy (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

The pandemic in many ways presents a checkpoint for assumptions regarding freelance work; how are freelancers impacted by this event that profoundly changed everyday life and working practices for many people worldwide? Did their networks indeed reduce risk in the face of crisis? In fact, many assumptions regarding social capital are confirmed or reinforced by the responses of my interview candidates. While it is somewhat surprising that some freelancers felt no tangible impact on their careers, they did so because they have a pool of established clients in industries that

are less affected by the pandemic. For those whose job opportunities have been severely impaired, immediately focusing on existing connections as well as creating new ones is an important strategy to mitigate the damage. While communicating more and more through digital channels, an interesting aspect is also that some respondents perceive an increasing focus on local markets due to lockdowns, travel restrictions et cetera.

The fact that many autonomous workers in this complex period depend on external financial support cannot be ignored and might present a rediscovery of structural responsibilities instead of highly individualised ones. However, the “creativity doctrine” of 21st century working conditions (cf. Schlesinger, 2007) is still confirmed in the respondents’ narratives that emphasise their creative abilities as a universal strategy against professional difficulties. It is also interesting to note that none of the re-interviewed respondents has considered changing into fixed employment in reaction to the pandemic. They instead continue relying on their resilience, imagination and social capital to find innovative solutions. While the COVID-19 pandemic might induce profound changes in labour practices regarding office spaces, remote working, digital communication, professional travels et cetera, it appears that it is not fundamentally changing creative freelancers’ relationship to their careers.

The additional interviews were of course not included in the original research design, which was prepared before COVID-19 emerged. Only a small part of the sample was thus re-interviewed, and the anecdotal evidence of this chapter is only meant to give an indication of how respondents reacted to these recent events. Future research could explore this issue more in-depth.

#### 4.4 Discussion: A Dissolution of Boundaries

Chapter 4 overall demonstrates a profound dissolution of boundaries between personal and professional spheres due to the obligation to continuously socialise and network in connection with the obligation to self-brand and present a creative persona to an ever-present audience. This dissolution is prevalent both in digital and urban networking practices. I thus want to end this chapter by discussing some interview quotes that underline particularly how creative freelancers' lives become inseparably intertwined with their professions. Most obviously, this happens on a temporal and spatial level; even when attempting to go on holidays, several respondents continue working:

*For example, once we went on a vacation with friends and I still hadn't finished my stuff, so I just took my laptop to Portugal. It sucked a bit because I was still sitting on the project day and night. And my girlfriend just went out with the family that hosted us. But yeah, the computer will travel with me. The fact that I have the studio here is just for my own comfort, for making this disconnection between my house and work. But really it changes.*

Gal, 28, animation filmmaker, Kreuzberg

*But I often think that I need to understand how to organise my life, otherwise I will go crazy. For example, another time last winter I went to Milan for a few days to visit friends but then I got an unexpected job that I couldn't say no to, so I needed to carry my computer with me and work for the whole stay. So I need to learn how to manage breaks, work, a balance.*

Sara, 31, motion designer, Pigneto

Some respondents try to find ways to separate better between private and professional endeavours because they feel exhausted by their schedule:

*There was a time when I thought, man, why am I tired all the time? I don't work that much. And then I noticed that that week I had performed five nights, of course it's fun and gives me something but in the end it's also energy and it's a creative process and of course it's work. So for self-care reasons at some point I said it's work and no matter if I get paid or not, if I categorise it as work it's easier for me to say, OK, I need a break.*

Anita, 30, comedian, Neukölln

When one's profession is at the same time one's hobby and inseparably intertwined with one's social circle, nightlife activities et cetera, creating a boundary between work and leisure becomes first of all a psychological task. Other respondents



however accept and welcome the dissolution of private and professional spheres into their lives:

*With art it's difficult to define. Life is art, art is life, this kind of stuff. [...] It seems a bit like a snob thing, living outside of time and space, saying "Oh, I always work, I never stop working" and in reality you don't do shit. But no, I really believe that for work, for what you define, for doing things, maybe I do ten hours a day, something like that. Surely. I come here in the morning and leave at night.*

Leonardo, 34, artist, San Lorenzo/Neukölln

*Well, I'm very lucky compared to many. I have a job I like. I don't make astronomic figures but I'm more relaxed, I have time to do this and that. My job right now is being in a beautiful place and drinking fruit juice. There are people who work in factories and make a lot less than me.*

Massimo, 36, photographer, Pigneto

*I think it is a condition of being a freelancer, because when I had a corporate job in the UK, on the weekends I loved not working. Now I get really bored if I don't work. So I don't know what to do, when I'm on vacation and I don't have any work to do, I don't know what to do. I've lost the ability to read a book I think, just to chill out.*

Jonathan, 51, digital marketer, San Lorenzo

The "freelance condition", consisting of flexibility and freedom, but also of long working hours, low pay and not having weekends, becomes embedded into the very fabric of the respondents' lives. When freelance creatives concentrate in spaces, such as in the analysed neighbourhoods, their networks take on the same, boundaryless quality:

*In this neighbourhood I have found a lot of willingness to do things on your own [...]. So, I like it for that, on a personal level and on a professional level. [...] Because then in the end, work becomes something... there is often a difference between work and social life. And here, these things mix a bit more, they are less defined. [...] So you create a network of friendships, solidarity and of work, too.*

Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto

Thus, we can see that real-life freelance working conditions are not necessarily perceived as negative by those who experience them. The blurring of spheres on a temporal, spatial and social level often corresponds with how the respondents perceive their own personalities. They self-identify to a high degree with their professions:

*It mixes completely. Especially in this area, it's often specifically about your personality, you get jobs because of your personality and your looks. And I'm molded differently, I studied and had office jobs, I'm sometimes a bit conservative in their eyes [laughs]. But I do see myself as an actor and when people ask, I like to talk about it and people find it exciting. I don't really separate. Sometimes you talk about it, sometimes you don't, I can't really evaluate that. It's not working hours for*

*me when I meet my reading group and we talk about texts. I don't write an invoice for that [laughs].*

Vincent, 31, actor, Kreuzberg

They describe themselves in many ways as “natural-born” freelancers whose desires and characters clash with conventional employment and office environments:

*When I was 18 I was a secretary with a full time job and found it incredibly awful, I imagined something completely different. [...] But with a bit more life experience I know that I just can't deal with going to the same place every day and doing the same thing. [...] I need freedom, at the same time I like working from home, I need variety, that's what I'm prone to, evidently. And I have never applied to anything fixed, I wouldn't even have gotten the idea, even in difficult times.*

Rita, 38, radio host/musician, Kreuzberg

*I mean, having certainties also gives you boundaries, but boundaries give you some security, so in the end it's a matter of... I guess I'm the kind of person that was always outside of standards schemes and against them, actually. So for me, this is, or through time it became normality. [...] But if you kind of organise your life and your psychology and your economy like this, then this is your normal thing.*

Neno, 39, architect/graphic designer, San Lorenzo

As described, even after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting difficulties, none of the re-interviewed respondents have questioned their existence as freelancers. They treat creative abilities and freelance working conditions as part of their identity, integrated into an entrepreneurial ethos enabling them to overcome difficulties (cf. Bandinelli & Arvidsson, 2012).

## **5. Conclusion**

This study's objective was to analyse the networking practices of creative freelancers in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how social capital permeates their professional and private lives. Chapter 3, focusing on the 31 conducted interviews with freelancers in Berlin and Rome, emphasised the similarities in the networking process throughout the sample, building the basis for the subsequent exploration of different spaces. It thus provided the background for the findings of Chapter 4, which applied these observations to specific settings and situations of social capital accumulation, adding explorations of urban and digital networking environments to the results of the interview analysis. This separation into two analysis chapters facilitated a detailed examination of the several explored spheres. I will summarise the overall findings in the following paragraphs, taking into account the analyses of both chapters and connecting them to relevant theoretical considerations. Lastly, I will conclude the study with some final remarks.

## **5.1 Summary of the Main Results**

The main findings of the study can broadly be summarised into three points: 1) The creation, utilisation and maintenance of social capital constitute continuous and labourious tasks for creative freelancers throughout their career, 2) different networking environments result in distinct manifestations of this responsibility and 3) constant networking as an integral part of the entrepreneurial ethos of creative professions leads to a profound blurring of personal and private spheres for creative freelancers. The following paragraphs will explain these main results more comprehensively.

### **5.1.1 Social capital as a continuous responsibility**

The analysis of the networking process in Chapter 3 demonstrated the extent to which networking constitutes an ongoing, constant responsibility for freelance creatives. Firstly, the creation of social capital is an effortful task that presents a crucial step at the beginning of a freelance career and that at the same time often appears vague and convoluted. Networking too openly and forcefully is frowned upon in creative freelance circles as it appears “needy”, opportunistic and unnatural. Skill and talent alone, however, do not suffice for professional success since the CCI are often closed structures with overwhelming competition, not accessible to outsiders without referrals and recommendations. Freelancers need to acquaint themselves seemingly casually with the “right people” who can help them enter valuable circles. This is facilitated by factors connected to human capital, such as educational institutes providing industry connections. Social capital helps to manifest the potential of collected human capital, communicating one’s acquired skills to relevant contacts and ultimately gaining economic capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1986; Portes, 1998). Educational institutes, particularly universities, thus often provide 1) the academic qualification facilitating entrance into the CCI (i.e. human capital) as well as 2) connections as the actual, effective entryway into the CCI (i.e. social capital) (cf. McRobbie, 2002). Those without degrees have to work harder on their social networks but can, to an extent, substitute academic skills with social capital. Outside of institutional structures, in urban spaces freelancers utilise what

would be considered their spare time to create professional connections for example at cultural events such as gallery openings and book presentations. There, they can create social capital in a seemingly playful, casual, face-to-face way (Wittel, 2001). Urban infrastructure has become more adapted to the professional needs of the “creative class” in the last decades, providing coworking spaces, laptop cafés, et cetera, which further fosters this kind of casual-professional interaction.

This leads to the utilisation of social capital, during which the created connections form chains, branch out and intertwine. Intermediary contacts play the role of “human newsletters”, recommending the respondents to clients and collaborators so that networks of references form. These word-of-mouth recommendations act in lieu of traditional, formal applications as the primary way to acquire new projects. The use of social capital is thus ideally a relatively passive process, in which a freelancer’s connections do the work for her/him. When social capital is mobilised more actively by respondents, this is predominantly done within their existing network. For example, the desire to be introduced to a specific client can be followed by indicating one’s availability to a shared contact who might act as a middleman. In comparison, directly contacting a potential client is described as a likely futile endeavour, as it disregards the implicit but often mandatory chain of referral. This confirms existing considerations of how informal hiring procedures require recommendations rather than direct contact between client and worker (cf. Lin, 1999b; Menger, 1999).

Lastly, maintaining social capital is particularly bound to creative freelancers’ private lives. As a process that strengthens existing ties, it involves deepening relationships with other professionals, clients as well as colleagues, which leads to more stable networks, reliable recommendations and recurring bookings. At the same time, friendship circles become somewhat professionalised. Socialising extensively within CCI circles first of all likely leads to the automatic creation of friendships over time; furthermore, relationships with industry contacts often get prioritised over other friendships given their professional benefits. The personal lives of creative freelancers thus increasingly become intertwined with their professional practices. The rationales between occupation and private life intertwine (Menger, 1999, p. 554). This also implies that they have to continuously exhibit their

professional, creative qualities even in private settings; peers might stop recommending friends who deliver substandard work or are unreliable, as this can also reflect poorly on them. Without actively maintaining connections, i.e. staying in touch with clients, deepening relationships, consistently delivering quality work et cetera, social capital can be lost again.

As mentioned before, the separation of creation, use and maintenance of social capital into three distinct processes is an approximation; in reality, as a social dynamic, the networking process cannot be unravelled as clearly. The breakdown as presented however demonstrates that social capital pervades the working practices and social lives of the respondents in a consistent fashion. While the utilisation of existing social capital ideally is a more passive process carried by intermediary contacts, the creation and maintenance of social capital are active tasks. Creative freelancers work towards stable networks that provide them with a consistent inflow of projects as well as new connections, expanding the pool of clients and collaborators. But even after reaching this goal, stable networks still require active maintenance, often particularly connected to freelancers' private social lives and leisure time. Networking therefore is not only an early-career obligation in project-based creative labour environments, but a continuous responsibility.

### **5.1.2 Individualisation and co-operation across different spheres**

For the interviewed freelancers, this continuous quest to create and maintain social capital thus results in a profound intertwinement and blurring of private and professional lives. In varying manifestations, this is apparent in both cities and all selected neighbourhoods as well as both in digital and urban spheres. Creative freelancers' working practices to a great extent become networking practices. Spaces they frequent in their neighbourhoods are often either designed to cater to their professional needs, or they find a way to utilise them in a way that benefits their work. Digital spaces similarly serve purposes at an intersection of work and leisure, leading to professionalised private profiles and "personalised" professional ones, which brand their owners as artistic, professional yet likeable, amicable personalities.

Significant differences within the sample concern the organisation of urban space regarding CCI labour. Berlin as a whole and particularly the analysed neighbourhoods of Kreuzberg and Neukölln are more professionalised and customised to match the needs of the “creative class”, with industry infrastructure and events, corporate coworking spaces, laptop-friendly cafés, et cetera. Working environments take on a casual, informal character to also serve as social spaces. This development can be seen as a contemporary adaptation to the semi-casual, semi-professional face-to-face networking practices of “new media” workers that Wittel described already in 2001. The existence of these structures however does not automatically translate into creative freelancers utilising them; they often see them as a sign of gentrification, find them too costly and not adapted to their highly individualised needs.

Rome remains somewhat underdeveloped in this respect. The city’s CCI are highly concentrated in San Lorenzo and particularly Pigneto. Small, self-organised studios appear more common and creative networks are particularly close-knit, therefore quite stable but somewhat isolated and hardly accessible to outsiders. Leisure spaces such as cafés get appropriated as working environments instead of being designed for this purpose. Roman creative freelancers thus often lament a lack of professional resources. Even joining the professional coworking spaces that exist commonly depends on knowing somebody “on the inside”. The prevalence of informal networks in Italian labour markets evidently also impacts networking practices in Rome’s creative scene (cf. Pistaferrri, 1999).

The described close-knit communities of creatives in Rome lead to specific forms of social capital utilisation that is particularly connected to close friendships with continuous, mutual support in private and professional contexts. In the view of some creatives, these communities develop precisely because Rome lacks the large-scale CCI groups of more renowned “creative cities” such as Berlin or Milan. It thus makes sense that Rome respondents who do not maintain relationships with other creative freelancers in their neighbourhoods often feel disconnected from the city’s CCI as a whole, perceiving that there are no structures from which they can benefit. Without friendships with other creative freelancers, their opportunities to mobilise and utilise social capital in Rome’s creative scene are limited. It is no

coincidence that Rome has been called a *capitale fai-da-te*, a “do-it-yourself capital”, in which the existing economic potential is often not sufficiently translated into policies (Diletti, 2019). In this environment, freelancers need to create their own infrastructures with little systemic or corporate support.

This is also visible in digital networking practices, where peers utilise their friendships to for example advertise each other’s projects by publishing posts and *stories* about them on *Instagram*. As foreseen by Wittel (2001, p. 70), long-distance communication has become integrated into face-to-face interaction, even if the extent to which digital communication technology has pervaded everyday life, for example through smartphones, could not have been anticipated. Berlin respondents utilise a higher number of digital platforms and are overall less hesitant about social media, indicating a higher grade of professionalisation in digital networking practices, too. They also organise offline meetings through digital platforms such as *Meetup* or *Bumble Bizz*, integrating technologically-mediated with face-to-face communication. Rome respondents, on the other hand, tend to rely on local communities. They often reject social media to create connections, as they perceive them as superficial, not “real”. Those who utilise social media collaborate with their connections in a more communal and enduring way, focusing on connections they have already established offline.

Differences between the two cities were noticeable in the research process as well. Trying to recruit respondents in Rome, I was often met with suspicion when contacting someone without a shared contact or friend. More successful strategies involved either a mutual contact vouching for me or becoming acquainted in a casual setting before enquiring about an interview with an individual. However, once someone had granted me access to a specific network and introduced me as trustworthy to its members, recruiting them required minimal little effort. This implies a high level of trust and familiarity inside these networks as well as closure towards outsiders. In Berlin, on the other hand, it was easier to find respondents without having shared contacts beforehand, particularly on the mobile networking application *Bumble Bizz*. Networks however appeared less reliable and familiar, since the referral to other interview candidates within respondents’ networks was rarely successful. It thus appears that in Berlin, creating contacts and therefore social



capital is a faster process thanks to a more professionalised, digitalised environment but does not necessarily lead to reliable relationships. These informal social media networks are commonly temporary and have low or no levels of community (cf. Arvidsson, Bandinelli & Gandini, 2016).

The interviewed creative freelancers overall constitute a heterogeneous group with differing needs and practices depending on their specific industry or urban surroundings. The study did not focus on single professions within the CCI, which made some of these differences particularly observable. Workers in traditional “core” creative fields, i.e. artists, musicians, filmmakers, et cetera, within the sample tend to lay the most emphasis on authentic, close relationships and concealed networking. Respondents working in more technology-based and business-focused professions such as digital marketing or social media management appear to adopt a more openly instrumental attitude regarding professional relationships. This difference is often mainly linguistic, as both types of worker embrace entrepreneurial working values with a high degree of self-reliability. While core creative, artistic workers lay emphasis on their inherent creativity as a cure-all strategy, those in more profit-oriented roles have a less idealised view of their profession. This demonstrates once more how in the 21st century, the creativity “doctrine” to an extent conceals capitalist mechanisms and transfers responsibility to the individual creative worker (cf. Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Schlesinger, 2007).

Individual perceptions and practices thus differ, but the de-facto dependence on relationships and, therefore, social capital for professional success is, as demonstrated, universal within the sample. The creative scene appears fragmented and individualised to respondents in both cities, lacking cohesion and community. Freelancers have to socialise constantly and utilise their free time to create friendships with peers to obtain professional support, exchange and collaboration. These complaints might have different origins. In Rome, the intense focus on a few, small neighbourhoods and the perceived lower amount of CCI workers in general leads to smaller, more close-knit and relatively stable communities that stay among themselves and appear exclusive. In Berlin, on the other hand, a very high concentration of creative freelancers and a fast-developing, competitive environment results in respondents working in a very individualised, sometimes isolated way.

While Roman respondents tend to be more co-operative compared to Berlin's grade of individualisation, in neither city, the working practices of creative freelancers can be classified as truly "collective" (cf. Menger, 1999; Peacock & Weir, 1975). Outside of their own small social circles, they do not perceive themselves as a cohesive class or group of workers with similar interests to advocate for, but rather as a loose network of potential collaborators and competitors. As individual creatives, they can be conceived as self-managed "small firms" who at times cooperate (Menger, 1999). The respondents' circumstances differ, yet this phenomenon is apparent independently from their surroundings and is thus likely rooted in their profession rather than in place-specific conditions.

The (net)working conditions of Berlin might be where Rome is headed if it develops further in the direction of a "creative city". Rome's current climate, in which CCI infrastructures are not highly developed or supported by targeted policies, requires the city's creative freelancers to further collaborate as they create their own local structures. The comparison between the two cities in this regard can illustrate how networking develops in a renowned "creative hub"; it becomes an even more individualised and digitalised practice, less dependent on a stable, local and somewhat exclusive group of close contacts and more based on ephemeral, purpose-bound connections that are maintained on a surface level and re-approached when suitable.

### **5.1.3 Self-branded, self-entrepreneurial: The figure of the creative**

There are two main phenomena observable in the interviews regarding digital spaces: As analysed, some respondents, particularly in Rome, reject digital networking altogether. In their perception, it does not create the kind of relationships and social capital they find valuable. They afford this rejection based on the fact that they can find tight-knit communities of peers and clients in their neighbourhoods, which to an extent renders online promotion superfluous. However, in both cities, several respondents embrace digital networking specifically as an instrument to bond on a more intimate level with audiences. This therefore does not appear to be a place-specific practice. Both dynamics have in common that they are deeply connected to the respondents' sense of self and private lives.

Those who reject digital platforms view them as irreconcilable with the creation of authentic relationships. They lay emphasis on connecting with clients and colleagues on a personal level, while digital contacts do not correspond with their highly idealistic views of their professions and professional relationships. They favour strong, personal ties, placing particular importance on the quality of the social capital they create and constructing their self-identity (cf. Giddens, 1991) around being real, authentic, “romantic” and “against the current”. For those who embrace digital networking, it precisely serves the function of appearing authentic and “likeable” to clients and collaborators. Similarly to how the commodified character of networking events is often concealed (cf. Wittel, 2001), these respondents conceal the networking purpose of their digital profiles with seemingly casual, personal insights. Private or intimate information becomes an essential parameter in how the public perceives and evaluates creative freelancers (cf. Arvidsson & Peitersen, 2009).

Both perspectives ultimately illustrate how deeply intertwined the personalities and private lives of creative freelancers are with their professional practices, particularly concerning how they network and create social capital. They accept the potential professional disadvantages of rejecting digital networking if it does not correspond with their personal values. For those who embrace social media, the digital platform becomes a stage of crafted, curated intimacy in an effort to “personalise” online relationships; private and professional spheres become inseparable. Rather than only generating “bridging” social capital to expand networks, digital platforms are increasingly personal, intimate settings. On social media platforms, individuals share aspects of their private lives and personalities with their contacts, thus arguably providing more private information than acquainting in-person.

In freelance creative contexts, this renders these platforms spaces to bond on a more intimate level with one’s audience, which contradicts preconceived notions about digital social capital. While the world wide web used to be associated with anonymity, the contemporary online sphere in fact makes the dissolution of the private and the professional particularly tangible; respondents purposefully curate intimacy to craft deeper relationships with clients and collaborators. The way that the interviewed freelancers utilise the digital platform *Instagram* is an especially

illustrative example of these self-branding efforts. While their online self-branding to *create* social capital focuses on conveying a professional, artistic image, their efforts to *maintain* social capital revolves around generating a sense of closeness and friendship. This dynamic appears to rely deeply on sympathy between the freelancer and her audience and thus involves an even more social, relational aspect than reputation. It demonstrates how profoundly neoliberal values are embedded into all spheres of human life, including the very fabric of the private self (cf. Hearn, 2008). The relationship between digital space and social capital appears to be shifting, with social media platforms explicitly serving the purpose of “bonding” with professionally valuable contacts. Arvidsson, Gandini and Bandinelli (2016) hypothesise that creative workers *might* reappropriate branding as a means to generate new socialities. It can be argued that the described curated intimacy and concealed professionalism of contemporary social media profiles present the realisation of this hypothesis, as creative freelancers find innovative modes to relate to their audience by making their personalities public.

At the intersection of urban and digital realms, self-branding efforts transcend social media, also targeting the way freelancers define their working relations with each other. Organising “collectives” in shared workspaces, they convey an image of collaboration, professionalism and coolness to potential clients. Groups of creative freelancers are thus not only able to build more stable networks and therefore generate, use and maintain social capital in and outside of their collective, but can also brand and market themselves as creative collectives, which then again enables them to create social capital with new contacts.

The fact that across the board, creative freelancers’ careers greatly depend on their character and social behaviour while they operate in highly individualised environments certainly impacts how much the respondents intertwine their personalities with their work. This facilitates the described profound blurring of professional and personal spheres in temporal, spatial and social terms. The association with the figure of “the creative”, connected to heavily charged notions of creativity in 21st century labour values, pervades their sense of self, how they are perceived and how they brand themselves. The expectations associated with being a

creative freelancer is not lost on the respondents, some of whom struggle with this image:

*I have a bit of a problem with creative networks [laughs]. Networks of creatives. Apart from the fact that now there is this figure of "the creative", which didn't exist before as a noun, "the creative". So when I hear "the creatives, the creative", I feel bad, because it's like a responsibility, as if it was a figure like a doctor [laughs]. I don't recognise this as a word. Everybody is creative, that's what annoys me. "The creative" instead is like an elected official, I don't know [laughs]. From a bloodline, "the creative".*

Sandra, 31, graphic designer, Pigneto

Yet, particularly the additional interviews regarding the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate how creative freelancers internalise the entrepreneurial, creative ethos of their occupations. They trust in their self-reliance, passion and creativity to solve difficult economic situations, viewing crises as opportunities to "start over". They accept the freelance condition of frequent uncertainty and precarity as a necessary evil in order to work artistically and independently. Constant networking as a justificatory regime is a crucial element of their self-reliant working practices (cf. Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). Creating and maintaining social capital is their main way to mitigate this career path's inherent risk, with self-organised social structures substituting the institutional social security of traditional employment.

## 5.2 Final Remarks

I would like to conclude this thesis with some final contemplations regarding the research process, the study's limitations and potential links to further research. A considerable and unforeseeable obstacle of research conducted in 2020 consisted of the COVID-19 pandemic, which in my case led to the cancellation of several interviews and profoundly changed working conditions for potential candidates. I attempted to adapt to these difficulties and later added supplementary second interviews with some respondents to measure up to this unique and complex situation. Still, this study without a doubt was impacted by the crisis and, for example, might have a bigger sample without this impediment.

Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic in many ways presented and still presents an interesting moment for this kind of research. Due to the social and economic consequences of the pandemic, the sphere of labour is certainly going through a period of change that cannot be compared to the effects of any other recent event. This is particularly true for features formerly most common in freelance work, such as remote work, working from home, flexibilised schedules, et cetera. Within a very short amount of time, these attributes have become widespread, even compulsory for a much wider array of professions and working relationships. This study, which was designed before the onset of the pandemic, has thus by chance touched upon several topics whose importance for the white-collar working population has since risen considerably. While this research of course has not taken into account working environments outside of CCI labour, phenomena like the blurring of personal and professional boundaries are likely to spread significantly throughout other industries. This could thus be a promising opportunity for further research into changing working relations. The pandemic's consequences for freelance creative labour were an additional consideration I added to the study at a later point. They indubitably deserve much greater attention and could be explored more in-depth in further research.

Another topic I would have liked to delve into further are the self-organised small-scale studios of respondents. Particularly in Rome, they appear to be decisive structures for creative freelancers' social interactions. In a city without a strong

policy focus on CCI development, these workspaces represent attempts to create cohesion and collaboration between otherwise detached individuals working on their own. This phenomenon, tightly connected to the analysed neighbourhoods' spatial organisation, was not the focus of the present research but provides interesting impulses for further exploration.

As a qualitative case study, this research does not claim to paint a comprehensive or generalisable picture of freelancers in the creative and cultural industries. It nevertheless provides valuable in-depth insights into the networking mechanisms of CCI working environments within the analysed sample. The comparison between the selected neighbourhoods in Berlin and Rome as well as between offline and online networking brought to light interesting manifestations of social capital. While analyses of the connection between social capital and neighbourhoods with creative clusters as well as with digital self-branding certainly exist in great numbers, the comparison of the chosen cases constitutes an original depiction of contemporary networking strategies.

## Bibliography

Adam, F. & Rončević, B. (2003). Social capital. Recent debates and research trends. *Social Science Information* 42(2), pp. 155-183.

Adorno, T. (1991). *The Culture Industry. Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London: Routledge.

Adorno, T. (1951/1974). *Minima Moralia. Reflections from Damaged Life*. London: Verso.

Anheier, H., Gerhards, J. & Romo, F. (1995). Forms of capital and social structure in cultural fields. Examining Bourdieu's social topography. *The American Journal of Sociology* 100(4), pp. 859-903.

Annunziata, S. (2010). Desiring neighborhoods. The case of Pigneto in Rome. *Lo Squaderno. The Value of Places* 18, pp. 25-29.

Annunziata, S. (2014). Gentrification and public policies in Italy. In A. Calafati (ed.). *The Changing Italian Cities. Emerging Imbalances and Conflicts. GSSI Urban Studies – Working Papers* 6. L'Aquila: Gran Sasso Science Institute, pp. 23-34.

Apitzsch, B. (2009). *Flexible Beschäftigung, neue Abhängigkeiten*. Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag.

Armano, E. (2013). *Freelance Professionals at Time of Crisis*. ISA RC52 Blog. Retrieved from [researchcommittee52.wordpress.com/2013/02/13/freelance-professionals-at-time-of-crisis/](https://researchcommittee52.wordpress.com/2013/02/13/freelance-professionals-at-time-of-crisis/) (accessed 05/11/2020).

Armano, E., Mazali, T. & Teli, M. (2020). The production of neoliberal subjectivity in platform capitalism. Comparative interpretative hypotheses. *Sociologia della Comunicazione* 59(2020), pp. 106-26.

Armano, E. & Murgia, A. (2013). The precariousnesses of young knowledge workers. A subject-oriented approach, *Global Discourse: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought* 3(3-4), pp. 486-501.

Arthur, M. (1994). The boundaryless career. A new perspective for organizational inquiry. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* 15, pp. 295-306.

Arvidsson, A., Malossi, G. & Naro, S. (2010). Passionate work? Labour conditions in the Milan fashion industry. *Journal for Cultural Research* 14(3), pp. 295-309.

Arvidsson, A., Gandini, A. & Bandinelli, C. (2016). Self-branding among freelance knowledge workers. In M. Crain (ed.). *Invisible Labor. Hidden Work in the Contemporary World*. Oakland: University of California Press, pp. 239-56.



- Arvidsson, A. & Peitersen, N. (2009). *The Ethical Economy. Rebuilding Value After the Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bagwell, S. (2008). Creative clusters and city growth. *Creative Industries Journal Volume 1(1)*, pp. 31-46.
- Bain, A. & McLean, D. (2013). From post to poster to post-industrial. In M. Breitbart (ed.). *Creative Economies in Post-Industrial Cities*. Burlington: Ashgate, pp. 97-122.
- Bandinelli, C. & Arvidsson, A. (2012). Brand yourself a changemaker! *Journal of Macromarketing 33(1)*, pp. 67-71.
- Banks, M. (2006). Moral Economy and Cultural Work. *Sociology 40(3)*, pp. 455-72.
- Battaglia, A. (2014). Creative industries and knowledge economy development in Rome. The example of Pietralata District. *International Journal of Knowledge-Based Development. 5(3)*, pp. 238-52.
- Bauman, Z. (1999). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). *The Individualized Society*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Baumann, A. (2002). Informal labour market governance. The case of the British and German media production industries. *Work, Employment and Society 16*, pp. 27-46.
- Beck, U. (1999). *Individualization*. London: Sage.
- Beck, U. (2000). *The Brave New World of Work*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Becker, G. (1964). *Human Capital*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Becker, H. (1963). *Outsiders. Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bell, D. (1973). *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bellini, A., Burrioni, L. & Dorigatti, L. (2018). *Industrial Relations and Creative Workers. Country Report Italy*. IR-CREA – Strategic but Vulnerable. Industrial Relations and Creative Workers. Retrieved from [www.ties-unifi.eu/ircrea/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/03/wpc\\_country-report\\_italy.pdf](http://www.ties-unifi.eu/ircrea/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/03/wpc_country-report_italy.pdf) (accessed 01/05/2020).
- Bertacchini, E. & Borrione, P. (2013). The geography of the Italian creative economy. The special role of the design and craft based industries. *Regional Studies 47(2)*, pp. 135-47.
- Bianchini, F. (1987). GLC R.I.P. 1981-1986. *New Formations 1*, pp. 103-17

Bianchini, F. (1993). Remaking European cities. The role of cultural policies. In F. Bianchini & M. Parkinson (eds.). *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration. The West European Experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 1-20.

Biernacki, P. & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling. *Sociological Methods and Research* 10(2), pp. 141-63.

Bloomfield, J. (1993). Bologna. A laboratory for cultural enterprise. In F. Bianchini & M. Parkinson (eds.). *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration. The West European Experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 90-113.

Bodirsky, K. (2012). Culture for competitiveness. Valuing diversity in EU-Europe and the 'creative city' of Berlin. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 18(4), pp. 455-73.

Boix, R., Capone, F., De Propriis, L., Lazzeretti, L. & Sanchez, D. (2016). Comparing creative industries in Europe. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23(4), pp. 935-940.

Boltanski, L. & Chiapello, E. (2005). *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Bourdieu, P. (1965). *Photography. A Middle-Brow Art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1983). The field of cultural production, or: The economic world reversed. *Poetics* 12(1983), pp. 311-56.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1985). Social space and the genesis of groups. *Theory and Society* 14(6), pp. 723-44.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (ed.). *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, pp. 241-58.

Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bridges, L. (2017). Flexible as freedom? The dynamics of creative industry work and the case study of the editor in publishing. *New Media & Society*, pp. 1-17.

Bridgstock, R. (2005). Australian artists, Starving and well-nourished. *Australian Journal of Career Development* 14, pp. 40-47.

Brown, J. (2017). Curating the “Third Place”? Coworking and the mediation of creativity. *Geoforum* 82, pp. 112-26.

Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie (BMWi) (2018). *Monitoringbericht Kultur und Kreativwirtschaft 2017*. Retrieved from [www.kultur-kreativ-wirtschaft.de/KUK/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/2017/monitoring-wirtschaftliche-eckdaten-kuk-2017.pdf](http://www.kultur-kreativ-wirtschaft.de/KUK/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/2017/monitoring-wirtschaftliche-eckdaten-kuk-2017.pdf) (accessed 10/05/2020).

BMWi (2019). *Monitoringbericht Kultur und Kreativwirtschaft 2018*. Retrieved from [www.kultur-kreativ-wirtschaft.de/KUK/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/2017/monitoring-wirtschaftliche-eckdaten-kuk-2017.pdf](http://www.kultur-kreativ-wirtschaft.de/KUK/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/2017/monitoring-wirtschaftliche-eckdaten-kuk-2017.pdf) (accessed 10/05/2020).

Burt, R. (1995). *Structural Holes. The Social Structure of Competition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Burt, R. (2001). Structural holes versus network closure as a social capital. In N. Lin, K. Cook & R. Burt (eds.). *Social Capital: Theory and Research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, pp. 31-56.

Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society*. Malden: Blackwell.

Castells, M. (2000). *The Information Age. Economy, Society and Culture*. Malden: Blackwell.

Castells, M. (2004). *The Network Society. A Cross-cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Caves, R. (2000). *Creative Industries. Contracts Between Art and Commerce*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.

Chiappini, P., Porro, E. & Valentini, E. (2013). Lavoro intellettuale e processi di apprendimento. In Fontano, R. (ed., 2013). *Oltre l'uomo artigiano. Capitale sociale e condivisione delle conoscenze*. Milan: Mondadori Education, pp. 150-80.

Chicchi, F. & G. Roggero (2009). *Lavoro e produzione del valore nell'economia della conoscenza. Criticità e ambivalenze della network culture*. Milan: Angeli.

Christopherson, S. (2004). The divergent worlds of new media. How policy shapes work in the creative economy. *Review of Policy Research* 21(4), pp. 543-58.

Christopherson, S. (2008). Beyond the self-expressive creative worker. An industry perspective on entertainment media. *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(7-8), pp. 73-95.

Clementi, A., Ricci, M. & Cannavò, P. (2004). *Ripensare il progetto urbano. Il caso di San Lorenzo a Roma*. Rome: Meltemi.

Coleman, J. (1958). Relational analysis. The study of social organizations with survey methods. *Human Organization* 17(4), pp. 28-36.

Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology* 94, pp. 95-120.

Coletti, R. & Rabbiosi, C. (2020). Neighbourhood branding and urban regeneration. Performing the 'right to the brand' in Casilino, Rome. *Urban Research & Practice*, pp. 1-22.

Comunian, R. & England, L. (2020). Creative and cultural work without filters. Covid-19 and exposed precarity in the creative economy. *Cultural Trends* 29(2), pp. 112-128.

Corbin, J. & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research. Procedures, canons and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology* 13(1), pp. 3-21.

Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles: Sage.

D'Amato, F. & Miconi, A. (2012). Produzione culturale, crowdfunding e capitale sociale. Uno studio empirico su Produzioni dal Basso. *Sociologia della comunicazione* 43, pp. 135-48.

Department for Culture and Sport (DCMS) (1998). *Creative Industries Mapping Document*. London: Department for Culture Media and Sport.

Dean, M. (2014). Rethinking neoliberalism. *Journal of Sociology* 50(2), pp. 150-63.

Deuze, M. (2007). *Media Work*. Cambridge: Polity.

Diletti, M. (2019). Roma. Una (poco) capitale fai-da-te. In R. Andò, A. Farro, A. Marinelli & S. Parisi (eds.). *Reti creative. Pratiche e spazi di attivazione culturale a Roma*. Milan: Guerini e Associati, pp. 61-75.

DiMaggio, P. (2011). Cultural networks. In J. Scott & P. Carrington (eds.). *The Sage Handbook of Social Network Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 286-300.

Dines, N. (2019). Stop Pasolini. Excavating the social underbelly of a gentrifying neighbourhood in Rome. *Lo Squaderno. Neighbourhood Portraits* 53, pp. 21-25.

Dowd, T. & Pinheiro, D. (2013). The ties among the notes. The social capital of jazz musicians in three metro areas. *Work and Occupations* 40(4), pp. 431-64.

Durkheim, E. (1893/1984). *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Free Press.

Edelman Intelligence (2020). *Freelance Forward 2020*. Upwork and Freelancers Union.

Ekinsmyth, C. (2002). Project organization, embeddedness and risk in magazine publishing. *Regional Studies* 36(3), pp. 229–43.

Färber, A. (2008). Flourishing cultural production in economic wasteland. Three ways of making sense of a cultural economy in Berlin at the beginning of the twentyfirst century. In M. Heßler & C. Zimmermann (eds.). *Creative Urban Milieus. Historical Perspectives on Culture, Economy, and the City*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, pp. 409-28.

Fernandez, R. & Weinberg, N. (1997). Sifting and sorting. Personal contacts and hiring in a retail bank. *American Sociological Review* 62, pp. 883-902.

Fernandez-Kelly, P. (1994). Towanda's triumph. Social and cultural capital in the transition to adulthood in the urban ghetto. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 18(1), pp. 88-112.

Fiorentino, S. (2018). Re-making urban economic geography. Start-ups, entrepreneurial support and the Makers Movement. A critical assessment of policy mobility in Rome. *Geoforum* 93, pp. 116-19.

Flew, T. & Cunningham, S. (2010). Creative industries after the first decade of debate. *The Information Society* 26(2), pp. 113-23.

Florida, R. (2002). *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2015). *What a Creative Neighborhood Looks Like*. CityLab. Retrieved from [www.citylab.com/life/2015/05/what-a-creative-neighborhood-looks-like/393038](http://www.citylab.com/life/2015/05/what-a-creative-neighborhood-looks-like/393038) (accessed 12/01/2019).

Foley, M. & Edwards, B. (1999). Is it time to disinvest in social capital? *Journal of Public Policy* 19(2), pp. 141-73.

Fondazione Symbola - Unioncamere (2020). *Io sono Cultura 2020. L'Italia della qualità e della bellezza sfida la crisi*. Retrieved from [www.symbola.net/ricerca/io-sono-cultura-2020](http://www.symbola.net/ricerca/io-sono-cultura-2020) (accessed 09/07/2021).

Fontano, R., Nemmo, E. & Valentini, E. (2013). Gli artigiani dell'epoca digitale. Tratti identitari di una figura quasi sconosciuta. In N. Bortoletto & M. Federici (eds.). *Lo sviluppo endogeno e i saperi tradizionali come risposte alla crisi*. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

Friedrichs, F. & J. Dangschat (1993). Hamburg. Culture and urban competition. In F. Bianchini & M. Parkinson (eds.). *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration. The West European Experience*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 90-113.

- Frith, S. (1993). Popular music and the local state. In T. Bennett, S. Frith, L. Grossberg, J. Shepherd & G. Turner (eds.). *Rock and Popular Music. Politics, Policies, Institutions*. London: Routledge, pp. 14-24.
- Gandini, A. (2014a). Social media e lavoro autonomo. Precarietà, lavoro gratuito, innovazione. *Quaderni del Premio 'Giorgio Rota' 2(2014)*.
- Gandini, A. (2014b). *The Reputation Economy. Creative Labor and Freelance Networks*. Doctoral thesis, University of Milan.
- Gandini, A. (2015). Il lavoro freelance. Reputazione e capitale sociale nell'era del 'lavoro digitale'. *Quaderni di Sociologia 69(2015)*, pp. 87-106.
- Gandini, A. (2016). Digital work. Self-branding and social capital in the freelance knowledge economy. *Marketing Theory 16(1)*, pp. 123-41.
- Gandini, A., Bandinelli, C. & Cossu, A. (2017). Collaborating, competing, co-working, coalescing. Artists, freelancers and social entrepreneurs as the 'new subjects' of the creative economy. In J. Graham & A. Gandini. *Collaborative Production in the Creative Industries*. London: University of Westminster Press, pp. 15-32.
- Garnham, N. (1987). Concepts of culture. Public policy and the cultural industries. In A. Gray & J. McGuigan (eds.). *Studies in Culture. An Introductory Reader*. London: Sage, pp. 54-61.
- Garnham, N. (1990). *Capitalism and Communication. Global Culture and the Economics of Information*. London: Sage.
- Garnham, N. (2005). From cultural to creative industries. *International Journal of Cultural Policy 11(1)*, pp. 15-29.
- Gemmiti, R. (2008). Creative cities, culture, tourism. The experience of Rome. In L. Milíková & M. Sirák (eds.). *Regional and Urban Regeneration in European Peripheries: What Role for Culture?* Bratislava: Interlingua, pp. 10-20.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gill, R. (2002). Cool, creative and egalitarian? Exploring gender in project based new media work in Europe. *Information, Communication and Society 5(1)*, pp. 70-89.
- Gill, R. (2007). *Technobohemians or the New Cybertariat, New Media Work in Amsterdam a Decade After the Web*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures.

- Gill, R. (2014). Unspeakable inequalities. Post feminism, entrepreneurial subjectivity, and the repudiation of sexism among cultural workers. *Social Politics* 21(4), pp. 509-528.
- Gill, R. & Pratt, A. (2008). In the social factory? Immaterial labour, precariousness and cultural work. *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(7-8), pp. 1-30.
- Girard, A. (1982). Cultural industries. A handicap or a new opportunity for cultural development? In UNESCO, *Cultural Industries. A Challenge for the Future of Culture*. Paris: UNESCO, pp. 24-39.
- Gissara, M. (2018). *Città immaginate. Il Pigneto-Preneestino e la sua fabbrica. Rigenerazione urbana e pratiche dal basso*. Doctoral thesis, Sapienza University of Rome.
- Grabher, G. (2004). Learning in projects, remembering in networks? Communitary, sociality, and connectivity in project ecologies. *European Urban and Regional Studies* 11(2), pp. 99-119.
- Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6), pp. 1360-80.
- Granovetter, M. (1974). *Getting A Job. A Study in Contacts and Careers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure. The problem of embeddedness. *American Journal of Sociology* 91(3), pp. 481-510.
- Grésillon, B. (1999). Berlin, cultural metropolis. Changes in the cultural geography of Berlin since reunification. *Cultural Geographies* 6(3), pp. 284-94.
- Grugulis, I. & Stoyanova, D. (2011). The missing middle. Communities of practice in a freelance labour market. *Work, Employment & Society* 25(2), pp. 342-51.
- Grugulis, I. & Stoyanova, D. (2012). Social capital and networks in film and TV. Jobs for the boys? *Organization Studies* 33(10), pp. 1311-31.
- Hall, S. (2003). New Labour's Double Shuffle. *Soundings* 15, pp. 10-14.
- Hall, S. (2011). The neoliberal revolution. *Cultural Studies* 25(6), pp. 705-28.
- Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press.
- Harvey, D. (1989). From managerialism to entrepreneurialism. The transformation in urban governance in late capitalism. *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* 71(1), pp. 3-17.

- Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Health Education Authority (2000). *Art for Health. A Review of Good Practice in Community-based Arts Projects and Initiatives Which Impact on Health and Wellbeing*. London: Health Development Agency.
- Hearn, A. (2008). 'Meat, mask, burden'. Probing the contours of the branded 'self'. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8(2), pp. 197–217.
- Hearn, A. (2010). Structuring feeling. web 2.0, online ranking and rating, and the digital 'reputation economy'. *Ephemera* 10(3/4), pp. 421-38.
- Heckathorn, D. & Jeffri, J. (2001). Finding the beat. Using respondent-driven sampling to study jazz musicians. *Poetics* 28, pp. 307–29.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2002). *The Cultural Industries*. London: Sage.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2008). Cultural and creative industries. In T. Bennett & J. Frow (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Cultural Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 553–69.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. & Pratt, A. (2005). Cultural industries and cultural policy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 11(1), pp. 1-14.
- Hirsch, P. (1972). Processing fads and fashions. An organization-set analysis of cultural industry systems. *American Journal of Sociology* 77(4), pp. 639-59.
- Hogan, B. & Quan-Haase, A. (2010). Persistence and change in social media. *Bulletin of Science Technology Society* 30, pp. 309-15.
- Holgate, J. & McKay, S. (2007). *Institutional Barriers to Recruitment and Employment in the Audio Visual Industries. The Effect on Black and Minority Ethnic Workers*. London: Working Lives Research Institute.
- Holm, A. (2007). "Endstation Neukölln" oder "neuer Trendkiez"? Zwischen Rütlihschule und Landwehrkanal wird darüber diskutiert, ob in Nord-Neukölln Gentrifizierung stattfindet. *MieterEcho: Zeitung der Berliner MieterGemeinschaft* 324, p. 6-9.
- Holm, A. (2013). Berlin's gentrification mainstream. In M. Bernt, B. Grell & A. Holm (eds.). *The Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism*. Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 171-87.
- Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T. (1947/2002). *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Horowitz, S. & Rosati, F. (2014). *Freelancing in America. A National Survey of the New Workforce*. Freelancers Union and Elance-oDesk. Retrieved from



[www.upwork.com/press/2014/09/03/53-million-americans-now-freelance-new-study-finds-2/](http://www.upwork.com/press/2014/09/03/53-million-americans-now-freelance-new-study-finds-2/) (accessed 07/10/2019).

Howard, P. (2002). Network ethnography and the hypermedia organization. *New media, new organizations, new methods. New Media Society* 4(4), pp. 550-74.

Howkins, J. (2001). *The Creative Economy: How People Make Money from Ideas*. London: Penguin Books.

James, A., Martin, R. & Sunley, P. (2008). The rise of cultural economic geography. In R. Martin and P. Sunley (eds.). *Economic Geography. Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences – Volume IV: The Cultural Economy*. London: Routledge, pp. 3-18.

Jakob, D. (2010). Constructing the creative neighborhood. Hopes and limitations of creative city policies in Berlin. *City, Culture and Society* 4(1), pp. 193-96.

Jenkins, R. (1992). *The Work of Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

KEA (2006). *The Economy of Culture in Europe*. Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission. Brussels: KEA European Affairs. Retrieved from [ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/library/studies/cultural-economy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/library/studies/cultural-economy_en.pdf) (accessed 03/04/2020).

KEA & PPMI (2019). *Research for CULT Committee. Culture and Creative Sectors in the European Union. Key Future Developments, Challenges and Opportunities*. Brussels: European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies. Retrieved from [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/629203/IPOL\\_STU\(2019\)629203\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/629203/IPOL_STU(2019)629203_EN.pdf) (accessed 02/05/2020).

Kesselring, S. (2005). New mobilities management. Mobility pioneers between first and second modernity. *Zeitschrift für Familienforschung* 17(2), pp. 129-43.

Krätke, S. (2013). City of talents? Berlin's regional economy, socio-spatial fabric and "worst practice" urban governance. In M. Bernt, B. Grell & A. Holm (eds.). *The Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism*. Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 131-54.

Landry, C. (2000). *The Creative City. A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London: Earthscan.

Lange, B. (2007). *Die Räume der Kreativszenen: Culturepreneurs und ihre Orte in Berlin*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Lazzarato, M. (1996). Immaterial labor. In M. Hardt & P. Virno (eds.). *Radical Thought in Italy. A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota, pp. 133-47.

Lazzarato, M. (2012). The making of the indebted man. An essay on the neoliberal condition. *Semiotext(e) intervention series 13*, Amsterdam.

Lazzeretti, L., Capone, F. & Boix, R. (2012). Reasons for clustering of creative industries in Italy and Spain. *European Planning Studies* 20(8), pp. 1243-62

Lee, D. (2011). Networks, cultural capital and creative labour in the British independent television industry. *Media, Culture & Society* 33(4), pp. 549-65.

Lee, D. (2013a). *Creative Labour in the Cultural Industries*. Sociopedia.isa.

Lee, D. (2013b). Creative networks and social capital. In D. Ashton & C. Noonan (eds.). *Cultural Work and Higher Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 195-213.

Lhermitte, M., Alvarez, H., Marcout, C., Nam, Q. & Sauze, E. (2021). *Rebuilding Europe. The Cultural and Creative Economy Before and After the COVID-19 Crisis*. Ernst & Young Global Limited commissioned by The European Grouping of Societies of Authors and Composers (GESAC). Retrieved from [1761b814-bfb6-43fc-9f9a-775d1abca7ab.filesusr.com/ugd/4b2ba2\\_8bc0958c15d9495e9d19f25ec6c0a6f8.pdf](https://1761b814-bfb6-43fc-9f9a-775d1abca7ab.filesusr.com/ugd/4b2ba2_8bc0958c15d9495e9d19f25ec6c0a6f8.pdf) (accessed 28/01/2021).

Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo (2017). Pratiche a scala di quartiere. La Libera Repubblica di San Lorenzo. *Quaderni di Urbanistica Tre* 13(5), pp. 25-32.

Liegl, M. (2014). Nomadicity and the care of place. On the aesthetic and affective organization of space in freelance creative work. *Computer Supported Cooperative Work* 23, pp. 163–83.

Light I. (2001). Social capital's unique accessibility. Presented at the *Danish Building and Urban Research/EURA 2001 Conference*. Copenhagen, 2001.

Lin, N. (1999a). Building a network theory of social capital. *Connections* 22(1), pp. 8-51.

Lin, N. (1999b). Social networks and status attainment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 23, pp. 467–87.

Lin, N. (2002). *Social Capital. A Theory of Social Structure and Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lin, N., Ensel, W. & Vaughn, J. (1981). Social resources and strength of ties. Structural factors in occupational status attainment. *American Sociological Review* 46(4), pp. 393-405.

Lingo, E. & Tepper, S. (2013). Looking back, looking forward. Arts-based careers and creative work. *Work and Occupations* 40(4), pp. 337-63.

Lorey, I. (2006). *Governmentality and Self-Precarization. On the Normalization of Cultural Producers*. Transversal. Retrieved from <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en.html> (accessed 10/01/2019).

Lorey, I. (2011). Virtuosos of freedom. In G. Raunig, G. Ray & U. Wuggenig (eds.). *Critique of Creativity. Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the 'Creative Industries'*. London: MayFlyBooks, pp. 79-90.

Loury, G. (1977). A dynamic theory of racial income differences. In P. Wallace & A. La Mond (eds.). *Women, Minorities and Employment Discrimination*. Lexington: Heath, pp. 153-86.

Loury, G. (1981). Intergenerational transfers and the distribution of earnings. *Econometrica* 49, pp. 843-67.

Manske, A. (2016). *Kapitalistische Geister in der Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Marelli, E. & Signorelli, M. (2015). Convergence, crisis and unemployment in Europe. The need for innovative policies. *Croatian Economic Survey* 17(2), pp. 5-56.

Marinelli, A. & Parisi, S. (2019). Culture urbane connessa. Technologie, creatività e socialità oltre la metropoli smart. In R. Andò, A. Farro, A. Marinelli & S. Parisi (eds.). *Reti creative. Pratiche e spazi di attivazione culturale a Roma*. Milan: Guerini e Associati, pp. 37-59.

Markusen, A. (2006). Urban development and the politics of a creative class. Evidence from a study of artists. *Environment and Planning A* 38(10), pp. 1921-40.

Markusen, A. & Johnson, A. (2006). *Artists' Centers. Evolution and Impact on Careers, Neighborhoods and Economies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

Markusen, A. & Gadwa, A. (2010). Arts and culture in urban or regional planning. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 29(3), pp. 379-91.

Marx, K. (1867). *Capital. Volume 1*. London: Penguin.

Marx, K. (1973). *Grundrisse*. London: Allen Lane.

May, T. (2011). *Social Research & Reflexivity. Content, Consequences and Context*. London: Sage.

Mayer, M. (2004). New lines of division in the new Berlin. In M. Bernt, B. Grell & A. Holm (eds.). *The Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism*. Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 171-87. pp. 95-106.

- Mazali, T. (2017). Le professioni digitali, dalle industrie creative culturali alle trasformazioni di industria. *Professionalità 1(1)*, pp. 156-71.
- McGuigan, J. (2010). Creative labour, cultural work and individualisation. *International Journal of Cultural Policy 16(3)*, pp. 323-35.
- McRobbie, A. (1998). *British Fashion Design. Rag Trade or Image Industry?* London: Routledge
- McRobbie, A. (2002). Clubs to companies. Notes on the decline of political culture in speeded up creative worlds. *Cultural Studies 16(4)*, pp. 516-31
- McRobbie, A. (2004). Everyone is creative? Artists as pioneers of the new economy. In E. Silva & T. Bennett (eds.). *Contemporary Culture and Everyday Life*. Durham: Sociology Press, pp. 184–210.
- McRobbie, A. (2012). Key concepts for urban creative industry in the UK. In I. Elam (ed.). *Konstnären och kulturnäringarna Artists and the Arts Industries*. The Swedish Arts Grants Committee, pp. 78-93.
- McRobbie, A. (2016). *Be Creative. Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Menger, P. (1999). Artistic labor markets and careers. *Annual Review of Sociology 25(1)*, pp. 541-74.
- Merkel, J. (2009). *Kreativquartiere: Urbane Milieus zwischen Inspiration und Prekarität*. Berlin: edition sigma.
- Merkel, J. (2015). Coworking in the city. *Ephemera 15(1)*, pp. 121–39.
- Merkel, J. & Oppen, M. (2013). *Coworking Spaces. Die (Re-)Organisation kreativer Arbeit*. WZBrief Arbeit 16. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin.
- Miconi, A. (2013). Under the skin of the networks. How concentration affects social practices in web 2.0 environments. In G. Lovink & M. Rasch, M. (eds). *Unlike Us Reader: Social Media Monopolies and Their Alternatives*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, pp 89–102.
- Miège, B. (1987). The logics at work in the new cultural industries. *Media, Culture and Society 9(3)*, pp. 273–89.
- Minichbauer, R. (2011). Chanting the creative mantra. The accelerating economization of EU Cultural Policy. In G. Raunig, G. Ray & U. Wuggenig (eds.). *Critique of Creativity. Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the 'Creative Industries'*. London: MayFlyBooks, pp. 147-63.

- Mommaas, H. (2004). Cultural clusters and the post-industrial city. Towards the remapping of urban cultural policy. *Urban Studies* 41, pp. 507-32.
- Montuori, M. (2007). *The Visible and the Invisible. Crossing Ethnic and Spatial Boundaries in Two Immigrant Neighbourhoods in Rome*. Eurodiv Paper 55.
- Mould, O., Vorley, T. & Liu, K. (2013). Invisible creativity? Highlighting the hidden impact of freelancing in London's creative industries. *European Planning Studies* 22(12), pp. 2436-55.
- Mulgan, G. & Worpole, K. (1986). *Saturday Night or Sunday Morning? From Arts to Industry. New Forms of Cultural Policy*. London: Comedia.
- Neff, G., Wissinger, E. & Zukin, S. (2005). Entrepreneurial labour and cultural production. 'Cool' jobs in 'hot' places. *Social Semiotics* 15(3), pp. 307-30.
- Neves, B. (2013). Social capital and internet use. The irrelevant, the bad, and the good. *Sociology Compass* 7(8), pp. 599–611.
- O'Connor, J. (2007). *The Cultural and Creative Industries. A Review of the Literature. A Report for Creative Partnerships*. London: Arts Council England.
- O'Connor, J. (2011). The cultural and creative industries. A critical history. *Ekonomiaz: Revista Vasca de Economia* 78, pp. 24-47.
- Parisi, S. (2014). Da borgata a downtown. L'immagine del Pigneto. In I. Tani (ed.). *Paesaggi metropolitani. Teorie, modelli, percorsi*. Macerata: Quodlibet, pp. 175-191.
- Parisi, S. (2019). Nuovi spazi pubblici e diritto alla città. Note sul valore d'uso e di scambio dell'urbano contemporaneo. In Andò, R., Farro, A., Marinelli, A. & Parisi, S. (eds., 2019). *Reti creative. Pratiche e spazi di attivazione culturale a Roma*. Milan: Guerini e Associati, pp. 11-35.
- Pavolini, E., León, M., Guillén, A. & Ascoli, U. (2015). From austerity to permanent strain? The EU and welfare state reform in Italy and Spain. *Comparative European Politics* 13(1), pp. 1-21.
- Peacock, A. & Weir, R. (1975). *The Composer in the Market Place*. London: Faber.
- Peck, J. (2005). Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, pp. 740-70.
- Peck, J. (2012). Recreative city. Amsterdam, vehicular ideas and the adaptive spaces of creativity policy. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36(2), pp. 462-85.
- Pistaferrri, L. (1999). Informal networks in the Italian labor market. *Giornale degli Economisti, Bocconi University* 58(3-4), pp. 355-75.

Ponzo, M. & Scoppa, V. (2010). The use of informal networks in Italy. Efficiency or favoritism? *The Journal of Socio-Economics* 39, pp. 89-99.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital. Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, pp. 1-24.

Portes, A. (2000). The two meanings of social capital. *Sociological Forum* 15(1), pp. 1-12.

Portes, A. & Landolt, P. (1996). The downside of social capital. *The American Prospect* 7(26), pp. 18-21.

Postiglione, M. (2008). *Usi sociali degli spazi nella città contemporanea come fenomeni di trasformazione urbana. il caso del quartiere Pigneto a Roma*. Doctoral thesis, Sapienza University of Rome.

Postiglione M. (2014). L'evoluzione del Pigneto. In Cellamare, C. (ed.), SMUR. *Roma città autoprodotta. Ricerca urbana e linguaggi artistici*. Rome: Manifestolibri.

Pratt, A. (1997). The cultural industries sector. Its definition and character from secondary sources on employment and trade, Britain 1984-91. *Research Papers on Environmental and Spatial Analysis* 41, London School of Economics.

Pratt, A. (2002). Hot jobs in cool places. The material cultures of new media product spaces. The case of south of the market, San Francisco. *Information, Communication and Society* 5(1), pp. 27-50.

Pratt, A. (2004). Creative clusters. Towards the governance of the creative industries production system? *Media International Australia* 112, pp. 50-66.

Pratt, A. (2005). Cultural industries and public policy. An oxymoron? *International journal of cultural policy*, 11(1), pp. 31-44.

Pratt, A. (2008). Creative cities. The cultural industries and the creative class. *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* 90(2), pp. 107-17.

Pratt, A. (2009). Policy transfer and the field of the cultural and creative industries. Learning from Europe? In L. Kong & J. O'Connor (eds.). *Creative Economies, Creative Cities. Asian-European Perspectives*. Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 9-23.

Pratt, A. (2019). Cultural economy. In D. Richardson (ed.). *The International Encyclopedia of Geography. People, the Earth, Environment, and Technology*. New York: Wiley.

Putnam, R. (2001). The prosperous community. Social capital and public life. *The American Prospect*. Retrieved from

prospect.org/infrastructure/prosperous-community-social-capital-public-life/  
(Accessed 16/04/2020).

Putnam, R. (1995). Bowling alone. America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6, pp. 65-78

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Putnam R. (2001). Social capital. Measurement and consequences. *Canadian Journal of Policy Research* 2(1), pp. 41-51.

Putnam, R., Leonardi, R. & Nanetti, R. (1993). *Making Democracy Work. Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Randle, K., Blair, H. & Culkin, N. (2003). From London to Los Angeles. A comparison of local labour market processes in the US and UK film industries. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 14(4), pp. 619–33.

Randle, K. & Culkin, N. (2009). Getting in and getting on in Hollywood. Freelance careers in an uncertain industry. In A. McKinlay & C. Smith (eds.). *Creative Labour. Working in the Creative Industries*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 93-115.

Randle, K., Forson, C. & Calveley, M. (2015). Towards a Bourdieusian analysis of the social composition of the UK film and television workforce. *Work, Employment & Society* 29(4), pp. 590-606.

Raunig, G. (2013) *Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Rifkin, J. (2000). *The Age of Access*. London: Penguin Books.

Ross, A. (2003). *No-Collar. The Humane Workplace and its Hidden Costs*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ross, A. (2009). *Nice Work If You Can Get It. Life and Labor in Precarious Times*. New York: New York University Press.

Rossiter, N. (2006). *Organized Networks. Media Theory, Creative Labour, New Institutions*. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers.

Rothberg, R. (2001). *Patterns of Social Capital. Stability and Change in Historical Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rozentale, I. & Lavanga, M. (2014). The “universal” characteristics of creative industries revisited. The case of Riga. *City, Culture and Society* 5(2), pp. 55-64.

- Samek Lodovici, M. & Semenza, R. (2012). *Precarious Work and High-Skilled Youth in Europe*. Milan: Angeli.
- Sassen, S. (1991). *The Global City. New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sassoon, D. (2006). *The Culture of the Europeans from 1800 to the Present*. London: Harper Collins.
- Scandurra, G. (2007). *Il Pigneto. Un'etnografia fuori le mura di Roma*. Padova: Cluep.
- Schlesinger, P. (2007). Creativity. From discourse to doctrine? *Screen* 48(3), pp. 399-387.
- Schuller, T. (2001). The complementary roles of human and social capital. *Isuma* 2(1), pp. 18-24.
- Schultz, T. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review* 51(1), pp. 1-17.
- Scott, A. (1997). The cultural economy of cities. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 21(2), pp. 323-40.
- Scott, A. (2005). *On Hollywood. The Place, the Industry*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sennett, R. (1998). *The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
- Sennett, R. (2006). *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Siemer, J. & Matthews-Hunter, K. (2017). The spatial pattern of gentrification in Berlin. *Prairie Perspectives: Geographical Essays* 2017(19), pp. 49-57.
- Siisiäinen, M. (2000). Two concepts of social capital. Bourdieu vs. Putnam. Presented at *ISTR Fourth International Conference*. Dublin, 2000.
- Smith, C. (1998). *Creative Britain*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Söndermann, M. (2012). *Kultureller Beschäftigungsmarkt und Künstlerarbeitsmarkt*. Arbeitskreis Kulturstatistik e.V. Retrieved from [www.kulturwirtschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/DUK-KB-Endfassung\\_2012\\_1104.pdf](http://www.kulturwirtschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/DUK-KB-Endfassung_2012_1104.pdf) (accessed 15/01/2019).
- Spinuzzi, C. (2012). Working alone together. Coworking as emergent collaborative activity. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 26(4), pp. 399-441.



- Standing, G. (2011). *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Stevenson, D. (2013). *Cities of Culture. A Global Perspective*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Stors, N. & Baltes, S. (2018). Constructing urban tourism space digitally. A study of Airbnb listings in two Berlin neighborhoods. *Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact.* 2, CSCW, Article 166.
- Taylor, C. & Watson, A. (2014). Invisible agents and hidden protagonists. Rethinking creative cities policy. *European Planning Studies* 22(12), pp. 2429-35.
- Thanki, A. & Jeffreys, S. (2007). Who are the fairest? Ethnic segmentation in London's media production. *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation* 1(1), pp. 108-18.
- Thornton, S. (1996). *Club Cultures. Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Throsby, D. (2001). *Economics and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tinagli, I. & Florida, R. (2005). *L'Italia nell'era creativa*. Creativity Group Europe. Retrieved from [www.simpresa.it/files/l-italia-nell-era-creativa\\_2.pdf](http://www.simpresa.it/files/l-italia-nell-era-creativa_2.pdf) (accessed 20/01/2019).
- Tremblay, D. & Battaglia, A. (2012). El Raval and Mile End. A comparative study of two cultural quarters between urban regeneration and creative clusters. *Journal of Geography and Geology* 4(1), pp. 56-74.
- Tzanakis, M. (2013). Social capital in Bourdieu's, Coleman's and Putnam's theory. Empirical evidence and emergent measurement issues. *Educate* 13(2), pp. 2-23.
- UNESCO (2009). *The 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS)*. Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
- Ursell, G. (2000). Television production. Issues of exploitation, commodification and subjectivity in UK television labour markets. *Media, Culture and Society* 22(6), pp. 805-27.
- Van Antwerpen, J., Fesel, B. & Kaltenbach, L. (2015). The cultural and creative industries in Europe. Entrepreneurial assets and capacities need more support. *The European Business Network*. Retrieved from [ecbnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ECBN\\_manifesto-20151.pdf](http://ecbnetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ECBN_manifesto-20151.pdf) (accessed 15/01/2019).

- Van Dijk, J. (1999). *The Network Society. Social Aspects of New Media*. London: Sage.
- Van Heur, B. (2009). From creative industries to critique. Comparing policies in London and Berlin. In J. Eckardt & L. Nystrom (eds.). *Culture and the City*. Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Van Heur, B. (2010). *Creative Networks and the City. Towards a Cultural Political Economy of Aesthetic Production*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Virno, P. (1996). The ambivalence of disenchantment. In M. Hardt & P. Virno (eds.). *Radical Thought in Italy. A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota, pp. 13–36.
- Volkerling, M. (2001). From cool Britannia to hot nation. 'Creative industries' policies in Europe, Canada and New Zealand. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 7(3), pp. 437-455.
- Von Osten, M. (2007). Unpredictable outcomes. A reflection after some years of debates on creativity and creative industries. In G. Lovink & N. Rossiter (eds.). *MyCreativity Reader: A Critique of Creative Industries*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, pp. 49-58.
- Wacquant, L. (1998). Negative social capital. State breakdown and social destitution in America's urban core. *Netherlands Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 13(1), pp. 25-40.
- Ward, J. (2004). Berlin, the virtual global city. *Journal of Visual Culture* 3(2), pp. 239-56.
- Wegener, B. (1991). Job mobility and social ties. Social resources, prior job, and status attainment. *American Sociological Review* 56(1), pp. 60-71 .
- Weidenhiller, U. (2015). Berlino. Città creativa. In M. Rocca Longo & M. Pennacchia (eds.). *Turismo creativo e identità culturale*. Rome: RomaTrE, pp. 119-28.
- Wellman, B. (2001). Physical place and cyberplace. The rise of personalized networking. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25(2), pp. 227-52.
- Wellman, B. (2002). The rise (and possible fall) of networked individualism. *Connections* 24(3), pp. 30-32.
- Wellman, B., Haase, A., Witte, J. & Hampton, K. (2001). Does the internet increase, decrease, or supplement social capital? Social networks, participation, and community commitment. *American Behavioral Scientist* 45(3), pp. 436-55.
- Williams, R. (1981). *Culture*. London: Fontana.

Wittel, A. (2001). Towards a network sociality. *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(6), pp. 51-76.

Wittel, A. (2016). Digital Marx. Toward a political economy of distributed media. In C. Fuchs & V. Mosco (eds.). *Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 68-104.

Woolcock, M. (1998). Social capital and economic development. Toward a theoretical synthesis and policy framework. *Theory and Society* 27(2), pp. 151-208.

Zukin, S. (1982). *Loft Living. Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Zukin, S. (1995). *The Culture of Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell

Zukin, S. (2010). *Naked City. The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.