



Edited by **Pasquale Grosso**

Hip hop's values and educational dimension in schools, peripheral areas, and prisons through the experience and the point of view of artists and educators in a network for the first time.





I Quaderni di daSud / Volume 2

Keep It Real

Edited by Pasquale Grosso

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# Introduction

## From Social Anti-Mafia to Hip hop: Imagine, Transform, Practice

What leads a social anti-mafia Association to ask itself about the purpose of Hip hop as an educational tool? Its history.

The answer may seem trivial, but it carries a nearly 18-year-old baggage of processing, practises, experiments, and imagination.

Association bodies like daSud are obviously characterized by the people who build, cross, and animate them since their foundation and along their journey, even when paths crossed for a short period. Its foundation was characterized by curiosity, so it's no surprise that the rest of its journey it's a never-ending exploration of new ways, new worlds, new languages. Do not get misled by the present. Rather than its original contents, Hip hop's current tools and aesthetic characteristics, dominated the music, fashion, communication, and cultural production industries, from cinema to dance. We should rewind the tape fourteen years at least to try to find the first encounter between daSud and Hip hop, when a "movement" and a generational idea of Hip hop was resisting, despite the recording industry crisis (due to the advent of new technologies) was trying to kill its music. Rap and writing characterized events, communication campaigns, moments of reflection and audio-visual productions created by and with daSud. A challenge for the artists and a way to be part of a much wider mission. A language within a culture full of contradictions and diversities, but with a marked aptitude to be "mean and not an end" for a community redemption, to be a sort of collective point of view that represents everyone's own way to live in this World.

### **An idea of World and Practices**

Social anti-mafia is an exhausting practice that stops being a value and loses its effectiveness when it's not a prerequisite for political, public, social, community and individual acts but becomes a separated sector with a banal approach and a satisfied, comfortable, and redundant method. We always said and then put into practice how crucial it's for the social anti-mafia to start from a point of view that observes society, its complexities, its fragilities, to become a disruptive practice that creates real and concrete opportunities in the social marginalities and collective, individual, and economic fragilities in which it operates (a mean and not an end). Therefore, social anti-mafia has the duty, and the responsibility to be the

opportunity against resignation, a different route in a path that seems to have no way out, creating or searching for places to meet and confront where there seems to be no space to dare, hoping to build more and more bridges between apparently different worlds, helpful to scan together new horizons and bring to life new communities.



**CHAPTER 1**  
**MAPPING THE EXISTING**  
**TO IMAGINE THE (IM)POSSIBLE**





## 1.1 Keep It Real, Communities in a Circle

### The Container

Since 2016, the daSud association brought to life an educational, social, and cultural project in the higher education institution of IIS Enzo Ferrari of Cinecittà-Don Bosco, in the southeast area of Rome, to contrast early school leaving, educational poverty, and social inequalities. “ÀP - Accademia Popolare dell’Antimafia e dei Diritti” represents a change in method and perspective, a small revolution in training and educational processes that makes social anti-mafia the point of view through which one can plan, operate, and build possible futures.

A practice that changes the relationship between school, tertiary sector, and territory that renews the concepts of cultural fruition and production, and the promotion of citizenship rights, particularly referring to adolescents. A place and a method that brings life to a concept of new practices for the teaching community, in which many schools of the district, local institutions and informal bodies converge. ÀP is the place of experimentation and construction of a new imagination in which we are trying to redesign the approach towards educational and cultural processes, albeit facing difficulties and obstacles.

### Move On Up! Our Workshop

Hip hop, but first Rap, immediately found its position in this macro container as the bridge between young people and the whole project, a bridge between peers, and a glue for their need to self-narrate emotions, dreams, ambitions, and difficulties. An opportunity.

During four years of workshops supported by the “**Alta Mane Italia**” **Foundation**, boys and (not many) girls practised and learned through experience to be and feel part of a community, the main goal of our courses, even if many of them were devoid of Hip hop as a concept. So, Rap had a central role in the development of ÀP’s project. Workshops, concerts, masterclasses, vinyl production, E.P. and music videos formed a relationship based on trust between us and the users that allowed us to propose to boys and girls the possibility to explore other artistic languages linked to creative writing, nonfiction, audio-visual productions, broadening the outlook to the world. A bridge built on experimentation and mutual contamination between educators and beneficiaries which we named: **Move On Up!** A tribute to the famous Curtis Mayfield song that urges us to not break down while facing difficulties, to not give up and to go on. Not a random choice.

## Move On Up! The Video

The voices and faces of some young people that worked with us for three years, a story captured in different moments between recording sessions in the studio and the formative masterclass held by Kiave the rapper and Roberto Marrone (Fenix Music Director).



**Scan the QR Code** to see the video produced by Vito Foderà and Daniele Lazzara for **Àp-Studios**.



## The Next Step: Keep It Real

As Mayfield teaches, we felt the urge to go on, to continue to ask ourselves questions both on the effectiveness of educational processes and methods, as well as on the development of possible scenarios that not only meet our needs as a third-sector body but also try to look at the overall picture of the past and the present of Italy. Last year was characterized by an excessive narration linked to young trappers by the media, focusing on news items rather than focusing on the musical aspect (which is, in fact, predominant on radios and in the charts).

From gang rivalry to kidnappings, from aggressions to group violence, an outline of the real Italy, of its objective difficulties, especially in specific urban and peripheral contexts, narrated as if it was a factor linked to the music world, to its imagination. A half-truth. An always judging approach towards effects, fruitless and not so prone to have a real debate on the causes, methods, antidotes, and cultural tools as a cure for the wounded sociocultural fabric which is more and more marginalized.

## **The other side of the coin**

Obviously, we're not here to give a historic analysis of Hip hop as a movement, with its development or its regressions. We thought it would be useful to start a methodological, theoretic, and programmatic reflection on how creative and expressive languages linked to Hip hop culture or its surrogates such as Trap, dominant in the collective imagination of adolescents, could be central tools for the regeneration and reconstruction of the concept of "community" in a historic moment in which the new artistic drifts don't address to a target audience, but rather to a passive one. We thought it would be useful to turn the spotlight on what already exists: there are hundreds of artists (rappers, breakers, writers and DJs) that have been doing for at least a decade extraordinary work with adolescents, preadolescents, children in social and economic marginalized conditions or deprived of freedom using Hip hop as a tool for emancipation and social redemption, thanks to the support and the intuition of third sector bodies or other places of aggregation.

There is an informal movement that continues to fulfil its original function based on the fundamental principle of "each one teach one" to leave no one behind and make progress together. In Italy, and in other parts of the world, from the United States to Brazil, from Portugal to France, there is an ensemble of artists and educators who look out for others, an ensemble of people that used Hip hop and its conscious aptitude as a point of view to observe and practice their own lives to try to "Keep It Real" in the never-ending and complex balancing act between the desire of imagination and being down to earth. What didn't exist yet, what didn't happen yet, is what the "Keep It Real" project is trying to build: a community of good practises.

## **Keep It Real, Communities in a Circle**

A common space for discussion, a movement of thought that allows both to create and develop methods, share results, tools, and problems. A national network that is an advocate and spokesperson for complex and exhausting work, that asks, discusses with, and presses for places of knowledge such as Universities. That discusses with local Institutions, which are more and more advocating for educational activities based on Hip hop, which should be better calibrated and regulated. That deals with the deprivation of freedom and the activities in youth detention centres. Therefore, there is a need for dialogue and representation but first, we need to build, map, know "who, how, where, and when", be curious and be willing to listen to one another.

A great challenge that started last September 30 during the "Restart" Festival by daSud Association. The first "public call" supported by the "Alta Mane Italia"

Foundation saw the participation of more than 30 artists and associations, a convergence of discussions that everyone felt the need for and participated in with great enthusiasm. This work, this multimedia publication is just a partial and not at all exhaustive picture of present times. It's nothing more than a first real step, hoping to create a long journey, to contribute to undermine collective imagination and create an outline of common reflection on Hip hop as an educational and community tool, and as a transformative practice for the present.

As you will read in the many following contributions, Hip hop concretely gave a second chance to many, used as a compass which orientated their steps, generating an important feeling of gratitude, a debt that should be repaid, by also caring for the communities: young and very young people, in conditions of social marginality, deprivation of freedom, educational and economic poverty, and cognitive deficit. Therefore, social anti-mafia and Hip hop are both reasons for change and regenerative factors “for and of” communities, a second chance and an alternative path to pursue together but, as Kiave sings, as long as you do so “Just to change the World.”

## The contributions found in this publication are written by:

- ◆ **Stefano Campetta**, AP-Accademia Popolare dell'Antimafia e dei Diritti
- ◆ **Luca Mascini**, aka **Militant A**, from Assalti Frontali
- ◆ **Francesco Garberini**, Cies/Matemù
- ◆ **Manuel Simoncini**, aka **Kyodo**
- ◆ **Antonio Turano**, aka **DonGoco**
- ◆ **Davide Fant**, aka **Skrim**
- ◆ **Mirko Filice**, aka **Kiave**
- ◆ **Marco Ottavi**, aka **Zatarra**
- ◆ **Andrea Gorni**, aka **Musteeno**
- ◆ **Enzo Musto**, aka **Oyoshe**
- ◆ **Adriano Rossi** (Matemù/Cies)
- ◆ **Daniele Vitrone**, aka **Diamante**
- ◆ **Francesco Carlo**, aka **Kento**

**Matteo Cerasoli** interviewed:

- ◆ **Assunta Viteritti**, Sociology of Socialization and Educational Processes lecturer at La Sapienza University in Rome.
- ◆ **Marcello Ravveduto**, Digital Public History lecturer at Salerno University, Modena University and Reggio Emilia University.





## 1.2 Keep It Real, the podcast

by **Stefano Campetta**

“Keep It Real, the Podcast” is a sound space in which three educators discuss the pedagogical work using Rap as a means of engagement, but above all, expression.

But why Rap?

As evinced by the words of Luca Mascini (Militant A – from the group “Attacchi Frontali”), Francesco Gamberini (Cies/MaTeMù) and Stefano Campetta (ÀP – Accademia Popolare dell’Antimafia e dei Diritti), Rap language travels on a double track. On one side, it travels among its history which is rooted in the peripheral areas of big cities, in which economic and cultural poverty outline a complex social fabric where the State is the real great absentee. On the other side, it travels in the present time, where Rap is on top of the global charts in a period in which socialization processes radically changed.

The podcast replicates the organization of open mic, perfectly in tune with the cultural reference imagination. A narrative experience, without resorting to editing, an emotional flow linked to educational and cultural processes.

The power of Rap is told through stories experienced during years of work, underlining the accessibility of this language made of rules but also of freedom of expression, authenticity, and narrative freedom.

A continuous flow where field experiences, good praxis, and reflections on the role of the educator are shared, setting boundaries in which we operate and trying to analyse defeats and successes.



**Keep It Real - the Podcast**  
Scan the QR Code to listen to it.





## CHAPTER 2

### HIP HOP AS RESEARCH





## 2.1 Hip hop Philosophy: Educating through Rap for Creativity

Based on the homonymous book by Manuel Manuel “Fu Kyodo” Simoncini

### **Edutainment**

The “Hip hop Philosophy” creative training itineraries are fully part of the Edutainment field. This term is created by the meeting of two words: Education and Entertainment or Entrainment.

According to Massimo Fancelli, Edutainment comprehends all those activities that are used for didactic aim in schools or trainings (music, theatre, poetry, games or video games, cartoons, cinema, etc.) although they come from the world of entertainment<sup>1</sup>.

Paraphrasing other sources, we could translate the term as “educating while playing” and consider it as the new era of the “classic” *ludendo docere*; in fact, Edutainment includes forms of communication that make the learning process fun<sup>2</sup>. The idea is to use communication tools that are fascinating and contemporary, modern shared languages and less formal alternative settings to stimulate motivation, interest, attention, concentration, discussion, and active participation. For several decades, Edutainment has been mentioned in the Hip hop movement thanks to the work of prominent figures such as KRS-One who even made an album titled “Edutainment” in 1990 with his group Boogie Down Productions<sup>3</sup>. Prominent figures like KRS-One and Chuck D (leader of the group Public Enemy) always were an example because they followed artistic pathways that never succumbed to mainstream flattery while taking up their own space, presenting conscious lyrics and organizing initiatives with an aggregative, social, and cultural value, in poor neighbourhoods both in the American and in the global setting.

### **A complex balancing act**

In the education, training and didactic field, the main recurring goal is to “not fill empty vases” but rather wishing for the growth of “well-made heads” and not the growth of “well-filled heads.”<sup>4</sup>

If this concept is accepted from a didactic and training point of view, the issue is even more evident on an educational level. But what seems theoretically obvious, is not when put into practice: every educator needs to face their own expectations, insecurities, biases and all the relational and situational difficulties that make this job a never-ending challenge. Unfortunately, the appearance reassures, pride is easily hurt, routine is quickly rooted, and it’s easier to require a formal adhesion to a model rather than venturing into unknown zones where very little can be taken for granted.

A complex balancing act where sensitivity plays a crucial role because learning

needs entertainment, but also organization, sacrifice and self-discipline. Education consists of conviviality, pleasantness, and harmony, but it's important to learn to deal with conflicts and face unpleasant situations calmly.

The rigid barrier between duty and leisure can be broken by edutainment, enhancing the meeting and the fusion between learning and passion.

This way it's possible to enhance the value of one's interests capturing its cultural contents while finding satisfaction in doing the series of activities that are quintessentially linked to the sphere of duty, obligation, and commands.

As much as it's something useful, it's obvious that the perception of obligation is associated with boredom, instinctive reluctance, and various resistances. Opportunities to combine usefulness and amusement, effort and lightness<sup>5</sup>, duty and escapism are valuable integrating moments between aspects that are commonly seen in a dichotomous way. Overcoming superficial contradictions that are mostly dictated by conditionings means overcoming and rediscovering oneself to test out ourselves through new interpretive approaches, and new outlooks on the world.

### **The Duality of the Mediator**

To be convincing and effective a mediator needs to have both educational and artistic experiences that allows him to manage workshops, wisely integrating both fields of competence. A high-qualified sociocultural educator will face difficulties in spontaneously mastering expressive codes of a culture that isn't his own. Although animated by good intentions and great training strategies, he would probably struggle to assert himself as someone to refer to. Obviously, if he has transversal skills he can use them in this context, but he will hardly have the incisiveness of people who experienced situations first hand.

On the other hand, those who have marked artistic skills and come from a background coherent to the workshops but are not animated by a qualified and solid educational intention will have a fascinating and captivating impact, but they're also not suitable to play this role. Despite the good intentions, its intervention could even be counterproductive to the self-growth journey of the participants. The didactic and training aspect is also not to be taken for granted: it's not certain that an affirmed artist has the characteristics to pass on their skills and put the group under the ideal conditions to learn. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that educational, artistic, and didactic and training requisites must complement and value each other.

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1 <https://www.massimofancella.com/edutainment-divertire-con-la-formazione/>

2 <https://www.paidea.it/edutainment-imparare-giocando/>

3 BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS, KRS-ONE, *Edutainment*, Jive Records, New York, 1990

4 Cit. E. MORIN

5 Cit. M. GALLERANI, *L'impegno lieve: il razionalismo critico e l'ideale estetico*, Loffredo editore University Press, 2012

## 2.2 Self-“Rap” presentation

by **Antonio Turano**, aka **DonGocò**

Antonio Turano, aka DonGocò, psychologist psychotherapist, art therapist and musician. I integrated my academic skills – I use a psychophysiological bio-existentialist approach in art therapy and a dynamic approach in psychotherapy - with the experience gained with an over 20-year-old musical activity as a rapper and freestyler in my work regarding developmental age, adolescence, and disability. More or less, I started to Rap and freestyle when I was 16 years old and from that moment on, I started to develop an interest in the psychologic, soul and relational aspects as a source of inspiration for writing. I released many albums as a solo using my stage name DonGocò, but also with different groups, and I pursued an intense career in freestyle battles, even participating in some of Italy’s most prestigious ones.

### **Where and With Whom I Work**

I worked in many peripheral areas of Rome (from Tor Bella Monaca to Massimina), but currently I work mostly between the Pigneto district where my studio is, in which I also meet young people with mental disability and motor impairment, and Appia, Pignatelli and Ciampino, where I’m a music therapist in two communities for people with intellectual disability and motor impairment. I also run a workshop for the local healthcare company ASL Rome 1 named “Rhythm with signs” with users of the mental health center of Montesanto (now Palestro).

### **My Teaching Model\***

*\*based on the article “Sallo. Report dell’evento Keep It Real” published on psicoanalisi sociale.it*

Even if nearly no one attended a specific academic training program, the Representation of their own work has a shared way, sensitivity, and methodology that would suggest they all attended the same trainings. In a way it’s true, even if it’s not quite official, but Hip hop (HH) educated this generation of rappers that are now educators. The conscious aptitude that HH promoted is subconsciously profoundly in tune with the most modern “official” educational approaches. The things that pedagogists like Maria Montessori and Paulo Freire and psychoanalysts like Donald Winnicott among other scholars observed, described, and proposed by the end of 1900, can find a concrete implementation in HH used as a container and a relationship tool for (cognitive, emotional, and social) growth of the person through art.



Given that Rap workshops carried out by a conscious aptitude aren't music lessons because technical learning is considered the result of one's own expressive authenticity that through writing encourages the research (True Self in psychology, Keep It Real in HH), how should a rapper with this approach define himself? As an educator? As a workshop technician? Or else?

Beyond the formal aspect related to educational attainment, this topic is the starting point for a deep reflection that is crucial for all the people involved: the professional definition and, therefore, the identity.

As I'm writing, I recall that until a few years ago Rap wasn't considered "music", in fact, many orthodox schools labelled it as simply "talking", not acknowledging the musical value of its central aspects, for example the melodic/prosodic flow and the rhythm metric. Here comes back the theme of the acknowledgement and identity, before the "to be or not to be an educator?" this generation of rappers already faced the "to be or not to be musician?" debate, with the need to conquer an identity. To clarify this doubt Rap had to arrogantly take over record charts. And if looking back makes these heritages emerge, looking at the origins of HH we can find the same need for self-expression to define oneself and be "acknowledged", the same need that black American people tried to satisfy and to do so they created the cultural movement we are talking about.

A culture that consists in identification processes, self-"rap"presentation, reappropriation of one's own identity as an original value (black American people), search for one's own authenticity which, as much as it may sound disruptive and awkward to the ears of the flat white bourgeoisie, arms with consciousness as an authenticity tool, and because of its authentic nature it can demand to be acknowledged. It's impossible not to recognize that these "acknowledgement" psycho-social processes have been the base for the creation of HH in the 70s, and that after 20 years, in the 90s, Italian rappers had to revive them, and now after another 20 years they revive them again, although in a new light, always provided by the HH culture. Impossible not to feel that this 20-year-old cycle is connected to the topic of acknowledgement and the search for identity. In fact, even if many think that adolescence ends when you turn 20, it's during this period that a greater self-definition begins to settle in, as many people who work in this field know well. Although it's final, it's still a part of the adolescence phase.

Maybe this is the reason why HH workshops are so powerful among adolescents, and it has such a high-rate participation and an authentic grip on them. Young

people love to have a peer-to-peer talk, and when they tear apart what they were to become what they really are, they face an often-frightening identity wound. HH is beside them, a peer, with its own identity wound that never completely healed. Because it's a culture with an evolutive drive and a willingness to doubt itself, to rediscover itself over and over, in the present moment, in a freestyle in which by the end of the performance you already evolved into something new. A living organism continuously evolving. Something yet to be discovered, restarting in a loop, just as the ones on which the MC expresses himself discussing, through a stream of thoughts and free associations, with his own inner world. This process is always a jolt for the achieved certainties, a much-needed jolt to evolve again, and again, and again.

Probably, in HH that identity wound, as Jung used to say, is continuously bleeding. So, it becomes a slit that allows adolescents to practice, familiarise, to not be alone and frightened in this passage.

Adolescents are starting to feel the burden but also the value of the identity process. It's not a process that ends with adolescence but in this phase, it surely is something that can confuse more because we're facing it for the first time. As we know, it's a never-ending process that therapists who work with adolescents (and not just them) acknowledge as something essential to continue to evolve in a healthy way and to not fixate on the typical rigidity of neurotic conditions.

The identification process is something that all adolescents begin to experience, but in those who are more prone to satisfy an expectation in a family and social context can find particularly dramatic consequences. This is the result of valuable reflections on the work with young people who come, for example, from families who have turned to crime. How can someone train somebody else to betray their own family? Evolutionary psychology reminds us that every identification process carries a "betrayal" of what we were to become what we will be. A process that every adolescent needs to practice, hoping that they will continue to do so for the rest of their lives. Maybe this is the reason why nowadays HH seems to be a sort of teaching model, and one of the most recognizable and effective among adolescents, thanks to the fact that it's not recognized as a proper teaching model, and so it can be closer to adolescents in this grey, undefined area to guide them towards an always new definition.

The richness that HH has in its DNA naturally led us to this point and will unstopably continue to make this educational body grow, regardless of rappers

who practice it and regardless of the greater or lesser acknowledgment of the context. Just as what already happened in the musical field.

These reflections have been very important also because all the participants appreciated the value of meeting, gathering, and sharing ideas to create a common thought and to not be alone in one's own work. The ability to embrace the fragilities of every individual, that are shared by everyone, and enrich them through the point of view of each one is per se a demonstration of maturity of the HH community. At the end of the day, there was a shared consciousness in the air that beyond institutional and professional definitions the most valuable thing that nurtured the participants, and we hope will continue to do so, is experiencing the project as a living fabric rather than as single scattered cells. Be able to meet and discuss, share, and get emotional when recognising each other in one another, distant and the same. Help oneself to help, to share a sense and find new ones, and continue to live this new shape that HH has taken in everyone's lives and continue to discover how many more shapes it can take again, and again.



## 2.3 Break the Script!

by **Davide Fant**

**Disclaimer:** while rereading, I realized that in the paragraph that I wrote, and the one you're about to read, I linger in the autobiographical dimension but, freely paraphrasing Militant A, if Hip hop is nothing but us, us in the environment we live in and us in our history, and this is the message that emerges from all of this, then maybe it's okay this way.

### **Something disruptive**

By the end of the 80s I discovered Hip hop, thanks to someone called Jovanotti who used to sing “gimme five”, then, in a matter of moments, I discovered Run-D.M.C, Public Enemy and so on.

It was something so powerful and incredibly disruptive: I finally had music to use to oppose to pretty much everyone, from my parents to my peers: even my friends used to say “...but this isn't music!” It was the best ally for an adolescent who was against everything and everyone. And then there was the social and political dimension; I grew up in a family that was sensitive to social issues, but their approach seemed weak to me, I needed strong slogans, to “remix” that sensitivity in something that was mine, that set on fire my urgencies.

So, I started to see reflected in the aptitude of Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party my desire for fighting injustices that I perceived in the world around me, the political afflatus was being nurtured, and at the same time a new view and a new consciousness compared to the distortion of the imagination created by colonialism and structural racism of our society grew inside of me. This way, I wrote my first rhymes, weak on the beat but with the urge to be screamed at the world. When the group “Assalti Frontali” released “Terra di nessuno” I realised that rhymes are a mean both to talk about the “outer” – politics, society – as well as the “inner”: emotions, personal sufferings. This way I discovered that I could use words to build images that could heal. From then on, writing will always be a sort of therapeutic diary for me, sensing its importance more and more..

### **Hip hop to Meet the Adolescents**

While attending university, I devoured all the sociological and historical books on Hip hop that I can find: I want to understand, further explore, theorise; that was the same period in which I started to work as an educator and professor in professional training, discovering that thanks to my adolescence wounds I inherited a sensitivity that could become a dialogue space for young people, because “vibing

with them” was spontaneous for me.

But Hip hop and formative work are still parallel dimensions, also because at the time, adolescents used to listen to quite the opposite, mostly gabber, Rap was certainly not for them. Suddenly, something that strikes me happens: I start to notice that young people are taking big doses of Rap through their earphones, and I even catch someone trying to write their own rhymes. What happened? The first album, actually a mixtape, by the rapper Mondo Marcio was released, and it talked without filters about life in the peripheral areas, social workers, family tensions, with an unprecedented strength in Italy.

Now, the young people living “on the margins” that I worked with felt represented and realised that this form of communication could be used as a mean to say what seemed inexpressible until then.

So, I realize that there are interesting common points, and my passion for Hip hop starts to converge with my work as an educator. At the beginning, I simply propose to listen together to some lyrics, to reflect on the contents, on the interests, or I’ll be at their disposal for recording their compositions and, for those who want to, I run a writing workshop too. This way, step by step, tries and mistakes, from one intuition to another, I create some tools that will continue to evolve with time, contributing to the development of my personal approach to Hip hop based education in which I value and mix tools and formative outlooks of my personal baggage: Morenian approaches, media education “hacker”, narrative and autobiographical techniques, Freirean approaches, and above all, the experiential learning that I was currently further exploring with Piergiorgio Reggio, lecturer and colleague of Methods.

Those methodologies perfectly combined with Hip hop practices; I realised that, as I will further explain later, those young people from the Bronx had some deep pedagogical intuitions, that they found a very sophisticated tool for self-care in an anxious period. I notice that it works, that special things happen with young people, something quite magical, and I have a thirst for new inputs, I want to further explore: I try to gather what has been already written on education and Hip hop internationally, then I fly to Brazil, Recife, to see how Rap, graffiti, breakdancing, DJing are used as an empowering tool for favelas’ street children, inspired by the pedagogy of desire.

In the same period, I discover poetry slams through Saul Williams, so I head to NYC, to the Nuyorican poets Café, and when me and my friends came back, we started to organize probably the first Italian slam that was held on a regular basis with free registration. So, I start to enrich my workshops with poetic writing and slam writing as well, a research area that boosted my practices.

## **A book?**

During this period, I never stopped writing down my thoughts and trying to organize them in pathways of meaning. Even theoretic writing has always been for me a space to give shape to my thoughts, a tool to learn from what I did that passes through me, even before I tell others about it.

Lo and behold, within a few months, the ideas started to be organized, and the connections, the intuitions that I gave shape to concentrated in pathways of meaning in an article published by the “Animazione Sociale” magazine.

I didn't even know if they were going to publish it, but instead it was warmly welcomed, and above all it was nice to receive mails with interesting feedbacks from the readers. Among the others, I remember with pleasure the one from A.N.D from the group “Menti Criminali”, that told me he worked with adolescents in addition to being a militant rapper: new bridges, dialogues, connections were being created. But the content - notes, experimentations, literature, reflections – was so much, and continued to grow over time, that it was quite natural for that article to “explode” into a book, written in two years during the free time I had from the exhausting and beautiful work with the young people that were leaving school early. I thought there was the need to bring a fixed outlook that had things in common but also differences with the overseas experience.

I didn't know what to expect, I was just happy that Reggio, from whom I learned a lot, believed in this pretty crazy project.

I just wanted the book to have a theoretic solidity to be acknowledged by the academic context and, at the same time, a street credibility given by break-dancers like me. The cover consisted in just my tag “Skrim”, as if to say, “I am here”, but also: “This is Hip hop: to reinvent, impose, and care for oneself, tracing new shapes, fashion chaos.”

So, the book started to become more known, and it led me to discover many different contexts, from cooperatives to university classrooms, up to Cambridge, where I was lucky enough to attend the first European convention on Hip hop studies, discussing with researchers from all around Europe and not just them, in a surreal context of break- dancer researchers that were invading and de-sacralising those austere classrooms.

But, above all, the publication of the book led me to meet many people that wrote to me because they were Hip hoppers but also educators, just like me, and they wanted to discuss, tell me their experience, or simply get in touch. Among all of them, it was a pleasure to reunite with Musteeno, a dear friend and one

of the best Italian MCs that, in that precise moment, was beginning to propose workshops with adolescents and – being the good visionary he is – he was already working on bringing to life the Street Arts Academy (S.A.A.), an association completely devoted to Hip hop education.

It's in the context of S.A.A. that me, Musteenno and DJ Vigor from the group OTR quickly created a spoke word and Rap performance, along with videos mixed live, to speak, in a strongly evocative way, about the educational value of this culture.

### **Still Researching**

Nowadays, my educational work with Hip hop is focused on the context of “Anno Unico”, the “school for young people who doesn't attend school” in which I've been involved with for many years. When there's the “right group” I run proper Rap workshops, but what characterizes my newest work the most is the inclusion of Hip hop-based education in activities that are not purely focused on Hip hop.

My work as an advisor and trainer for professionals who work with adolescents is also still going and widening, and for them, Hip hop is still a very generative space both to comprehend new generations as well as for refining intervention tools. If I had to pick out a couple of research areas in the direct work I am carrying out at this particular moment, I would say:

### **Lyrics and Videos as a Space for Mediation and Problematization.**

Rap music, in its various forms, is the most important voice of the new generations, in which they find fragments of their lives, their emotions, desires, frustrations. Sometimes lyrics can be full of negative contents, contradictory, emancipated, and oppressive at the same time, voices of freedom and voices of the industry.

On this level, my intention is to refine techniques for reflection and dialogue to help young people to speak up about their inner world through the focus of some elements that are particularly resonant in their favourite songs and videos, and from this, I try to build with them a pathway of meaning, to open about new questions, new meanings. This is a highly Freirean approach for the research of “generative words”: problematizing reality while researching authentic questions to investigate in a community dimension.



## **“Break the Script”: Writing as Research**

Regarding purely writing activities, I am focusing on making sure that composing rhymes is a research opportunity for young people, something that can lead them to new self-knowledge, bring the unexpected, be surprised even in front of themselves. Handing a white sheet to them doesn't necessarily mean to give them the freedom to write whatever they want to; the risk is to impose not the spontaneity but the stereotyped inner script, the result of one's own usual narration and of the “mainstream colonisation”: pre-established models, standardized contents, always identical ways of seeing things.

Through always evolving specific writing techniques, I try to guide them step by step in a work of inner research, deconstruction, and reconstruction, while keeping the focus on building a safe and “sensitive” setting in which “new words” can be welcomed to know and recognise oneself, and to have an impact on the world.

## **Weaving the Web to Contaminate, Learn and Provoke**

It was nice to discover how, parallel to my own pathways, others were carrying out something similar, many comprehended the educational value of Hip hop and were experimenting themselves, all starting from their own resources and richnesses; some of them were even my favourite Italian rappers, and discovering myself in excellent company could only boost my energy.

I now believe that the network in which all these experiences can converge and dialogue is something extraordinary and this publication is the proof of it. The educational work with Hip hop is not an instrumental use of a street culture to “fix” troubled young people, instead, it's an integrating part of this culture that is used as a tool for growth, healing, and teaching since its foundation. So, the planned diffusion of these practices in Italy becomes the valorisation of a fundamental aspect of Hip hop, to stand as integrating part of the scene, in tension, opposition and dialogue with the most street and commercial dimension.

Perhaps, this is one of the most beautiful and interesting things that happened in the Italian dimension of Hip hop in recent years. To create a network is to put ourselves “on the map” in a more incisive way but, above all, for us this means to be a space for exchanging experiences and techniques to improve, to self-grow; a big crew in which “each one teach one”, as the pioneers used to say. It's important that everyone keeps their own distinctive features, the result of their own story and context, generating learning without the aim of establishing models that would just flatten the richness of differences. We need to be careful to not institutionalise ourselves too much and stay with one foot on the street and one foot in the institutions, to stay “dirty” as “dirty” Hip hop is. Only this way we can continue to be a source of vital provocations, for us and for the others.



# CHAPTER 3

## HIP HOP AS EXPERIENCE





## 3.1 The debt

by **Mirko Filice**, aka **Kiave**

Mirko Filice, aka Kiave. More or less, I am an MC/rapper since 1996, and I started since I was young driven by my love for Hip hop culture, in Cosenza, my hometown, that marked both my *forma mentis* and my approach towards music. I am part of the Street Arts Academy association based in Saronno/Milan and, since around 2012, I embarked on the process that led me to run Rap writing, Hip hop history and fight against discrimination workshops in the most diverse and often defined as “difficult” contexts.

### **My Artistic and Professional Journey**

Synthesis is not one of my qualities, so I struggle to summarize my artistic journey. I discovered Hip hop in the second half of the 90s in Cosenza, when my hometown enjoyed a great cultural-artistic ferment and Hip hop landed too, painting on the city walls, filling places with jams, and streets with rhymes and break-dancers that tried to learn how to follow the beat. That period marked me and gave me a valid and solid alternative to what the neighbourhood I lived in could give me, since it was a central area subjected to social dynamics that had a grip on the majority of the southern cities of Italy. It was thanks to the discovering and the love for Hip hop culture that I was able to create something different that led me to commit in cultivating my talent in improvising rhymes; from then on, I started to read a lot (I always avoided everything that could be defined as “studying” before) because I needed new words to use during freestyles, I felt the need to learn and study because one of the meanings of Hip hop, back in the day, was “the knowledge that guides me in every circumstance.”

Music gave me the opportunity to move cities and live for eight years in Rome, and now to always live off music (in its many shades, not just releasing albums or performing live), for ten years in Milan.

While telling about myself, I mainly highlighted the emotional aspect compared to the purely artistic one, to answer to one of the questions that are often asked to me: “Why do you do that, why do you go to such difficult places, why do you commit for little, so little money, hoping to change something and bringing back home all the negativity, the nearly unbearable situations and the desperation of so many young people?.” The answer is easy: I just try to pay back the culture that saved my own life, offering and sharing in adequate spaces what I learned during the years: releasing albums and performing live is not enough, there’s the need

for dialogue, discussion, exchange of ideas and experiences, and this is the reason why I dedicate most of my life to Hip hop workshops in prisons, communities, aggregation centres in school and in day centres.

### **Where and With Whom I Work**

I mainly work in Milan and in the Lombardia region, but I also ran workshops in different areas of Italy, from my own region to Lazio and so on.

I ran very positive workshops in different prisons of the region (Milan, Monza, Varese) and my project, in some contexts, has a specific name and each workshop series ends with a live performance and real albums, all available at this link:

<https://www.mirkokiave.com/voci-spiegate/>.

I started collaborating with a local association – the “Razzismo brutta storia” project, that refers to the Feltrinelli Foundation -, engaged in social activities and fighting against discriminations for years. In 2014 it funded the first project in the prison of Monza, and it continued to do so in the three following years. After, I decided to break away from them to create my own project to independently carry out, and in some cases with the help of Street Arts Academy.

I am currently involved with the Association of Social Promotion “ForMattArt” in many workshops that we run in day centres, aggregation centres and schools. Many of these in Corvetto, Porta Venezia and Lorenteggio. Most of the young people who are the target of this project are volunteers or sent in by the “upper levels”, are second generations or sons of immigrants, or young people that, however, live in difficult and uncertain economic conditions.

My workshops start from the history of Hip hop culture and, while tracing its early years, I try to instil in the young ones, the ones who don't have big economic resources, the hope of achieving their dreams linked to music or art in general even with zero budget, because the ones who “invented a revolution from scratch” in the first half of the 70s in New York, had nothing.

To reinforce my theory there's the innovation that this culture generated in the (nearly) last 50 years, since nothing stayed the same since its advent, from pop music to the world of visual and figurative arts, from dance to the music business that often had to recalibrate its consolidated mechanisms to deal with the uncontrolled explosions of independent music born in the street.

The street seen as a starting or transitioning point rather than a destination. A

“miracle” that allows the users of this genre to turn all the drives and negative energies into something constructive and artistic. This is what young people reflect themselves on, and they cultivate the hope that everyone can become someone. It takes very little to narrate our own history, a paper and a pen, the flow, and nights full of rhymes.

### **Il mio modello educativo**

I think that the main focus is discussion, dialogue, sharing. I never impose myself as a teacher or a professor, also because I think that the way to stimulate young people in doing Rap is much more like Socratic maieutics than to standard teaching in our schools. Trying to focus the attention on the strengths of a potential rapper and, above all, making clear that everyone has a story to tell, and that everyone can make it interesting for the listeners, is the most solid motivation.

As I already said, we start from the history of the culture and its four disciplines; so, from Rap history we continue with technical bases that are useful for writing lyrics, choosing the base, self-analysing one’s own taste and the emotions that arise from it, and then we start drafting the lyrics. We proceed with recording the song, both in professional studios and with the help of my “portable” studio that’s able to go everywhere. The recording part is important because most of the users face the typical issues in using and controlling their own voice, breathing techniques, and following the beat.

In a third macro-moment, we start to build a live performance to bring the songs we made on a stage and in front of an audience. I always try to get users to cooperate as much as possible, pushing them to try to find common themes to intertwine in a featuring and posse cuts.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Regarding my workshops, their strengths are pretty evident in the written, produced, and recorded albums in prisons, in which I ran this type of workshops. There, where facing criminality is normal and the past of prisoner-rappers is mostly made up of mistakes and important issues, the main topics are far from gangsta Rap, if we want to call it this way on the threshold of 2023, but instead, they talk about love, redemption, social redemption, and the desire to use music to send a message to the external world.

Let’s remember that prisoners can’t use social or similar means to “promote” their activities. It’s this limitation that opens up a world of communication, but

above all attention on the quality and the content of what is being written and recorded; I often ended up asking to prisoner-rappers to try to change the topic and try to verbally “be more nasty”, and it sounds like a paradox, but it could be used as an example for all the new rappers out there.

Generally speaking, in the last period I’ve seen more issues than usual, on one hand linked to the total detachment occurred in the recent years of lockdown/pandemic, during which many people, above all young people, lost emotions that are fundamental, not only for the building of one’s own artistic personality, such as their first concert, the first autographed album and the t-shirt of one’s own favourite artist bought during a concert, and on the other hand linked to the proliferation of bad examples.

This is an important debate, and I don’t want to easily fall into useless and rhetorical moral and vaguely ethical pitfalls, but I can’t help but point out that the mythization of ignorance and the idolatry of crime are increasingly present phenomena in the catchment area we work with, therefore increasingly difficult to handle. There has been transforming inputs that, as it often happens, aren’t strictly linked to the desire for success and there’s a greater desire for revenge, and to prove to the world “what you are worth” at first; but now, the purely economic aspect seems more fascinating, so the idea of doing music only to make money captivates, and ending up in jail nearly seems like a sort of help to achieve this aim, therefore, this becomes a boulder that affects and slows down the inevitable urge to study, work hard and accept that you need to pay your dues, collect experiences and disappointments before turning into an ace of the genre. In the “everything and now” era, to deal with and to avert such examples becomes complicated.

### **The Importance of a Network**

Since I started, I always felt like doing something that didn’t have a marked pathway or a track to follow, as in saying that it’s necessary to create step by step everything concerning the workshop process we’re talking about; and basically this is how it went, considering that reference texts are very little, just as few as the ones who want to implement certain workshops are, and even among us educators there are completely different methods, environments, and contexts.

Lately, I feel the urge to discuss with others, study, and reinforce myself a lot. Luckily, a real net of contacts is being created, hoping that it will lead to officialise this place, and I feel lucky to have the possibility to call and discuss with fellow rap-



pers that do the same type of work with young people and, more and more often, the discussions help me solve issues that keep me awake at night.

**Trying to model this type of activity** means to establish criteria and general guidelines that allow the many workshops and bodies to interface and cooperate with the net of contacts and widen it.

Personally, I had drawn so much from the books of my colleagues over the last period, I studied them as I used to do when I was a student and the gained knowledge allowed me to better manage some issues that emerged during the meetings with young people. In addition to the method, there's the need for a real acknowledgment of this role economically speaking too, understand how to manage accounting, billing, and all the bureaucratic part that is sluggish and, unfortunately, sometimes it risks sabotaging projects where they are much needed; most of us don't have the necessary skills to fill in or create this type of requests and projects.

We need a way out of that limbo that doesn't recognise us neither as educators nor as artists, a materialisation of the work done so far that could allow us to enter the places in question with a role, certifications, and the deserved acknowledgment of the experiences that everyone has. I often surprise boys and girls in the school environment with activities that don't presuppose desks, pen and paper, the black blackboard, instead we use smartphones, an interactive whiteboard and share content on WhatsApp, Telegram and so on. Throughout the years, I understood how crucial it is to have an equal numerical ratio between the number of educators/artists and boys/girls, a need that is often overlooked due to the financial dynamics that prevail on the quality of educational services. Among my limits, I recognise that I have a scarce knowledge of today's Trap music scene, both Italian and foreign, and sometimes this reduces the points in common with some "difficult" and opposite young people.

Other difficulties arise when facing families of boys and girls, who come from different parts of the world, that don't always comprehend our informal educational methodologies.



## 3.2 First, We Do, Then We Understand What We Did

by **Marco Ottavi**, aka **Zatarra**

Marco Ottavi, aka **Zatarra**. Rapper, musical educator, musician who strums four instruments. Music has always been with me, they say I inherited it from the grandfather I never met, a house worker and strummer of instruments at leisure, he taught “smuggled music” to his fellow countrymen during World War II. A childhood spent between beatings, from the neighbourhood kindergarten to my household, I didn’t even have the courage to phone the kids helpline. I built courage on the way, literally, and Rap, more than anything else, cemented it in me. I was born in Pisa, I lived in Siena, Florence and Marseille, the only place in which I felt, and feel, at home.

The present reality I represent, is the one of a territory that was always “good” financially speaking, but didn’t prepare for what was about to come, that is, a human, social and financial “peripheral” reality that had a strong clash with the historical mindset of many generations.

I don’t consider home the place where I currently live, as I already said; however, the commitment to give my best to kids, teenagers and young people will never be lacking. I would like to offer to kids, teenagers, and young people what I didn’t have during my childhood and teenage, and this is why I never set logistic or personal limits. Wherever there’s “need” we must help, I have always said this to my daughter and to those around me.

### **My Artistic and Professional Journey**

I released four albums, an EP, a street album, and a mixtape, I was featured in songs of friends and colleagues in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Finland.

I took part in several Festivals (including “Des 5 Continents” in Marseille, “Hypnotik” in Barcelona, “Independent Music Day” in Sanremo and a semi-final in Castrocaro) and in a documentary (for OZ Productions).

I still have very good memories of the crossover experiences I had, Nu Metal with HSO and Funky Rock with No, Thanks!, winning contests including ATR and participating to Italia Wave.

I was a radio host for years, between Radio 3 Network and Radio Siena.

I sing and Rap in Italian and French, and I occasionally had the opportunity to experiment with English, Spanish and Portuguese. I started to attend as a collaborator/trainee in Rap Workshops, or rather “Atelier”, in Marseille, with Dj Djel

(Fonky Family) at the Friche la Belle de Mai, and continuing in Italy with the same role with Amir (Padova, Porto Sant'Elpidio, Arezzo).

I worked as a creator and independent host in Genoa, Parma, Florence, Grosseto, Empoli, Siena and its province. I'm a 2 level MLT-licensed music educator, Uni Tor Vergata graduate for the Orff-Schulwerk methodology, qualified by "Nati per la Musica", a national CSB Onlus project. As an educator, I work teaching musical and rhythmic propaedeutics in kindergarten, nursery, and elementary schools.

### **Where and With Whom I Work**

I work in Tuscany, with rare random exceptions, and I am the responsible for this type of activities with young people, above all for the relationship with Schools (Middle and High School) and with Libraries (once with University).

The other environments in which I usually work are directly streets and parks (rarely in a "Circolo Arci" or in a Community Centre), through external collaborations with street educators cooperatives, like "Promocultura", "Coop21" and "Cat", mainly for the Valdelsa and Empoli areas, and Florence's hinterland, peripheral neighbourhoods (in Cat there are internal street educators that are also rappers, like Ax from Menti Criminali, Charlie DaKilo and Lezzo). The ages of young people rank from 12 to 17 years old in these occasions too. I worked in Extraordinary Reception Centres, through the Pangea Cooperative, with young immigrants on exchange and inclusion projects with local peers (this time we went up to 20-23 years old people involved in the project). These were beautiful experiences, among the best I ever had, using a local Theatre and an abandoned rural farmhouse as "home." Also, the experiences with disabled kids were unforgettable, both in Schools and in accommodation facilities.

### **My Teaching Model**

Being playful and indirect, and always referring to wider, more diverse, concrete, practical musical references. First, we do, then we understand what we did, no voice commands or initial explanations. Even before the mind, the focus of games and activities is the body. I also use other art forms as "hooks" to observe and re-elaborate a lot, such as painting, sculpture, theatre, books.

As regards the method and approach with young people: mastering foreign languages is helping me more and more (sooner or later, I need to learn Arabic, even just in general terms).

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

One of the main problems for my present working area is that I don't have any reference entities who act as mediator and contacts Schools, with a trained and qualitative staff, so I am forced to deal with didactic, teaching, paperwork, and accountings, only through my small association "L'Untore."

Another big issue, apart from some rare, enlightened administrations, is raising institutional awareness on the importance of street education and other projects regarding the whole Hip hop culture.

## **L'importanza di una rete**

My strength could be a weakness for one of my colleagues and vice versa, so the exchange is vital to solve issues even during the planning stage, as well as during the development. Support and sharing also help our psychological sphere, I always saw this work as a mission: you can't save them all, but you can give something to all of them, small or big. And to give more, there's nothing better than confronting with friends and colleagues.

**Trying to model this type of activity** means to make our practical workshop life easier, diversity is richness, and while sharing it we can offer a better service to young people and create a community among them, even before creating one among us, not just virtually but also in real life.

### 3.3 Street Arts Academy

by **Andrea Gorni**, aka **Musteeno**

My name is Andrea Gorni, aka Musteeno, born in Milan in 1978 and I represent the Street Arts Academy (association of social promotion founded in 2014) as President and founding member. The aim of the Association is to conceive, develop and spread educational and training projects carried out through classic Hip hop culture disciplines, linked to music (Rap), figurative art (graffiti), dance and body expression (breakdance).

The scope of activities (workshops, training programs, artistic events, urban re-development, making artistic products, etc.) concerns all those areas – like schools, youth centres, day centres, prisons, SPRAR centres, places of aggregation – in which activities that convey values of mutual respect and good relationships between people from different countries, beliefs, race, social backgrounds, are much needed. The creative and cultural/artistic expression of each one, supported by educational activities, has the aim of implementing the ease and well-being of participants in a perspective of growth and improvement of one's own condition and relationship with the environment in which these actions take place. The activities use music, drawing, dancing, and creative self-expression in classic disciplines of Hip hop to spread among the population of the territory the values of peace, love, unity, and healthy amusement, training young people to use their artistic talents to change the surrounding reality together, starting from diversities as a richness and from the daily difficulties as an input to improve.

#### **My Artistic and Professional Journey**

When I was around 14, I developed my passion for Hip hop when I started to dance, draw tags, and writing lyrics, outlining my first rudimental rhymes. Later, I focused on the art of the word (MCing) and released many CDs, participated in and won freestyle battles, toured Italy bringing my music in live performance. A passion that never left me until it gave me the opportunity to interface with the pedagogical potentials of what I do: in 2005 I ran my first Hip hop workshop in a professional training centre (PTC) in Bologna and now I work permanently in a PTC as a trainer, coordinating, planning, and running workshops for young people in the institute and training courses for teachers on a workshop and inclusive didactic. I'm president of Street Arts Academy since 2014.

## **Where and With Whom I Work**

The Association mainly works in Milan, Varese, Como, and other provinces; moreover, we organised workshops and trainings in other areas of Italy too. We don't have a favourite type of users: we try to bring our method wherever there's the need or the opportunity.

We interface with schools, youth centres, disability resource centres, SPRAR centres, detention centres, companies, and informal places, organising the activities on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the goals shared with our host entities. Hip hop came to us because we needed it in that moment, even if we weren't aware of it at the time. Someone gave us the opportunity to taste its energy and spirit; therefore, we want to give this possibility to whoever can benefit from it.

## **Our Teaching Model**

Our teaching model is focused on the exchange of experiences and courses; therefore the "live" element is the centre of all disciplines: from performances to events and informal meetings outside prepacked spaces. Our users are invited and guided in this genre's scene by our technicians that, thanks to their artistic experience, are ready to give to the participants 360° experiences inside the Hip hop world.

Furthermore, our courses are designed upon goals agreed with the promoting entities that are hosting us, to form a community of the goals that are calibrated to the users' specific needs, identified by educators that met them before us.

Apart from a possible product or conclusive performance, each course is calibrated to the specific needs of users, maintaining its centrality, to guarantee high quality experiences. As a result, people who are truly passionate can develop the aptitude for teaching and become technicians of our workshops too.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses**

The weakness of our experience resides in the fact that we can't always guarantee a continuity: when not having a head office, collaborating with many different entities, and managing many projects, it's not always easy to make sure that courses can continue or develop over time, to allow participants and technicians to build more ambitious itineraries and to slow down. This is only possible when meeting funders who are willing to invest in a long-term collaboration, and this isn't always possible because the trend is to work on small, self-contained projects that are reiterated for a few seasons, best-case scenario.

The main strength is the possibility to cover all the classic Hip hop disciplines and create a standard for the creation, the planning and the conducting of workshops that could be adapted to any possible formative setting. A Street Arts Academy workshop is based on the focus on the sources, on a relevant technical level, high qualitative models and on the possibility of going outside of the simple single project space, to get in touch with the true artistic reality.

### **The Importance of a Network**

The comparison with, or studying in general, pathways and realities that differ from our own, offers the possibility to analyse different methods and praxis that are useful to reinforce one's own activities and work method. Starting from the reading of already published books on the topic of Hip hop culture, it's possible to notice the differences and the similarities, as well as both practical and theoretical references mainly adopted by different operators. Developing this work both on a research and information level could encourage the multiplication of this type of activities nationally, further reducing the stigma against those types of activities, too often present in institutions and public administrations of areas that need this type of intervention the most.

**Trying to model this type of activity** means trying to define, structure and articulate, different types of already existing interventions and their applications. To do so it would be necessary to establish categories and "reference standards" based on international literature, that could be reproducible and testable in our working context and with our target users.



### 3.4 4 Raw City Sound

by **Vincenzo Musto**, aka **Oyoshe**

My name is Vincenzo Musto, aka Oyoshe, born in 1991 in Fuorigrotta, a neighbourhood of the 10th municipality of Naples. I collaborate, along with Lorenzo Lodato (activist and sociologist that focused his studies on the topics of cultural studies and critical pedagogy, titling his specialist thesis “Educational potentialities of Hip hop culture in the digital era. Naples’ experience in relation with the international research”) and a large team of experts, with the Association of Social Promotion (ASP) 4 Raw City Sound.

The 4 Raw City Sound ASP, founded in 2019 and with its operating office in a multiplex recording studio situated in the centre of the Fuorigrotta neighbourhood in Naples, aims to devote itself to the production, promotion, artistic and cultural training in all its shapes, through the spread and the diffusion of the Hip hop culture values and its expressive forms. The ASP wants to be an open tool for meeting and citizen’s participation, stimulating the protagonism of young people and active local bodies. The main goal is to animate social contexts and contrast education poverty, early school leaving, and socioeconomic precariousness. We pursue it by adhering to various associative territorial and city networks offering them workshops, happenings, and events.

4 Raw City Sound is a partner that helps managing the Community Youth Centre “Peppino Impastato” in the 10th Municipality of Naples and is also a signatory and promoter of the Community Education Pact “Sparsa Colligo” financed by the Territorial Cohesion Agency, and it’s the winner of the “Creative Living Lab 4th Edition” prize promoted by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity by the Ministry of Culture.

#### **My Artistic and Professional Journey**

I started to improvise rhymes with my first crews, and eventually this led me to make mixtapes and albums both as a rapper and as a producer, vaunting collaborations with important Italian and American artists.

I am engaged as an expert of social workshops that use “Hip hop” methodology to develop educational, recreational and music-therapeutic pathways, as evidenced by my experience in the Gaza strip with “Gaza Is Alive 2019”, an international Hip hop project for Palestinian children. Currently, I am engaged in writing and digital production workshop activities in penal institutions among with the

rapper “Lucariello” in Airola’s Youth Detention Centre thanks to a project promoted by “Crisi Come Opportunità.”

### **Where and With Whom I Work**

The association’s and single workshop experts’ activities are in Campania, mostly in the city of Naples and its province. The centre of the activities is the 10th Municipality, in the Fuorigrotta and Bagnoli neighbourhoods, where the association developed and where its head office is. During the years, the activities spread over the city territory, especially in peripheral contexts, in neighbourhoods like Pianura, Soccavo, Scampia, Secondigliano, San Giovanni a Teduccio; furthermore, the association and its experts are currently committed in projects that take place in several municipalities of the Caserta and Benevento areas.

Equally numerous are the experiences in Umbria with the “Rockability” project, the collaborations with “Spazio Graf” in Bologna, “Wag” in Milan and in the rest of Italy. Lastly, thanks to my participation to the “Gaza Is Alive 2019” project, coordinated with the Palestinian ONG Palestine Children’s Relief Fund, YaBasta, Grafite HB and the University of Milano-Bicocca, the association had the possibility to experiment its work method internationally.

### **Our Teaching Model**

The model experimented with activities made by the team of experts of 4 Raw City Sound has been designed, and is being constantly refined, to be easily modulated to each work context and each one/each group of participants. The actions and the goals that can be done and achieved during these courses can be organized based on temporal and instrumental needs, on the degree of participation of each one or of a group of users.

First of all, the educational approach used in activities involves the operators’ suspension of judgment, who play the role of facilitators and moderators to achieve the goals of each one and of the group.

This approach is based on horizontality, mutual respect and on a few and simple “game rules” and is finalized to self-formation and self-evaluation of the participants. Lastly, all activities involve actions of linguistic improvisation, identified as a central tool to submit and transfer to each one/the group of participants.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses**

Activities promoted by 4 Raw City Sound are surely an input for creativity, intelligence, inspiration, and reflexivity of participants. These activities trigger similar

effects in many of the contexts in which they've been proposed, but they differ based on the type of the target, the work context, and the available equipment.

Normally, each activity cycle stimulates the creation of a collective identity that promotes the sense of community in each person in the group of participants. But like every group dynamic, these processes are characterised by affinities and aversions, complicity and competition.

### **The Importance of a Network**

The comparison with, or studying in general, pathways and realities that differ from our own, offers the possibility to analyse different methods and praxis that are useful to reinforce one's own activities and work method. Starting from the reading of already published books on the topic of Hip hop culture, it's possible to notice the differences and the similarities, as well as both practical and theoretical references mainly adopted by different operators. Developing this work both on a research and information level could encourage the multiplication of this type of activities nationally, further reducing the stigma against those types of activities, too often present in institutions and public administrations of areas that need this type of intervention the most.

**Trying to model this type of activity** means trying to define, structure and articulate, different types of already existing interventions and their applications. To do so it would be necessary to establish categories and "reference standards" based on international literature, that could be reproducible and testable in our working context and with our target users.

## 3.5 MaTeMù

by **Adriano Rossi**

Adriano Rossi, coordinator of MaTeMù/CIES, youth centre and art school. MaTeMù exists since 2010 and it's a space for boys and girls who range from 10 to 25, a space for gathering, artistic and cultural growth, a place where people listen to each other, receive counselling and have fun together; in other words, a place in which girls and boys of all cultures and corners of the world can express their creativity, enjoy their free time in a new way, and find support: it's a place where all differences are seen as values and inputs to find new possibilities.

### **Where and With Whom I Work**

MaTeMù is the Youth Centre and Art School, created and managed by CIES Onlus, in collaboration with the Municipal District Rome 1: to be able to build the MaTeMù model wouldn't have been possible without the possibility to guarantee continuity, given by CIES Onlus which incurred the costs of those activities that weren't fully funded, building a stability of action and educational process that made the difference. MaTeMù is completely free, it organises activities for pre-adolescents, adolescents, and young people, but is also a space in which associations, individual residents who would like to live as "active citizens", and artists, can get together and work with and for young people and for the city. Every day, it hosts more than 50 boys and girls, with more than six thousand active users over the ten years of life of the Centre.

As mentioned, MaTeMù works with boys and girls who range from 10 to 25, without any type of distinction. Our idea is to build a cross-cultural community that embraces boys and girls from different kinds of cultural, economic, and family contexts.

### **Our Teaching Model**

The activities of MaTeMù (from Rap to teaching Italian as a second language - L2 -, from breakdance to scholastic support) continued over the years of activity having some pedagogical reference points, part of the educational pathways of each operator and of all the staff as a group:

- Intercultural pedagogy playing the role of an intercultural moderator, elaborated in the 30 years of activity by CIES Onlus.
- The pedagogy of the oppressed by Freire.
- The work done to contrast early school leaving, by the "Maestri di Strada" from Naples.
- Art education and pedagogy of the desire of the Axe project, which some of the staff also reached in Salvador de Bahia.

## **What characterises our methodology and our approach:**

- 1) The gratuity of offered activities and services.
- 2) An interprofessional staff of artists and educators that works in perfect synergy and whom program, supervise with an external professional, reflect on the work and the different cases, write the log at the end of the day.
- 3) Constant commitment in trying to have a varied target audience, with young people from different cultural and social backgrounds, that comprehends boys and girls who don't necessarily come from disadvantaged conditions too. The presence of different targets, and intercultural coexistence too, isn't automatic nor natural, but it's a result of monitored and shared strategies which invest in communication and promotion, the proposed activities, the conflict management, the appearance of the spaces. For this aim, it's necessary to maintain a high-quality teaching and teacher level, because this is what attracts boys and girls that would attend MaTeMù even if there was a fee to pay.
- 4) Supporting and integrating the artistic formative offer with support services that are considered "necessary"; for instance, when we opened, young people who came from very difficult conditions didn't subscribe to the musical instrument courses, even if they were free.

## **The Importance of a Network**

In MaTeMù's work, the work of networking has a central relevance, both with other associations and with institutions. According to our experience, working in a network means both to build opportunities and exchange praxis with other interlocutors, as well as to have mutual help, support, and a resource for all those activities that MaTeMù can't cover. Sometimes, networking also comprehends the need to become the one who activates the processes, the input to do a little more that is necessary to meet the needs of the boy or the girl, and the community in general.

**Trying to model this type of activity**, on a wide-range level, means to work for a significative change of education policies, that should focus on the integration of formal and informal education, on the development of the existing didactic and on the right to study. On a medium-range level, we need to work on the formation of educators, in an increasing perspective of complex and integrated activities.



# CHAPTER 4

## HIP HOP AS POSSIBILITY







## 4.1 A Workshop Morning in School

by **Daniele “Diamante” Vitrone**

### **The author**

Daniele Vitrone, aka Diamante. I was born in Salvador, Brazil, I'm Italian and Brazilian. With the group “Indelebile Inchiostro”, we published “Negri de Roma” in 2001: the first Italian album made by Afro descendant rappers only. As an artist, I'm currently collaborating with a funky-jazz band (“Bolla Trio”) and with rapper/producer friends like Esa and Davide Borri. I've been practicing Buddhism since 2010, and I believe that this strongly influenced my choices in life. The resorts I used to start to run Rap and Hip hop meetings were the love for reading and writing and some studies regarding them (creative writing, script writing for comics and cinema), studies as a professional community and internship Educator, an audio technician degree and, above all, the 20- year-old period of militancy in the Hip hop scene, both in Rome and Milan. “Unity” is the name of the workshop that I manage in the artistic and multifunctional centre “Mare Urbano” in Milan.

During the workshops, young people are encouraged to elaborate thoughts in poetic form, starting from their own desires and their own passions, posing universal values as premises and as a key for interpretation. They are encouraged to imagine the future of their lives and their neighbourhood. In workshops they try to solve social problems with fantasy, colours, new inventions, new activities, and new suggestions. The world surrounding them becomes colourful thanks to Hip hop's disciplines, with the values of unity, peace, and listening to each other. At the same time, they describe their present through the language and expressions that are typical of their age.

### **Preparation**

The first time I ran a morning Rap workshop was thanks to one of Milan's co-operatives which won a tender for European funds and thanks to Share Radio that referred me because I was already working in workshops for two years in a cultural and artistic centre (Mare Culturale Urbano). The school that invited me was in the neighbourhood of Bonola in Milan, we had six meetings of one hour each with all the classes, from 4 to 6 hours per morning.

I was a little nervous because I never worked with boys and girls this young, and inside of a classroom. I thought it was a super fun idea, so I accepted without hesitating. I found almost nothing regarding these initiatives on YouTube except

for some documentaries with little interventions that didn't talk much about the method.

Among the little few things, there was a video in which the protagonist asserted: "You need enthusiasm for these types of things." Ok, got it! I have it and I can recall it anytime I want. Was it enough? Obviously, I love and follow Rap for several years, in this situation one is a "student" and I have been one for more than 25 years. Was it enough? No! I changed the way I was researching and started to search for presentations on music education for middle schools. I found very interesting that: "When kids play the recorder all together, the mistake of the individual is covered by the sound of the group."

Ok, then I'll make them sing the song all together! But how do I manage to keep them "on track"? It's normal to travel with the imagination, especially when talking about it and trying to stimulate it. It's normal to have the head in the clouds, get distracted, start to play with the others.

I needed a "controlled chaos" because if you give plenty of rope and leave a group of middle schoolers without leadership, everything could burst, in the first place, you. Ok! They're going to write it all together, not alone, not in small groups. We produce, they dictate it to me, and I write it on the blackboard step by step with the notes. In this case, I borrow the method Esa used when he came to one of my workshops; he'd made everyone write a line, very freely, and everyone had to introduce themselves and write something about their day. I would have to fit a little more in a rhyme scheme, because the boys and girls were younger, because they were more and because they would have to sing it together. So there needed to be a lyrics distribution and a well-defined cadence.

Otherwise, rather than the "mistake of the individual", the result would have been similar to Rome during its rush hour. I found a video of some boys and girls among with educators, in a circle. They were clapping their hands on their knees while following the beat: knees-hands-knees-knees-hands-, boom-cha-boomboom-cha! In the video, they were rapping their names, one at a time, on the fourth quarter, in a clockwise direction, and without ever stopping: Boom! Cha! Boom boom... Vito! Boom! Cha! Boom boom... Sara! Boom! Cha! Boom boom Eva! And so on until the circle was closed.

I had a way to start. However, I couldn't continue to improvise. The important part was to prepare two-three steps a day, to begin with. After all, the modules were about fifty minutes each, and I felt quite calm.

The words of my friend Nico Scavalli were running through my head, he was our old record producer, and at the time he said: “Talk with the youngest, ask them what music they listen to.” In 2001, when I was 20, we were the youngest, so, as young people do, I didn’t follow his advice, but it stuck to me. So, I started. I remember that I thought: “Experience it as if you were on stage, don’t take yourself too seriously and have fun.”

The key would have been the motivation toward young people.

### **Inside the Classroom: First Blackboard (10-15 minutes)**

After a very short greeting that sounded like “I’ve been a huge Rap and Hip hop fan for several years, but compared to you and even to today’s rappers and trappers, I’m a bit older”, I immediately ask: “Who likes Rap? Who likes Trap? Come on! Give me some names that you know, so I can write them down on the blackboard and learn something new”, and I start to write them down on the blackboard. And I already started to get to know the music taste of the teens. Ears open. On the back, Amina and Nicola seem like the bullies, they are part of the “dominant” group with Sandra and Fabri who sit in front of them.

Davide, who sits front row on the side, doesn’t talk, Silvia is in the centre and has a sharp and smart look. Sorin has to be two years older, but he seems made of wax, Luiz smiles to me and maybe he’s a year younger. Amina’s older brother makes Trap, Andreino’s dad is a fan of Articolo 31, but he doesn’t say that, instead Nicola does. Andre nods his head from the bottom row and pulls down his cap. Leone skates, and knows who 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg and Eminem are. Annika looks at me up and down from the front row under the window while chewing a gum. “Do you know why Eminem is called like this?”. “Because his name is Marshall Mathers, M-and-M: Eminem”. Someone mentions Justin Bieber, Annika says Elettra Lamborghini. Nicola asks: “Will you play one of your songs and show us a video?”. “Okay guys, maybe later, I’m not the protagonist here, you are.”. “Are you famous though? How many views have you got?”. “Not much, I’ve been doing Rap since before YouTube, but I’m not so famous if not among the old school ones... however, let’s continue.”. “Can you freestyle?”. Andreino says: “Will you diss me?”. I diss Andreino: “Diamante rhymes a lot, Andrea rhymes not, if you don’t study, I won’t understand your thought”.

Even if I have the privilege and the responsibility of controlling, the important thing to understand for the teacher, for me and for the teens, is that they are the focus of the lesson. They need to feel that many of the names they said are unknown to me, but that I want to discover them as soon as I go home. I know that

some of the names use lyrics regarding drugs, violence, and sexism. “Uhm... so you like this song by this trapper”. “It’s drill!”. “Ok! A subgenre of Rap... however, there are lots of swear words and disrespectful things in here. It’s a banger, sounds nice, and the videos he makes are powerful, great colours and great impact but... thinking about the words he says, what do you think?”. Silence. Maybe they never thought about it. I start to see some screws rattling. “Guys, I would never tell you what to listen or not to listen to, if someone imposed this to me when I was your age I would’ve said to them to go... to hell. Rap is freedom, art is creativity and freedom, it makes us feel good, nobody can tell us what to listen or not to listen. Ah! Let’s remember that we’re in school here.”

### **Inside the Classroom: Second Blackboard (30-40 minutes)**

As I was cleaning the blackboard: “So I get that you like Rap, the Trap and the drill are its subgenres. Today these are very famous genres, and I’m really happy about it because back in the days there were very few of us who listened to Rap!”. “How old are you, prof?”. “I won’t tell you! However, I think I’m old as your parents, if not a little older. Whatever, I’ll tell you... I’m 42.” “Wow! Older than my dad!”.

“Back to what we were saying, though: who’s able to tell me what Hip hop is and what’s the difference between Rap and Hip hop?”. “Hip hop has more rhythm!”. “Hip hop is a dance! I dance it!”. “Um, these are pretty fair answers... But I have to correct you and say that Hip hop is a culture or ‘subculture’, while rap or Trap are just a fourth or a fifth of Hip hop... To this day, If I go to a Hip hop party and I start to say on the microphone – I raise my voice – Peace!!! Unity!!! Love!!! There will always be someone that will scream while following the beat: and having fun!!!”. “Let’s try it all together!”.

I mime the microphone with my hand: “These values of the culture are super important and they were always repeated because the people were the same ones that were fighting with each other just few moments earlier. So, the organizers knew that they needed to remind it: we’re here for this! Let’s have fun! There’s another fundamental aspect, though. Something that made everything go back to the way it was if it was missing.”

I write down: “Respect! Respect for the others and self-respect. Without respect, all magic would have been lost. We used to talk about it a lot, and even now we should talk about it, because we always need to search for respect in the tension. I believe that basically everyone has it, but when we feel like we don’t have it,

we need to find it inside us.” “Without the tension of respect in the songs, only WAR would have been the topic, like ‘I’ll do this or that to you’. HATE like swear words intended for an enemy. DISUNITY like ‘Who are you, you are not one of my homies, we stand among us, you’re not welcome’ and BOREDOM, tremendous boredom such as ‘I take this and that drug..’ Do you understand? Come on let’s do this again, I’m having fun: Peace! Unity...”. “Think about today’s Trap. Aren’t these the topics they all talk about? Let’s make it clear, I repeat that I won’t ever tell you what to listen or not to listen to, and today’s rappers make beautiful videos... but you – I take a moment to look at each one of them – thinking about the words they say, you... what do you think?”.

Silence. Screws rattling and creaking...

**This is an example of an hour session with a group of middle schoolers.**

The work would take place for another 4 or 5 hours (one per week) with a continuous brainstorming. With the choice of a music base from my archive or the Internet, and with singing rehearsals all together. It would culminate with a choral performance for an audience made up of other students, teachers and parents. This workshop example shouldn’t be seen as a model applicable in all school contexts, in which time and explanations vary. Furthermore, the topic will be just suggested but never imposed. Written rhymes are absolutely all original inventions of the teens, a result of all the discussions we had during brainstorming.

## 4.2 Steel Bars, Glass Ceiling

Towards a planned and coordinated approach for Rap in prisons (and more)  
by **Francesco “Kento” Carlo**

### The author

Rapper and writer from Reggio Calabria, three books, ten albums and more than a thousand concerts. For more than a decade, he’s been running writing workshops in prisons, schools, and rehabilitation communities. He’s been a special guest of the “Tenco” award at the Ariston Theatre in Sanremo and was awarded by ANPI (National Association of Italy’s Partisans), the Memory House Felicia and Peppino Impastato, “Cultura contro le Mafie”. Author and performer for the series broadcasted on Rai Gulp (“Entra Nel Cerchio”, 2020) and on Repubblica TV (“Barre Aperte”, 2022). As the use of Rap became more widespread as a means of expression for young people who are in prison or in difficult situations, both opportunities and challenges that are worth being faced emerge. Or better: they need to be faced! In fact, without a national systematic approach it’ll be impossible to break the glass ceiling achieved through the praiseworthy initiatives that are promoted by each body on a local level.

As far as I’m concerned, I’m one of the few professionals that were lucky enough to have an overall outlook, thanks to the twelve years spent on the parallel collaboration with associations and operating entities in about ten of the seventeen Youth Detention Centres in Italy (in addition to adult prisons, schools, and communities), and I can affirm with certainty that the inequality of conditions and opportunities emerge prominently.

Different available equipment, different spaces, different approach by the authorities and decision makers, as well as, obviously, different professionalism of artists, operators and educators who are personally involved in Rap workshops in prisons, communities and gathering places in general: if, institutionally speaking (specifically: the penitentiary institution), it doesn’t seem possible (although it would be desirable) to ask for a uniform approach at the moment, it’s time for us to network even more so. In my opinion, the first step would be to share:

- **Share equipment** (music base databases, technical info, forms, relationships with SIAE/Soundreef/labels etc.)
- **Share practices** (recording, live, musical production).
- **Share results** (forwarding files and, if possible, exchanging live performances).
- **Share skills** (operators’ temporary transfer in other workshops, creating periodical moments for physical and virtual gathering).

These types of actions don't need any specific technical or bureaucratic presuppositions, and they would be useful on one hand to facilitate and streamline the work of people who already are in the field, and on the other hand to eliminate or mitigate entrance barrier for new territories or bodies that would like to start similar activities. From this point of view, an experiment has already started inside the informal net of "Rap Dentro", active since 2019.

The second step, and the decisive one to overcome the "glass ceiling", would be the building of a proper national network, capable of representing the field on all levels: both facing Institutions and the organization of events, but also the participation in tenders, contests, and activities for fundraising. The last function mentioned being the most essential to maintain an almost entirely professional approach rather than simple (although praiseworthy) volunteering.

From this point of view, the attempts we made during the last years didn't lead to decisive results: on one hand the problems linked to the pandemic, and, on the other hand, the organization and logistic difficulties linked to the fragmentation of the national scene, didn't allow us to reach a framework yet. As repeatedly highlighted during internal meetings, even the juridical condition of us as operators is very different, and some of the target realities have also expressed scepticism towards the establishment of yet another network that – from the point of view of people who work with culture in its various forms – would just add itself to the many organizations devoted to theatre, poetry, music in general.

In the meantime, however, Rap workshops are multiplying in number, visibility and in impacting the lives of young prisoners (and not just them). The plant is growing messily, but it's incredibly vigorous. Songs, videos, live exhibitions. In a historic moment in which Rap is often associated with non-values and superficial contents, these young people offer a different outline, deep and often painful, of their reality, and they deserve to have the same kind of attention and representation that their peers committed in theatres and classic poetry have.

A substantial and formal network, rooted in the territory and strongly representative, should be able to consolidate the already taken positions and take on an additional role in the social and political debate on a national level too. It could be a strong and firm interlocutor when necessary. Affirm clearly and unequivocally young people's right to be heard, and not just through Rap. It could contribute to the debate on the role and even the real need of institutions like the

*"I'm not saying I'm gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world."* – Tupac Shakur









# CHAPTER 5

## PLACES OF KNOWLEDGE

by Matteo Cerasoli





So far, the reflection on the potentials inherent in the intersection between artistic languages linked to Hip hop culture and educational processes has developed in a threefold direction: reflexive, experiential, and possible. The meeting point for these pathways is the combination of individual, relational, and collective factors that connect the experiences of the many artists and many bodies, their art, and their social and civil commitment.

On the other hand, in the academic debate of social sciences we witnessed a progressive emancipation of art from pure aesthetics, favouring a more contextual and social conception of it. Therefore, it's no coincidence that the common thread that connects the contributions proposed so far is made up of an intimate connection between music and society, that finds its synthesis in the ability of music to create worlds. A common thread which unfolds on two levels: one linked to the relationship between music and social processes, and the other linked to the relationship between music and imaginaries.

What is the transformative power of music? What do we mean when saying that music has the ability to create worlds? And in which spaces music can and needs to fit to build new worlds?

In the following pages, lecturers Assunta Viteritti and Marcello Ravveduto are called to answer these complex questions, lending us their point of view to better understand these two levels of reasoning.

**Assunta Viteritti**, seducation sociologist, she teaches Sociology of social and educational processes, Knowledge, learning and technologies in organisations and Sociology of cultural and communication processes at Sapienza University of Rome. President of the Italian STS scientific Association (2019-2021) and director of the scientific magazine “Scuola Democratica”, among her research interests there are change processes in the educational processes.

**Marcello Ravveduto**, shistorian, lecturer of Digital Public History at the Universities of Salerno and of Modena and Reggio Emilia. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Italian Association of Public History and of the Scientific Committee of the “Digital Library on the Camorra and the culture of legality” at the Federico II University of Naples, author of many essays on the relationship between collective imagination and mafia phenomena, with a particular focus on the Neapolitan song phenomena.

## 5.1 Music and Social Processes. Interview with Lecturer Assunta Viteritti

### **What are the sociocultural mechanisms through which music intervenes in processes of social construction and comprehension of the world?**

I don't know if we can talk about proper mechanisms. As an expressive dimension, music surely is always part of the process of construction of the experience and the existence, following the formation of cultures. In fact, in general, music made up the elite, the popular cultures, the countercultures, supported social movements. In a way, it's not music but musics. Therefore, I would say to pluralize, first of all.

Then, there's also a form of resistance, of long-lastingness, and of persistence, for instance folk music as the lastingness of traditions. Through music we, can continue to experience cultures and practices that can be less present, as if music could reproduce cultural experiences that don't have persistence in time, but they evoke it, making it a real experience, building and legitimating collective rituals and identity. Even if these expressive forms come from places and cultures that we could define more ancestral, deeper, they keep not just their ability to evoke, but also the experiential and performative expression – maybe transformative too, but I won't go too far on this.

If we take a leap and think about big musical events that characterise for example Rock 'N Roll, Punk rock, or Techno, these become, in a way, moments that create different kind of cultural discontinuity, because they undermine consolidated routine models.

Therefore, I would say first of all: “Music intervenes in the processes of construction and comprehension of the world?”. Yes, I would say so. To understand which are the mechanisms, though, a lot of research is required to observe the phenomena closely.

Surely there's a generational issue, because the generations are the ones who promote and interpret this kind of discontinuity that some music offers them over the years.

Therefore, the first factor is generational; then, there's a factor that is countercultural; there's an affirmative factor, because musical practices are a sort of practice for the affirmation of subjectivity. There's definitely a relationship between the levels.

**A frequently discussed topic in lyrics is change, in every form and in every way it may be interpreted. At the same time, there are many examples of hymns and songs that became real driving forces in changes that already happened, are happening or are desirable. What's the relation between music and social change?**

Looking at music as a collective fact I don't think we can distinguish, separate music from society and culture. There are events that testify it: I think about the Live Aid, where the Queen's last performance was, as one of the big events aimed, in that case, to raise money for Africa.

But let's also think about social movements, possibly not the occidental ones, because it would be too easy. When the war in Ukraine started, we began to listen to songs and hymns of patriotic claim of Ukrainian pride. For example, a Ukrainian rapper decided to join the army and then made a video of a very ancient Ukrainian folk song, and put it back in the game rapping it and making it a sort of hymn, and then other musicians from all over the world started to participate too, transforming it into a social practice, because it comprehends many issues. But let's think about Palestine or Iran too. I remember seeing reports on how young Palestinians use music as a place to practice in which their experience becomes itself a transformative performance. And I wouldn't be surprised if women who're in the streets in Iran sing together or if they have moments in which, despite the pain, they gather around music. Therefore, music becomes not just an experience of resistance but also an experience of affirmation of subjectivity in certain contexts and places. Speaking in countercultural terms.

But we don't have to see just this, because there are also musical forms that can maintain more a certain cultural model, in a way. For example, karaoke. I would certainly not define it as a transformative model, but it allows to stay inside a cultural model, also enduring a series of contradictions and consequences. Karaoke becomes an expressive model, although inside the acceptance of a cultural model.

Music experience per se is always an element that brings into play affirmative, and also potentially transformative aspects. We saw this from Woodstock onward, and the fact that there are some recurring aspects it's fascinating. Let's compare Woodstock and raves.

The fact that there are recurring things is due to the need to continuously nearly repeat the same thing, because creativity and expressive affirmation are an element that undermines rules.

Therefore, police and control are necessary, for the mere fact that there's an expression that's opposed to the respect of control. It's the expression of something that's always moving, and at least potentially transformative.

**You mentioned raves. Among with raves, on today's dock in the public debate, there's Trap, its lyrics and its themes connected to the so-called youth deviances. However, the connection between music and deviance isn't just a Trap characteristic: how does this connection help us read through the social phenomena behind the artistic language?**

As for the deviance topic, it's a word I don't really love and use, even in my didactic work with students. I always try to avoid it, I never place it at the centre of the talk, because it's as if it already puts a label on how to read the phenomenon. It's a pre- labelling that's never fair to do when talking about social phenomena, that first need to be seen closely in their internal differences and in the meanings they produce.

That being said, I can say that, generally speaking, I find 'Trap interesting. As a scholar, I need to put aside common sense and ask myself about phenomena, and then, I face an extraordinary variety of things. Raves and Trap are on the dock because they break social control rules, because they are a kind of practices of affirmation that are not contemplated in institutional programs. To keep focusing on Trap, it's true that it's linked to the needs to emerge, but in all Rap and Hip hop there's this need for emerging too; examples of emersion from marginality that use any symbolic elements, the same ones that were instead criticised in social movements of the '70s.

There's a dissonance, and this means that we need to look even deeper, or else we'll risk our common sense. So, machismo, sexism, explicit language used in some kind of Trap represents research data to me and I start to ask myself where does this language come from. As an education sociologist I can't help but say that there, in that expressiveness, there's the failure of any institution. So in some way, this problem is not caused by young people who make Trap, instead is caused by a social and institutional context that has failed. From this point of view, I already legitimate the answers that the young people give just for this reason. For me, the fact that they talk, so they express themselves, that they reach out to some references that acknowledge them and their language and words, is already positive.



This way, we already left the sociological category of deviance and we focus on what they do. And they do it from many different points of view. The common point is urban marginalities, places in which creativity must find independent means of expression, and so I'm amazed when I see this kind of expressions, even in its most extreme forms.

There are videos in which weapons are shown, so then I start to ask myself. "What does this thing mean?". Clearly there are some very critical issues. As an example, I'm going to use a video by Massimo Pericolo that I saw recently. It's obvious that I have a problem with that, but at the same time I'm listening, I'm reading the intertwining of messages, and I understand that it's not incitement to violence: it's something different, it's the expression of some form of aggressiveness, anger, discontent, the angry intent being exhibited, and as such, it becomes performative for social anger and self-acknowledgement expressions.

Obviously, there are some risks, it's not the case of Massimo Pericolo but rather of other examples that we saw on the news, gangs who want the trapper experiences and they find it in drugs, the use of weapons... Because boundaries are blurred, the risks are very slippery, because when failing a school experience or an affective experience, the risky experience is around the corner. It's immediate, whether you're a trapper or not. In short, there are no differences from this point of view, let's say that a kind of music allows to create a dissonance and an acknowledgement for social groups that would otherwise feel unrecognized.

A few months ago, in an interview, an Italian music critic proposed a comparison between Trap and Punk. There wasn't anything like Punk – that brought with itself aggressive and violent elements - before Punk, which also represented a form of rejection for the generations of Rock 'N Roll, Funky, Soul, as to say: "We do something else, and in this sense we don't care about being able to play or sing, we break things, we enter the scene with another way of expression." This critic really made me curious because he affirmed that there's nothing like Trap before Trap, and from this point of view it's an unprecedented musical expression, therefore it's very interesting and it needs to be observed well.

In fact, if we pick a Trap artist and look through his lyrics, there's the staging of situations, a language, a precise speech, and a narrative. Therefore, there's a great ability in textual construction, not being improvised but rather, sometimes it's even very narratively articulate, as if it was – I'd be inclined to say - post-modern literature put into music. There's the need to listen to it a lot to enter that situa-

tion and reflect on it. Where we think there's trash, if we look a little closer, we'll see that in a way there's much refinement. The eyes that see and the ears that ear should almost be educated and used to enter a scheme and a language that's part of generations that we ended up no longer looking nor observing, and started to be disinterested in them, and now they're shoving this in our faces. And we cannot label it as deviance.

**Rap and Trap are two musical genres and social phenomena that, in some respects, are historically in continuity, united in the contents linked to marginalities, city peripheral areas and a sense of revenge of their inhabitants, particularly the youngest. Speaking of these elements of continuity, is there convergence or divergence in social processes from which they draw on and help build?**

I'm not sure I'm able to properly answer this question, but fragments come up to me. First, I find interesting how in Rap and Trap lyrics the space in which these subjects live is represented: a suburban and marginal space that's praised, almost as if we could talk about praising marginality. It's true that we can talk about Rap and Trap as an expression that comes from an urban and peripheral marginality, but a question remains: how is it possible that they have a lot of success even in small towns, even in the south, where perhaps there's a different concept of the big city? It's as if Trap and Rap produced an urban environment even in contexts that are not urban or urban peripheral areas, and a metropolitan experience that perhaps these young people don't experience, because living in a small town in the south is different from living in Milan's peripheral areas.

How do musical cultures have the ability to create worlds, even where these worlds aren't physically there? These are all topics that should be investigated in research projects.

Instead, returning to the discussion about the lyrics, as a woman I clearly have a problem with Trap's lyrics, because there's an issue regarding a woman's body that should be investigated. In Trap music, the woman becomes a bitch. But at the same time, I am faced with oversentimental love lyrics. So, it's evident that there's a problem with the female cultural model. I think there needs to be done an even more important reflection on how boys treat the feminine sphere in Trap, but I'm not able to do it currently, so I only pose it as a problem.

In a way, it seems like Trap surely moved forward some kind of expression, even an anger expression, creating a discontinuity that needs to be well observed.

And in this discontinuity there's the obtainment of an expressive change that makes us think about something more or something new.

There's also another issue regarding the evolution of Trap, that is, how Trap itself is changing. I feel like, in a very short period there has been the developing of a reflective dimension that's higher than the early things that were perhaps more random. In some singers, there's a new sound and melodic dimension, much more refined and with more artistic work on the tracks.

It makes me think that there's much more work in the production, that evidently finds in these interlocutors something interesting even from the music industry perspective. The fact that these singers, unknown to most people, fill whole stadiums is extraordinary to me. This is the crazy part. You see the way they sell, win, have incredible results, but they seem to be unseen, or they are picked up just as an example of the deviance phenomena still. Something's not working and it's obvious that the phenomenon is much more complex than this.

As scholars and sociologists, we should reflect on what happens when these young people, sometimes even very young, go from being the expression of a marginality to becoming a phenomenon of mass consumption, they end up being full of jewels, dressed with luxury brands thanks to the recording labels that perhaps 'buy' them with a lot of money – money is another important topic on which there would be much to reflect about. When I look at them, as their rise is quick, I ask myself where will these young people be and what will they do in 5-10 years from now. Looking at the names of the Sanremo festival too, there are Lazza and Rosa Chemical, whom the industry and the media see as rupture, and they bring it to the stage.

Now, I don't remember which artist talked about his experience with a psychoanalyst in one of his tracks. I have the feeling that a big part of the performative tension is a work of elaboration, in which there's a mirroring in the memory that becomes a reflexive practice and, therefore, an affirmation practice. Overall, there's a process of consciousness and normalization of the discomfort that is activated, and that's another important thing. If an artist talks about psychological distress, or drug effects, or abandonment, and therefore the relationship with parents, or school failure, all these dynamics, all these aspects and these topics being staged are absolutely central in the new generations' experience. I find this process of self-acknowledgment, even in painful situations, extremely cathartic from a personal and individual point of view. When young people write and elaborate, they allow others to acknowledge their experience, not being the "peace&love" speech in Woodstock, but in the here and now it becomes a way to save ourselves somehow, even in pain. It's more of an introspective issue that uses anger and personal experience as a liberating dimension through music.

On the other hand, is an expression of contemporaneity. In this case, an important reference is Simon Reynolds, a music critic who writes very interesting texts because they always show the connection between musical expression and the contemporaneity of an event. Sociology and social sciences should dialogue with music criticism too, because perhaps by relating with high-quality music critics, we can interface these phenomena in a more interesting way rather than labelling them, considering them as an expression of contemporaneity which is also much more interesting as a topic to pursue.

**You observed how musical cultures can create worlds. Which role could music play and in which space should music insert itself, and artistic languages in general, to be a tool for the creation of other worlds? How can we synthesize the figure of the artist and the one of the educators, playing on the edge of artistic expression and educational aims?**

Music education, in general arts education, is one of the crucial issues. There's an extracurricular educational world that concerns music, theatre and artistic expression in general that seems to make up for the fact that institutionalized education seems like it forgot one educational element, that is, creativity. This is a really important issue, because then young people search for this element in other places: in their garage, or in other expressions, and even listening to Trap becomes a way to substitute a lack of creative expression. It's clear that listening to Trap signals the need for creative expression, and this often regards young people who're 13, 14, 15 years old that have an inadequate living of their creative expression in their educational experience.

Luckily, there are many different experiences. Just the other night I went to a concert in which there was a saxophonist that is a really good, rising musician, who's also a middle school music teacher that brought on stage 15 of his middle school students; so, at a concert there were 15 saxophones. It was beautiful because those young people were lucky enough to meet Danilo, this extraordinary teacher and musician, and I'm sure that their lives will be marked by this experience.

This is just a small example. I think that creatively and musically speaking there's a huge potential to also tackle early school leaving, discomfort, I think that creative and musical commitment – not just musical, but the arts in general – could be an experiential field in which one can elaborate all the discomforts that could be linked to family, the psychological sphere, and often school can't find the root of the problem. Therefore, from this point of view, and also from a learning point of view, music could be a powerful motivational vehicle.

I think that this is another research area for us researchers; trying to map the existing experiences, that could be fragmented, lost, which aren't systematic because perhaps the curricular importance of such teaching is not so much. For example, I recently had the opportunity to interview a C.N.R researcher on robotics issues and computational thinking who works on music didactics and collaborates with many teachers on the construction of a music didactics curriculum. This example is to show that we could work on many big plans, but to do so it would take a policy orientated in this direction.

## 5.2 Music and Imagination. Interview with Lecturer Marcello Ravveduto

**What are the sociocultural mechanisms through which music intervenes in building imaginaries?**

Memory and feelings are certainly two central elements. Generally, feelings are the main structure in which they are built, especially if we think about music and Italian popular music, those elements that affect the autobiographical memory. Over time, these two tools, memory and feelings, become part of the dynamics of the imagination and they become more and more the story of something that happened and also affects the experiences of life. Memory and feelings become an element around which music as a communication tool build itself, both being made up of words, both linked to notes, rhythm, or the evocation of these two pillars that determine the drive. We could say that this is the original drive.

Then, from a social point of view, music has almost always been an aggregator, a community builder, so much so that there are different audiences for different musical genres, because often music builds contexts, and is present inside of these, and is also the product of some contexts. Therefore, music and social contexts are elements that often affect each other. Music can also become an element that manifests the ability of a certain community, a certain social group, certain actors, it's a way to describe one's own identity, one's own way of thinking, the mindset, even one's own obsessions, if you will, and one's own feelings through a particular use of music – intended, as I said before, - both as a sound element and as a spoken element.

**A frequently discussed topic in lyrics is change, in every form and on every level it may be interpreted, from a micro to a macro level. At the same time, there are many examples of hymns and songs that became real driving forces in changes that already happened, are happening or are desirable. What's the relation between music and social change?**

Often, music has been the emblem and the symbol for change. If we think about some hymns, they clearly are the passage from one state to another. Let's think about all the political hymns or the ones for social rebellion. They're all prone to start a revolution, or at least to affirm a new regime over another, but they're also the story of communities that have put themselves on the line and fight for change – even when they don't fight, they push for change.

Change is not just this one, that we might say, has a political nature. Music is even able to talk about social change. For example, let's think about Rock 'N Roll in the 50s and the resulting rising of a new social dimension linked to young people, protagonist of the society through music, and of a new industry that focused on music and young people, because that music described and began to describe, through this, a new freer citizenship model that was determined by a change, by the shift from one generation to another.

Nowadays, we could say that this change of structure, through a generational shift, is found in Rap, Trap, Hip hop. At the very least, from the point of view of a certain narrative pushing for change, the shift from Rock 'N Roll to Hip hop points out how much new generations changed once again, even compared with stories, feelings, community building, which are not just artistic or social communities, but proper communities clashing in the construction and in certain territories and contexts. So, from Rock 'N Roll to Hip hop we could say that often, nearly always, music has been a tool for conveying certain topics in relation to territories and generations.

**Rap and Trap are two musical genres and social phenomena that, in some respects, are historically in continuity, united in the contents linked to marginalities, city peripheral areas and a sense of revenge of their inhabitants, particularly the youngest. Speaking of these elements of continuity, is there convergence or divergence in social processes from which they draw on and help build?**

Obviously, if we think about Rap and Trap, there are similarities and there are differences. The similarities are the starting contexts and, along with the starting contexts, the generations involved. Starting contexts are the metropolitan and peripheral ones, and generations are the generations of young people over than the “young-adults” – young people in their 20s, we could say. From this point of view, Rap and Trap could seem similar genres and phenomena, but they're not, although they come from a common context.

While Rap is a means of social protest, and substantially also a means of anger that becomes a driving and rebellion element in a determined territory, protesting the marginality issue as a political issue that is often neglected by the ruling class and also confronting it with the violence issue, generated in social marginality of peripheral areas, Trap doesn't focus on the issues of social and political struggle of that world.

It seems more like a neorealistic story regarding violences and social marginalities in the territory: but it's a story that almost doesn't seem to want to contend and compete with the ruling class on abandonment and marginality.

Rather, it almost seems to describe it as it is, as a matter of fact inside of which one can generate a new social protagonism linked to the violence theme. This seems to be a substantial difference between the two worlds: on one hand, Rap that sees violence as a way to protest, on the other hand, Trap, that sees violence as a matter of fact that can be used to aspire to social protagonism.

**Today on the dock of public debate, there's Trap, its lyrics and its themes connected to the criminal world, often seen as an easy response to needs, construction and self-affirmation processes and as an easy way to achieve those socially desirable goals, above all the economic success. However, the connection between music and criminal world is not just a characteristic of Trap: how did the relation between music and criminality, and more in general music and deviance, evolve over time?**

The one between music and criminality is a relation that in peripheral areas, and mostly in some western metropolitan peripheral areas, has several modes.

In Italy, it began being expressed through the classic mode of a nation that has melody among its identity phenomena. It's no coincidence that the phenomenon of the Neapolitan song in Naples, but also in Sicily and in other areas of the South of Italy, has become an element of expression. But why did it become an element of expression?

Because it stood as a narrative and as a dimension of the problem, it posed the marginality issue inside of a much larger issue, linked to the feelings developed in this marginality. Most of these stories, that are also criminal, start with the idea of love, affection, emotion about something that is happening and with the story, in this case, of the territory and the marginality they're experiencing. Inside of this territory, and inside of the marginality experienced, there are often also criminals involved in the stories. Criminals represent - as many others could do, for example a betrayed woman - figures and themes that made up the general story of marginality, as to say that in marginality one of the ways out from marginality, or one of the results of marginality if you will, is to commit crimes and criminal deviance in general.



This type of narrations were built also to justify oneself when facing allegations of crime or criminal violence. They said: “These songs display a context of material and immaterial deprivation”, which served, precisely, as a justification. This way it’s possible to comprehend the evolution, and then the shift, from the Neapolitan song to Hip hop and increasingly to Trap, because the Neapolitan song also started as an element able to describe the territory, especially in contexts of marginality, just as Hip hop does: so much so, that Neapolitan singers were defined as Italian Hip hoppers, because they were considered the only ones able to describe the reality of the territory.

And this passage, this cross-over generated from the Neapolitan song to Trap, also tells us about, once again, change linked to the pride of criminal diversity, and through an aesthetic of violence, of new generations’ social protagonism in contexts in which violence is normalized and an integral part of living.

**If it’s true that music can serve to, or at least is functional to tackle determined imaginaries, the opposite is also true. So, I ask you: in which space music, and art in general, can and must insert itself to be a tool to undermine these imaginations, and create other imaginations?**

Nowadays there surely are different ways, and surely one of these ways is given by associations like “Musica contro le Mafie”, that launched this contest several years ago and that today has become a contest of opposition against the way criminality and violence were portrayed in music, and thus to propose an alternative model to that type of music. Today, that model widened so much so that now the contest’s name is Music For Change, because a central element of music, to build alternative and opposing narrations to the ones who generate criminal imaginaries, is change and the great ability of music to portray change, paradoxically.

A change that can be social, it can be civil, it can be cultural, and above all it puts away all the generated stereotypes. For example, nowadays we are surrounded by stereotypes derived from the Trap genre, according to which young people of Generation Z should be violent, should treat women in a certain way, and portraits of this type of music seem to bring us toward these stereotypes. We are well aware that this is not the case, in fact, and that everyone has its own individuality, we are well aware that there are different social groups inside the Generation Z and we are well aware that we can’t associate the Generation Z with the Trap issue and with any stereotypes that have settled down also through Trap.

In fact, there's the need for an artistic call-up, and also a civil call-up, to make other portraits inside of this generation and in peripheral areas emerge, and associations like daSud are central from this point of view.

This can be an interesting pathway, even collaborating with other civil and social entities that are already working on the idea of music as change: the only way to undermine the subversion of crime is to build a civil dimension in music.

There are so many singers and young groups who participate, one year after another, in several contests that talk about the environment, fight against mafias, democracy and the Constitution. In short, I believe that cultivating these themes and encouraging young people to express themselves – the ones who already do it and the one who don't do it still – through a system of a call to arts could be a new pathway to pursue.





## Appendix

### I Quaderni di daSud

The editorial collection of daSud gathers the unpublished series of publications devoted to pathways, programs, and educational experiences that the association carries on as part of the larger project to tackle early school leaving, promote peripheral areas, and the socio-cultural contrast against mafias that has the name of “ÀP – Accademia Popolare dell’Antimafia e dei Diritti”.

### daSud Association

#### If we don't do it, who has to?

Anti-mafia and social promotion association that since 2005 works for a socio-cultural contrast against mafias, the promotion of rights, tackle early school leaving, the decrease in juvenile discomfort, and the promotion of peripheral areas. In Rome since 2009, committed in the educational, social and cultural project “ÀP – Accademia Popolare dell’Antimafia e dei Diritti” since 2016, living in its own, restored spaces inside a school in the peripheral area in the east of the capital: the IIS Enzo Ferrari of Cinecittà-Don Bosco.

It stands out for its cultural and editorial productions, the campaigns as a reporting and a sensibilisation tool, the concrete proposals for a good governance of territories and for an anti-mafia of opportunities and for education and informal education pathways. It opened the media library “Giuseppe Valarioti”, the first one on mafias and anti-mafia, and founded the web radio by young people “RadiodaSud”. Among its latest initiatives, there's the investigation inquiry “Mai dire mafia” and the protocol “Roma Senza Mafie” for a concrete commitment of the municipal administration against mafias, crime, and corruption in the Capital.

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[www.dasud.it](http://www.dasud.it)

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### ÀP - Accademia Popolare dell'antimafia e dei diritti

**Here, where the air is popular, the school creates the culture in peripheral areas.**

It's spelled with the accent on the “A” and reads like up. “ÀP - Accademia Popolare dell’Antimafia e dei Diritti” is daSud's project, made in collaboration with “Via Libera”, the cooperative “Diversamente”, the theatre company “Ragli”, “Magville”, “Il Baule Magico” and Theatre Workshops “VaBè”.

Founded in 2016, it's a unique experiment of educational, social, and cultural innovation in Italy with its head office in the higher education institution of IIS Enzo Ferrari of Cinecittà-Don Bosco: a centre of aggregation and a place of culture and sociality opened to schools, territory, and to the city of Rome. A space that today has a library, a cinema, a theatre, a web radio and a space for young children and their families.

There are many provided services and many activities and initiatives offered: from informal educational pathways for students, integrated in the school's educational offer, to afternoon courses, initiatives for young children and from readings to book presentations, film screenings, thematic reviews, and festivals.

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**[www.apaccademia.it](http://www.apaccademia.it)**

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### **Keep It Real – Communities in a Circle.**

As well as being the title of this publication, it's the project space promoted by daSud, supported by "Alta Mane Italia" Foundation, aimed to encourage and facilitate a technical discussion between artists, tertiary sector bodies, teachers, universities and insiders of the themes linked to Hip hop as a tool for regeneration and rebuilding the concept of community in social marginality contexts, devoted to contribute in the development of educational processes, co-planning of experimental pathways, the promotion of good practices and the definition of common working guidelines.







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## Keep It Real

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from - to  
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