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Napster and beyond: How online music  
can transform the dynamics of musical  
production and consumption in DIY subcultures  
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## Abstract

Online music distribution has been changing since Napster first appeared in 1999, and it certainly caused several impacts on musical production, distribution, consumption and sharing dynamics, particularly among those subcultures that are notoriously active at the margins of the music industry. This paper aims to discuss how the emergence of Napster opened a way for producing, sharing and consuming music that has benefited DIY youth cultures in Brazil, with a special focus on the straight edge community in the city of São Paulo. This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2011 and 2013, which had online music as a permeating analytical subject. Even after three decades of existence, straight edge still has significant activities around music festivals and DIY musical production, affirming that the Internet — from Napster to social networks — improved their access to the international scene and bands (mainly through downloads, authorized or illicit), as much as it has served as a window for showing their own work to the world. Online music has a crucial role in São Paulo straight edge: some bands cannot release an LP, but they can put it on the Internet to share with potentially interested people and with friends. Moreover, the simultaneity of distributive forms is also interesting, since both digital music and vinyl records co-occur among them. Furthermore, discussions around piracy and 'illegal' digital file sharing are an important feature of this context, stressing the perspectives straight edgers have on copyright — whether it belongs to them or to other parties.

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## Introduction

Access to equipment, studios, and distribution channels has been improving in São Paulo in recent decades. The most significant transformations for musical production, distribution and consumption came with the emergence of MP3 files, and the model of distribution associated with the creation of Napster by Sean Park and Shawn Fanning in 1999. Together with increasing Internet penetration rates and the availability of IT equipment, these advances made online music a reality for many people around the world.

This new technological context impacted on the music industry's business models, but it also impacted just as profoundly on the youngsters creating music at its margins. DIY (do-it-yourself) bands, collectives and festivals were also influenced by the possibility of recording their music at home, posting it on YouTube or Bandcamp, releasing online albums, arranging tours on other continents, downloading music from other DIY communities, sharing their

material through the Internet, and seeing people come to their shows and sing their songs together — even if the bands have never released an LP.

It is important to think about Napster's legacy, 15 years on, not only in terms of the "mainstream" industry, but also for those producing and consuming music on different logics. The creation of Napster was a turning point in the history of the music industry (Menn, 2003) — particularly when we talk about recording business models, since actual transformations on the concentration of power and resources in the recording industry became more evident with the dissemination of the Internet, as part of a global digitization process. The emergence and development of new information and communication was associated with several economical, social, political and cultural rearrangements. The field of music was hugely impacted by these changes, especially with the advent of the MP3 format for audio files. By compressing the audio and decreasing the size of the file, music could be widely shared over the Internet without significant loss of quality (Coleman, 2005). While the Internet was expanding, spreading new audio and videos formats, and growing in its number of users, there was also an increase in the legal and "illegal" circulation of culture, information and knowledge through the network. New forms of cultural consumption occurred simultaneously with a decline in the production costs involved in manipulating audio, video, images and texts, and an expansion in opportunities to create and distribute music online.

With this in mind, this paper addresses how online music transformed the dynamics of musical production and consumption for the straight edge subculture in Brazil. Established in the city of São Paulo since the 1990s, it had its origins in the punk scene of the 1980s.

Until today, this subculture is organized around festivals called Verdurada — organized by a collective by the same name — and it sits within a broader hardcore punk scene. According to my fieldwork findings, and as discussed in previous works from Thornton (1996), Wood (2006), and Driver (2011), a subcultural framework remains valid to describe certain youth cultures, particularly when focusing on processes of 'becoming' and on how a subculture "feels". [1] In this case, for instance, we have people directly involved with Verdurada becoming 40 years old, and yet continuing to identify as straight edge.

The hardcore punk scene was established before straight edge emerged in Brazil and, despite some changes over the last decades, it is still active and features a diverse range of bands, from militant anarchy-lesbo-feminist, to the traditional punk bands whose singers are celebrating their fiftieth birthdays. The straight edge subculture can be seen as immersed in this scene, dialoguing with it, but having some delimited boundaries as to what really makes a person a straight edger who can feel as one or identify with them. Straight edge is characterized by its militancy on sobriety and veganism, as well as by its political activism and the struggle for autonomy through a deep DIY culture.

On the daily struggle for autonomy, straight edgers usually put themselves out of the "mainstream versus independent" dichotomy, claiming to be DIY. The thinking is that being independent is still somehow profit driven, while DIY has no interest in market participation and claims autonomy from the commercial mainstream and from government and private sponsorship. Haenfler (2006) summarizes the opposition between mainstream reality and DIY hardcore ideals as in [Table 1](#), below:

<b>Table 1: Mainstream reality versus DIY hardcore ideals.</b>	
Source: Haenfler, 2006, p. 171.	
<b>Mainstream</b>	<b>Hardcore</b>
Impersonal (such as barriers at shows)	Personal relationships
Musicians = professional performers	Musicians = fans
Commercial business	Art
Commodity	Community
Professionalization (such as promoters)	DIY

The Internet and its platforms greatly improved DIY organizational mechanisms and the capacity for DIY subcultures to create music and to disseminate it across the world. The legacy of Napster and digital music distribution can be regarded as community empowerment, the reinvigoration of shared passion for music, and a re-signification of intellectual property infringement, especially copyright. Indeed, Napster had a central role in this process, opening doors and giving people the opportunity to share culture and information worldwide. It is not that DIY subcultures, like this one in São Paulo, would not exist without it — they invariably develop novel solutions to their challenges. But online music and the Internet have certainly provided tools and opportunities that a punk kid in the 1980s could only dream about.

This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out between 2011 and 2013 with online music as a permeating analytical subject. The methodological approach was both theoretical (engaging with previous research in the field, including the discussion in Cultural Studies concerning subcultures, scenes and identity) and empirical (two years of fieldwork, including participant observation, interviews, survey application and netnography) [2].



### **Hardcore punk, DIY and autonomy**

The promotion of DIY ideals is often connected to punk and hardcore. This ethos reflects, according to Dunn (2008), an intentional transformation of punks from passive mass media consumers to cultural production agents — starting from the notion that any youngster can get an electric guitar, learn some chords and start a band. Punk fanzines taught readers how to play, make a record, distribute this record and schedule shows. Some publications brought useful tips, like *Maximumrocknroll* [3], which created a research source for the global scene, called *Book Your Own Fucking Life* [4], making things easier for those who wanted to come together and do something for the scene.

Cooperation and autonomy in this context is very evident in O'Connor's work (2008), which studied 61 independent and DIY labels in the United States, Canada and Spain, showing scene dynamics, difficulties and community values in the struggle to accomplish hardcore punk's ideal of autonomy. The author bases his work in the idea of autonomy (as pursued by the labels), describing an autonomous organization as one in which the order that governs it is established by its own members, and not by people from outside. It is very difficult for a label to be completely autonomous — occasionally, it may be obliged to pay taxes, to register itself with the government and to sign legal contracts with bands (O'Connor, 2008). However, autonomy for punk labels is usually spoken of in relation to major labels.

Since 1981, hardcore punk involves small-scale production, with small labels. According to O'Connor (2008), a lot of people who are involved with the scene are able to manage their activities due to parallel jobs and a low cost lifestyle. Social support is available from others living the same lifestyle; people with more free time are able to maintain spaces for socializing. This social support allows people to make music that has little or no commercial impact. In this context, there are independent DIY labels, and commercial labels — which usually have some kind of contract with majors (mainly to distribute their products).

People who are more engaged in the scene were very critical of bands and labels who 'sold' themselves by signing with majors, since this action would weaken the smaller labels and the scene itself (O'Connor, 2008). Thus, if successful bands decide to leave this underground community, which does not work for money, but for other values, the entire autonomy of the scene is weakened.

Anyway, it is not easy to maintain a label, DIY or independent, as other activities are required to pay the bills: recording studios, silk-screening band t-shirts, e-commerce of punk music and distribution, etc. (O'Connor, 2008). Record distribution is one of the independent label's biggest problems. As will be seen below, most of the bands at Verdurada are not trying to make a living through their music, and DIY labels are really trying, at the minimum, to cover their expenses with album releases and continue to operate according to DIY principles.

Currently, according to O'Connor (2008), one of the remarkable challenges faced by DIY labels is music downloading. Some small labels saw music downloading as something similar to the cassette sharing practices of a generation before. Punks download music, and many labels

rapidly created Web sites to sell products online and to promote their bands. They have been organizing themselves around digital sales, including distributors who offer this service for a fee. Some bands that cannot sell physical discs end up having surprising results in online sales. However, it could be in the combination of MP3 and vinyl that the future of punk rock resides:

The future is anybody's guess. It is likely that in the punk scene there will be a resurgence of vinyl. Record turntables are still being manufactured. Kids are digging around basements and attics for the stereo system their parents put into storage when they bought a CD player. A new generation of turntables can turn vinyl into MP3 files. Punks love vinyl and the older generation never accepted the CD format. [...] In the United States an efficient DIY punk distribution system survived the 1990s and is set up to deal with vinyl records. We may even see a demand for reissues of out-of-print records by kids who regard the CD as an inferior and disposable format. [5]

According to Galuszka (2012), the importance of these independent labels to musical production is very clear — as is the relevance of netlabels — especially in an increasingly digitized context:

It may be difficult to evaluate the process of democratization of the music industry solely on the basis of the record sales numbers. The reason is that large numbers of artists who release their music on the Internet do not do it with the purpose of entering the charts or even selling any records. My argument is that the advent of the Internet and digitalization made it possible to distribute recordings that were made for reasons other than profit. Democratization of the recording industry in this context could be understood as a process in which amateur and aspiring artists gain — at least in theory — access to listeners all around the world without the mediation of the profit-oriented record labels (Galuszka, 2012).

At the end of the 1990s it was evident that digital distribution of music would be the future: digital recording, laser printers, MP3 and CD recorders at home were already abundant, meaning that anyone could achieve an unprecedented vertical integration — producing, recording, packing and distributing their own songs. In the words of Azerrad [6]: "the Internet allows DIY to range far beyond anyone's wildest dreams".

One of the most significant examples of punk as a counter-hegemonic mode of communication is the constant trust deposited in informal and decentralized networks, since while the music industry seized elements from an idealized punk culture, the global punk scene can be characterized by a flux of vinyl, tapes, CDs, fanzines and bands that exceed the constraints imposed by capitalist corporations — bands have a central role in strengthening these networks: "touring bands usually established bridges between social networks and acted as conduits of ideas, styles and other communication aspects among national and international punk scenes." [7] And it was this flux that helped punk scenes, and thus straight edge, to be consolidated around the world, including in Brazil.



### Digital music and straight edge in Brazil

Straight edge (sXe) is usually described as a movement originating in the U.S. during the 1980s, specifically, in Washington, D.C. Minor Threat, Ian MacKaye's former band, was its prominent trigger, with the song "Straight Edge" back in 1981. The straight edge arose in some way as a contraposition to the punk scene of the period, searching for a life free of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, but adopting also several aspects from the hardcore punk ethos.

Other aspects delimitating the straight edge identity vary from scene to scene, depending on the local context, such as veganism/vegetarianism, DIY culture, political activism and an attitude of anti-promiscuity, for example.

This movement has been known for decades for its advocacy for a sober, drug free life, adopting the X as a symbol of representation and mutual recognition at hardcore punk scenes. The X was initially used to mark the back of underage hands, in order to distinguish minors at hardcore punk shows in venues that sold alcoholic beverages in D.C., but it ended up being incorporated by the straight edgers to represent their choice for sobriety (Haenfler, 2006; Wood, 2006).

Very quickly, the sXe principles of sobriety spread to other corners of the world, arriving in Brazil in the same decade — the first reference to straight edge in the country is from 1982, on the cover of the *Grito Suburbano* album. Sao Paulo, the largest city in Brazil and home to a diverse range of scenes and subcultures, houses an active straight edge subculture that is still producing festivals and other events. They are organized around a collective named Verdurada [8], created in 1996, that promotes a homonymous festival involving sobriety, hardcore punk bands, veganism and political activism, all according to DIY principles.

André Mesquita [9], probably one of the most longstanding members of the collective, says that Verdurada started at the beginning of the 1990s, with some friends who arranged hardcore shows at their own houses. Some of them were part of a group called *Juventude Libertária*, composed of straight edgers and anarchopunks. This group ended around 1994–95, with some of them forming the S.E.L.F. (Straight Edge Life Frame). At that time, Verdurada was basically hardcore shows featuring friends' bands. According to André, the scene was very small then, with 40 or 50 people (of which five or six were girls). They organized hardcore shows and asked people to bring vegan food, until 1996, when they decided to make Verdurada an open event.

That year, when the band Shelter performed in Brazil, André told me how impressed he was with the number of unfamiliar people with Xs on their hands. At the beginning of Verdurada, information was circulated largely by word of mouth, through posters in the streets, and especially through fanzines:

It was a time when few people had access to Internet and to divergent political information. Information still circulated through fanzines. Younger people have no idea of how to make a fanzine with photocopies and glue. At Verdurada, back in 1997, people would put up a few stalls with imported discs, some Brazilians release and a lot of material like fanzines. Thanks to these things, I discovered a lot (André, 34 years old).

The DIY ethic marks out several aspects of the collective and the festivals, as it does with the other agents involved in the broader hardcore punk scene: labels, bands, and vegan food providers. On a regular day at Verdurada, you can find a wide range of DIY culture, from a small stand selling feminist material with DIY herbal abortion methods, to merchandise, zines, t-shirts, records and people that sell their own vegan food. Often, before the final show, there is an informal talk on topics relevant to the collective: women's rights, direct action, real estate speculation and squatting, current environmental issues, etc. At the end of the day, they distribute a free vegan dinner for all the participants.

These festivals happen periodically, without a fixed venue, but always close to the public transportation system. The festival brings together several bands, most of them being outsiders even on 'independent' circuits. They claim to be DIY, delimiting clearly that they are not part of the alternative networks of independent artists gaining strength in Brazil — such as the Fora do Eixo (FDE) [10], as will be discussed.

During my fieldwork the Verdurada collective consisted of 13 people, each one with specific roles, from planning the next Verdurada in advance to finding a venue, renting sound equipment, choosing the next bands, getting entrance bracelets, producing and placing posters, sending release material to their listservs, selling tickets in advance, getting bottled water, defining the next events' stalls, organizing the provision of food, posting information about the event on social networks, and so on. The tasks are not rigid; members exchange their jobs among themselves. On the day of the event, some members stay at the door, selling tickets; others stay in the kitchen; two will take care of the sound; André will conduct

the talk; someone manages the schedule and another person walks around, checking everything. At the end of the shows, a group is responsible for preparing and serving the dinner, outside the venue. The money raised from the festivals stays in a bank account and it is used to pay the venue the next time, as well as renting the sound equipment and paying for any other necessities. It is also used to pay the bands that perform at the festivals, especially those from outside the city (in this case, the money will serve to pay also for the travel expenses). According to André, for some time now they have no losses:

We had some losses and had to pay from our own pockets — not much — but we managed to regain it. For some time now we have no big loss; nowadays we sell anticipated tickets, lots of people buy them, and on the day we sell the remaining ones. It is enough to keep Verdurada working, although rent is very expensive nowadays (André, 34 years old).

The number of attendees varies a lot, in accordance with the size of the rented space, usually ranging from 600 to 1,000 people. André states that Internet has been very helpful to publicize festivals — filling a venue is not hard and sometimes they even sell out.

The Internet and its new platforms are considered revolutionary in a DIY community like this, they are understood to be important tools in engaging youngsters in different kinds of global communication, bringing new resources to improve their expression, and putting them in contact with other scenes around the world. Punk bands and independent labels usually have their own online pages, allowing communication with an international audience, distribution of music without intermediaries, and sale of merchandise (Haenfler, 2006).

The Internet is considered one of the most important mediums for the straight edge subculture and its members, as it allows an unprecedented access to the music and to the subculture's history, not only inside one country, but also around the whole world. Besides, organizing and marketing shows turns out to be an easier task: "booking shows, signing and promoting bands, and finding venues are all easier with the advent of e-mail. For these reasons, many sXers believe the Internet has greatly benefited the underground music scene."

[11]

The virtual community that is formed can be compared to the physical one; chat rooms and online forums can be considered "subcultural spaces" (Haenfler, 2006) where members socialize much as if they were inside a record store or a club. Face-to-face interaction is still very important to people in the Brazilian straight edge subculture, but they also use Facebook groups, e-mail and the mobile app Whatsapp to socialize and exchange information. Recently, sexist attitudes and 'porn revenge' from some straight edge men on a Whatsapp group led to several discussions about online privacy, respect and sexism inside both the sXe subculture and the hardcore punk scene. Outsiders, especially feminist groups and bands, usually look on Verdurada as sexist, homophobic and male-dominated; this episode, as much as the leaked information, raised the issue once again.

From the interviews and participant observation at Verdurada, I noted that the Internet is used in quite an objective or instrumental way. The most used platforms for organizing the event range from social networks (Facebook and Orkut at the time) to e-mail. The main objective is to publicize information regarding the festivals:

Verdurada uses the Internet in a very simple way: direct mail, site updates (in HTML), and posting on Facebook, Orkut and Twitter also helped a lot. Flickr is also a way to keep a live archive, with posters. Internet certainly made distribution easier. (André, 34 years old)

Regarding the use of social networks, the collective now uses Twitter and Facebook (where as of August 2014 they had a group with more than 1,800 members, and a page with more than 2,600 likes at the same time), as Orkut will finish its operations on 30 September 2014. On Verdurada's Facebook page it is possible to find advertisements for events, labels and record shops, links to vegan Web sites, discussions about festivals, advertisements for bands, calls to activism, links to videos about straightedge and veganism and so on.

To Verdurada's attendees, regarding the changes brought by the Internet to the straightedge subculture, new technologies give dynamism and new impetus to the scene and to Verdurada.



National scenes can be more integrated, just as the exchange of information and material with international scenes were facilitated. At some point, people from other cities — and even countries — were inspired by the Verdurada, creating events based on its dynamics in Piracicaba, Sorocaba and Itapira, for example.

While discussing Internet's impacts, downloads and "illegal" digital file sharing issues are also debated in the subculture:

Younger sXers are part of the music downloading and CD burning generation, which raises its own set of question within the scene. Does downloading or burning music fit into the hardcore philosophy? Download may thwart the commercial aspects of making music but it also potentially undermines independent record labels' abilities to make enough money to produce the next record. [12]

According to Haenfler (2006), music downloading is accepted by community members, especially under the following circumstances:

1. When people download a song to check if they like the band enough to buy a record later;
2. To get old and/or unavailable songs, or in similar situations;
3. To get music from major artists.

The sale of band materials in small stands during shows has a fundamental role in their survival and marketing. This practice — called *merch* in Brazil (derived from the English word merchandise) — of selling records, clothes and band accessories has a sacred value, according to Haenfler (2006): besides being memories of that experience, the public see merch as a quasi-obligation to support bands — at the same time that bands had hope in selling enough items to pay for the fuel and food until the next tour stop. Kids saw the act of buying merchandise not only as an exchange of money for goods, but also as an obligation to keep the scene alive. The Internet brought merchandise sales to a whole new level, helping bands to put their material online for sale.

The Internet's role inside these subcultures is significant: there are forums to discuss the movement's values, festivals and events, buy and exchange records, answer surveys, download music, etc. With social media, it became easier to share music, to meet people, to discuss and spread the word about shows, gigs and events, thus strengthening the community.

In Brazil, the role of the Internet and digital music is relevant to the organization and autonomy of the straight edge subculture. Through the interviews with Verdurada's collective, I discovered that the DIY ethic is one of the greatest motivations to continue organizing the festivals and an essential condition for the event's existence. The idea of DIY guides Verdurada's conception, the selection of bands, the collective's actions, the products, t-shirts and accessories sold and so on.

Verdurada does not see itself framed inside the current Brazilian independent circuit; they prefer to stand in the margins, believing themselves to be autonomous, and applying DIY principles to the festivals, bands and labels.

As I found, there are people who have been involved with the Verdurada collective for over a decade. When questioned about their motivations to continue actively participating and claiming a straight edge identity, the answers converged on same points: they believe in the value and importance of this event for youngsters and for the hardcore punk scene, and they like to be with friends and to live for something that makes a difference.

It is an event that I don't know any other thing similar. It doesn't gather only music and that's what is most important. It is not just a show; it is an event that brings discussions about topics that are interesting to us (...). I'm still believing in Verdurada's importance and we are a very united group, very cool (Daniela, 31 years old).

I really like Verdurada because it is not just a rock show for the kids; I think there is something more and there is a very clear political objective there, which is to take the DIY forward. We always try to show that DIY is possible (Felipe, 37 years old).

We can promote a vegetarian lifestyle and do something that does not fit in the current patterns. We really want to produce things to show that DIY is possible — you can do a lot without bounds to the government or even sponsorship; we can create our own musical scene (Iran, 22 years old).

Being absolutely DIY is also a challenge, which they have apparently been dealing with satisfactorily in recent years: they have been able to produce events with sold out tickets; event organization is commendable, with good marketing; punctuality, food and drinks are available over the entire day with one dinner that always gather big queues at the end of the shows. According to Pedro, Verdurada is not part of the so-called independent festivals circuit in Brazil, and he believes this is a good thing, since they consider themselves to be DIY, not merely independent.

I think that many years ago a clear delimitation between the independent, autonomous guy versus the major guy still existed. Today this difference is blurred, and I would tell you that a DIY artist is someone that has full control over all levels of his production. The other difference is being part of a community and having a collaborative relation with the others, especially with the people that like his band — going beyond music commercialization and a consumer-artist relationship. An important question here is that the DIY artist is also his audience, and his audience knows that they could also be on the stage (Pedro, 34 years old).

Marcelo also shares this same point of view, affirming that he only wants to produce inside the DIY community, not aiming to go anywhere else. And, for me, it really appeared that people believe they belong to a community, with their friends, trying to produce in an autonomous way, differently from the outsiders:

For me, the DIY principle is based on the idea that you can make activities that are usually delegated to other people/institutions. It helps to maintain your autonomy (André, 34 years old).

[DIY] is something that both the punk and the hardcore taught us: if you feel uncomfortable with this, DIY (Carol, 18 years old).

DIY is all about doing fanzines, organizing gigs, starting a band — and people don't get it. Only by being involved in this community, producing inside it, it is already a political act. DIY is basically being able to produce without needing anyone besides people who believe in you, in the community. People help each other. (Iran, 22 years old)

During the field research, I felt that they like to point out the differences between the straight edge subculture that runs around Verdurada and the independent scene in São Paulo. For reasons such as not looking for profit, not expecting to live by their music as a profession, not caring about issues that affect the music industry (like "illegal" digital file sharing), not wishing to reach an intermediary music circuit, and for believing they live and produce inside a cooperative community, this group of people differentiate themselves from other Brazilian independent music collectives, such as FDE.



Music plays a central role in Verdurada though, and all the time people told me about the importance of supporting the community and covering the expenses. Besides all the 'love' and efforts they claim to put into DIY, it is commonsense for them that bands, and especially labels, should get paid for their expenses when performing at gigs and releasing albums (online or not). Iran, who plays in some bands and was starting his own label at the time, affirmed vehemently that a DIY band should also get paid for their efforts, performances, travel expenses and so on. Being in a DIY community should not be synonymous with losing money, even if people are not making a living from this activity.

Even online practices to promote music production and distribution are treated with a certain suspicion by some straight edgers, such as crowdfunding initiatives for musical production. They seem to be okay with crowdfunding for other cultural activities (movies, for instance), but in their point of view, today anyone can afford to record music and distribute it, at least online, without the need of thousands of BRL to make an album.

One of the most prominent consequences of the appropriation of new technologies is the decreasing price of multimedia equipment, which allegedly promotes democratization of cultural and informational production. Indeed, bands say that nowadays is much easier to record, edit, produce and distribute music. The internet penetration rate in Brazilian households is increasing, but it still does not cover half the population — 48 percent in urban areas in 2013, according to CGI [13] — but if you look at lower income classes, this rate can be as low as eight percent — and the low quality of the services is still a serious issue in the country, despite some attempts to universalize the service. At least at Verdurada's collective, everyone has regular access to Internet and its platforms.

All the bands that I studied during the fieldwork had at a minimum a MySpace or Bandcamp page. MySpace, for instance, allows music downloading and streaming, upload of photos, tour dates, general information about the band and interaction with other account holders. Bandcamp is a similar platform, which allows music downloading and streaming (under Creative Commons licenses), posting lyrics, record releases and contact information. The bands that played at Verdurada had at least one account with one of these platforms, as well as Facebook pages and in some cases their own Web site, as well as content posted on YouTube. Nevertheless, discussions about the role of these platforms in the economic and social context of the Internet, especially YouTube (owned by Google) and Facebook, are not raised as they should be. Besides being free of charge to the users and having a large audience around the world, these companies profit from specific business models based, for instance, on targeted advertising following user's online behavior (on Facebook), and monetization of content posted by users (on YouTube). There are also privacy and data issues that should be taken into account. Today, although YouTube does in some senses help independent and DIY artists, it is important to shed a critical light on its role, as much as on its relations with big companies and major labels for music distribution.

Digital file sharing and music downloading are consolidated as everyday practices among straight edgers and those who attend the Verdurada. Nonetheless, there is a widespread idea that it is important to keep the hardcore punk scene active, supporting the bands, buying their recordings and EPs from DIY record labels. When talking about "illegal" file sharing and downloading, the answers about it were clear:

I do download music, but if I find something from a band that I really enjoy, I will buy their stuff. The problem with the music industry, for me, relies on the fact that it created an aura of disposability. Everything has to be very pleasant to sell out soon and then they can sell even more. And now they [music industry] are becoming the victims of this: everything is so disposable that no one wants more — and finally people have the chance to not buy it. There are stuffs that you download, listen to, say 'It's crap' and then throw it out (Felipe, 37 years old).

I think it is problematic. For instance: after one week that we launched our split, there was one Web site in Russia where you could download it. Something that was made by four DIY labels investing money and needing to retrieve it. So, I believe that things should

be more balanced, both in this side or when you distribute an MP3 — which I think is fair; people must have this freedom and the right to share. But it cannot harm and destroy our own network. It is one thing when you harm Mariah Carey, who sells 150 thousand albums; another thing is when you harm Seven Eight Life [local DIY label], who makes only one thousand albums (Marcelo, 38 years old).

If I told you that I'm against [music downloading] at any level, I would be the most hypocritical person in the universe; I'm doing my part on the destruction of the entertainment industry (Pedro, 34 years old).

This MP3 thing made everything easier — when I was a master's candidate, I had to choose between buying discs/vinyl or buying books, so I couldn't use my scholarship money with that. That's why vinyl culture doesn't work for me. People are always saying: 'if some Brazilian band recorded an album, we should buy it instead of downloading it'. Or try to do a paid download at Bandcamp. People have been using this kind of tool, but it is not very explored; it could be bigger, in my opinion (André, 34 years old).

It is clear that the downloading of content (generally "illegally" available) is a recurrent practice among straight edgers, principally if one considers the access to culture approach (in André's words) or by not agreeing with the recording industry business models (Pedro). However, as Marcelo addresses the question, it is obvious that music downloading should not affect the community, since musicians and labels invest money and efforts to make what they love, trying to sell it for a fair price. The interviewers find it very inappropriate and unfair to pirate Brazilian DIY music (through CDs or illegal downloads). But, in fact, most of the bands put their work online free of charge, decreasing the chances for illegal piracy.

From the survey [14] with people attending Verdurada (most respondents range from 15 to 25 years old, are males, and belong to the middle class), it was clear that the Internet has a central role in the underground scene, allowing them to download music, interact with bands via social media, search for content, book tours, and interact with people from other scenes around the world. Some claimed that the greatest advantage of the illicit music download is to allow them to check to see if it is interesting, and then buy the record album. Also, before digital music became more accessible in the country, people had a very limited range of options on music and bands — especially in the smaller cities or among those in the lower income classes. Some people affirm that the Internet and digital music improve the visibility of the scene's bands, as much as they enhance the promotion of the DIY festivals. According to C.B. (21 years old): "if it weren't by the Internet, I wouldn't know Verdurada and what the fuck is straight edge. I think that Internet took the entire scene to something beyond the word of mouth".

When we talk about downloading music — produced by bands from the scene or outside it — the opinions are very similar to the one stated by L.G. (27 years old):

It is the current reality [downloads], I don't have anything against it — quite the opposite — it is like access to knowledge: it must be open to everyone. I play in three bands, I've recorded with another in which I don't play anymore and I don't care if people download music for free. What I really want is that everyone listens to it. Moreover, I was the first to "pirate" it and put it online. One does not earn any money with CDs. What people shall do is to forget this thing of pressing a disc and putting a cover on it. You should do a home record, which is perfectly possible to be done with a fair quality nowadays, and put it for download. *It is a matter of changing your perspective, and people who are from an underground scene and*

*defends DIY should know and have a better understanding of this context.* The more people know and like your music, the more they are going to your show, then you start talking about paying the expenses and, who knows, to have a surplus.

The idea that people are not earning money from music to make a living appeared several times during fieldwork, as much as the discourse on the importance of covering the expenses to produce music. W.L. (21 years old) also thinks "music downloading is a reality and a great tool for band marketing. People who listen to music and get interested end up coming to shows, buying material, indirectly supporting the band". L.A. (21 years old), who owns a distro, a publisher and a producing house, says:

Usually I download [music] and, if I like the band, I buy their physical record to help them. I buy more things from national bands; from international bands I prefer to download it, since they have more structure to keep their career. This is different for national bands, which depends on CD sales, t-shirts, etc. [...] I think music download is important to know the band and also to reduce the resources to produce something. But I think it is important to buy physical materials from the band. We need to reach a balance and learn to identify who just wants some revenue and who wants to build something that is really good. [...] the Internet is a great tool to publicize, to discover new bands, to get information. There are a lot of blogs and Web sites over there marketing bands, there are places to download albums, it is very nice and productive, but the scene cannot sustain itself with YouTube videos, downloads and Facebook chats. It needs people to attend shows, to buy band material and establish real friendships.

This emphasis on the need to sustain the scene in real life also appears in international cases, as seen before. Several people stressed the importance of access to music, knowing the band's production through the Internet, but asserted that if one likes it, more needs to happen than simply watching their videos on YouTube. This means going to their shows, buying their records and t-shirts, and helping the band to continue its work.

The music industry has been fighting an arduous battle against "illegal" file sharing and so-called piracy, pressing countries to adopt enforcement mechanisms against copyright violations in legislation — as well as filing disproportionately punitive lawsuits against people who consume music in this way. One of the findings regarding this subject is that people connected to the subculture with whom I talked to do not seem to care about copyright issues. As long as people do not use their work for commercial purposes and give the right attribution, reproduction and sharing are free.

I believe that most people do not have this worry [copyright]; they know the money comes from other things, that's the truth. What they want more is to sustain their work than to earn money. [...] One day, if the music industry goes bankrupt, that's fine, because the artist always finds other ways to earn money; everyone knows that musicians do not earn money from music, the amount is minimal. I believe that what labels want is to produce a number of records that do not stay stuck, or that can sustain what was spent. This is a very important preoccupation, in my opinion (André, 34 years old).

I think music must be shared, [...] I believe a band must distribute their music and find other ways to earn money; this scheme where bands sell music in the Internet, as was the case of Radiohead some time ago

— you pay what you think the music is worth — I think this proposal is cool. It is honest with the public. The bands we invite [to Verdurada] do not have a lot of problems with that, because they are already independent. And I think this is very nice on their part, that's why I like this scene. People are making music, they know fans are going to buy their music because we are supporting the band. For instance, I don't download music for free from an independent band, because I believe it is unfair. What I do not want is to support an immense industry that turns music into commodities (Daniela, 31 years old).

It is not that we worry about our own stuff's copyright. Our preoccupation about this is next to zero. Regarding copyright, I think it is important, it is interesting, and we go back to that issue regarding the Internet having created, for instance, new ways to distribute cultural goods, which is increasingly important. I believe that to subvert copyright logic is a very progressive thing, because it is a prognostic of a new way to distribute any kind of goods (Pedro, 34 years old).

Regarding piracy — which for them seems to mean selling physical media copied without the artist's or label's authorization — people turned out to be resistant, because the idea of copying a DIY band's album seems inappropriate:

I think [piracy] is an answer to the industry. I've read a very nice text when all this MegaUpload uproar started but I don't remember where I found it, it was a blog, and it started like this: Yes, I'm a pirate because you, industry, took all my money for many years and didn't do a good job, so I will keep pirating you, because even if I pay you, you'll keep not doing a good job. Why do you pick a CD that ends up having a cost price of BRL 4 and sells it for BRL 40? Why should I pay to Ivete Sangalo [famous Brazilian singer] to live in a mansion and drive a limousine everywhere? I do not care to pay to Ian MacKaye [former Minor Threat singer] because I know where this guy lives. An ordinary life, with no glamour (Felipe, 37 years old).

In the hardcore scene, the thing is so underground that you don't need to pirate it, see? If someone likes the stuff, they will buy it. If he does not want to buy, he will download it. I have nothing against downloading. If someone gets my band's album, makes some copies with a blank CD and start to sell it, I'll say: 'Dude, are you kidding me?' But this isn't for me, but for the label, which spends some money to make this album and sell it for BRL 15. To the guy who does not have the money to buy the record, that's easy: he downloads it. [...] All our albums are available for downloading. (Iran, 22 years old).

Given that most people in the subculture are not trying to make a living as musicians — everyone that I talked to had a parallel job (researchers, journalists, editors, interns, etc.) — they do not consider their bands a way to make money and pay the bills. The idea of autonomy is broadly present, as much as the idea of making music for 'love' or authenticity, highlighting the importance of the access to their work in Brazil and abroad. At the same time, they want to recognize and defend the work put in by all the DIY agents involved. The prices are already low, with a reduced profit margin.

In this process of creativity feedback, which Benkler (2006) describes as an “On the shoulders of giants” effect, ideas need to be free to circulate and to form new ideas, because that’s the way culture is generated. Bands are inspired by other bands and by other musical and art productions to write their songs and to produce music. Especially in the DIY context, it does not make any sense to block ideas with copyright and engage with other such mechanisms, because it is a community who cooperate and produce together in the struggle for autonomy.




## Conclusion

The technological changes commonly associated with the advent of Napster raised the opportunity to develop digital music distribution, helping both independent and DIY artists to produce and distribute music without the old intermediaries. The advances of Web 2.0 and more specific music-oriented platforms have greatly impacted those who produce inside subcultures, even in the absence of the discussion as to whether these platforms (such as YouTube) are new intermediaries of the culture or “enemies” of autonomy. It is important to stress that digital music is not replacing other media, such as vinyl — still widely used by straight edge DIY labels. This is evidence of a tendency to mutual existence of these two ways of experiencing music.

When you deal with digital music from a DIY perspective, the issues that concern mainstream agents and artists, such as copyright and piracy, gain another meaning and do not bear the import they have been carrying in recent years.

The music industry is not going to disappear any time soon, as much as people will continue to produce music in different logics, from independent to DIY or any other form between them. What is worth noting is the legacy that Napster and p2p networks left for us, democratizing musical production and consumption, and facilitating, at the same time, the life of those working in the margins of the huge business that music has become.

Despite these comings and goings, it is important to acknowledge that people involved in the straight edge subculture, specially those who have an active role — be it organizing festivals, forming a band or doing other kinds of creative work — have a clear notion that new technologies can be used to subvert corporate logics of production and sharing of culture. The Internet has profoundly affected this subculture, and shown that DIY can be even more cooperative and dynamic, that the struggle for autonomy has great means at its disposal, and at the same time, the face-to-face interaction and support to the community is still absolutely vital to take into account. 

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## Notes

1. Driver, 2011, p. 987.

2. It is important to highlight that I do not identify myself as straight edge, neither do I

participate actively in this subculture; but I have cultural proximity, as I am vegan and I have attended hardcore gigs for many years in São Paulo — which, in my point of view, gave me potential advantages during the fieldwork.

3. See <http://maximumrocknroll.com/>.

4. See <http://www.byofl.org/>.

5. O'Connor, 2008, p. 82.

6. Azerrad, 2001, p. 500.

7. Dunn, 2008, pp. 202–203.

8. See <http://www.verdurada.org/>.

9. In-depth interviews were conducted in São Paulo and by Skype/Telephone. The ages shown here represent the alleged age at the time I spoke to them. Please see the [Appendix](#) for more information.

10. Fora do Eixo (FDE) is a Brazilian network of cultural collectives created in 2005, which has been dramatically growing since then. Having Pablo Capilé as a “founder”, along with other artists and cultural producers, it has the goal of promoting cultural exchange in regions located outside the axis of Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo. It focused initially on independent musical production, but is now also engaged with other artistic expression, such as cinema, visual arts and theater — at the same time that it is now also expanding its actions through Latin America. Criticism has been directed at their so-called independent network of cultural production, for the fact it receives money both from the government and from private initiatives, to the organization, and that it is said to be horizontal, decentralized and collaborative, but raised many recent debates around authorship and appropriation of works inside the collective.

11. Haenfler, 2006, p. 178.

12. Haenfler, 2006, p. 181.

13. *Comitê Gestor da Internet* (Brazilian Internet Steering Committee), 2013, at <http://cetic.br/tics/usuarios/2013/total-brasil/A4/>, accessed in 27 August 2014.

14. The survey was applied at the shows and online, through Verdurada’s profile in Facebook. The total of questionnaires answered were 128, with open and closed questions. Here, I preferred to keep respondents anonymous by using their initials.

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## Appendix

List of in-depth interviews by name, date and place or 'Skype' (in the case of Skype interviews):

1. Pedro Carvalho, 09 October 2012, Skype.
2. André Mesquita, 27 January 2012, São Paulo.
3. Daniela Madureira, 02 June 2012, São Paulo.
4. Felipe Madureira, 06 May 2012, São Paulo.
5. Iran Costa, 20 July 2012, Skype.
6. Marcelo Fonseca, 03 July 2012, Skype.

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