

**DIGITAL CULTURE, VIRTUAL SOCIABILITY AND INDEPENDENT MUSIC IN  
BRAZIL: CONNECTIONS, INTERFACES AND CONSUMPTION<sup>1\*</sup>**

***CULTURA DIGITAL, SOCIABILIDADE VIRTUAL E MÚSICA INDEPENDENTE NO  
BRASIL: CONEXÕES, INTERFACES E CONSUMO***

***CULTURA DIGITAL, SOCIABILIDAD VIRTUAL Y MÚSICA INDEPENDIENTE EN  
BRASIL: CONEXIONES, INTERFACES Y CONSUMO***



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**ABSTRACT:** Based on the assumption that new technologies introduce and establish new paradigms and organizational standards, as well as socializing habits, in various domains of human existence, the present study aims to reflect, through a brief literature review, on the continuous transformations and social-economic, political, and cultural changes that humanity has undergone since the invention or emergence of new information and communication technologies. Similarly, it intends to address the innovations that have taken place in the conception, production, and enjoyment of musical works available in designated virtual environments, emphasizing the advancements that technology has brought to the independent sector, particularly in the Brazilian context. In conclusion, it is observed that the internet and its technologies have triggered the emergence of new means, pathways, and concepts for the construction of forms of sociability that encompass both co-creation and the consumption of cultural, material, and immaterial goods in real and virtual spaces.

**KEYWORDS:** Digital culture. Virtual sociability. Consumption. Independent music in Brazil.

**RESUMO:** *Com base no pressuposto de que novas tecnologias introduzem e estabelecem novos paradigmas e padrões de organização, assim como hábitos de socialização, em diversos domínios da existência humana, o presente estudo tem como propósito refletir, por meio de uma breve revisão bibliográfica, sobre as contínuas transformações e mudanças sociais, econômicas, políticas e culturais pelas quais a humanidade passa desde a invenção ou surgimento das novas tecnologias de informação e comunicação. Da mesma forma, pretende-se abordar as inovações ocorridas na concepção, produção e fruição de obras musicais disponíveis em ambientes virtuais designados, com ênfase nos avanços que a tecnologia proporcionou ao setor independente, particularmente no contexto brasileiro. Ao término, conclui-se que a Internet e suas tecnologias têm provocado o surgimento de novos meios, caminhos e conceitos para a construção de formas de sociabilidade que englobam tanto a cocriação quanto o consumo de bens culturais, materiais e/ou imateriais, em espaços reais e virtuais.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Cultura digital. Sociabilidade virtual. Consumo. Música independente no Brasil.*

**RESUMEN:** *Tomando como principio que las nuevas tecnologías inauguran y establecen nuevos paradigmas y patrones de organización, o hábitos de socialización, en los más diversos campos de la existencia humana, este estudio pretende reflexionar, en una breve revisión bibliográfica, sobre las constantes transformaciones y cambios sociales, económicas, políticas y culturales que la humanidad viene atravesando desde la invención o aparición de las nuevas tecnologías de información y comunicación. Del mismo modo, pretende discutir sobre las innovaciones puestas a la concepción, producción y disfrute de obras musicales disponibles en ambientes virtuales designados y, en especial, sobre los avances que la tecnología ha proporcionado al segmento independiente, especialmente en Brasil. Al final, se concluye que Internet y sus tecnologías han provocado el origen de nuevos medios, formas y conceptos para la construcción de sociabilidades que culminan tanto en la co-creación, como en el consumo de bienes culturales, materiales o inmateriales, en espacios reales y virtuales.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Cultura digital. Sociabilidad virtual. Consumo. Música independiente en Brasil*

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## Introduction

A considerable portion of the transformations and changes in contemporary lifestyles can be attributed to the introduction and impact of information and communication technologies in virtually all social relations, be it in politics, economy, or cultural production. Social realities and cultural exchanges, gradually or abruptly, tend to be mediated, intertwined, and supported by electronic media or teleinformacionais<sup>3</sup>, indiscriminately connecting everything and everyone.

In this evolution of "new" or renewed technologies, which has established new paradigms in social, economic, and political contexts, one can observe the imminence of new cultural scenarios, diverse forms of personal relationships, and consumer relationships that overlap with various sectors of life in society. These pieces of information are synchronously or asynchronously in tune with "times without time," available on electronic platforms and telematic networks, virtual and commercial communication, knowledge, and entertainment.

Amidst all these aspects, culture is understood according to the conception attributed by contemporary theorists, such as the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who, based on the studies of the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920), advocates for an essentially semiotic concept of culture, whose meaning encompasses "webs of meaning that man has woven and in which he is entangled" (GEERTZ, 2008, p. 10, our translation). A contemporary approach to culture, regarding its configurations and new implications, also becomes possible based on concepts that include the use of electronic technologies and media, which attribute new adjectives or meanings, as can be observed and verified when considering the existence of studies, research, and terms such as digital culture and cyberculture, designated by the French philosopher and sociologist Pierre Lévy (1999), and the culture of real virtuality, attributed by the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells (2000).

Terms, adjectives, or designations that have emerged and consolidated with the advent and dissemination of interactive communication networks have allowed humanity to integrate, within a single space called cyberspace, the different oral, written, and audiovisual faculties of communication. The implications of this process can alter behaviors, values, and customs.

The main objective of this brief study is to highlight and reflect, albeit briefly, on the innovations and possibilities offered to the production, distribution, listening, use, and

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<sup>3</sup> "Teleinformacional" is a term used to refer to the field of knowledge that encompasses the transmission, processing, and storage of information through telecommunications systems.

enjoyment of musical works available in electronic or virtual environments. Likewise, it will address the possibilities of "independence," especially in Brazil, that the entry of digital culture has imposed on various production and consumption relationships in the realm of musical art, present in digital communities or platforms that organize and operate through intangible yet tangible devices of information and communication technologies and computer networks that sustain the functioning and "materialize" the existence of its central icon, the Internet.

Social and cultural trends, which are marketable and consumable, highlight new ways of thinking (individually or collectively), relating, and intertwining (in person or virtually), made possible by communication techniques and technologies, digitization, and data processing, which concentrate and connect "cinema, radio-television, journalism, publishing, music, telecommunications, and information technology in the same electronic fabric" (LÉVY, 1993, p. 102, our translation). It is a device or mass media in which the production, dissemination, commercialization, and consumption habits of music in digital culture have become topics of interest in various areas of academic research. In one way or another, this fits into and operates within the context of discussions that encompass specific historical periods and social scenarios, in which critics and theorists from various fields of knowledge will attribute terms or designations to outline characteristics and contexts that arise from the relationship between society and technology, such as the "society of the spectacle," "consumer society," and more recently, in the context of social network formation, the designation or label of the "network society."

### **Digital Culture and Virtual Sociability**

Since the invention and emergence of the first computers, which highlighted scientific progress and technological advances, enabling unprecedented means of communication and access to information, there is a consensus in the scientific and academic community about establishing new paradigms that have influenced the course of social transformations. This, in turn, has led to the introduction of distinct variables in human interactions and experiences, especially in personal relationships, cultural production, and exchange, as well as the emergence of new forms of business and consumer desires, whether related to goods, services, or cultural products.

Digital culture is a relatively recent term that reflects the growing trend of encoding and digitizing communication techniques, data processing, information transmission, knowledge

sharing, and exchange from various perspectives resulting from the innovative use of technology and the impact of electronic connections on the structure and practice of social organizations. In other words, digital culture creates and recreates new cultural realities, where we compose with "bits"<sup>4</sup> the images, texts, sounds, assemblages in which we interweave our thoughts or senses" (LÉVY, 1993, p. 63, our translation).

In this sense, it is a consensus among many scholars that digital culture represents the fusion of art, science, technique, and technology through the ephemeral or intangible possibilities of the digital realm. This entails the conversion of analog signals into binary digits in the technical structure of computational language, composed of "ones" and "zeros." The term itself, adopted by various agents and sectors of human creation and production, incorporates different perspectives on the impact of information and communication technologies, namely digital technologies, on society's organization and ways of life. Consequently, this affects respective systems of symbols, practices, values, beliefs, customs, and attitudes.

Among these scholars, Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells (2008) addresses the innovation and creativity made possible by the development of new tools for the Internet, such as Web 2.0<sup>5</sup>. He presents topics that contribute to the definition of digital culture, understood as:

1. Ability to communicate or merge any product based on a common digital language;
2. Ability to communicate from local to global in real-time and dissolve the interaction process;
3. Existence of multiple modes of communication;
4. Interconnection of all digitized networks of databases or the realization of Nelson's hypertext dream with the data storage and retrieval system, named Xanadu, in 1965;
5. Capacity to reconfigure all configurations, creating new meaning in different layers of communication processes;
6. The gradual formation of the collective mind through networked work, through a limitless set of brains. Here, I refer to the connections between networked brains and the collective mind (CASTELLS, 2008, p. 2, our translation).

Thus, in line with other analysts of this phenomenon, digital culture can be succinctly understood, as defined by Brazilian sociologist André Lemos, as "everything that explores the

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<sup>4</sup> According to historians Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, the word "BIT" was coined in 1946 by John Stucky, a statistician from Princeton, combining the words "binary" and "digital" (BRIGGS; BURKE, 2004, p. 272).

<sup>5</sup> WEB: a diminutive term for World Wide Web, which generally means "a network on a global scale." With the development of studies in Semantic Web, versions 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 emerged, representing its evolution in providing services and products, content sharing, interaction, and user relationships (BLASCO, 2022).

new media that have emerged and become popularized" (LEMOS, R., 2009, p. 97, our translation). It is synonymous with cyberculture, which "is the culture that emerges from within, stemming from the expansion of digital networks, and that recombines science with the arts" (AMADEU, 2009, p. 67, our translation). Cyberculture represents the "contemporary culture, where various digital electronic devices are already part of our reality" (LEMOS, A., 2009, p. 136, our translation). It has been gradually and intensely reproducing and consolidating itself in a broad scenario of social, cultural, political, economic, and technological changes, productions, and manifestations. According to French scholar Pierre Lévy, cyber culture is a neologism that refers to a "set of techniques (material and intellectual), practices, attitudes, modes of thought, and values that develop in conjunction with the growth of cyberspace" (LÉVY, 1999, p.17, our translation). At its core, cyberculture involves the formation of virtual communities and the emergence of social networks, which decentralize, deterritorialize, and significantly redefine the possibilities of communication and information and symbolic and material production. This brings about significant changes in behavior and relationships among individuals and between them and the natural, social, and cultural environment.

The social, behavioral, and virtual relationships that have become possible and realized have been mainly propelled by the development of the Internet, a "social technology" and one of the most complex and comprehensive communication systems capable of reshaping cultural habits and customs and establishing new patterns of sociability among human beings.

Manuel Castells (2001) observes that the new model of sociability in contemporary societies is characterized by networked individualism, which is constituted based on individualized interaction. In this sense, he considers that:

Networked individualism constitutes a social model, not a collection of isolated individuals [...] Thus, new technological advancements enhance the possibilities for networked individualism to become the dominant form of sociability. [...] These trends represent the triumph of the individual, even though the costs they may have for society are unclear. Unless we consider that individuals are reconstructing the model of social interaction with the aid of new technological possibilities to create a new societal model: the networked society (CASTELLS, 2001, p. 149-154, our translation).

In this context, in the networked society, contemporary culture also shared electronically, has given rise to new structures of sociability. These structures are characterized by the infinite connections of computer networks, the groupings in cyberspace - the vast virtual space created by computer networks - and the exchange of experiences, symbols, and meanings in virtual communities. The Internet, or the Web, is the medium and infrastructure that enable



and ensure the development of new personal relationships and various modes of social, cultural, and commercial relations. According to Professor and researcher Luli Radfaher (2018, p. 2, our translation):

The Web today resembles a vast conglomerate of highly concentrated private companies whose communication services, professional and well-crafted, are offered as freely as radio and television programming once was. However, its dynamics are vastly different from the major media outlets that preceded it, resulting in considerable changes in social dynamics, interactions, and ideological structures of persuasion.

Although discussions about contemporary forms of sociability are permeated with uncertainties, virtual devices and services aimed at data and information socialization, as well as the creation of social bonds, have been developed and improved since the early days of public availability of the Internet in general, that is, for the average user.

With the advent of new interactive and collaborative tools, which have empowered users to program the Internet themselves, the average user, also known as an internet user or cybernaut, has transitioned from being a mere spectator and passive consumer to an active producer and distributor of information and content, in various formats and for different purposes, such as text, images, sounds, or videos. These contents are primarily made available and accessible free of charge and spread rapidly.

In the virtual realm, the emergence of new spaces for expression, information, communication, and culture, such as virtual communities and social networks, has represented the end of passivity imposed by traditional media. These spaces have facilitated forming of electronic groups, where individuals can expose and express common interests, preferences, behaviors, ideologies, and engagements. They represent the confluence of the individual and the collective in cyberculture. According to Dênis de Moraes (2000, p. 142, our translation), a Brazilian communication theorist:

Cyberculture universalizes the most disparate worldviews, the most contrasting modes of social organization, and the most diffuse ambitions without favoring single thoughts or domains through coercion. It is a virtual realm of considerable knowledge, which brings together conflicting forces, impulses, and interests. With the fundamental peculiarity - as pointed out by Pierre Lévy - of universalizing without totalizing.

In the context of a global society and universal culture, part of understanding contemporary sociability - and its alleged transformation, situated between the real and virtual world, composed of social relationships mediated by globally interconnected communication

devices or systems - is based on specific perspectives that recognize that "shared culture determines the possibility of sociability in human groupings and gives intelligibility to social behaviors" (CASTRO, 1997, p. 86, our translation). The cultural influence of technology, characterized by portability, mobility, and ubiquity of techniques and media, must be strongly considered when analyzing these forms of sociability. The Brazilian sociologist and journalist Muniz Sodré observes the formation of "a new type of relationship between the individual and concrete references and truth, and in this case, with another *anthropological condition*" (SODRÉ, 2003, p. 23, our translation). This suggests the emergence of a series of situations and issues that propel and induce numerous possibilities for entertainment, leisure, and consumption, as well as indistinct needs, frequent contacts, and constant virtuality.

### **Electronic Consumption and Independent Music in Brazil**

With the emergence of new forms of sociability, a new economy, commercial relationships, and consequently, forms of consumption have been established in virtual spaces provided by the Internet.

The Internet promotes a significant transformation in the economic landscape through the social relationships established in virtual communities and social networks, influencing individuals' cultural and daily habits, as well as the production, perception, diffusion, use, and consumption of symbolic creations and artistic works in the era of digital culture.

Considering the various forms of utilization, the study of the Internet and its technologies, as well as the social, economic, political, and cultural implications, has sparked interest and placed their impacts at the center of a wide range of topics for study and discussion on the transformations affecting contemporary ways of living, thinking, feeling, creating, acting, and consuming, encompassing the numerous facets of human capabilities and needs that express their relationship of existence and survival with nature. At the heart of these debates are the "social uses" of technology, with emphasis on the domestic and commercial use of the Internet in the field of culture, which also extends to the sphere of creation, production, availability, circulation, commercialization, and appreciation of art, in its different possibilities that guide practice and mediate supply and demand.

Among the various approaches that address the cultural influence of technology and technology and media development, Jesús Martín-Barbero (1997), a Spanish philosopher, semiotician, and anthropologist based in Latin America, proposes a new perspective for



studying communication. He understands that the sender and receiver relate to each other based on needs and problems, not just through a specific channel or vehicle. In this new outlook, inspired by cultural studies, he suggests a shift of focus from studying the media to studying the mediations. In his work "Dos meios às mediações", he argues that there is a multiplicity of meanings in mediation processes, which are devices through which "hegemony internally transforms the meaning of work and communal life". Therefore, the starting point is not determined by traditional concepts but by the ways of living, doing, and perceiving reality, considering that "multiple mediations and cultural and social practices are understood as mediation processes" (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 262, our translation).

Thus, in his studies and theory about traditional media, Martín-Barbero argues that social media possess intentionality, and consequently, ideological structures and nuances that involve specific mediations. This theory finds resonance in the current context of electronic communication devices and media, digital media, and technological appeals that invade and impact different facets and phases of human experiences and cultures. In summary, the theorist highlights that communication and culture co-occur, involving appropriations and resignifications of processes that can occur both in the production and reception of communicative products, in the "negotiation of meanings" that, at different levels of everyday life, influence habits, awaken desires, mediate practices, and intertwine consumption skills.

In the virtual context, music is one of the most widely disseminated and consumed cultural products, mainly due to the practices of free access and free consumption offered to users (music producers and consuming audience), who have greater freedom to stream<sup>6</sup>, download, and share files.

However, as users have established a more advanced relationship with the virtual environments of electronic networks, various changes have emerged in how they relate to information, knowledge, culture, and art in their multiple modalities. Regarding musical art, one of the significant and noticeable changes lies in the forms or modes of consumption that have "established a new pragmatics of musical creation and listening" (LÉVY, 1993, p. 140, our translation).

As users-consumers, primarily fans, adopt new pragmatics or reconfigure patterns, they assume roles or tasks inherent to producers in the conventional production model. This has

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<sup>6</sup> *Streaming* is the technical term in English used to describe the practice of transmitting music over the Internet. Currently, *streaming* platforms, companies that provide an *online* music catalog, dominate the market by offering paid and complimentary services. Some of the most popular platforms include *Spotify*, *Deezer*, *Tidal*, and *YouTube Music* (JALIL, 2004; BARBOSA, 2017).

resulted in a new configuration of understanding called *prosumer*<sup>7</sup>, characterizing changes in typical usage patterns and transforming production and consumption circuits of materials and content, among other aspects that gave rise to these new actors (FERNÁNDEZ, 2014, our translation).

The term *prosumer* is an acronym derived from the words "producer" and "consumer", representing the idea that users play both roles in the production of information and content. This concept emerged in 1972 when Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian educator, philosopher, and communication theorist, and Barrington Nevitt, an engineer, radio broadcaster, and author from the same country, stated that electronic technology would allow consumers to become content producers simultaneously. Therefore, the term *prosumer* encompasses various actions, interactions, commercial exchanges, social relationships, and other forms of engagement (FERNÁNDEZ, 2014, our translation).

For the theorist and sociologist Alvin Toffler (1980), who coined the term while discussing the changes occurring in the industry, where consumers assumed more responsibilities at the expense of companies, this process would cause alterations in production, resulting in a greater emphasis on the use of things and a change in consumer behaviors. People would start producing and repairing their objects or reclaiming services outsourced by economic industrialization, within what he called the "third wave" in the post-industrial era. In the same decade, this DIY (*Do It Yourself*) movement gained importance in the United States and England as a trend, where artists started releasing their productions due to low production costs and greater creative freedom (FONTENELLE, 2015; BARBOSA, 2017; CAVALCANTI; SOUZA-LEÃO, 2021).

However, due to the variety of channels and means of communication present in online environments, especially on the internet, other terms and concepts have been developed to describe the connected subject, such as:

- *Gatewatchers* (BURNS, 2003) - The concept refers to individuals organizing and curating various content across multiple channels. The goal is not to control the "gates" of the channels but to participate in a distributed and organized effort to observe which information passes through them;
- *Interagente* (PRIMO, 2007) - the term encompasses the participation and exchange of technology-subject-human-machine - and subjects among themselves on the web;

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the current digital influencers who, like *prosumers*, act as and within human communication channels, providing opinions, suggestions, and advice to their social sphere through information and brand promotion, among other possibilities that also encompass the co-creation of brands and technological products, they influence musical preferences, lifestyles, as well as ideologies and political affiliations, among numerous options that redefine the market, *consumer demands, and experiences* (SAAD; RAPOSO, 2017, our translation).

- *Netizen* (CANCLINI, 2008) - being a netizen increases the possibility for millions of people to be readers and viewers;
- *Reader-producer* (BRIGNOL, 2010) - the conception refers to individuals who appropriate the media based on their needs and interests, reinterpreting them in everyday practice (WINQUES; LONGHI, 2022, p. 155, our translation).

In addition to the other terms and concepts, there are *prosumers*, resulting from combining roles as producers, viewers, and consumers. These groupings involve cultural codes, symbolic meanings, and ideological aspects that influence and complicate changes in social behaviors and, consequently, in consumption experiences.

Over the past twenty years, consumer research has generated a flow of investigations and studies focused on analyzing consumption's sociocultural, experiential, symbolic, and ideological aspects. This results in various theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumption practices, the market, and cultural meanings. These perspectives have been developed by authors such as the Consumer Culture Theory (ARNOULD; THOMPSON, 2005; McCracken, 2003 apud PINTO; LARA, 2011).

In this sense, by exploring the various cultural meanings, Brazilian researchers Pinto and Lara (2011, p. 48, our translation) highlight the possibility of dialogue between literature and discussions stemming from the experiential notion of consumption. They state that:

[...] the entire process of consumption, including experiences, shapes behaviors, preferences, social relationships, lifestyles, consumption patterns, and the individual's identity and self-concept. Thus, in attempting to understand how meanings of services are constructed and how they influence the service consumption experience; how cultural and symbolic aspects shape the relationship between companies and customers; how consumers articulate experiential and symbolic elements in retail establishments; how cultural codes influence and hinder the change of social behaviors that are inherently experiential, among many other issues, researchers must not lose sight of the interplay between consumption experiences and the theory of consumer culture.

Individuals are involved in a broad field of study based on *Consumer Culture Theory* (CCT) by playing a central role in transforming social behaviors and engaging in various modes of production:

[...] fans are considered specialized consumers, participating in a consumption subculture linked to media products (SOUZA-LEÃO; COSTA, 2018; KOZINETS, 2001). This productivity characteristic indicates they are considered *prosumers* (CHEN, 2018; SOUZA-LEÃO; COSTA, 2018). The phenomenon of *prosumption* believes that production and consumption function symbiotically. Consumers take on tasks that are the producer's

responsibility in the traditional dual model of production consumption. This conception became widely discussed in CCT through the works of Ritzer (2005, 2008), gaining even greater resonance when it was considered in the context of Web 2.0 (RITZER; JURGENSON, 2010) (CAVALCANTI; SOUZA-LEÃO; MOURA, 2021, p. 3-4, emphasis added, our translation).

Under this perspective, which involves a symbiotic relationship between consumption and media technologies, independent music production has emerged as a modality or alternative for autonomous artists seeking and achieving visibility on platforms and websites within the vast Internet network.

Internationally, the independent music movement, also known as indie, originated in the 1980s in the United States and England, when artists began releasing their productions following the philosophy of "*do it yourself*" (DIY). In the 21st century, independent artists gained greater relevance and established themselves in the music market, especially during the crisis in the recording industry caused by the ease of digital file sharing. Currently, this genre of music both participates in the conventional market and generates profitability through *streaming*, downloads and shows available on digital platforms (CAVALCANTI; SOUZA-LEÃO; MOURA, 2021).

In Brazil, the independent music movement emerged almost simultaneously with the international growth of the technological revolution, with the creation of the first microcomputers and the expansion of telecommunications in the 1970s and 1980s.

In his work "*História da Música Independente*" (History of Independent Music), musician, composer, and communication theorist Gil Nuno Vaz recounts a specific historical narrative. According to Vaz, in October 1979, with the emergence of Lira Paulistana<sup>8</sup>, a gathering space in São Paulo, independent music production found a place to unite and promote alternative artistic works. The establishment of Lira Paulistana aimed to foster the activities of different groups and became a significant milestone for the independent movement. By the end of 1982, the theater gained increasing importance and attracted the interest of the national record label Copacabana. This resulted in an association between the theater and the record label and an ambitious project for music releases. According to Vaz, this event was a significant milestone in the evolution of the independent movement. He highlights the constant interviews and debates promoted by specialized journalism and academic circles: "One of these meetings,

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<sup>8</sup> The theater was inaugurated in late 1979 in Vila Madalena, São Paulo, and became the stage for the polarization of the debate about the independence of music production in the country at a time when the independent option was also widely embraced by artists operating in regional markets, in country music, instrumental music, and other segments overlooked by record labels (VICENTE, 2006, p. 5-6).

held at the headquarters of Lira Paulistana in November 1982, will serve as a starting point for our journey towards independent music" (VAZ, 1988, p. 8-9, our translation).

In this historical account, Vaz (1988) mentions that, at that time, bringing together various segments and trends of the era's music scene, the presented conceptions formed an exemplary framework for a conceptual understanding of the independent music phenomenon. This framework encompassed aspects such as "composition and interpretation; the individual musician and the group; vocals and instrumentation; creation and production; the lyrical and the humorous; the North and the South; tradition and rupture" (VAZ, 1988, p. 9, our translation).

Despite being partially accepted, using the term "independent" generated controversies. According to Vaz (1988), amid the discussions and debates of the time, there were disagreements among the artists involved in the movement regarding the use of this term. He observes and concludes that:

[...] the term "independent" expresses this: that the release of the album, as done, did not depend on the judgment of record labels [...]. As a result, it is valid to conclude that the independent artist possesses, more than or beyond the intention to preserve their aesthetic values, a natural aspiration for the means of production, driven by the inner conviction that their work, considered of greater or lesser quality by others, deserves dissemination to which established outlets do not grant them access (VAZ, 1988, p. 12-14, our translation).

As Vaz (1988) mentioned, independent music production faced difficulties in accessing and receiving support from the "established outlets" to disseminate their work. However, there came a point where independent production ceased to be uncommon and became a viable and achievable solution. Aware of a reality in which the Brazilian music industry was threatened by the domination of the phonographic market and intense foreign advertising campaigns, artists confronted this reality by seeking alternatives, such as promotion in schools and universities, and becoming entrepreneurs (VAZ, 1988, p. 18-19).

In his study on the same historical context and trajectory of independent music in Brazil, Eduardo Vicente (2006) considers the album "Feito em Casa," produced by Antonio Adolfo<sup>9</sup> in 1977, as a symbolic milestone for the discussion on the subject of independence and a turning point in the long process of organization and growth of the phonographic industry in the country. Simultaneously, the emergence or expansion of international companies operating in

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<sup>9</sup> Pianist, arranger, producer, and educator from Rio de Janeiro, the musician, grew up in a musical family. At the age of seven, he began his studies, and by seventeen, he was already a professional musician (AAM Music, 2020).  
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the phonographic sector triggered a crisis in the Brazilian industry in the late 1970s, leading to the emergence of the independent scenario as a tactic or possibility for the professional survival of artists. From this perspective, the independent music emerges as a "space of cultural and political resistance to the new organization of the industry" and as the only access route to the market for a diverse group of artists (VICENTE, 2006, p. 4, our translation).

Com o passar do tempo, muitas das dificuldades enfrentadas pelo setor foram gradualmente superadas, especialmente devido aos avanços tecnológicos que resultaram em uma considerável redução nos custos de produção. Esses avanços inauguraram uma nova fase para a criação artística, em geral, incluindo o segmento da música independente.

Over time, many of the difficulties faced by the sector were gradually overcome, mainly due to technological advancements that resulted in a considerable reduction in production costs. These advancements ushered in a new phase for artistic creation, including the independent music segment.

This new phase, known as the digital era, marks the third stage of development for recording and music playback equipment, as highlighted by professor, researcher, and musician Messias Bandeira (2001). This stage began in 1982 with the introduction of the *compact disc*<sup>10</sup>. From that moment onwards, the following changes took place:

Popular music, conceived for consumption and characterized by its ephemeral nature (ECO, 1970), becomes structured according to the established parameters of technological advancements in audio recording and playback, which implies the adaptation of musical creation to the specifications of each medium (BANDEIRA, 2001, p. 5, our translation).

With the increasing diversification and sophistication of software that facilitated the emergence of new mediums, digitalization, and data compression for audio in the field of music production, such as the MP3<sup>11</sup> format, the use of the Internet and the many music platforms or portals present in its environment have been consolidating and strengthening as standard practices and viable alternatives, especially when it comes to the dissemination and distribution of works by independent artists and record labels. "As they make their production available *online* and at the same time gain access to what others have made available" (MONTEIRO, 2008, p. 9, our translation), they inaugurate contexts or "new music scenes that do not have a

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<sup>10</sup> In October 1982, the CD emerged due to a partnership between the Dutch company Philips and the Japanese multinational Sony (FREIRE, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> The acronym for MPEG Audio Layer-3 (Layer 3) was created in 1987 by the German institute IIS (Institut Integrierte Schaltungen) and the University of Erlangen, aiming to lower music compression rates — where a minute of music equates to 1MB (ALECRIM, 2003). With this compression, music production, storage, distribution, sharing, and trade opened up to new forms of consumption.



traditional media support, such as records, press, and well-defined social spaces like concert venues and bars," as noted by professor and researcher Bruno Nogueira (2014, p. 21, our translation).

When considering the music scene from the perspective of informational territories, Bruno Nogueira argues and draws upon the studies and work of Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson (2004) in "*Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*" to provide a typology for music scenes that offers a better understanding of the differences, categorizing, for example, what they call "translocal scenes" where there is "a more evident cultural and economic relationship than the local relationship among members of a particular scene" (NOGUEIRA, 2014, p. 23, our translation).

In the work above, which brings together studies from researchers in related fields, Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson (2004) initially clarify that the term "scene", based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of field (1983) and Howard Becker's notion of art worlds (1982), and extensively used it to describe the marginal and bohemian lifestyles associated with the jazz world in the 1940s. The concept has been employed in academic research as a model for studying musical production, performance, and reception since the 1990s. Taking into account the historical and social contexts and clarifying the origin of the concepts, the authors note that the term "music scene" has become commonly used in everyday language and, when employed by academic researchers, aims to describe the contexts in which "groups of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others" (BENNETT; PETERSON, 2004, p. 2-3, our translation).

Regarding the classification of scene types, the authors present three possible categories based on the organization of discussions in work and the principles and common characteristics shared. These categories are:

The local scene closely corresponds to the original notion of a scene centered around a specific geographic area. The translocal scene refers to widely dispersed local settings focused on regular communication around a distinct form of music and lifestyle. The virtual scene is an emerging formation in which people scattered across large physical spaces create a sense of scene through fanzines and, increasingly, the Internet (BENNETT; PETERSON, 2004, p. 6-9, our translation).

However, this characterization or understanding of the scene has sparked different debates in various areas of knowledge. In this sense, Bruno Nogueira (2014) emphasizes that the perception of the scene presented by Bennett and Peterson (2004) is often questioned due to the changes or evolution the Internet has undergone since the 1990s. The central issue raised

is the "fact that it is difficult to imagine a musical scene that does not extensively utilize resources that would be exclusive to a virtual scene," relying on the statement of Professor and researcher Simone de Sá, who affirms that:

When transitioning to the digital environment, any scene is summoned to consider this new environment's specificities - aesthetic, technical, and economic -. It is, therefore, a highly complex process that can leave marks and permanently transform the very identity of a local or translocal scene (DE SÁ, 2013, p. 32 apud NOGUEIRA, 2014, p. 25, our translation).

In a similar perspective, ethnomusicology professor Vincenzo Cambria, in the field of music studies, notes that the concept of "music scenes" attracts the "attention of researchers from various disciplinary fields as the basis for a new research model, defined as *scene research*" (CAMBRIA, 2017, p. 77, our translation). In this context, regarding the publication of the anthology produced by Bennett and Peterson (2004), he states that the work:

[...] represented the main milestone of the new trend. After the publication of this book and following in its footsteps, a relatively large number of studies have been published, mainly in music sociology and communication. Since many of these works cite this anthology as their main theoretical reference, it is important to examine the definitions and new perspectives it proposes for the idea of "music scenes". In their brief introduction, Bennett and Peterson, hoping that the book's chapters "present something approximating a comprehensive view of what a scene is" (2004, p. 1), only offer laconic and ambiguous definitions (CAMBRIA, 2017, p. 82, our translation).

In his critical analysis of the work, the scholar of the musical phenomenon also considers that, compared to previous studies, the new perspective presented in the anthology stands out for the classification of the three types of music scenes. From this evaluative point of view, he concludes that:

Considering these three dimensions as representing different types is a mistake because, as some of the articles in this book clearly demonstrate, they often overlap, extend from one to another, and are, most of the time, inextricably interconnected and interdependent. Why has this perspective on scenes become so attractive? It does not represent a genuinely new approach, nor does it propose a clear and coherent methodology to be followed. What is clear to me is that the flexibility of the notion of scene represents its most appealing aspect to scholars who are still "struggling" to find suitable substitutes for older concepts like community and subculture, which are increasingly perceived as problematic (CAMBRIA, 2017, p. 83, our translation).

The notion of a music scene remains vague and ambiguous, hindering a clear theoretical perspective due to the lack of exploration and conceptual systematization of the complex forms

of human interaction and interconnections that the term "scene" can evoke (CAMBRIA, 2017, p. 88).

In addition to the perspectives and ambiguities of theoretical models, an example of a relatively recent national music scene or production within this broad spectrum of possibilities offered by digital links and virtual interfaces is the album "*Irreverendo*". Produced by the musician, composer, and multi-instrumentalist from Paraná, known artistically as Cláudio Caldeira, the album was released in 2018 by an independent label and made available on various digital platforms in the world of electronic networks. The artist composed the songs (lyrics, melody, and harmony) for this self-production, rented a recording studio, and invited musician friends to record the "virtual album".

An artistic and cultural initiative, among many others, demonstrating the association between music and technology, technical reproduction, and free access, is responsible for independent music production's popularization, diffusion, and consumption (or *prosumption*). At the same time, it highlights that the Internet, as the primary representative of the changes resulting from the integration of new or renewed technologies in virtually all areas of human creation and production, is a potential and exceptional instrument for the design, display, and socialization of artworks in their various forms, modalities, and purposes. Furthermore, the Internet facilitates the formation of connections between cultures, and the appropriation and use of technological resources that allow for the configuration of new patterns, environments, or musical and social scenarios, whether authentic, local, translocal, or purely virtual. In the context of the translocality and virtuality of the digital world, this musical self-production, along with many others, suggests that the use of digital technologies and social networks can drive the creation of self-productions and new independent initiatives by creative individuals and inspired artists.

### **Final Considerations: New paradigms in the network society**

Without prejudice, it is evident and remarkable that since the invention of contemporary information and communication technologies, humanity has been living in a community and culture widely characterized by economic globalization and digitalization in all spheres of activity and social existence.

With the advent of the internet, prefixes such as "tele", "info", and "cyber", as well as adjectives like "digital", "virtual", and "electronic", came to describe the transformations that

technological advancements have brought to a wide range of human activities, whether they are social, economic, political, or cultural in nature. Terms like "infrastructure", "telematics", "cyberspace", "virtual community", "digital economy", "cyberculture", and "virtual reality", among others, were introduced to define the changes that the technological imperative has brought to the world and people's lives, stimulating the redefinition or a better understanding of the phenomena and peculiarities of the "new" forms of social relations and material and symbolic production.

In the context of culture and human social interactions, the internet, whether for domestic or commercial use, has reconfigured habits and redesigned historically entrenched communication systems. Firstly, through the capacity and reach of electronic information networks, such as fiber-optic cables and satellites, in connecting nations, peoples, cultures, and economies. Secondly, because social relations and processes of symbolic production are increasingly mediated by communication devices that aestheticize and spectacular patterns of perception, apprehension, and experience of reality (MORAES, 2001), thus interfering in social, cultural, political, and economic life, both at an individual and collective level.

With the media convergence provided by the Internet and the countless possibilities of the digital and virtual world, activities such as watching TV, reading books and newspapers, and listening to, promoting, or producing music have become examples of the omnipresence of technology and electronic devices. This omnipresence is associated with interactivity and immediacy, indicating a paradigm shift in all dimensions and complexities of social practices and manifestations, both in the configuration of theoretical models and the diversity of artistic and cultural expressions, as well as in contemporary forms of production and consumption habits, whether of material or immaterial products.

Undeniably, technologies based on the proliferation of the Internet have caused significant changes in the music industry. Firstly, they allowed users to exchange and share music content (*peer-to-peer*<sup>12</sup>). Subsequently, *streaming* services became the dominant model of music consumption in the 2010s (SINCLAIR; GREEN, 2016 apud CAVALCANTI; SOUZA-LEÃO; MOURA, 2021).

Even when consolidated, music is one of the segments of culture and entertainment that have undergone the most changes and reinventions, thanks to technological advancements and

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<sup>12</sup> A Arquitetura P2P (*peer-to-peer*) é uma arquitetura de redes em que cada par, ou nó, coopera entre si para prover serviços um ao outro sem a necessidade, a priori, de um servidor central. É uma rede de computadores construída sobre outra rede (MARCIANO; SOUZA; SOUZA, 2018).

the democratization of its consumption. These transformations have been most notable in production processes and how people enjoy music, especially with the emergence of independent initiatives. These initiatives often find the opportunity and autonomy in technology to create and manage their production. Moreover, new means, modes of production, and new actors in the industry, self-proclaimed as self-producers, are observed. In specific cases, these artists are even understood as *prosumers*.

In the national context, the Brazilian Association of Independent Music (ABMI) collected data on recorded music, addressing topics such as the degree of informality in the sector, gender diversity, and years of activity in the market. The objective was to demonstrate the importance of the economic dimension in the cultural field. The research analyzed the size of companies in the industry, digital distributors, and the presence and market activities of self-produced artists. These artists are groups of musicians, performers, or composers who individually develop their activities and naturally manage their careers. In general, considering the diversity of the independent music sector in the country, the collected data indicated a variety of aspects that converge toward the understanding that the reduction of costs in creation, production, distribution, and marketing is being worked on and developed more efficiently with the dissemination of digital technologies. These technologies have provided greater autonomy to artists and more suitable tools to overcome market entry barriers, resulting in expectations of expanding and reaching a wider audience without the involvement or intermediation of third parties. Thus, enabling and monetizing business strategies and artistic careers become the main challenges in the current scenario (ABMI, 2020).

Based on the data and the diversity of aspects that characterize the sector, the report produced by the entity points out some future trends that summarize a new model for the music market. These trends indicate that the production of music content together with video results in increased audiovisual consumption. Additionally, *streaming* services offer better sound quality, and the development of Internet connection bandwidth, with faster data transmission, including virtual reality experiences, may enable the adoption of remote work in the industry. This drives the creation of predominantly digital scenes, scenarios, or *paradigms* in producing and consuming recorded music (ABMI, 2020, emphasis added).

These sociocultural, anthropological, market-oriented, technological, and instrumental contexts or paradigms reflect the digital and virtual impact on the real. They contribute to the idea of two distinct worlds that coexist in which scientific, cultural, economic, and sensory experiences overemphasize the technological aspect at the expense of humans. This dynamic

characterizes moments of rupture with the established social order and signals moments of *historical discontinuity* (CASTELLS, 2003, emphasis added). These paradigms belong to a "network society" that highlights transformations in the techniques of reproducing cultural signs, drives and characterizes independence in artistic production, questions the evolution and legitimacy of concepts, nuances individual and collective identities, consolidates and decentralizes the multiplying power of markets, deterritorializes social ties, and redefines, with relative legitimacy, the meaning, and desire for mass consumption.

In this developing paradigm, considering the possibilities, propositions, and premises of "technological determinism" - a term that expresses a theoretical perspective in which technology is the analytical factor of social and historical phenomena - a constant theme emerges in debates and discussions about the impact of technological innovations as the primary cause of societal changes. However, the levels of imprecision and unpredictability are still significantly high (POSTMAN, 1994).

Under this perspective, it is crucial to observe and consider that technology does not possess the autonomy to determine the course of a society. It integrates into circumstances where historical, social, economic, political, and cultural factors converge (FEENBERG, 2010). Additionally, we must ponder that changes in human relationships, material, artistic or cultural productions, signs, and meanings, information exchange flows, new social configurations, formation of social bonds, and interactions with new technologies can influence and mediate but not determine, the destinies of humanity and the course of the world, even when it comes to virtual worlds where history seeks to be silenced.

In this sense, it is not an exaggeration to recall that technology and music have been interconnected since the invention of the gramophone (BERRY, 1995 apud BANDEIRA, 2001). In other words, or a broader sense, technical artifacts have always been present and are constituents of human organizations and historical connections, interconnecting cultures, power, and politics, where "appropriations are insinuated, and resistances are reformulated", as pointed out by an insightful historian addressing the movements of written culture with the emergence of digital technologies, suggesting that "changes in the order of practices tend to be slower than the revolutions of techniques" (CHARTIER, 2002, p. 112, our translation). This premise can shed light on issues to understand the relationship between culture and technology better or generate inferences about changes in society and technological advancements.



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