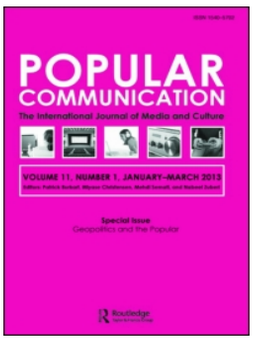

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The online place of popular music: Exploring the impact of geography and social media on pop artists' mainstream media attention

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Many authors have pointed to the internet's potential to increase connectivity across the world, which would imply an equalizing effect, yet few researchers have examined this. At the same time, the increasing usage of social media by popular culture celebrities for self-promotion has been signaled. We study the extent to which social media can reduce inequalities in mainstream media attention between artists from central cities in popular music production (e.g., New York, London) versus more peripheral cities. We distinguish between media attention by institutionally embedded music critics and lay users on the internet. The results show that artists coming from more central cities have higher chances to get attention in mainstream media—both by institutional critics and lay users—than artists from peripheral cities. Building a fan base on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or MySpace can compensate for some of this inequality, but not for all of it.

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Introduction

Rock 'n roll, and popular music in general, have traditionally been associated strongly with cities as loci of where new music is conceived, as is exemplified by the title of one of the earliest—and now classic—histories of rock music: "The Sound of the City" (Gillett, 1970). Since then, scholars have shown how places matter in bringing together people (e.g., Connell & Gibson, 2003, 90ff; Lena, 2012), sounds and styles (Phillips, 2011), and businesses (Negus, 1992; Scott, 2000) to produce both artistically innovative and commercially viable music. However, the increasing popularity of the internet in the past decades has diminished the importance of geographical positioning. Or has it? A large body of authors has pointed to the internet's potential to increase connectivity across the world which would imply an equalizing effect (e.g., Anderson, 2006; Connell & Gibson, 2003), yet few authors have examined this. This article aims to study the extent to which various, different internet-based media[1] help reducing inequality between artists from central locations in popular music production versus more peripheral locations. More concretely, we examine how differences in mainstream media attention (both by institutional music critics and lay users) compare to pop artists' usage of social media (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter), and how this differs for artists of different geographical origin.

It is evident that digitalization processes changed the structure and organization of the field of popular music significantly (e.g., Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Leyshon, 2009). The internet and especially social media platforms have made it easier to produce, disseminate, and consume popular music from all over the world (Baym & Ledbetter, 2009). This has led Wikström (2009, p. 10) to conclude that the current music industry is "characterized by high connectivity and little control; music is provided as a

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[1]For the sake of readability we will also use the term "the internet" when we refer to internet-based media. However, we are aware that it is debatable whether the internet can be perceived as a general medium.

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service and there is increased consumer creativity." Three consequences of this digitalization are the impetus for this article: 1) increased competition by user-generated content for institutionally produced content, 2) the rise of social media as tools for self promotion, and 3) the decreasing relevance of geographical origin.

Institutional music critics, that is, critics who regularly write for media outlets that are professionally organized or follow conventions of the music press, are traditionally considered important gatekeepers influencing consumer taste (Jones, 2002; Schmutz, Van Venrooij, Janssen, & Verboord, 2010; Shuker, 2001). Yet the music press is facing turbulent times as the internet enabled millions of fans, wannabe critics, and other lay persons to share their opinions online (user-generated content). Increasingly, music fans blog about their favorite artists and rate albums in customer review sections of websites, and fans sample selected music (Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2012). The internet also brought about new spaces for critics to evaluate popular music. More than newspapers and music magazines characterize the current field of popular music criticism; online publications such as Pitchfork.com have become influential players. As a result, not only the traditional distinction between professional and amateurs is blurring, but also the legitimacy of the former is under pressure (Verboord, 2014) and new opinion leaders emerge. How the institutional and user-generated media attention for pop artists differ is the first central focus of our article.

A second development that affects how new music finds its way to listeners concerns the rise of social media. Musicians have become less dependent on recording facilities, marketing activities, and distribution networks of record companies. Some renowned bands, such as Nine Inch Nails and Radiohead, make their albums available via their official websites. Also, there are many examples of upcoming acts claiming to owe their success to promotion on social networking sites such as Myspace and Facebook (Click, Lee, & Wilson Holladay, 2013 on Lady Gaga; Tancer, 2009 on Arctic Monkeys), suggesting that artists have increased their agency to enlarge and mobilize their fan base beyond the existing media institutions. Yet many of these claims are, at least partly, exaggerated in the press (e.g., Arctic Monkeys had already a large following as a live band; Lady Gaga had major label support). And since most research on social media usage by pop artists concerns case studies on famous artists, it is really not clear how widespread this practice is amongst the general population of pop artists, and how this affects their careers. This is the second question that will be addressed in this article.

Recognizing that the internet has facilitated connections between musicians and their audiences from all over the world also invokes a study of "translocal and virtual music scenes" (Bennett & Peterson, 2004). This is the third and final consequence of digitalization we examine: the way internet-based media have altered the meaning and significance of geography (Anderson, 2006). Some scholars argue that the traditional link between locality and popular music has changed, and that the spread of the internet helped to "de-link the notion of scene from locality" (Connell & Gibson, 2003, p. 107). More concretely, it is suggested that musicians do not cluster in particular localities (cities) anymore, since the importance of physical proximity to dominant production apparatuses as well as audiences is declining, and thus location becomes less important in popular music. This informs our final and most central research question: To what extent do social media help reducing inequality in mainstream media attention between artists from central cities in popular music production versus more peripheral cities?

Addressing these issues contributes to existing work on how culture is produced and mediated. Theories of "production of centrality" (see Janssen et al., 2008) and creative cities (Florida & Jackson, 2010) have emphasized how places of origin affect changes of success by having more or less attractive establishment climates due to available resources, relevant companies, and other facilities. Studies of popular culture have mapped how media critics shape the perception of cultural products in detail (Debenedetti, 2006; Schmutz et al., 2010; Kersten & Bielby, 2012). Our analysis of media attention in the digital age brings this literature together, as well as extends it theoretically with work on new media production and empirically with a more systematical account of the usage of social media by pop artists than previous studies. Our study is explorative, yet we aim to provide a cross-sectional view on the overall pop music output and its circulation among the general audience. To this end, we

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sample one month of new music releases and analyze the attention they receive in the media, their artists' place of origin as well as social media resources, and their relationships.

Theoretical framework

Where popular music is produced

Although the notion of the genial self-made artist continues to allure many, most works of art are actually the result of collaborations of various persons (Becker, 1982). To create and distribute music, most musicians rely on sound engineers, producers, managers, and concert venues for performing; recording studios for making records; and record companies for advance payments (Caves, 2000; Leyshon, 2001; Negus, 1992). On the artistic side, musicians get inspired and influenced by their peers; they all stand in a tradition that resonates in the media, in public spaces such as clubs and bars, or in the broader "cultural memory" (Street, 2004), while seeking innovations to be noticed by audiences. This collective impetus for producing music points to the importance of places where people meet to create, purchase, consume, exchange, or trade cultural artifacts (Brandellero, 2011; Straw, 1991; Watson, Hoyler, & Mager, 2009).

The significance of geography for music production is also captured by two routinely used ways to refer to music production: "scenes" when music is created in relatively small contexts where performers, support facilities, and fans loosely interact versus "music industry" when music is produced as a commodity for large audiences using highly formalized conventions with the aim to produce revenue (see Bennett & Peterson, 2004, pp. 3–6; Connell & Gibson, 2003; Watson, 2008). These concepts are not absolute opposites. While "scenes" carry the strong association of authenticity (e.g., the idea that places can be uniquely connected to certain sounds or styles) (see Cohen, 1991), Lena (2012) argues that most music genres move through various stages, including scene-based and industry-based ones. She emphasizes how music is always generated by communities of creators and listeners who share conventions and practices that sometimes, not always, grow into institutionally legitimated and industrially manufactured genres. Interestingly, the local scale of organization in the earlier phases can generate strong associations between genres and places that live on even when both have outgrown the status of "scene" (e.g., Chicago for blues, Nashville for country). Also, intermediate levels of production such as the existence of small record labels can have such impact (e.g., Motown which started out as a small label in Detroit) (Connell & Gibson, 2003, p. 90ff).

The dynamics of the geography of music production is exemplified by Florida and Jackson (2010), who monitor the significance of various US regions between 1974 and 2004 and find considerable fluctuations. Some metropolitan areas have consolidated (New York, Los Angeles) or improved (Nashville) their central position for music employment and music-related business establishments, whereas others have suffered from economic setbacks and became less attractive for musical entrepreneurs (e.g., Memphis, New Orleans, Detroit). At the same time, new places emerged on the music map as local scenes gained momentum due to, for instance, successful music festivals or record labels (e.g., Portland, Austin). Still, it is important to signal that not all places strive to become hotspots or crossroads for economically successful music. Lange and Bürkner (2012) present the case of Berlin, one of the most important cities for electronic music, where large-scale production is increasingly replaced by bottom-up production practices that emphasize the fluidity of scenes.

Geographical locations thus matter for music-making as people cluster to create culture, share experiences, and build both artistic and economic careers. It is particularly cities which serve as breeding ground for innovation and creativity, since they offer the largest number of resources in human, social, and cultural capital (Scott, 2000). Due to the particular constellations of people, traditions, infrastructure, etc., cities can thus take more or less central positions within the global market. Sociologists of culture refer to the extent to which the cultural production of a certain place interests cross-national producers, experts, and audiences as "centrality of production" (Heilbron, 1999; Janssen, Kuipers, & Verboord, 2008). This centrality may influence subsequent flows or

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reception of products, both on a national level, where the United States and the United Kingdom are key producers (see Negus, 1993), and on a local level, where cities such as New York and Los Angeles in the United States and London in United Kingdom take central positions in global music networks (see Brandellero & Pfeffer, 2011; Leyshon, 2009; Watson, 2012).

Media attention and geography in the digital age

One of the ways differences in centrality of production play out is in terms of media attention (Janssen et al., 2008; Schmutz et al., 2010). Media critics are traditionally important gatekeepers in the field of culture and thus in the field of popular music, since their selections and evaluations impact what and how audiences perceive the supply (Debenedetti, 2006; Frith, 1996; Shuker, 2001). Particularly institutionally embedded critics can exert strong influence on cultural legitimation processes by determining and executing the aesthetic criteria through which artists are evaluated (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). This evaluation has also ties to cultural geography. Belonging to the same cluster of artists, entrepreneurs, and experts who deploy their taste idiom and knowledge on aesthetic conventions, institutional critics are generally located in the same centers where music is produced.[2] Central cities offer concert venues where new talents can be spotted, company offices where business deals can be tracked, and, more generally, the "scenes" where aficionados meet and exchange the latest news.

The rise of the internet appears to have changed the playing field both for the production of music and for media work as catalyst of artistic inequality. In the literature, most attention is typically given to how the internet is used to acquire music, particularly via the (illegal) downloading of music files. Analyses of the internet's impact therefore often emphasize economic consequences for the industry as a whole (e.g., Hesmondhalgh, 2012; Knopper, 2010; Wikström, 2009). Less explored is how new media, more concretely music criticism in these media, can alter the prospective of individual artists and bands, in particular those from less central places of origin. We argue that the position of music criticism has changed in several ways.

First, print media are becoming less popular as younger generations increasingly rely on new media which seriously impacts the media industries. Partly this is due to the rise of free content online as an alternative for paid newspapers and magazines; partly new media simply tap into the cycle of innovation which is quintessential in pop music. Whereas rock criticism developed itself into a legitimated institution in the past decades (Frith, 1996; Jones, 2002), the corresponding focus on "authenticity" and "personality writers" increasingly conflicted with the interests of young, chart-oriented audiences (Forde, 2001; McLeese, 2010). All this suggests that art world conventions of institutional criticism are losing consensus.

Also, it has become easier for lay users and fans in particular to produce criticism themselves (e.g., Baym & Burnett, 2009; Dewan & Ramaprasad, 2012; Verboord, 2014). One can argue that this has closed the gap between professional magazines and fanzines and, at the same time, increased, diversified, and compartmentalized music criticism (McLeese, 2010). The rise of genre-specific webzines and blogs has created virtual scenes that are strongly governed by conventions from participatory culture: reputations and network contacts in the professional field matter less than connecting to the interests and tastes of peers (Jenkins, 2006). Consequently, music writers no longer have to be located in centers of music production as they can stay updated on new music via the internet.

Another important development concerns the emergence of social media as new platforms for raising publicity. Artists have embraced social network sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter to connect directly to fans (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Part of the appeal of such sites is what Beer (2008) called the "perception of proximity": fans feel more closely connected to artists since they can

[2]For instance, *Rolling Stone*, one of the most important rock magazines in the United States of the past decades, was founded in San Francisco in 1967 when that city embodied the counterculture of the 1960s, but moved its offices to New York in 1977 and to Los Angeles in 2009 to be closer to new music developments (Temple, 2009).

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become "friends" and can receive messages that appear to (and sometimes actually do) come from the artists themselves. Beginning artists can thus build up a fan base bottom-up, without support from the industry (see also Click et al., 2013). Of course, the very same thing that makes social media more inclusive and allows artists their independence from industry-based marketing tools also makes them ubiquitous and often not very distinctive (Kruse, 2010). It therefore remains to be seen what the actual impact of social media presence is on becoming successful.

The increasing importance of the internet in the field of popular music has provided artists with more options to get noticed by audiences. Since many of these options are user-generated and do not require cooperation of actors in the field, there is less need to locate in specific central geographic locations. Possibly the internet has created a level playing field for artists, in line with notions of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). Yet it is also imaginable that the increasing music industry's adaptation of internet-based media has already undone much of this effect. This issue informs our empirical research by asking whether inequalities in the music field due to place of origin are likely to decline. More concretely, we will test whether artists from the periphery can compensate their distance from central places of production by social media resources.

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Method and operationalization

We analyze the media attention for one month of new music album releases. For all artists in this release window, we coded their place of origin as well as the media attention they received. Our sample of albums (CDs) consists of all new popular music releases from the month of February 2012. The month February is chosen because this is a relatively "normal" month, outside of the Christmas period and summer. As our primary source for our sample, we used the online Music Guide (online: allmusic.com), a database for professional and lay users with all kinds of information about musicians (e.g., genre, CDs released, awards, and chart success) because this is the only database that we are aware of that provides an up-to-date, comprehensive list of new releases in popular music. About the All Music Guide Shuker (2001, p. 196) argues that "these reference tools have become bibles in their fields, establishing orthodoxies as to the relative value of various styles and genres and pantheons of artists." Still, we checked our sample against the release dates given on Amazon.com. In the event of inconsistencies, we deleted the album from our sample.

Our decision to focus on albums and use Allmusic and Amazon to construct our sample frame is based on our aim to study mainstream media attention (which still mostly focused on this traditional format). We acknowledge that our sample misses out on music only released in alternatively formats (e.g., Bandcamp, Beatport) and is thus not representative of the total population. While it is true that particularly young people may not purchase CDs anymore, we believe that many of them still consume (parts of) albums via downloads or streaming.

We confine our sample to popular music genres but define these broadly. That is, we included all new released albums labeled by the Allmusic Guide in their list of releases as Pop/Rock, Rap, Country, Folk, R&B, Avant-Garde, Vocal and Easy Listening. Classical and Jazz were excluded. We included albums labeled by less "clear" categories, namely Avant-Garde, Vocal, and Easy Listening because we found that many of the artists of such albums received multiple genre labels in the artist descriptions of the Allmusic Guide including often also the Pop/Rock label. We focus on new releases, implying that reissues of albums (as indicated in the release list on Allmusic.com) are excluded. However, we found various new releases that in fact were re-releases in a different format (e.g., the immersion edition of *The Wall* by Pink Floyd) or albums including some new never released songs as well as compilation albums. We decided to include these, but use a dummy variable in the multivariate analyses to mark these albums.[3] For pragmatic reasons, compilation albums by various artists were not taken into consideration. In a similar vein, we left seven

[3]Note that if we found double cases, for example in the case of rap albums that release uncensored and censured albums, we only included one edition. The same applies to "deluxe" versus "normal" versions of albums: we only included the normal version.

cases out of our sample that comprised collaborations of various bands/artists, most of them having an established career on their own as well.

Measurements

The data collection was partly done by undergraduate students in two weeks in May 2012 (thus capturing media attention of about three months after release) and partly by the researchers. All students in a research workshop on new media and popular culture received a codebook, developed by the researchers, in which they were instructed what data to collect, and how. Every student received a list of 20 new releases and was asked to collect information on the reviews of the albums by institutional critics and lay users, along with some general characteristics about the album and pop artist (i.e., debut or not, gender), using Allmusic.com as their primary source. The instructions were very straight-forward: students received details on what info they needed to get from which website, and often also a screenshot of where exactly the information was. All data were inspected by the researchers and corrected if necessary. Some variables were later added by the researchers in June 2012, namely the location of the artist, and information on previous hit success.

Geographic location of artist

The location of the artist of the album was retrieved, using several online sources (mostly Allmusic.com, Rateyourmusic.com, Wikipedia.com, MySpace.com, and bibliographies on the artists' websites). We registered the location from where the artist or band currently operates: country and city. Next, we determined the production centrality of the cities found. To our knowledge, there is no previous study or reference work that offers measurements on the importance of cities for music production from a global perspective. We therefore took a pragmatic approach: we aggregated the number of cities in our data set and added this value to our cases. For example, 33 music acts came from Los Angeles, California (United States); these acts received a centrality score of 33. Because this measurement neglected the possibility that acts maybe come from neighboring towns or suburbs, we created a second score in which such towns were added to the larger metropolitan area in case. For instance, locations such as Pasadena, Pomona Valley, and Culver City were added to Los Angeles. This increased the centrality of the particular city (in this case, Los Angeles went up to a score of 40) but also brought certain acts within the playing field of a larger production centrum. We use this measurement (centrality including regions) for the rest of this article. For the descriptive analyses we also created a variable with three categories: peripheral city (1 or 2 acts from that city), medium-central city (3 to 10), and high-central city (11 or more). These categories represent 38%, 30%, and 32% of our cases, respectively.

Table 1 gives the top 10 of the most central cities in our data set. If we compare our ranking with that of American cities by Florida and Jackson (2010), we find a fairly similar collection of names.

Table 1. Centrality of cities.

	Centrality measure (including regions)	Rank Florida and Jackson (location quotient '04)
1. New York, NY	43	3
2. Los Angeles, CA	40	6
3. London, UK	29	n.a.
4. San Francisco, CA	25	4
5. Nashville, TN	13	1
6. Portland, OR	11	11
7. Chicago, IL	9	18
Toronto, ON, Canada	9	n.a.
9. Berlin, Germany	8	n.a.
10. Austin, TX	7	not in top 31

Source: Florida and Jackson (2010).

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Chicago is ranked slightly lower, and Austin does not appear at all on the list of Florida and Jackson (but is highlighted elsewhere for being increasingly important centrum for indie music). Some important cities on Florida and Jackson's list (nr.2 Milwaukee; nr.5 Pittsburgh; nr.7 New Orleans; nr.8 Las Vegas) are not prominent in our data, in all likelihood because they are more important for live music than for recording.

Media attention

In this study, we focus on attention on mainstream media, which excludes specific (virtual) scenes such as genre-specific blogs, discussion forums, or other types of websites, since we do not want to confine our study to specific genres or niche audiences. Media attention is gauged by the number of reviews the album has received (which implies attention to separate songs from the albums or background stories on the artist are not incorporated in our study). We rely on two websites to find this information: Metacritic.com for reviews by institutional critics and Amazon.com for reviews by lay users.

Metacritic is an electronic archive that collects reviews of movies, games, TV, and popular music. The music archive contains reviews from more than 60 media outlets, ranging from nationally distributed US and UK newspapers (e.g., *The New York Times*) and music magazines (e.g., *Rolling Stone*), to online magazines (e.g., Pitchfork). We consider Metacritic as a valid source to chart institutional media attention, not only for its extensiveness but also because it focuses on "well-written reviews that are well regarded in the industry or among their peers." The site attracts almost half a million unique visitors per month (sitetrail.com) and is globally ranked 2,966 according to Alexa.com.[4] Based on the information in Metacritic, we found that 25% of the albums in our sample received a review by an institutional critic. The number of reviews ran from 1 to 42.

We captured the attention of lay users—the user-generated content—via Amazon, a webstore that allows users to rate and review articles. With about 119 million unique visitors each month (sitetrail.com), Amazon is one of the largest online stores. Again, we registered the number of reviews that the albums in our sample received. About 50% of all albums have received at least one user review on Amazon. Again, the range proved to be highly skewed (1-179, plus 685 for Van Halen's *A Different Kind of Truth* and 1061 for the "experience version" of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*). We set ceiling scores of 300.

Social media resources

In order to examine whether the online social network of artists and bands can compensate lack of offline resources as found in central production locations, we looked up the presence and popularity of music acts on three social media: Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter. More concretely, we coded the number of, respectively, *likes, friends,* and *followers* for each artist. In some cases, artists had multiple Facebook or Twitter accounts, we then coded the official account, as indicated on the websites and mainly used the website of the artists to gather the official social networking sites. These three social networking sites are generally considered to be the most important social networking sites of the moment. According to Sitetrail, the number of unique monthly visitors is 148 million, 29 million, and 67 million, respectively. Moreover, Facebook and Twitter are ranked second and eleventh among the most popular websites worldwide (alexa.com). Although MySpace is not considered to be as popular as a couple of years ago (rank 436), we included this social networking site because it is often associated with music (Beer, 2006), and traditionally used a lot by musicians to inform their fans. For all three social media types we encountered skewed distributions of scores. Again, we set ceiling scores to limit the effects of outliers.

[4]Retrieved August 2013.

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Background characteristics of pop artists

Differences in media attention may be the consequence of general characteristics of artists. We therefore collected some background information on all artists for the multivariate analyses. First, we account for the country of origin to make sure effects of cities are not effects of countries. Since the majority of artists (57%) came from the United States, we simply coded this as American or not. Second, we consider whether the album is indeed a new album (82% of our sample) rather than a special issue, compilation, or live album (18%). Media attention could also be affected by the artist's current career phase. Artists with longer careers, more hits, or more awards may receive more attention simply because their reputation is larger. We collected information on the number of unique albums that made it into the Billboard top 200 (six categories: no hits, one, two, three-five, six-ten, more than ten). Information on the number of previously released albums and winning Grammy awards was also retrieved and analyzed, but not further discussed as the results for these variables proved insignificant.

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Results

The final data set contains 444 albums released in February 2012. To give an indication of which music is found, the distribution of genres (according to the Allmusic classification) is the following: 66% Pop/Rock, 13% Electronic, 6% Rap, 5% Country, 5% Folk, 3% R&B, about 1.5% Vocal, and a little less than 1% Avant-Garde. Clearly, the category Pop/Rock is much bigger than the other categories since this category contains many types/styles of popular music. For instance, closer inspection shows that we find about 60 metal albums within this category. Most artists are male (74%), while about 10% are female, and 16% are male-female collaborations. A little more than one-fifth of the albums are debut albums, whereas another fifth of the albums in part of an oeuvre that contains at least 10 albums already.

Most artists are located in English-language countries: United States, 58%; United Kingdom, 14%; Canada, Australia, Ireland, and South Africa together, 7.5%. The remaining fifth of the artists come from 21 other countries, of which Germany (6%), and Italy, Sweden, and Norway (each 2%) have the highest frequency. As we already reported, the most prominent cities in our data set are New York City, 10%; Los Angeles, 9%; London, 6.5%; San Francisco, almost 6%; Nashville, 3%; and Portland, 2.5%.

Differences in media attention and social media resources

Table 2 presents the differences in media attention at the country level. We distinguish here between artists from the United States, United Kingdom, Europe (minus the United Kingdom), and other regions in the world. There are clear differences in how institutional critics and Amazon users select artists according to world regions. Artists from the United States and United Kingdom are more often reviewed in Metacritic and Amazon than artists from the other two regions. Still, the difference between artists from the United States and other parts of the world is small. The relatively limited attention to European artists (other than UK artists) probably is the consequence of the overrepresentation of Electronic or Metal music on the continent—genres that generally are not popular among institutional critics. The United States and United Kingdom generate relatively more Pop/Rock artists and their artists are thus more often considered for reviewing.

The last three columns of Table 2 show how artists are present on various social media. Clearly, large proportions of the artists use social media, especially Myspace at 87% and Facebook at 89%. Twitter is less popular, with 65%. Interestingly, there are no significant differences according to country region, except for Twitter. Here, again, European artists (excluding UK artists) are less prominent than the other regions.

Table 2. Mainstream media attention by country.

	Mainstream media attention				Online social media presence					
	Institutional critics (Metacritic)		Lay users (Amazon)		MySpace		Twitter		Facebook	
	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
US	65	25.4	141	55.1	217	84.8	171	66.8	225	87.9
UK	25	39.7	37	58.7	55	87.3	45	71.4	56	88.9
Europe (-UK)	10	11.5	30	34.5	79	90.8	45	51.7	81	93.1
Rest of the world	8	21.6	15	40.5	34	91.9	27	73.0	35	94.6
Total	108	24.4	223	50.3	385	86.9	288	65.2	397	89.6
Chi-square test	$\chi2(3, n = 444) = 16.1$ **		$\chi2(3, n = 444) = 14.3$ **		$\chi2(3, n = 444) = 3.1$		$\chi2(3, n = 444) = 9.3$ *		$\chi2(3, n = 444) = 3.0$	

Dependent variable is whether or not artist received media attention/are present on social media. Note 1: artists who did not receive media attention or are not present on social media (in other words: category 0) are analyzed but left out of the table. Note 2: percentages in table are within rows.
Significance: ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

Table 3. Mainstream media attention by production centrality size of city.

	Mainstream media attention				Online social media presence					
	Institutional critics (Metacritic)		Lay users (Amazon)		MySpace		Twitter		Facebook	
	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%	abs	%
Peripheral	24	16.6	65	44.8	126	86.9	83	57.2	132	91.0
Medium-central	40	29.0	62	44.9	121	87.7	93	67.4	122	88.4
High-central	44	27.3	96	59.6	128	85.7	112	69.4	143	88.8
Total	108	24.3	223	50.2	385	86.7	288	64.9	397	89.4
Chi-square test	$\chi2(2, n = 444) = 7.2$ *		$\chi2(2, n = 444) = 8.9$ **		$\chi2(2, n = 444) = 0.3$		$\chi2(2, n = 444) = 5.6$˜		$\chi2(2, n = 444) = 0.6$	

Dependent variable is whether or not artist received media attention/are present on social media. Note 1: artists who did not receive media attention or are not present on social media (in other words: category 0) are analyzed but left out of the table. Note 2: percentages in table are within rows.
Significance: ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$ ˜$p < .10$

Next, we turn to the city level. Table 3 shows how mainstream media attention and online social media presence are distributed across cities varying in music production centrality. We see that artists from medium-central and high-central cities are reviewed significantly more by institutional critics than artists located in peripheral cities. With regards to user reviews, artists from high-central cities receive more attention than the other categories: almost 60% of the artists from high-central cities are reviewed against only 45% of the artists from the peripheral cities. These outcomes imply that operating from cities that have more central positions in the music industry is indeed beneficial for getting mainstream media attention. Still, we hardly find any difference in usage of social media across city sizes. Only Twitter seems to be used more often by artists from medium-central and high-central cities in comparison to those from peripheral cities. One conclusion is thus that a large majority of artists present themselves online via Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. Of course, presence does not measure the popularity of an artist on social media.

To analyze whether mainstream media attention and social media resources—the number of fans or friends that artists are capable of mobilizing—are related, we calculated cross-tabs, as shown in Table 4. For the sake of presentation, we rescaled the continuous data of social media resources in four categories on the basis of quartiles. The first 25% is considered having a small online social network, and the fourth quartile is considered of having the largest social network.

We observe significant inequality for all three types of social media. That is, artists who have more social media resources, whether these concern friends, followers, or likes, have significantly higher

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Table 4. Mainstream media attention by size of social media resources.

		Institutional critics (Metacritic)	Lay users (Amazon)
MySpace	**Small network**	15.6%	22.9%
		19.6%	49.5%
		27.1%	55.2%
	Large network	41.7%	81.3%
		$\chi2(3, n = 385) = 19.8$***	$\chi2(3, n = 385) = 66.1$***
Twitter	**Small network**	9.7%	26.4%
		20.8%	51.4%
		49.9%	68.5%
	Large network	46.5%	85.9%
		$\chi2(3, n = 288) = 36.3$ ***	$\chi2(3, n = 288) = 56.8$***
Facebook	**Small network**	14.1%	19.2%
		14.0%	38.0%
		29.3%	67.7%
	Large network	47.5%	87.9%
		$\chi2(3, n = 397) = 38.8$ ***	$\chi2(3, n = 397) = 111.4$ ***

Dependent variable is whether or not artist received media attention. Note 1: N differs since artists who are not present on the particular social media are excluded from analysis. Note 2: for each media type, category 0 is left out the table (thus artists with no Metacritic or Amazon review are analyzed but left out of the table). Note 3: percentages in table are within rows.
Significance: ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$

chances to get reviewed than artists with fewer resources. For instance, artists with a small network of Facebook friends have much smaller chances of getting a review (14% for institutional critics; 19% for users) than those with a large network (48% for institutional critics; 88% for users). This result applies both to institutional and to user reviews. Thus, whereas we already saw that getting mainstream media attention is influenced by the city where artists come from, it is also related to the online network that artists have been able to build. Still, these results might the consequence of exogenous factors such as having a strong commercial reputation. Therefore, we turn to multivariate analyses.

Predicting mainstream media attention by centrality and social media resources

While the descriptive analyses showed how both centrality of music production and popularity in social media impact the chances to get a review, multivariate analyses are necessary to examine whether online resources can actually compensate coming from more peripheral cities. We conducted two Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analyses in which the number of reviews that artists receive is the dependent variable. That is, we will examine how well production centrality and social media resources are able to predict mainstream media attention (while taking into account other characteristics of artists). Note that we use both for production centrality and for social media resources continuous variables. For each dependent variable, we present two models: the first contains only production centrality and control variables, the second adds MySpace friends, Facebook likes, and Twitter followers.

Table 5 first shows that more central artists receive more media attention by institutional critics (as counted in Metacritic; $\beta = .103$), controlled for artists' background characteristics. The second model shows that this inequality still persists if we take into account the social media resources. True, more MySpace friends and more Twitter followers helps getting more reviews. The impact of MySpace friends and Twitter followers is slightly larger than that of production centrality ($\beta = .105$ and $\beta = .109$, respectively), but production centrality still has a significant impact on media attention ($\beta = .094$). Thus, more central artists receive more institutional reviews, even when we take into consideration that they differ in terms of nationality, hit albums, album type, and social media resources. This confirms the descriptive results: there is inequality in media attention according to the place where artists come from. Pop artists who originate from more central cities of production are likely to receive more media attention, regardless of their reputation. The second important conclusion is that

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Table 5. OLS regression of mainstream media attention by institutional critics and lay users (N = 444).

	Institutional critics (Metacritic)		Lay users (Amazon)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	−2.822	−1.546	−.596	.889
Production centrality	.103 *	.094˜	.116 *	.102*
US artist (0/1)	−.029	−.019	−.075	−.044
# Albums (cat)	.046	.037	−.045	−.048
Grammy (0/1)	−.042	−.056	−.008	−.015
# Hit albums (cat)	.176 **	.105˜	.411 ***	.215 **
New album (0/1)	.183 ***	.165 **	.039	.033
# Myspace friends		.105˜		−.058
# Twitter followers		.109˜		−.097 *
# Facebook likes		−.020		.611 ***
F-test model	4.971 ***	4.491 ***	14.515 ***	31.825 ***
Adjusted R^2	.051	.066	.155	.386

Standardized coefficients (Beta).
Significance: ***$p < .001$ **$p < .01$ *$p < .05$ ˜p < .10

social media do not compensate for geographical origin. The effect of production centrality becomes smaller in comparison to the first model, but does not fully disappear when we add the three social media resources as predictors. Having more MySpace friends and more Twitter followers helps getting more reviews but coming from more central places still gives pop artists an advantage.

For user reviews on Amazon we find quite similar results (see Table 5, model 1 and 2). Coming from more central cities also increases the number of user reviews (β = .116), and this impact cannot be attributed to other artist characteristics. Again, we find no evidence that online social media resources can reduce differences in mainstream media attention between central and peripheral artists. Model 2 does show that the number of Amazon reviews is predicted much better by the number of Facebook likes (β = .611) than by any other variable. Yet, even when all social media resources are used as predictors, there still remains a significant statistical relation between production centrality and mainstream media attention (β = .102), suggesting that offline inequalities cannot that easily be reduced via online resources. It should be noted that our predictors were able to explain a much higher portion of the variance for the lay users (adjusted R^2 = 38.6% in the second model) than for the institutional critics (adjusted R^2 = 6.6% in the second model).

Discussion

Does the internet make the role of location superfluous? Authors like Anderson (2006) suggest that geographical position and distances are no longer important. While it is true that in everyday life the internet has facilitated easier purchase of cultural products, such as music albums and songs, across the world, a more fundamental question did so far not get an answer. Does the way the internet is being used by actors in the music field result in more equal playing field for artists, in which place of origin no longer effects chances of career success? In this article, we examined the mainstream media attention, both by institutional critics and lay users, for new albums and its linkages to geography and social media resources.

Our results suggest that offline inequalities in the field of music are not that easily undone via online resources. In general, artists coming from cities that have a central place in music production receive more attention by both institutional media critics and user critics. Social media resources such as friends on Facebook or followers on Twitter can compensate some of this inequality, but not all. These results imply that geographical origin still plays a pivotal role in music production. There are some differences between institutional critics and lay users, but these mainly relate to sheer quantities: about 25% of all sampled albums are reviewed by institutional critics, while 50% are reviewed by lay users. The impact of geography on attention by institutional and lay users is quite similar. For social

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media we find that the number of Facebook likes predicts the number of lay user reviews much better than it predicts the number of institutionally embedded reviews.

To our knowledge, this article provides one of the first systematic accounts of how many pop artists use social media in their professional life. It appears that particularly MySpace and Facebook are used by a large majority of artists, making it difficult to distinguish oneself within these spaces (Kruse, 2010). Moreover, the richest and most famous artists have professionalized their social media presence such that the distinction with traditional top-down marketing practices is difficult to see (Hampp, 2010). In that respect, traditional arrangements from the cultural industries, such as the importance of geography, are to a large part reproduced online (Taylor, 2014). It would be worthwhile to further study under which circumstances such reproductions occur, or how upcoming artists *can* be successful in using social media, now that so many artists have discovered social media for promoting music.

Social media obviously have broadened up the media landscape, and in all likelihood diminished the importance of traditional promotion channels such as print music magazines, radio, and music television. We have only touched upon a small fraction of their possible impact. Some more limitations need to be mentioned. Importantly, we focused here on mainstream media attention as an indicator of successfully passing the gatekeepers of the media and being noticed. Particularly for some (niche) genres, such as heavy metal or rap, this may not be the best place to look because critics and fans also have alternative, more specialized platforms they use to signal what they find important (Beer, 2006). However, since this research is largely explorative, we wanted to provide a general view on the music supply and music's geography. Another issue that needs to be signaled is that our design does not allow us to disentangle the precise time order of media attention. We observed all forms of media attention at the same time, and while it makes sense that social media resources had a longer time to build up than attention to a recently released record, future research could tease this out more clearly. It is yet an empirical question how particular (successful) songs or albums could raise the number of likes, followers and friends of the artist.

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