Mobile Music Listening: The Users and their Art of Making Do

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ABSTRACT

Research on mobile music listening lacks empirical data to provide a good understanding of the practice. My ethnography of mobile listeners aims at investigating the act of listening by taking into account situational and technical dimensions of the practice. In this paper, I support a theoretical position to consider the listening environment when investigating the practice of mobile music listening. By looking closely at the affordances and constraints of the situation of use and of the technical device, it is possible to determine how these aspects configure the practice. My interpretations, based on Antoine Hennion's (2002) concept of 'performance' of listening, confirm the idea of listening as a product of the ecology in which it takes place. Further interpretations can lead to detail the more creative practices of the listeners and develop a typology of users.

KEYWORDS

Music; Mobile Listening; User; Technology; Practice

Introduction

As Nick Prior (2014) recently suggested, there is surprisingly little research on mobile music listening[1] despite the overall presence of the practice. The existing academic literature is centred on sociological investigations or questions about the relationship between music and the sonic environment. Without denying the value of these works, it appears that none of the existing papers on the subject deal with the changes that occur to the practice of listening itself when it becomes mobile. This paper aims to fill a gap in the field by taking a socio-technical approach to that object of study. My theoretical framework is based on the tradition of the *sociologie des usages* (Jouët 2000), the appropriation approach (Millerand 1999; Proulx 2002, 2005) and domestication (Haddon 2011; Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley 1992). These theories all share a socio-technical view on the use of technology. This means that they consider the use of technology as much depending on technical as social dimensions. They also share the same idea of the observation of everyday life as the starting point to understand social and cultural practices. They recognize users in their capacity to act autonomously with technical devices in their everyday environment (Jauréguiberry & Proulx 2011, 90–101). I refer to the term 'practice' according to this definition: 'the use of the technical object fits into the framework of an activity (work, leisure, family…). So, for instance, the use of a word processor fits in the framework of a practice of writing. The social and personal practice of an individual or a group could be significantly affected by the introduction of new "ways of making-do" related to the use of a technical device. In some cases, the use of a technique may raise up new elements in the practice of the activity, a characteristic that will act as a psychosocial reinforcement in the appropriation process of the technical object' (Jauréguiberry & Proulx 2011, 80)[2].

My ethnography of mobile music listening analyses how the listeners appropriate their devices in order to perform their listening in a given situation. Although I acknowledge the evidence of a trivial practice (music as background), results of my investigations show the creativity of some users when they listen by taking into account constraints and affordances of the situation. Technical, environmental, individual, social and circumstantial aspects of the situated practice are considered in a definition of what consists for them in 'good listening'. This article explains how they develop a personal art of 'making do' (de Certeau 2011) for their listening and the meaning they attach to it.

Past research: from Walkman to iPod

The advent of the Sony Walkman in 1979 appears as a major change in the history of music media. The portability and mobility of music had been a reality since the 1950s with the

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[1] In this research I consider mobile music listening in a narrow sense: individual listening to music with a mobile device and earphones (or headphones). I do not take into account collective listening, listening with speakers or to other audio contents (podcasts, audiobooks, for instance).

[2] Personal translation. Original quote: 'l'usage de l'objet technique s'insère dans le cadre d'exercice d'une activité (travail, loisirs, famille...). Ainsi, par exemple, l'usage d'un logiciel de traitement de texte s'insère dans le cadre d'une pratique d'écriture. La pratique personnelle et sociale d'un individu ou d'un groupe pourra être affectée significativement par l'introduction de nouvelles "manières de faire" liées à l'usage d'un dispositif technique. Dans certains cas, l'usage d'une technique pourra faire surgir des éléments de nouveauté dans la pratique de l'activité, caractéristique qui agira à titre de renforcement psychosocial dans le processus d'appropriation de l'objet technique'.

portable radio (also known as transistor radio)[3]. Listening alone with headphones had also already been a practice promoted since at least 1925, according to Jonathan Sterne (2003, 87–89). At that time, it was dedicated to radio listening. Headphones allowed an isolation from room noise and kept radio sound out of the room. It was also a solution to the problem of hearing the faint sounds of distant radio. With the Walkman, a new way of listening emerges from the possibility to listen to one's own music (with personal cassettes) with headphones in any place and at any time. The added value of the mp3 player is the efficiency of batteries and the increased amount of music one can carry along. For the public of the 1980s, seeing someone listening in public with headphones was something new. In the first scientific article about this emergent phenomenon, Shuhei Hosokawa (1984) underlines the changes to the relationship between the walker and the sonic environment. The Walkman adds something to the act of walking and shows onlookers that the listener is experiencing something they cannot understand. While sound environment is part of what a community shares, the Walkman listener makes his/her own choice of music, without the influence of other listeners and in an imperceptible way. In this sense, Hosokawa speaks of the 'public secret' of the listener: he/she is listening to music and exhibiting his/her practice but he/she keeps the content of the music for him/herself.

Jean-Paul Thibaud's research (1994) focuses on the relationship between the music that is heard and the sound environment. Based on empirical data, his results show the porosity that characterizes the act of listening in the public sphere and the ways in which this porosity reconfigures public sociability. Anthony Pecqueux (2009a, 2009b) investigates similar dimensions of mobile listening but gives more detailed description on how listeners manage the attention to music and the environment. Michael Bull has gathered empirical data on the practice of mobile listening (2000, 2005, 2007), conducting surveys and interviews over a ten-year period to better understand why people like mobile listening. In doing so, he helped develop a fuller picture of mobile listening, showing that people use their devices to manage their everyday life. The Walkman, then the iPod, is a functional tool for the listeners to modify their (often difficult) relationships to time, space, others and themselves. With his work, Bull certainly provided important results for this field of study. Moreover, he was one of the scholars who contributed to a renewed interest in the senses (and sound especially) in society. Very recently, Lewis Kaye (2013) has criticized Bull's work for his functionalist approach. Kaye's argument is fair and Bull indeed puts forward very few arguments regarding the specific act of listening to music. Bull too often seems to forget that many people listen to music only to listen to the music itself and that the reconfigurations that are taking place are not the goal but side effects of the practice. Nick Prior (2014) also brought nuances to the understanding of mobile listening. As his investigation suggests, listeners have a more complex practice than it had been imagined, and we can understand many things by analysing the events when they decide to not listen to music at all. Following Bernard Lahire (2011), Prior shows that the listener is plural, as are his/her uses. From time to time, a listener can listen to music equally as a background or as a foreground activity.

Although this review of literature gives a mostly positive or neutral view on the practice of mobile listening, this must not hide the more negative accounts of it. There are papers that seem to follow public opinion on the mp3 player (see for instance Brabazon 2008). Indeed, some views on mobile listening defend a technical determinism by arguing that the practice is detrimental to social behaviour. Nonetheless, in comparison with the Walkman era, complaints about the attitude of the mobile listener are disappearing, probably because of the

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[3] As noted by Anthony Pecqueux in this blog article (2012/05/03): http://lcv.hypotheses.org/5643 (accessed 2015/02/16).

widespread use of technological devices in public spaces (Quiñones 2007, 20–21). But I think it is difficult to give credit to papers that defend a clear argument on an object without any empirical evidence and that reduce the point of focus to solely the technical aspect of the practice. As I will show later, when talking about mobile listening, it is important to take the whole listening environment into account. By looking closely at what is going on during listening, it is possible to describe it and determine if it is a simple evolution of the practice of listening to recorded music or if it consists in something radically new. In other words, when listening becomes mobile does it devalue music or does it produce new values?

Method

As is often the case in social sciences, my understanding of mobile listening started as a daily routine of observing listeners with a feeling of strangeness. I used to do this in public spaces: cafés, public transport, pedestrian streets, shops. I tried to keep questioning myself about what was going on at that moment. How do these people manage their sociability? How do they handle their device and with what goals? What do they look at? How does it feel for them to wander through these places with music in their ears? Do they listen at a high volume to hear the details of the music or do they just keep it as background music to hear street noises? How does listening combine with their activity: running, commuting, reading a book, drinking coffee? Observations led to many questions that stayed at the level of assumptions. I easily recruited nine mobile listeners among friends of acquaintances. These first interviews were exploratory and were meant to bring new ideas that could lead to research questions as well as reveal details about where, when, how and why the people were listening to music with a mobile device and headphones (or earphones).

Among other results, there was one important finding about music listening. Consistent with the public opinion, a very trivial listening practice exists, a practice that is triggered almost automatically when the listener is in what he/she evaluates as a space and time suitable for listening. This generally comes out of habit. When this background practice happens, the listener is busy doing something that requires his/her focus (reading, searching for direction, working) or he/she is lost in thought. But results also show that there exists active listening where the listener is only focused on the music. It is sometimes a moment for discovering new music or just listening to details. But it can also be a moment when the music itself catches his/her attention. The listening can be combined with the landscape or visual aspects, but in both cases (trivial or active listening) listening cannot be understood without taking into account the environment in which it takes place: space, time, activity, people and technical aspects. Hence, based on these first findings, I undertook further investigations.

The appropriate method had to help to collect data as close as possible to the actual practice where and when it happens, so it seemed obvious to opt for ethnography of the listeners. There are many ways of doing ethnography, but the common ground of this method is to adopt the perspective of the actors to account for a social practice or a phenomenon (Vannini 2009, 4). Even if the analysis of the practice of listening is slightly different from the fieldworks and the methods of anthropology, the understanding of that practice requires detailed data to provide a fine description of it (Latzko-Toth and Millerand 2012, 127). At first, I thought about adapting a method used by Anthony Pecqueux (2009b). He followed listeners during their commuting, taking notes of his observations and interrupting the journey to elicit some behaviours he had previously noticed. But, as my focal point was the act of listening, I thought this method was not appropriate to my research question and that the

observer's presence would bias a practice that is, for some people, a truly intimate experience during which they forget about the surroundings. I chose to give the listener a notebook in which he/she would write about every experience of mobile listening for two weeks. According to past research that used this idea of a diary, a very positive effect was the reflexivity about the practice that could emerge from the respondent.

I designed my method by adapting the diary-interview method (Zimmerman & Lawrence 1977), based also on other research, mainly from psychology, which used diaries in empirical research (for a good summary of the use of diary in social research, see Alaszewski 2006). I chose to hand participants an empty notebook with light recommendations on what to write about. This allowed the respondent to make the diary his/her own and left space for whatever he/she felt was interesting to mention. I only asked the respondent to detail the listening situation (where, when, doing what). After two weeks, they sent me back the diary, I annotated it and I met them for an interview based on their notes. I also wanted to approach some topics that, most of the time, did not appear in the writing (such as: devices used, organizing their collections, their history with music and mobile listening etc.). I recruited 14 respondents aged 22 to 59, with the majority (11 out of 14) of the sample between 25 and 31 years old. Despite the limitations of the sample, such group composition was helpful in learning about how people from the same generation use the mp3 player. The group was quite homogenous, being at the beginning of their financial and personal autonomy, and there could then be a link to make to their autonomy in their cultural practices, such as music listening. The remaining respondents (22, 37 and 59 years old) were useful for comparing practices across ages. Certainly, considering the size of the sample, the findings of the research are limited and cannot be generalized, but, as I will argue later, they provide valuable insight into creative practices and users.

I transcribed the interviews and I analysed both notebooks and interviews using a qualitative data analysis tool that involved coding fragments[4]. These fragments were used as inductive elements for the interpretation that took the form of various Excel sheets helping bring forth similar and dissimilar aspects of the practice between respondents.

The listening environment

I consider mobile music listening as a practice in a broad sense. Even if my focus is on listening in itself, I believe that, to get a better understanding of it, it is essential to go beyond the narrow view of listening to music and expand it to the situation where it takes place. My investigation confirms the strong links between music listening and the 'listening environment'. I use the term 'listening environment' to take into account the space, time and the activity within which listening occurs. It also includes the device used to listen to music, what it affords and how it is possible to listen to music (shuffle[5], playlists[6] etc.). The next points detail how listeners 'make do' with the listening environments to produce their practice of listening. I do not develop here other results of my research concerning respondents'

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[4] TAMS Analyzer.

[5] 'The shuffle mode may be described as the haphazard reproduction of a certain number of tracks' (Quiñones 2007, 12).

[6] A playlist is a selection of songs compiled by an individual. It can also be automatically created from the music collection according to filters or proposed by a computer program based on an algorithm (for instance: similarities between songs).

relationships to others and themselves, the organization of their music collections, or respondents' moods and emotions.

Most of the time, mobile listening happens in public and social spaces. Anyone can witness mobile listeners engaging in common activities such as walking in a city, commuting with public transport and waiting (for an appointment, in a queue, at the bus stop…). In these situations, all respondents appreciate closing themselves off from the situation and the people around them, but most do not see this as a goal in itself. On the contrary, the creation of a 'bubble' (the most frequently used word to describe it) is described as a personal moment of empowerment and music discovery. In those situations (commuting, walking, waiting, even running), the individual perceives the constraints of the environment as a given, but it is also seen as something positive. The listener cannot do anything else because he/she has a restricted access to other resources (books, television, computer but also kitchen, for instance). These situations appear then as perfect time for listening to music for several reasons. First, they are obligatory situations: the listeners have to take the bus to go to work, they have to queue at the bank or the hospital, they have to walk home. Second, the activities require very little attention or cognitive activity. Finally, almost all of these situations and activities leave the listeners' eyes and hands free, which makes it easier to manipulate the device to control music. It turns out some listeners end up liking 'boring' situations because it is their space and time when they can listen to music. Thibault started loving his recent commute to work when he combined music with reading, his two favourite passions[7]:

> '(…) the advantage of this train, tram or metro, it's I'm there, I'm sitting or standing but I'm only doing that. And if this bubble creates itself so well, it is because… I cannot prepare myself some tea or… that's it. (…) I am constrained but not against my will (laughs). (…) I am happy about this constraint. And that time is really (…) It is awesome because I am only doing this. I am learning or listening, discovering. So I am swallowing a maximum of pages. Because it is now, I am enjoying, enjoying, enjoying it. By the way, when I receive too many text messages during those times, it tends to annoy me because I am interrupted. I am so much into my moment that is almost only dedicated to that.' (Thibault, interview)

For Pierre, the best moments of music listening happen when he is 'nowhere', for instance, when commuting from Brussels to Paris with the express train, the Thalys, which is, according to him, the best place to escape (he said he would buy one if he could). What makes a Thalys the perfect space to listen to music is a mix of spatial constraints, quiet sound environment, a long but limited time and, once again, the limited access to cultural resources. For Benjamin, the time he wastes in public transport becomes more acceptable when he considers it as time for musical discoveries. He then loads his mp3 player with a majority of new albums. Even if he sees his commute as lost time, the possibility to turn it into something positive – a time for music listening only – changes these obligatory journeys in musical journeys.

With time and construction of habits of listening, the listeners end up foreseeing what a good listening environment will consist of and try to enhance it. For instance, Gregory is coming back home by train after a night out with his friends. He knows that his 20-minute journey and the 45-minute walk home will be a moment to listen to music very intensively. His idea of perfect listening also includes the headphones used. In this situation, he would have loved

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[7] For the comfort of reading I translated the excerpts from French to English.

to listen with his headphones but did not take them because they were too cumbersome. His headphones allow him to listen to music in (almost) any social situation because of a better isolation. They shut out ambient noise efficiently and avoid other people hearing his music while listening at fairly high volume to details of the music. As he is reduced to using his portable but cheap earphones, he moves out of the carriage so he can listen at high volume without worrying about disturbing the other travellers:

> 'There is only music. So, anyway, I can only do that. For once, it is simple, it is the only thing I have to do. (…) At that time, no, I do not think about anything else, only music. [he explains that he shuffles his music] (…)There are so many good ones and… also I am looking for the (…) perfect track for my walk afterwards. (…) And so I also have to skip a maximum to say "ok, it is this one I need when I am going to start walking". It is such a precious moment, it only happens once every three months, that it must not be spoiled by a shitty track. (smile) (…) It is so rare to have nothing to do and because it is not walking back from or to work, it is walking for an hour when, except listening to music, I cannot do anything. And that is too precious. You really should not drive me back home! (laughs) (…) That is really a privileged moment. (…) when I am starting to walk. Because it is way better than the train because I am walking. It is nicer. And so I really need the perfect track. Something (…) that really chills me.' (Gregory, interview)

In this excerpt, Gregory describes the positive side of an obligatory (and rare) situation and how he wants to configure it almost as a momentum, as Sophie Maisonneuve (2001) puts it, a peak experience he does not want to spoil or fail.

To agree with what listeners said about their mp3 players, I also include, in the listening environment, technical features of the device used to listen to music. The design of the device influences how and to what music the listener chooses to listen to. Each device is manufactured and programmed in such a way that the designer inscribes some affordances in the machine (Bardini 1996; Norman 2002). Emilie, for instance, has an old USB stick mp3 player. This device resembles a big USB stick with a tiny screen, a complex navigation tree and small buttons. Due to these technical specifications, it is hard to pick and listen to a specific artist or song. This forces her to always shuffle the songs she has put on it:

> '(…) It is always on shuffle but, on the other hand, it also annoys me because I have like 400 songs on it but I put them on months ago and only sometimes I put on some new ones. But then I have the feeling that I have 400 songs but maybe there are only 80 that I want to listen to so I am always "next, next, next, next".' (Emilie, interview)

Because Emilie skips a lot of tracks, she always keeps her mp3 player in her hand when she walks. In the end, a technical constraint changes her everyday practice of walking.

Several respondents use Apple's smart playlists. These automatic playlists are created, by default, in iTunes according to filters: the most played songs, the recently listened to songs etc. The listeners who use these end up listening to the same songs again and again, as Johanne mentions: 'there is the "25 most listened to", and that thing, it comes back pretty often. And as I am listening to the 25 most listened to, then, they are always the same so… It is a bit of a vicious circle.' (Johanne, interview)

These affordances of the device are, for these respondents, the easy way to listen to music by delegating choice of music. These kinds of playlists can thus hinder the possibility of discovering new music outside of the songs they know best. As I mentioned earlier, there exists a diversity of uses in each listener. But this example of choice of music can be a variable to categorize users according to a general attitude towards music listening. In this case, there would be some listeners who prefer to listen to their favourite music, and others who conceive music listening as a work of perpetual discovery. Their use of their device would then differ according to how they consider and value music listening.

One of the main technical constraints that the users face is the available space on their device. For some, it is not a problem because their whole collection can fit on the player. For others, it does not appear as a major problem either. They seem to take advantage of it because it forces them to pick the songs they would want to listen to for a few weeks. Some report the pain of thinking about changing their music and taking time to do it. Others found a way to automatize it or reduce the time dedicated to it. Some like taking this time to navigate in their collection and select albums for their mp3 player. The practice of Benjamin, who owns an mp3 player with two memory spaces, exemplifies this technical constraint. One space is built into the device and is ready to access. The other one is an SD card that takes some time to load. Considering his own practice of listening, he organises his collection according to the different spaces. On the less accessible space, he puts his 'classics', the artists and albums that constitute his musical history. He does not listen to them a lot but, once in a while, he likes putting them on:

> 'Sometimes, I tell myself that the fact that my thing is loading, it also gives something rare (…) to the song that I am going to listen to. If I really want to pick a track which is on my other storage thing, it is going to take 30 seconds to load, I will be like "damn…", wait and stuff (…) And so I will be like "shit, shit, shit,…" and then I take time to find it… The moment I play it, I will be like "aaaaah", you see? Like it is going to be… You deserved it a little more (laughs).'

Being a fan of music, the other space of his mp3 player consists mainly of new albums that he wants to discover.

Listening as a production process

Looking at the results of my research, I can support what Antoine Hennion (2002) said about music listening. According to him, listening is an event, an uncertain process that depends on the context and what the listener does with it. In this sense, he considers listening as a 'performance'. I would say that listening is a product, a result of the use of the device in an unstable environment. It is possible to broaden this idea of 'production process' to the attention to music. Several respondents mention the action of music on the focus of their attention. In a sense, they feel as if the music comes to grab them while they are doing something else. For instance, Pierre is walking in the streets to get a sandwich and the music suddenly hits him and attracts his attention to some detail, so much that he completely forgets to be careful when he crosses the street. The same thing happens in Paris when he forgets several times to stop at the right metro station.

> 'Very attentive to music. I take as proof of evidence the number of times when I miss the stop or… Just because I am foot-tapping - if it is music - or listening if it is a

podcast. And then, suddenly, I am raising my head and "damn". Ok, it is not complicated, I get off at the next stop… It lengthens the journey a bit but it allows me to listen more. Great, fantastic!' (Pierre, interview)

This production of attention depends on where and when the listening occurs. If the environment is too dynamic or if the journey is unknown or insecure, listeners' attention tends to focus on their surroundings and the music cannot attract them. The listeners stay focused on what is going on around them, where they have to go, who is around. If the environment is too oppressive, they will drop one earphone or stop the music. If the environment is relatively stable, there is a higher chance that the music will catch their attention. It will produce good listening because the listeners can listen closely to the music while being aware of only the sound events, the signals they need to perform their travel. This is confirmed by Jean-Paul Thibaud's research (1994) and by Antony Pecqueux's recent research (2009b). As Thibaud explains, there is an entanglement between what the walking listeners hear, their steps and the visual environment of the city. They are absorbed in their listening but a single scream can bring them back to their surroundings (Thibaud 2003).

In some circumstances, attending to the environment becomes the activity which music comes to enhance. This is like a blend of music and landscape where they experience deep focus and a perfect match between the music and the perception of the environment. Some users even show competences to create these kinds of moments in beautiful places. They will choose the music that suits the place best.

'I have a small internal software. I know approximately what is in there [his iPhone], I know what, today, I would need to put into it so I can have like what fits to my global mood. And then, arriving at the Royal Palace, a splendid place, I have a kind of intuition that is "Daniel Mille, that is really beautiful music for this place". You only press "D", launch it and, indeed, it works.' (Pierre, interview)

As this respondent explains later, he does not agree with his critical friends who try to convince him that he should walk in those beautiful places without music to experience them with all his senses. He is convinced that it is something else, that it enables him to create new and unexpected experiences. The place can grab him to go deep in the music or the music focuses his attention on the place through which he walks. This search for beauty is driven by an emotional response to the place and to the music and a will to enhance this feeling that is already there but that he wants to sustain. This audio-visual approach to the environment is not common to all users and, surprisingly, is not limited to the experts, the ones that are more engaged in the music.

Based on Hennion's research, Sophie Maisonneuve (2001, 2006) shows how audiophiles in the 1930s engaged with recorded music. In great detail, she explains how these listeners configured the act of listening in technical, situational and social dimensions to achieve a 'performance' of listening. In this sense, she explains how technical choices, for instance, play a role in the construction of taste in these groups of people.

I argue that in mobile music listening, the same is observed. Listeners listen to their music in very diverse environments. With time, they notice dimensions of the listening environment (places, number of people) or whole situations (an activity always in the same environment, for instance) that produce the same sort of listening. This construction of their practice allows them to foresee the listening environments that will constitute the best conditions and thus

produce the best listening. If the attention to music is a product of the listening environment, the listeners know what causes they need to look for if they wish to listen closely to music. Of course, the chance factor is not to be underestimated. Sometimes, the best moments of listening happen at times when the listeners were not looking for them. This serendipity produces an even better listening moment specifically because the listener was not prepared to experience it at that time. This probably explains the relative success of shuffle mode. Even if some listeners hate it, most of them like the fact that it can make them listen to songs they forgot they had or that they would not have thought to play at that time. Marta Garcia Quiñones (2007) details this enhanced listening with shuffle mode by explaining that this mode of listening reminds the listeners that they are listening and puts them in a state of high expectations because they do not know what song will play next. According to her, even though the listener gives away control over his/her practice, it makes listening more playful because the listener accepts the rules of that game: wait for the next song and adjust to the music chosen by the device. This way of 'making do' is something that was impossible with a Walkman: 'The capacity of the mp3 player to carry vast quantities of compressed music that can be accessed through non-linear search and playback mechanisms delivers this remixing with far greater precision, choice and scope than previous devices' (Beer 2007, 854). Once again, there is evidence that listening is produced, in part, by the technical features of the machine and its affordances.

Conclusion

I have tried to show that the listening environment brings affordances and constraints to the practice of mobile music listening. As a consequence, I consider listening (and the attention to it) not as the starting point of the practice but as a result that stays uncertain for its duration. Even if this could be said about music listening in general, there is a difference with past listening practices and immobile practices because of the variability of situations and technical devices on which listening occurs. Even if people use their mp3 player in selected and sometimes very recurring situations, these situations are always unstable, compared to listening in a bedroom or living room. The uncertainty of music seems higher during mobile listening than with any other type of listening. Shuffle can be seen then as a good metaphor for mobile music listening. The practice can be more or less programmed but there will always be unpredictable things happening in the music, around the music and in what it does to the listener.

As Michel de Certeau (2011) showed, users always 'make do' with their cultural practices. As I have briefly shown, listeners always fabricate their own practice according to what happens around the practice itself. It is as impossible to avoid the action of the technical device as it is unthinkable to imagine that the practice is not influenced by the situation in which it takes place. Those elements end up being an important part of the practice in itself. We cannot think of mobile music listening outside of any of these aspects. According to de Certeau (2011), all users demonstrate creativity in their practice. My results tend to show the same but at different levels. Some respondents have a gift of finding the right music for the environment, they can prepare conditions to be 'caught by' the music, they do not delegate choice of music or, if they do so, they put themselves in a spirit of a 'happy discovery'. I think 'expert listeners' (i.e., those more passionate about music) have a tendency to be more creative because they want to configure their practice to have the best possible listening experience. But they all face aspects they cannot negotiate: they do not own the perfect earphones they dream of, sometimes they cannot find the right music for the situation, the noise level is too

high… Maybe the expertise at some point is to know when to stop listening because it will only provide anxiety or disappointment.

As I have already mentioned and as Nick Prior (2014) showed, we cannot undermine the plurality of the actors. The same can be said regarding creativity. A particularly creative user can, at some time, be tempted to only listen to music as a background noise. On the opposite, a more trivial listener can demonstrate great talents to bring a poetic view to his/her practice in a specific situation. Results of my research still need to be thoroughly interpreted and nuanced regarding the diversity of uses to consider if a typology can be proposed. Moreover there is still much to discuss about mobile listening regarding the fragmentation of listening ecologies: different places, different interfaces and audio outputs. If we broaden the focal point to any listening practice, there is much to learn from mobile listening practices.

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