How Music Matters:
Exploring the Musical Experience, its attachments and its technologies

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November, 2019

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

This thesis explores how music becomes important as a social and individual practice mediated by devices in everyday life. Through the guiding concepts of Attachments and the Musical Experience, the thesis focuses on the idea of music as a practice that acquires importance beyond the economic value through everyday practice from an assemblage and materialities perspective, guided by Science and Technology Studies. The data was generated from 41 participants and the Musical Experience History Method, which includes interviews around their musical practice and their past, while listening together with them and discuss valuable objects that they have selected in advance. This thesis orders the findings by abstract moments and elements of the creation of those musical attachments. The first chapter focuses on the Dispositions and Threshold moments, which explains the initial interest in listening to music, specific genres or practices. The second chapter attends to the flexibility of those elements as new moments of listening and negotiations take place to fit new music, practices and alignment with social and intimate identities, this is analysed through the concept of Re/Tuning. At the same time, the thesis explores the process of assembling meanings around musical objects and practices through the concept of Networks of Meanings. The final chapter explores the ongoing relationship of the listener with specific music, which becomes a material object that is at risk of becoming worn out and deformed, hence that demands to be looked after and constantly refreshed. To finalise the thesis highlights the importance of paying attention to the practices and devices of music and proposes the concept of Plasticine Music as a sensitizing concept to make sense of the flexibility but solid materiality of the musical object in everyday life that is transformed through its mediations.

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Accompanying Material (Playlist)

Apple Music:

https://apple.co/3403LLD

Spotify:

https://bit.ly/2O0Omp2

Acknowledgements

First, I want to thank my supervisor Dave Beer for his guidance, support, music chats and for trusting me with this project. To my supervisor, Daryl Martin for his patience, support, time and for helping me to navigate the most difficult moments of this adventure over many cups of coffee.

To each of my participants in Mexico and the UK, that gave me their time, stories and music selflessly. This work would not be possible without you.

I want to thank the Department of Sociology at York, particularly the Science and Technology Unit (SATSU) for being the most supportive and inclusive community: Joanna Latimer, Sian Beynon-Jones, Ellen Annandale, Clare Jackson, Ben Vincent, Amanda Waggett, Tom O'Brien and Brian Loader. I would like to thank specially Nathan Manning for trusting me and offering me another space for ideas, discussion, support and long conversations.

To the teachers and guides of the past turned into friends in the present: Sandra González-Santos, Claudia Magallanes Blanco, Leandro Rodríguez, Edwin Culp, Jerónimo Repoll, Manuel Guerrero and Jorge Calles. Gracias por inspirarme y guiarme hasta acá.

Thanks to the lovely friends that I had the chance to make in academia, for their inspiration, listening, reading and support every day: Holly Steel, Anaïs Duong-Pedica, Will Paterson, Teddy Holmes, Germaine Stockbridge, Alejandra Vázquez-Jaramillo, Raven Bowen, Jack Denham, Dilvin Gumuscu, Dimitra Mouriki, Rachele Salvatelli and Jill Simpson.

Thanks to the friends that we found at York who helped us to earn our ways of living, but also to fell in our home away from home. At the Dean Court Hotel: Cristi Frasina, Ralu Sandú and Peter Fernandez. At the Shambles Tavern: Keith and Sue Woodward, Luke Smithson, Clare Lynch, Nicola Morris, Chantelle Morris and the rest of the weapons. Thanks to the Golden Ball and all its great community: Beth, the Hannas, Cowgirl (Sam and Danny), Nathan, Arran, Maddy, Martin and Jess Gardham. At the Viccy Vaults: Mick and Anna.

To my friends in Mexico who were always happy to provide me with the much-needed late chat, beer or dance: Carlos Chang, César Jerónimo, Elisa Alegría, Paulina Solís, Martha Palacios, Neil Owen, Israel Jerónimo and Rafael Chías. Gracias por la música compartida, los quiero familia.

To my extended family who put a lot on the side to help me to make it here: Imelda Torres, Ángeles Torres, Lucas de Palacio, Jorge Torres, Guadalupe Hernández, Hortencia Ávila, Guadalupe Ávila, Karen Ávila, Rosalba Carrera, Ines Torres-Lytle, Alejandro and Fernando Torres, Ricardo Mackenzie and Aurora Hernández.

To my family, for their support and encouragement at every step that brought me here. Thanks for letting me listen to all that music and for all the love: Dolores Torres, Miguel Ávila and Alfonso Ávila. Los amo mucho.

To my partner Denise Mackenzie, whose love, care and support was crucial and for sharing the music of my life. For the braveness of accompanying me to this new adventure and facing every day with the same amount of enthusiasm as the first day. Gracias por la música.

Thanks to the music, musicians and sounds that have made my world and story. This is thesis is my acknowledgement and tribute to that music and my stories above.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Víctor Miguel Ávila Torres

1 - Introduction

> Si hablar sobre música nos importa tanto más que hablar sobre danza o escultura, es porque el valor que le damos a la música va más allá de otras prácticas simbólicas eficaces. La música nos importa porque en el *runruneo* incesante al que nos invita se juega algo acerca de quiénes pensamos que somos o quiénes desearíamos ser, aun a sabiendas de que al hablar sobre la música siempre hay algo que se nos escurre, se nos escapa, tanto sobre la música como respecto de quiénes somos. Esa conversación sin fin nos ayuda a pensar acerca de cómo habitamos este mundo y de la forma en que usamos las canciones para rehacer nuestros mundos inmediatos. El sentido de la música popular es inseparable de los juicios de valor, de los miles de actos de discernimiento que acompañan su consumo y puesta en escena.[1] (Benzecry, 2014, p. 16)[2]

In the late summer of 2014, many iTunes Store users woke up to discover that they had a new addition to their music library, a new **U2** album, **Songs of Innocence**. The album went straight to all devices with an iTunes account in the Apple signature format, no payment was required, not even wanting the album was required. What looked like a smart marketing strategy turned out to become a burden for the users: digital social media such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* saw an outburst of criticism and complaints. Many listeners were not willing to give it a listen, and some devices with less storage available were left full without the possibility of eliminating the album. In opposition to what music industries expected, listeners did not want free music, or at least any music—even if it comes from the most famous band in recent years—but they wanted to choose, and to keep their devices for what they wanted to do and download.

This counterintuitive example illustrates the topic of this thesis, that music is not only a consumption product but rather a key element of

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[1] If talking about music matters to us more than talking about dance or sculpture, is because the value we give to music goes beyond the incessant humming to which it invites, something is at play about who we think we are or who we would like to be, even knowing that when talking about music there is always something that slips away, it escapes us, both about the music and about ourselves. That endless conversation helps us to think about how we inhabit this world and the way we use songs to remake our worlds. The idea of popular music is inseparable from value judgements, from thousands of acts of discernment that accompany its consumption and staging.

[2] Through this thesis I use a lot of resources in Spanish—my first language— from texts, to songs and accounts from my participants. All of them are translated in English by me. Nevertheless, I decided to leave this one in Spanish, as way to honour the bilingual nature of this research, and the small group of

individual and social life. Listeners want music, not only because it is a restricted or scarce product—in that case everybody would have welcomed the free gift—but because it tells something about the listeners and their technosocial world. Music is important, not only because many of its dimensions have a cost, but also because it is flexible enough as cultural object to relate identity and community through a process of decision-making, display and curation.

But when talking about music, in the terms Benzecry uses above, we are talking not only about the object, the society that produces it, or the interactions that are produced from it. Music cannot exist without a series of mediations that will allow it to appear and condition its practices. Talking about music is talking about the role of those technological mediations. A main argument of this thesis is that the process of learning and engaging with those technologies and practices is what makes music important and valuable. Through the process of decision making, the listener displays complex networks of meanings and views that produce attachments to music. In other words, when investigating music in social life it is fundamental to pay close attention to the practices that are produced around it, and this can be done only if there is enough focus on the technologies that make it appear and condition those practices. Hence, the object of study of this thesis is not the music itself, the technology for listening to it or producing it, or the listener, but the material and social relationship between those elements that produce specific experiences and attachments.

In a few words, this thesis is about the ways in which music becomes important for listeners through specific practices and devices, transforming the music into more than an aesthetic object or a cultural product, but as a resource for making sense of the listener's own world. Music, as a concept and practice, is indivisible from all the actions and objects that surround it. In order to unpick this idea, I rely on two orientating concepts, the first one is that of Attachment as productive relationship between two agents that generates new agencies, in this

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authors that write in this field in my language. From now on, the whole text is in English.

case music, technology and listeners. The second is that of The Musical Experience, which expands the idea of listening or consuming music to make sense of all the temporalities, decisions and outcomes happening at every moment the individual produces encounters with music. This will allow me to understand music as an assemblage, challenging clear-cut separations between the object and its mediations, but also between its individual and social dimensions. My argument overall is that it is possible to understand the importance of music in individual and social terms through the practices that specific technologies promote with them. That importance is related with what listeners can do with the music and how they can interact with it and control it; this could lead to retrieve memories, learn practices, and assign meanings and share with different levels of intimacy. At the end of this thesis I propose the idea of plasticine music as a sensitizing concept to follow the way music travels in everyday life through different stages in the life course, being shaped by different factors while the listener's attachments to it are also shaped.

The analysis that I am proposing with this thesis relies on concepts that come from cultural sociology, media studies, cultural studies and science and technology studies. Nevertheless, the analysis is not limited to those fields. As I will show, my main contributions are in the possibility of including the material dimensions of technology as shaper of the experience; and the inclusion of the personal history of the listener with a specific song as the shaper of that experience. This converts the Musical Experience into an assemblage that includes the individual, the device, the music, the past, the present and the future in the form of expectations. This means that this thesis could speak to different sets of scholars, but takes a new materialism and assemblage perspective. The findings of the thesis also allow me to develop concepts that could be explored in different fields regarding attachments and objects.

1. 1. Not only Why, But How Music Matters?

At the heart of this thesis' argument lies the affirmation that music matters for social and individual life. In the same way, technologies are important, not only those that are part of the musical

production process, but also those that set up the ways in which people engage with music. It is precisely there where I am trying to analyse the importance of music for individuals. This research is about the value of music, but not in economic terms —also included in the accounts and analysis— but the way in which listeners keeps repeating the experience and expanding their catalogue.

The question heading this section plays with the title of the book by David Hesmondhalgh (2013), *Why Music Matters*, a 'critical defence of music' (p. 3). The defence is grounded on overcoming the constant questioning of the value of music, and art in a broader sense, in comparison with other social practices and, I would add, other sociological topics. In other words, Hesmondhalgh's first argument shows music as a key element of social life as important as other social practices, like work, family or politics. His book is also a defence from considering capital as the only driving force for cultural development or importance. His argument relies on the value of music as something that enriches people's life while making society flourish at different levels. Hence, music is important not only at the individual level, but also in the ways that we relate to others; make sense of community, and to promote solidarity and commonality (p. 5). Alongside a rich analysis he brings together empirical research as well as historical accounts to show that music is a resource not only for society, but also for social sciences.

This thesis starts from similar concerns, but with a different perspective, one more personal and still quite social. I had the chance, as probably Hesmondhalgh did, to be a listener while the mp3, Napster, the Internet, the iPod, iTunes and music blogs were re-shaping music practices. I downloaded thousands of songs and albums, then erased them and then downloaded them again in better quality when available. I created dozens of playlists for different purposes, some of them specifically for my friends, who always accused my own preferences of being boring. I also got and replaced different devices, from the NetMD, the Microsoft Zune to the iPod Classic. I used to, obsessively, plan my listening journeys and trips, I needed to be certain in what to listen for the day before venturing into it. But I also had many CDs and some tapes, I used to give many of them as a gift and lend others with the

hope of having them back. During most of this period my income was really limited, so every album or device was really significant. As I got older and more reflective, I understood that my relationship with music was more than a cultural one, it was not only a form of identity and certainly it did not have a lot to do with my class or cultural capital. Downloading was more than just 'having' the song for free. I understood that, my friends and I had many places in common, in our tastes, but through music could also link, share and describe our differences, there was not a clear cut line between our *musics* but anyone could say something like 'this sounds a lot more like for Víctor'. I understood, in a few words, that music was more important than I thought before, but also that its worth (its '*matter-ness*'), was not graspable by simple productive explanations or capital-driven ones.

Therefore, this thesis is about the importance of music, particularly from the perspective of the individual and the way music becomes part of the listener's sense of being in the world and the way they/we make sense of the world. By analysing listening to music as a practice I want to show not only why, but also *how music matters* from a very intimate level that can reach a more social one. I do not think that music needs another defence to show its importance as a social matter as the one Hesmondhalgh did. But I *do* think that the listener and their experiences, practices and engagements with music need to be refocused in discussing that notion of worth. Hence, what I am proposing is to re-insert those individual experiences in the social analysis; not only to show how music acts, or how we use it, but to show how it becomes a symbiotic part of our experience in the world. In any case this, more than a defence, this thesis is a call to re-introduce the listener, their history and practices into the discussion.

Music from that point of view is more than a cultural object, it is a resource, an identity, a lens, a good, a point of encounter and difference, an affection, an accompaniment, a link to our past; music is an inseparable part of the social world, and its practices. As I will explain further below, that is why I will be talking about the Musical Experience, instead of simply music, understanding it as an assemblage, not only as a convergence of many different things, but also a new entity, beyond

thingness. It raises its own capacities of action, interaction, feelings and desires with uncertain outcomes (Fox and Alldred, 2014, p. 402) that will lead to new affections and assemblages.

This research is focused in the Musical Experience as a set of practices, and the ways in which they create continuous engagements between the music and the listener, but that analysis would be incomplete without paying close attention to the role of devices and contexts of music. By highlighting the role of devices in listening practices it is possible to understand the differences that emerge in those attachments, how different features of the music can be made more or less important than others, or how different experiences would make listening more meaningful. In other words, attending to the role of devices will open the chance to analyse different ways of listening and value that emerge from them, as proposed by Ola Stockfeld in his call to accept the individual experience of listening (1997, p. 91) beyond any normative one.

Including technologies means to include many ways of relating to music in contemporary world, languages, origins and affects that are flowing from different places, and that are constantly changing. As Anahid Kassabian (2013) noted, music is not only everywhere now, but music from everywhere and with multiple levels of attention, with different forms of engagement and different ways of relating us with the world. For her this also challenges how we understand ourselves and the music; the networks that enable the music to be in the world and how this is part of the creation of subjectivities and power relations with unpredictable outcomes. In that sense, her focus is precisely on the attention we pay to everyday music, and the ways in which those differential accounts are raised from specific social and psychological factors. But her most interesting contribution to my work is that, following her work, it is not possible to understand those processes without paying attention to the fluid ways in which we travel through different forms of listening and attention in modern everyday life (Kassabian, 2013, p. 112). In the modern world, the ways in which we listen —and how we differentiate them— shape not only ourselves, but how we live in the world, and what the music means for us. Technology

is not just a mediator then, but also a main actor of our listening practices and how we produce meanings in music. Hence, music is also a mediator of technology and the world.

Accordingly, in this research I am trying to understand the ways that music appears in everyday life, with different levels of attention and in specific situations. As Hagen explains the relational threefold of human-music-technology (Hagen, 2016b, p. 243) becomes important as it also helps to create an infrastructure for everyday life, by setting small time/space frames and routinizing them. But devices are not inserted as a clear-cut replacement of other devices and practices, but through a process of negotiations that confront and mediate known practices and constraints (Magaudda, 2011, p. 2323) in which the listener relates those new practices with the ones already known. That is, to understand the ways in which musical consumption happens, it is required to understand its devices, the music that travels, and the intentions of the listener that are related to their past and previous experiences. In a few words, the negotiations and expectations of the Musical Experience are dimensions of this analysis.

In my account of my own practices above music is still a very vague term. I was not downloading any music, I was downloading specific music that was telling me something about that moment of my life, music I love. The above discussion about modes of listening is crosses also by what music must be listened in which form. It used to be widely accepted that classical music is something to listen to with full attention, while popular music is accompaniment music, but nowadays devices and technologies allow listeners to integrate any available music in their everyday practices for different purposes (Zaborowski, 2016, p. 1). It is the music that we choose that helps us to create an identity and be part of the world, hence becoming inseparable from our sense of self (Johnson, 2002, p. 40) and it is precisely that music that set us up in the social world as symbolic resource (Shuker, 2001, p. 216). Peter Martin (2006, p. 2) asserts that is precisely 'prosaic' music people use in everyday life that should be of interest for Sociology. Martin calls it popular music, but for this thesis even the distinction between the popular and classical is problematic, as listeners are exposed to one or

the other with different levels of attention and for different purposes. In that case, it is useful to expand the concept of popular music to include anything that people use in ordinary musical practices. In this thesis, music is also attended as the object that people use to negotiate other elements and make meaning of their Musical Experience.

Another important starting point for this thesis is to overcome the separation between the individual experience and the social one. One of the most common values attributed to music is that of creating empathy and connection with others, which at the same time opens the possibility of affective relations and solidarity with others (Keevers and Sykes, 2016) and our surroundings (Yamasaki et al., 2013). This argument is also part of Hesmondhalgh's (2008, p. 337) defence, whilst still recognising that music could be a tool for separation, segregation and distinction. As I will show in this thesis, individual and social elements of the Musical Experience, as well as the positive and negative effects of it are not only in negotiation, but also in a fluid relationship in everyday life. In that sense, in his essay about music and the critical experience Israel Marquez uses the example of some traditional communities in which music is just part of their life, politics, religion and aesthetic realm, music is an essential part of that complex assemblage that is life (Marquez, 2011, p. 195). Music makes it difficult to separate the individual and the social, and to separate positive outcomes from negative ones in definitive ways.

Music as an activity, as a compound or as an assemblage, can be the centre of sociological analysis. When paying attention to music, it is possible to observe how self-identities are formed, while negotiated with the context and affections (Frith, 1996, p. 90). When paying attention to music, it is possible to get deeper into the practices, signifiers and rituals that compose it, as well as its consequences in the context: It is hence possible to understand the social in a multidimensional way (Finnegan, 2002, p. 14). More than that, when paying attention to music it is possible to put in the centre the affects and ways of circulation of emotions, feelings and sensations it means. In other words, by analysing musical practices at an individual level, it is also understanding music in its place and context, and the way it makes the social possible. At the

same time, in the case that I am doing with this research, this shows the relevance for music in this analysis. The technology has a crucial role, and the individual histories shape them, but even when the analysis that I propose and the conceptual elements of it can be transported to other cultural objects, this is only possible in the current form through music.

To sum up, by analysing music as a practice, with devices, aesthetic objects and contexts, this thesis is trying to understand how music comes to matter in all those dimensions. To understand that, music invites us to collapse the differences and separations between individual and social, practices and objects, entertainment and attention, or between the cultural and the affective. In this sense, modern music consumption constantly travels around all those categories for every listener. Focusing on those processes does not mean to avoid being critical, or ignore the ways that music also could be a source of social problems, as the possibilities that are opened through that assemblage can also include negative outcomes. It is my claim that understanding the process of making it matter is also understanding the production of those negative outcomes, and the challenging negotiations of those processes. In other words, this thesis looks beyond critical readings of an object or a context; it looks to the assemblage of the Musical Experience, while tracing its formation and dissects its movements. In the following pages I delineate the conceptual framework that makes this analysis possible; first to move out from the concept of taste to the idea of attachment as the idea of a continuing and changing relationship between listener, music and devices. The following section will explain a movement from the idea of listening, as an activity, to the idea of the Musical Experience which allows for the inclusion of different elements in time and space. These conceptual movements are a central part of the framing of the thesis and will be necessary through the rest of the chapters and are key linguistic elements that will appear constantly.

1. 1. 1. From taste to attachments

When talking about music's worth in social and individual terms, it could be confused with the concept of taste. From a sociological

perspective it seems inescapable to visit the concept of taste raised from Pierre Bourdieu's work (1979). In a brief explanation, taste is a preference cultivated from specific social determinants that act over the construction of a social identity and the production of social capital. This is a sense of preference influenced by the position of the individual in the social setting and the possibilities of making something of it; a taste for displaying the self into the social (Shuker, 2001, p. 216). As Gronow (1997, p. 11) notes, this allows Bourdieu to understand taste as something only legitimised through power and social positions. Those with power create the apparent notion of 'good taste' imposing specific group preferences as such. Bourdieu's project is to understand the specific relations of power that happen through the imposition of those notions and the reproduction of social inequality (Warde, 2008, p. 332). In other words, Bourdieu's work is useful to analyse the way in which classed tastes are imposed and perpetrated through valuations and validations. This research is not trying to analyse taste—while it might be an important actor—but the ways in which relations of worth emerge; from that point Bourdieu's theories might not be the appropriate way to conceptualise music as the assemblage explained in the section above. The project is not about preferences over one type of music and the boundary work between good and bad by the consumer, but about how connections are made with the music to become an active assemblage tied together by heterogeneous attachments.

An alternative framework is presented by Antoine Hennion, to analyse cultural adoption from the frame of mediations (Hennion, 2002).[3] In his work *The Passion for Music* he presented this idea as an alternative to sociological, aesthetic, historicist and interactionist understandings of culture (p. 119-156), or a form to tackle what he assesses as their faults. He proposes to include the active role of each of the elements that affect the appreciation of a piece of art, not only considering them as mediators, but as active mediations that shape and transform the very perception of the work and all the other elements of it: 'On the end of

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[3] There is a recent English version of this title (Hennion, 2015a), but all the references in this thesis are taken from the Spanish translation in 2002, from the French version published in 1993.

one mediation, it does not appear an autonomous world, but another mediation. Their relations compose a global network that cannot be summed up into a unit, but that can produce agglomerations as gigantic as the world of the intermediary' (p. 221). In other words, mediations are constantly transforming the whole ontological network of an object.[4] He proposes music as the iconic case to explain mediations, as music is only the product of different elements acting in a very specific way to raise a very specific experience (Hennion, 2010, p. 26).

It is precisely his focus on the experience that makes the most distinctive feature of his approach. His analysis opens the door to the introduction of the listener (in the case of music), as the centre of analysis while challenging Bourdieu's portrait of the individual as a mere carrier of determinants. He understands taste as the result of a specific experiences assembled and learnt by the listener and her own expertise in how to make it emerge. From a pragmatic point of view, the listener will be the one who practices, learns and uses those determinants raised by critical theory, in order to get a desired experience through a reflexive process (Hennion, 2007, p. 101). This means that Hennion is paying attention to how the individual uses her skills—he uses the word *amateur* (Gomart and Hennion, 1999; Teil and Hennion, 2004)—, objects and determinants to build specific experiences, that also will change over time. The focus is on the constitution of that experience and its repetition as a skill.

Another keyword that he uses to develop his framework is *passion.* This allows him to conceptualise the convergence of elements as something that becomes mutually constitutive (Verbeek, 2005, p. 136), repetitive and sensuous (Gherardi, 2009, p. 537). The body plays a central role in this process as it is the way in which mediations are experienced as something that is worthy for the listener to repeat, and through which learning happens. Hence taste is converted into more than

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[4] In this sense there is an intimate relationship with Bruno Latour and Michel Callon's Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 1984; Latour, 1994; Latour, 1993; Latour and Woolgar, 1986), they actually worked together in the production of their theoretical frameworks (Hennion and Muecke, 2016). In any case, ANT by itself is not playing an important role in this thesis, therefore I will not expand on it.

a social knowledge, it is a performance that is transformed over time changing its elements and is experienced through the body (Hennion, 2012, p. 253; Teil and Hennion, 2004, p. 30). Schwarz adds that what is being observed is a technique, that is socially produced, shaped by tasting subjects, life paths and socialization (Schwarz, 2013, p. 420). This means that the main focus is on embodied strategies to experiment with that preference, but that those 'techniques' cannot be understood without attending to the social. That does not make techniques, strategies or practices equivalent to the importance of music in everyday life, but it means that through understanding this practice a sense of valuation could be developed.

This last idea also means, for this thesis, that the relationship is co-constitutive. The mediation between the object and the individual is a passionate one in equal terms, the object needs the interested individual to be raised to a meaningful object and the individual needs the object to gain a pleasurable experience or to be transformed into an expert and to get that heightened experience.

Hennion's concern is also about the dismissive nature of the object in other sociological accounts (see Becker, 1982; Becker, 1953; Blacking, 1969; Bourdieu, 1979; Martin, 1996). For him the object plays a crucial role in the process of performing taste, as it has specific qualities that allow or constrain the action of other elements (Hennion, 2007, p. 98). Not every music provides the same amount of pleasure or interest to the listener, even when they love the band or a specific genre, there are specific qualities that allow the mobilisation of pleasure in specific moments and situations. In a similar fashion, Tia DeNora calls us to attend to the affordances of music (DeNora, 2000, pp. 42-44), that could be understood as emergent qualities of music, that are not predetermined and neither independent of it, while also distributed in the network of elements of sense-making (DeNora, 2014, p. 103; DeNora, 2003a, p. 48). In other words, it means to consider what a specific music does and makes us do in specific circumstances, music as an object with properties. Music, or the aesthetic object, gains a renewed central role in the social sciences, but not as a producer of effects, but as allocating specific affections and interactions when performed. In line with these

ideas, in this thesis, the object is important as an actor with specific qualities, affordances and forms of agency, which will become part of the Musical Experience assemblage. The object is important not only as a source of analysis in itself but in the ways in which it interacts with others, travels and has specific qualities in the process of attachment.

Performing taste is a process of creating affective interactions of elements that will never remain the same, they raise attachments. The abstraction to the level of attachments allows me to separate from the analysis of the object, or taste as condition or activity, to prioritize the enduring interactions that are raised to specific forms and outcomes. It means to focus the attention to the moment in which the relationship—not the object alone— is valued (Hennion, 2017b; Hennion, 2015b; Stewart, 2013) and transformed to constitute the object and action (Gherardi, 2009, pp. 544-545). The idea of attachments does not create prejudices over which mediations are more important—or the value of the outcomes—as they are permanently in flux (Hennion, 2010). In that sense, he coincides with DeNora in not trying to predict an outcome from a single analysis but thinking attachments as something that remains uncertain and specific to that experience (DeNora, 2003a, p. 170). This means that the analytical focus is set in the formation of those attachments and the way they are transforming each other constantly, including the interactions and outcome produced by them. Attachments are a way to understand the practice of affect, love and enjoyment as experiences as well as the effects produced converted in new attachments.[5]

The perspective of attachments—as methodological/linguistic[6] probe, not as a theory— seems to focus on the individual and their private activities. Hence, it has been critiqued for being too liberal and its

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[5] A useful addition from Bruno Latour's work missing in Hennion's, is the notion of de-attachment; if every element of the network is transformed by the relationship, once the relationship is over there is no turning back. In Latour's account there is never detachment, is always only a process of substitution (Latour and Stark, 1999, p. 27). There is not a way of erasing the mark of that song that we hate now, as there is no way to stop comparing the sound of any new devices with that of the tape (for those who used it), even when only a few listeners of that format remain.

[6] Indeed, it is interesting to consider that there is no word in Spanish that could give account of this complex idea. In French the word might be *attachement.*

lack of concern with the structural conditions of the consumption or practice (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Nowak, 2016a). To overcome that, it becomes necessary to include in the analysis of the formation and deployment of attachments, the contextual conditions that play a role in the pleasurable and meaningful experience. Hesmondhalgh proposes to include the formation of *Constrained Agencies* (2013, p. 79) that limit the action of the listener; this is, the way that the listener finds some freedom and adjusts to structural constrains. Claudio Benzecry (2009, p. 139) gives some clues about including them when admitting that there is a negotiation between the individual and the social in that process of mastering the performance in the pursuit of enjoyment. In a similar way, Schwarz (2013, pp. 416-420), when talking about techniques, admits that those are socially shaped and learned and they might rise specific forms of distinction. Finally Nick Prior (2011, p. 134) calls us to consider how sometimes the preferences and tastes can be weaponized through expertise or imposing over others; in other words the ways in which music can be used to hurt or disturb (see Beer, 2013a). It is my contention that these perspectives are also talking about mediations and attachments, as they come from a specific position in the past—as in previous experiences/attachments—, and they might produce negative outcomes as they are inserted into different networks or ways of making sense of the world. This means, those constrained agencies and negative outcomes are active elements of the assemblage, although they are not the primary focus in the analysis of the Experience their role cannot be ignored as mediators of the relationship between music, listener and technologies. This certainly limit the scope of the analysis of those structural conditions in which the listener develops their practices, nevertheless, it allows the possibility of paying attention to the strategies to overcome those limitations.

For this thesis, the concept of attachments then, will be used to think on the multiple ways in which listeners, contexts, devices and music, interact to produce specific forms of worth, interest and new attachments. It becomes an opportunity to integrate in the analysis elements from different scales, while at the same time allowing me to pursue the long-term effects of each experience and the way it re-shapes

over time to produce new objects. It sensitizes the analysis to the musical assemblage in the terms explained above. Still, I consider it necessary to dig a bit deeper in the production of those experiences, beginning from the activity of listening, which I will call *The Musical Experience,* developed in the following section.

1. 1. 2. From Listening to the Musical Experience

To pay attention to the attachments and the assemblage produced by them, understanding them as objects of constant fluid activity, raises the question of listening as an activity in a specific time and space. It is also to pay attention to the moment but the ways in which listening—in opposition to hearing (Sterne, 2003, p. 19)—is produced by a series of social and individual practices that also involve other senses and body dispositions (Ihde, 2007, p. 45). That is, listening to music cannot be reduced to the moment, devices and context of setting up a stereo system and playing a record, or putting the headphones on —even when that moment is crucial as argued before. Listening to music needs to be understood in terms of a series of learnt practices that are enacted at every new performance of the activity. Listening to music is the moment, but is also the past and the future of it, and in this section, I will develop a brief argument of how this thesis will work with the concept of The Musical Experience.

When talking about mediators of listening, it is required to expand the very activity of listening into more complex networks of elements. That is the proposal of Christopher Small when transforming the idea of listening to music into a verb, into something that is done: *musicking* (Small, 2006; Small, 1998a; Small, 1998b). The concept suggests that music cannot be isolated as an object, but is always in performance by the interaction of all the people, and materials, that make it happen in specific settings, from providing materials to attending to the performance (see Borgo, 2007; Odendaal et al., 2013). A main feature of the terms is the distributed nature of music, music is not a thing but a network of things. But it also invites us to focus on the bodies and the creation of a sense of relatedness that emerges from a sense of common

objectives between all the participants of the activity, music as a community of people and elements (see Crossley, 2015). Small was also particularly interested in finding ways to narrow the gap between performers and listeners, mainly persisting in western academic music (Small, 1998a, p. 50).

Musicking, in the ways proposed by Small, makes it possible to collapse the distinction between listening attentively or just listening to recorded music in an elevator; the concept does not provide any kind of value judgement or consideration for levels of participation (Small, 1998b, p. 9). For Hesmondhalgh (2013, p. 91), this idea—which still allows us to understand music as a form of 'social flourishing'— carries three main problems: the impossibility of explaining the differences between the actors taking part in a performance; it lacks tools to understand more individualistic forms of consumption and; it assumes that music mirrors the values of the society that produces it. While I am aware of those elements and agree with Hesmondhalgh's critique, at this point I find it useful for its performative nature and the possibility of including different levels of attention in equal terms—analytically—will help me to consider the different modes of experience that the listener has in everyday life, as well as the points of encounter and exchange between those levels of engagement. Also, as I will show, it appears in my data that the separation between individual and social experiences is not possible, which means that even in individualist consumption it is possible to encounter social differences and elements, as well as clues from the social context that produces those listening encounters.

But instead of using the concept of musicking, during this thesis I will refer to the Musical Experience. This concept originates from the works of Georgina Born and I will try to expand it to make it fruitful for the methodological question of attachments. Georgina Born shares some ideas with Hennion and DeNora, but she also adds the need to consider music as a mediation of the social in terms of time and place (Born, 2005), which means that it is possible to understand music as an entity that establishes specific forms of the social in specific places. Key to her account is the notion of the socially and historically mediated meanings of music (p. 34) which forces the inclusion of the context in which a

specific music is produced and consumed—even the differences among those places and times. Music as a distributed object is linked to the places and the contextual features of the activity of listening.

In another piece, Born invites us to transcend the idea of listening to give way to the Musical Experience (Born, 2010b, p. 80). In her account the idea of the Musical Experience is related to the body, the affective and the located nature of the listening event. This means to put again the listener in the centre that will allow us to explain the roles of the specificities of each experience. In order to give way to a more critical account of the relation between music and listeners, she proposed to combine an analysis of the social and historical accounts of the Musical Experience, while attending to the forms of subjectivity raised from there (p.87) —in a similar fashion as Anahid Kassabian (2013). By considering the mediations of music in a wider form, Born allows the conditions of production and consumption to get into the analysis. She understands music as a multiple assemblage, and she proposes an analysis that includes the music in performance, the sense of community that it raises, the social relations produced, and the intimate level of it (see also Born, 2012; Born, 2010a, p. 233). This account, tackles some of the problems of the concept of musicking, particularly the understanding of music as a socio-historically located event, an experience that is capable of producing long-lasting meanings, but it might never be the same.

For Ruth Finnegan, exploring music as an experience, as something eminently affective and emotional, allows us to overcome the separation of normative ways of listening. The Musical Experience emerges anywhere, and its outcome will be an affective impression on the listener (Finnegan, 2012, p. 357). In her account those outcomes are shaped not only by the conditions of reception in situ, but also by the way in which social settings and place take part in moulding those relations, whether socialized or individual. By including the affective/emotional, that passes through the body and the environment, she is looking at how those outcomes and conditions of enjoyment allow for a more nuanced understanding of the social by observing the individual. This includes the ways in which emotional and sensuous places are creatively set in order to enhance the experience itself, but

also to transform the mental state and the mood of the listener (Pink and Leder Mackley, 2014). In other words, the Musical Experience must include emotional outcomes that are not only related to the music, but also the environment and the past.

To analyse the Musical Experience is an analysis of mediations. Technologies for consumption are part of those mediations, but as they play a central role in my argument, I will unpick it deeper as an important variable. Georgina Born does not ignore the role of technology in fact it is one of the main topics of her work (2010a, p. 235; Born, 2005, p. 32) nevertheless in her account the focus relies more on technologies for production and distribution. Another way to understand the role of technology within the music-listener-devices assemblage comes from Michael Bull, who presents his account on how the Musical Experience is (co)shaped by the urban experience through portable devices (Bull, 2013; Bull, 2010; Bull, 2007). In his account he still considers the role of the listener as an agent to manage and negotiate their own soundscape, in short, an account of the music-in-context. David Beer (2007, p. 855) expands this idea by paying attention to the materialities of the urban context, its sonic qualities and the way in which it is still part of the sound experience of the listener, which means the sound bubble is porous, the way in which the devices act allows the sound to get into the Musical Experience. Their argument points towards a more sensible and material account of the contextualised music experience. From there, Will Straw (2012) proposes to include the music, the material sounds that impact the body, into the analysis. For him, it is also important to de-centre the individual as the main agent in that relationship and focus more on the music and how it circulates through different moments, devices, places and attentions (see Straw, 2010). From these ideas it is possible to include in the analysis the role of the place not only as experiential space, but also as shapers of the Musical Experience in a constant negotiation of attention, comfort and time management.

Devices, in this thesis, are not just carriers of music, they are actors in the Musical Experience. In this case, I am looking at them beyond the individual and urban consumption, but also as mediators of

the social experiences and, importantly, as active moulders of what can be done with the music. David Beer suggests that the very material form of the devices and the way in which they are represented can shape the way people relate to those devices, but also old technologies (Beer, 2008a, p. 77). He suggests that is not possible to separate the life of those devices from what they allow listeners to do, as it is precisely those affordances what make the devices important and valuable for the listener (Beer, 2012, p. 366). Those interactions also change the way we think about the music itself (Beer, 2013b). Devices are ways of controlling music, collecting and sharing it with others; in that way they not only mediate our relationship with the work, but also with the world. In another piece, Nick Prior notes how those interactions are full of surprises and anomalies, the uses that people make of them is not homogeneous or predictable, they are shaped and reshaped constantly (Prior, 2014, p. 23). That means that the analysis of the Musical Experience is also in the ways in which devices act through it and how people assign meanings and uses in particular situations and contexts.

Finally, to include devices into the Musical Experience it is required to analyse how those devices are inserted into the social life of individuals. From that perspective, Paolo Magaudda offers an account of how the insertion of devices into specific practices demands competences and production of new values (Magaudda, 2011). His work highlights the entangled interaction of objects, meanings and practices in the negotiation of past practices and the inclusion of new devices—as well as the role of devices as enabling and constraining agents (Magaudda, 2012). The framework that he develops also gives account of the production and negotiation of meanings for those objects, in interaction with the messages the devices and the actual use in specific circumstances (Beer, 2008a; Magaudda, 2015). These accounts help us to move away from the idea that digital music is dematerialized; but also to include the ways that users negotiate their present devices in relation with those in the past. The argument for the Musical Experience concept that I am trying to present is that those interactions produce meanings for the objects they carry—the music. The meanings produced and the practices developed will influence the culture in return, changing the way

that music is produced, distributed and made available. (Beer, 2006; Beer and Burrows, 2013; Beer and Taylor, 2013; Morris, 2015a; Morris, 2015b; Morris, 2012; Sterne, 2014; Sterne, 2012). In short, devices and the interactions produced in time and space through the Musical Experience are influenced by the cultural and symbolic context, but that influence is also circular.

To clarify, for this research, I am proposing to analyse the assemblage as an experience; the relationship between the listener, their devices for listening and the shape of the content that they listen to. That makes all of the elements reviewed above important, but none on them as the main focus of analysis. Each of those elements, mediates the experience, which mean that they shape it and transform it. I am considering devices as any object—or series of objects—that bring recorded music to the listener and its affordances. I am considering music as pieces of organized sound that listeners use for different purposes in specific moments, which means also trying to include in the analysis the specific features of those content that shape and condition the experience. Nevertheless, in making those decisions, I will inevitably not be not exploring these individual elements in depth in the way that is typical of some disciplines in this field, for example, the project does not cover all the details that some other disciplines such as Sound Studies (e.g. Marshall, 2014; Perez-Colman, 2015), Cultural Sociology (e.g. Alexander, 2003; Zolberg, 2014) or Digital Media Studies (e.g. Couldry, 2012; Hamilton, 2019) would do. The analysis that I am proposing comes closer to a New Materialities (e.g. Barad, 1996; Fox & Alldred, 2019; Latimer, 2010) approach, that relies on Science and Technology Studies.

Summing up, the Musical Experience, as I am proposing it for this thesis, is the possibility of expanding the focus beyond the moment of listening; what DeNora calls *The Musical Event* (2003a, p. 49). It also expands upon the notion presented by Georgina Born (2010b, p. 80), as it puts in the centre the relationship that emerges between the listener, the distributed musical object and the social context. The Musical Experience is the encounter between the past—the learnt experience—, the present—as what is available and the decisions taken—, and the

future—expectations and intentions— of the listener. It includes the body and the affects produced, the material elements of the context, the devices and the sound as producers of meanings, and the way it produces relationships and ways of making sense of the world. Then, the Musical Experience is an assemblage of attachments that are deployed and transformed every new occasion, that will transform the understanding of worth and the way in which the listener positions herself towards the music she loves.

1. 2. Listening to the listeners

The focus of this thesis is on the interactions between listeners, music and devices. It achieves this focus by following the attachments that form the narrated or enacted Musical Experience. It means to keep attentive to the outcomes of those interactions and keep an open sensitivity to follow any unexpected element that plays a role in the process. My approach to confront this challenge was to follow the processes, stories and histories, behind the listeners' actual Musical Experiences; to understand what they value now and why they value it. While listening to the listeners we might also listen to their music and interact with their objects and devices. It aims to show, in the analysis, how music became of worth and meaningful. In other words, I am following different Musical Experiences in their present and past, that arose with and from attachments of divergent nature.

This research is based on Mexico and the UK, through what I call Musical Experience History Method that I will develop further in chapter 3. Nevertheless, at this point, it would be important to say that the interviews followed the processes of learning to engage with music to then putting it in practice during the conversation. This means that I tried to observe the way that the interviewees interact with those elements in practice. In other words, it means to follow the music in the lives of the participants (41) and how they perform those practices today in their own spaces. The analysis that followed up is based on the constant comparison principle of Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014), in which attention is given not only to the phenomena,

but also to my own relationship in the process of building up concepts and arguments.

The empirical groundings of this thesis are not only paying attention specifically to the music, the social context, the individual decision-making process or the role of devices, but on the interaction of those elements that will shape the listeners' experience; at the encounter of the past, the present and the future. The Musical Experience is not a happening in a specific time and space (Lepa and Hoklas, 2015, p. 1254); the interactions and negotiations that happen in everyday life come from the intimate to the structural, from the aesthetic to the strategic, from the attentive to the background and from utility to pleasure. In other words, music is observed as a strategic element in everyday life, that produces meanings and attachments.

Listeners are the ones who know how to deploy their own pleasurable experiences, how each element will interact to empower their day or what sound is 'best', the listener is always creating pathways to make-sense of their preferences and practices (Teil and Hennion, 2004, p. 27). I tried to learn what kinds of affects and attachments are being produced by those interactions and how the listeners try to repeat them. I also wanted to follow the diverse strategies that listeners follow to get that level of intimacy with their musical objects (Benzecry, 2009, p. 134). Finally, it was important to listen to how they explain their historical and cultural determinants as they act in their own decision-making process (Nowak, 2016a, p. 152). As I will explain in the Literature chapter [2], this thesis appeals to the re-insertion of the listener as a source of sociological knowledge about music, technology and everyday life.

What kind of listener? All of them. In my account I am not treating the fan or the listener as the obsessive collector, or the activist online forums commentator; neither the one with specialist knowledge about **Radiohead** nor **Mahler**. The range of participants covers different levels of expertise and attachments to music and technology. I let them draw their own pathways to explain how they practice their relationship with

music, in order to make evident what matters in the Musical Experience for them—the attachments—, and how they care about it.

As stated at the beginning of this Introduction, I agree with David Hesmondhalgh's defence of music away from the idea that music is only driven by capital. I also share his interest to show how music matters from the individual to the broad social group, nevertheless I contend that all those levels can be explored in relation to the individual, the way that the Musical Experience is entangled with everyday life (Frith, 2002, p. 46). In conclusion, why music matters for us, the regular listeners. This, of course will give way to some omissions and faults, particularly those related to the analysis of critical structures and the role of music production, but I will try to overcome this by gaining an in-depth exploration of listeners attachments and processes of stabilisation.

I consider necessary to make a couple of precisions about the writing. This thesis, as the method explained above, is trying to explore reflective experiences, even those related to the researcher/author, who is not anonymous, is an obsessive music listener and has very strong attachments to music. The reader—you—, will find a number of personal accounts, but most often, will find the use of 'we/our/ours' when talking about music lovers in more general terms. This is not a mistake, but a purposeful inclusion of myself when writing about practices, accounts or ideas that resonate with my own. A second note is that this thesis is also about music and technology. The reader will find names of technologies or devices in *italics* and those of bands and songs in **bold**. This is an attempt to make easy to find specific references within the thesis, besides the playlist included.

The first clarification in the last paragraph leads me to clarify also the use of the term 'listener' and the dimensions of it. I am interested in people who is engaged in listening to music in everyday life by their own interest and take strategic arrangements for that purpose. I am not using the term 'consumers' as I am not considering them necessarily as an act of consumption in productive ways—related to Hesmondhalgh's idea—but more as people who actually practice the act of listening as an experience. On the other hand, in the use of this sample and approach to the participants I am also including a political commitment; that even

when they participate in the cultural circulation of music, not everyone can participate in the same terms, given their socio-economic backgrounds or individual perspective. As I will show in the Literature Review, research has neglected the listener—as an individual committed to listen to music—unless they participate in some other activity like technology consumption, creation, collecting or participating in live events. In this thesis, some participants are part of those other activities, but I am interested in their roles as specific listeners. That does not mean that I am not considering other activities or roles, as shapers of their relationship with music, but I want to focus on their relationship with the Musical Experience.

This last point takes me to another nuance in the way I understand those participants. As I was designing this project, if found those gaps intimately related to my own personal experience. The consumer that has been studied in the Literature has never been related to me, without any special relationship with music beyond the very act of listening. I would have never had the chance of getting music lessons, or buying expensive collections or devices for listening. That does not make music less important; at the contrary, as I intend to show with this thesis, this makes music more special. Some of my interviewees had to buy counterfeit copies from street markets or download music from digital platforms just to access that music. I am interested in finding the importance of that relationship and how it has been developed in order to make them willing to do all those things. On that regard, I am not classifying based on traditional readings of social class; from those in rural areas of Mexico, to those with high-income families in the UK they are treated at the same level. My commitment is not labelling them with any sort of classification beyond the ones they want to include in their narrations. This does not mean that their structural conditions are not important, as the stories show, it is; my commitment is not to read those experiences and love for music purely from that perspective. My defence of music is also a defence of listeners like myself.

David Hesmondhalgh is not the only author who has tried to answer the question of why music matters and while I have been detailing a lot with his approach, I will close this introductory chapter—

before the summary in the next section—with a different form of answering the question, from Simon Frith's lecture:

> Music matters because it is pleasurable —to do and to experience— and because it is a necessary part of what we are as humans, as feeling, empathetic beings, interested in and engaged with other people. To study music is to study what it is to be human—biologically, cognitively, culturally; to play music is to experience what it is to be human— physically, mentally, socially, in an aesthetic, playful, sensual context. Music matters, in short, because without it we wouldn't know who we are and what we are capable of being. (Frith, 2008, p. 178)

1. 3. Chapter by Chapter Overview

This thesis proposes two main questions, how is music important for society and individuals outside questions of capital? And how do technologies and practices influence, shape and transform that importance for us? The analytical starting point proposed from this chapter is to explore the distributed nature of music, specially through technological devices. There are some other questions to be raised from there such as; how do we learn and reproduce the Musical Experience? Which actors play a role on transforming it and shaping it? How is that experience developed in everyday life? How does that experience change and acquire new shapes through the life course? How is that experience maintained through time? What do people do with the Musical Experience? In order to answer those questions, this thesis is structured as follows.

The thesis starts with this introductory chapter that tries to set up the orientating concepts and initial assumptions that are helpful to understand and develop the rest of the argument. In this chapter the main concepts of Attachments and Musical Experience are explored and delimited. Those concepts are presented from the point of view of the literature, but also from the uses and purposes of this thesis.

In the following chapter (2) I will present an exploration of current academic accounts about the encounters between music, technology and individuals. In the chapter—literature review— I focus on the way that objects and devices play a role in the Musical Experience; the way that the Musical Experience has been transformed through digital devices and its relationship with previous formats and the way new practices

emerged in listeners life. There is also an exploration of the ways in which from different perspectives musical objects become part of the formation of identity. Afterwards, I examine the accounts around the relationship of music with specific spaces memories and affections as mediated elements of everyday life. Finally, I look at some recent accounts of how the love of music, as represented by fandom, has experimented changes in the digital era, not only referring to the musical format itself, but also to other cultural practices such as digital social media.

The third chapter presents what I call the Musical Experience History Method, which is a joint exploration of musical memories and activities, between the interviewee and the interviewer, while listening to music together. I present the analytical rationale of the project and the process to gather participants in Mexico and the UK. The chapter focuses on the ways in which the research project has changed through the process of doing it. It also presents a summary of the participants and a small reflection about the process of translating from Spanish to English, which is a constant in this project.

Chapter four is the first analytical chapter. In it I explore the moments in which listeners got interested and engaged in specific forms of music and specific forms of consuming it. By its own nature it looks at the past of the attachment, but also it looks at its transformations and follows the elements that have shaped them to their current form. I propose the terms of 'Threshold Moments' and 'Dispositions' to make sense of intense encounters that will convert the Musical Experience while still retaining something from the past. That chapter includes an exploration of how through that process, listeners managed and shaped their identities at different levels. The chapter closes with the places and objects in which those musical identities are distributed to relate the individual to the social.

The second analytical chapter, number five, covers the strategies and conditions used to explore the Musical Experience and transform it into something meaningful. Using the word 'Drilling' as a key metaphor, the chapter unpicks the ways in which spaces, knowledges and devices take an active role in the constitution of attachments to the Musical

Experience. The word works in both senses of its meaning, on one side and something that tries to go deeper into a surface, as in the meanings of a song or the possibilities of a devices, and as a noun, as a practice in order to master specific procedures.

The following analytical chapter develops two main topics. On one side it explores the ways in which attachments are looked after and protected in everyday practices, as something that is sensible, malleable and prone to be constantly affected, even against the will of the listener. The second topic developed in the chapter covers the ways in which the listener uses the Musical Experience in everyday life, not only as a source of emotions or sensations, but also as ways to understanding the self and the world around them.

The concluding chapter summarizes the different approaches that were covered during the analysis and draw some answers to the main questions of the thesis. As a form of integrating the data I propose at the end an approach to follow the socio-material distributed assemblage that is the music, the idea of 'Plasticine Music'. With it I propose an avenue to explore the relationship of music with the social world and the notion of identity.

1. 4. About the playlist

This thesis is accompanied by a playlist that is intended to work in multiple ways. First as a point of reference for the music that appears through the thesis.[7] It is an invitation to listen what the listener is talking about and what we were probably listening together. As such, the length and format of the thesis did not allow the inclusion of all the music discussed and listened during our interviews. Hence, the playlist is also intended to honour that music, that is why there is some music that is not present in the text. Finally, the playlist is a way of getting the reader in contact with myself, there is some music that is about my own attachments and that has attached to different points of knowledge and

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[7] In the content of this thesis, there are a few mentions to **Michael Jackson** and **Ryan Adams**. For different sets of reasons in each case, they are not appearing in the playlist.

experiences during the research process; music that has attached me to different persons, places and memories. Finally, the playlist is not in any particular order, and it is not separated between those three purposes above. The intention of this is to let the reader to make their own attachments, interpretations and uses of it. For a change, the reader is encouraged to listen while reading.

2- Literature Review

The importance of music, in David Hesmondhalgh's (2013) terms, begins from the possibility of making the individual and the social flourish. On the side of the individual, he mainly focuses on processes of identity, intimacy and sociality. As explained before, my contention is that to grasp those processes it is required to keep an eye on the way listeners do things _to_ music_k_. In specific, how listeners _do_ things _with things_ to music_k_. Devices, culture, music and listeners are all agents in the Musical Experience, in transforming music from a noun to a verb. Hence, contemporary recent transformations towards the digital set an interesting starting point to analyse those practices.

This chapter explores some accounts of how scholars from different perspectives have covered those elements. As my main interest rests in the role of technology and music in everyday life, the exploration of this chapter will be led by what Nick Prior calls 'Digital Formations' (2018, p. 4), that he defines as the devices, the commercial claims, and the ways of talking that constitute technological realities and everyday routines that shape and interact with the consumption of digital music. The following sections are separated by the different points of focus that literature has covered that will prove useful for framing this thesis. In the first section I will explore the idea of formats and devices as agents in the formation of listening practices and notions of music. The second section deals with the new possibilities opened by portable formats and what new relationships between the listener and the music they allow. The third section refers to the personal and intimate relationship that listeners develop with certain _musics_ or music related objects, but also with sounds and genres. The fourth section covers the subjective experience of being a listener in the world, as negotiation with spaces and as memory objects. To close this chapter, the last section focuses on the new forms of fandom and uses that fans are making of technologies to enhance and mediate their passions.

The overall intention of this chapter, besides working as a traditional literature review, is to outline the transversal elements that form the Musical Experience such as devices, biography, passion,

memory, sounds and spaces. As is shown in the chapter, those elements have been explored separately, and through this chapter, beyond 'finding the gap', I want to outline some elements that inform in more detail my idea of the Musical Experience that will be useful through the following chapters.

2. 1. Machines and Formats as actors

In popular music the album as a recorded set of songs became the key element to convert it into a commodity through a scarcity regime. The very act of making music available through recordings to play somewhere else, removed the need of the listener to know how to play an instrument, sing, or read a notation. Michael Chanan notes that the recording produces also new meanings in the music, it creates an authoritative version of it, against which every performance will compared (Chanan, 1995, p. 18). At the same time, it us allows to have new forms of repetition that could be imitated by listeners that could have less musical formation. Further, the recording gave the listeners new ways to understand other musical activities, like the concert, in which the listener was able to attend to knowing perfectly the pieces in it, a *discomorphosis* of listening (Hennion, 2001, p. 6). The changes that accompanied the record can be traced beyond the sound and the market, but it is necessary to be mindful of the deterministic approach of those analyses.

The introduction of new technological devices goes along with new understandings of music itself. The places and tools for the production of music are key for those interpretations, as shown by Susan Schmidt Horning, who traced alongside the story of the recording studio the figures that emerged along those changes. Her research tells us about the professionals who adopted and adapted their roles while pushing the boundaries of technological devices. She narrates the multiple paths of sociotechnical arrangements in the recording studio that shaped the engineer and the producer, but also made them main actors of the process while *production* itself became an instrument in the process. She argues that the use of technology was shaped to pursue forms of

expression as well as the sound of records; in other words: how music was expected to sound like (Schmidt Horning, 2013, p. 217). In a similar fashion, Mark Katz shows how producers shaped technology to make it a key element of music, but he adds the role of listeners and industries who actively defined boundaries of what is possible and acceptable in music and—moreover—, as music (Katz, 2004, p. 4). What changes then is not only the notion of what is needed to make music, but also who can make that music and how we expect that music to sound.

The relation between music, technology and listeners is led by the mediation of sound, that means that they also produce knowledges and establish a specific definition of acceptable sound. For Jonathan Sterne, sound technologies—like the *gramophone*, the telephone or the *MP3*—are not only the product of technological developments but of notions of what is sound—and noise— and how those notions are related to the past and current cultural moments (Sterne, 2012, p. 17). The sound of the *MP3* can be traced back to the production of psychoacoustics, used by the telephone industry to define the minimum amount of signals required to understand the sound transmitted as words. The format then, is not only the container, but a convergence of knowledges, devices—that mingle with other devices—, and practices that can be made with them. In the specific case of the *MP3*, he contends, the format is made to listen for the ear, and that assumes a listener that will not be fully attentive all the time. That also might shape us as listeners; did you use to listen the hiss from the vinyl every time? Or the metallic sound of tapes? Sterne's arguments here set the basis to pay attention to the ways in which specific formats deploy sounds and create particular sensory reflections in the listener.

In Sterne's articulation of MP3's conditions of possibility cited before, he also highlights the convergence of different stakeholders with different sets of interests in shaping the format and its behaviour, as well as the importance of agreements to make it widely functional (Sterne, 2012, pp. 128-147). Sterne's interest is in the process of shaping the *MP3* as an audio format, that included media industries, labs and manufacturers—as well as a disembodied ear to test the functionality at each step of the formation of the format. Jeremy Wade Morris (2015b)

took this idea a step further, by also taking into account the role of 'external' actors that shape the object. In his account it is possible to trace the role of the Digital Music Commodity[8] not only from within the industry, but through side or even oppositional developments such as *Napster* or the Compact Disc Database (CDDB), as they helped to mould a use and a public interest in consuming music on that format. Both of their projects show the heterogeneous forces shaping the ways in which digital music is considered as 'music.'

Formats are shaped by culture, but they also have a role in shaping culture. This is the argument in Peter Manuel's history of cassette culture in India. The introduction of the cassette in the context that he describes restructured the North Indian popular music scene by challenging the dependence on 'old media' to circulate culture (Manuel, 2014, p. 390). The tape allowed the entrance and circulation of non-represented groups by the traditional industry. New hybrid genres raised from outside the *acceptability* of traditional industries. He explains how recording technologies are inserted in a complex network of relations that includes the state of the industry, the legal frame and the creative use of technologies by musicians and listeners—in this case at the margins of what is understood as music. The negotiations among these factors impact not only in the short-term relationship between music production and consumption, but also shape the cultural framework in which music circulates. In this argument it is important to note that legal frameworks are challenged too, as happened later with *MP3* and *p-2-p* sharing networks.

New technologies are never inserted into an empty space. Every new way of doing things proposed by technologies are also shaped and in alignment with the practices—and meanings— the techno-social context at a specific moment. In the commercial sphere a technology should bring something from the past to make it acceptable in the set of established practices, but they also mean new ways of understanding them (Bolter and Grusin, 2000; Hayles, 1999). In a comparative

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[8] Morris proposes this concept to understand the set of specific practices, technologies and formats that convert music – in the digital era – into a profitable object (Morris, 2015b, p. 11).

statistical analysis of the market behaviour of the *Compact Cassette* and the *Compact Disc* between 1973 and 2012, Guidolin and Guseo (2015) show that beyond competence both of the formats worked together towards an expansion of the album market. More than competing the introduction of the new format became a productive site for the music industries, while in users' terms both were compared with each other constantly. This behaviour resonates with Matthew David's analysis of the *peer-to-peer (p-2-p)* sharing phenomena, where he argued that the end of the regime of scarcity of physical formats was beneficial for other sectors of the music business, as listeners knew more music and they were able to relocate their expenditure in, for example, live concerts (David, 2010, p. 50). New formats and devices could be understood as competing formats, nonetheless they participate in networks of production that re-shape each other and are key mediations for the listeners to make sense of their own Musical Experience in wider terms.

So far, I have presented some research focused specifically on the format as a container, but the format is also a set of practices and devices specifically designated for it. The *vinyl* is a *turn table*, a specialised store, a set of high-end speakers and so. In that sense all of those devices are part of a discursive network that are also part of their affordances. From a cultural studies perspective Paul du Gay et.al showed the networks of meanings and practises that composed the *Sony Walkman* beyond its very production. In their account, the production of it, as well as its design play an important role, but paying attention to those elements should not blind us to the understanding that objects are also part of semiotic networks that produce social identities and regulations over their use (du Gay et al., 2013, pp. 15-16). In recent technologies David Beer notices the invisible interactions that happen to shape the simplicity of the *iPod* that goes beyond its very function as carrier of *MP3* files (Beer, 2008a, p. 75). Paolo Magaudda analysed how this device was inserted in a circuit of meanings through practices and negotiations that produce symbolic values from the device as an object (Magaudda, 2011, p. 31). In those three cases, devices are producers of value, symbolic capital and information about the carrier. The devices

become part of the social life of the individuals, but they are intertwined by economical-industrial accounts.

To sum up this section, formats are not just isolated objects. As I demonstrate in the research above, the relationship between the format and devices is not a closed one, and not led by a single interest. They are actors, shaped by cultural, scientific, economic and social forces. But they are not just a product, they also shape our practices and our ontological assumptions about what music 'should' be. They shape how we interact with music and the new assumptions from it. The research reviewed also shows that devices play an active social role in how those formats create symbolic meanings and interactions, while making others invisible. My intention here is to show that while 'there are not ontological grounds on which to claim that live or recorded music has a life abstracted from the world of objects' (Prior, 2018, p. 3), it is possible to affirm that those networks are also mediated and transformed at the micro and the macro level. In the following sections I will explore in more detail how specific practices are raised from those devices, the technological and material dimensions of *musicking* that produce specific attachments.

2. 2. Everything, everywhere, anytime

Through different assemblages—not only formats—, music seems to be available increasingly in more spaces and as a side element of different products. We are constantly stimulated by sound either intentionally or unintentionally. As I have shown, formats are part of the social life, and shape what we understand as music. But in a more individual level, it is possible to see that there is a change in the relationship established with music. In this section, I will explore some literature that explores the emerging relations between the listener and the aesthetic object by analysing the new availability of music.

Nowadays, a listener's experience of music is not retracted to one device, everyday listening occurs through different moments and places, and to grasp the changes and interaction among them, it seems necessary to explore the Musical Experience in a multi-focused way;

which means, paying attention at the differential element of those devices and places instead of focusing in just one kind of experience. By following the way that 177 listeners encounter music at different moments—through a self-reporting method— Amanda E. Krause, Adrian C. North and Lauren Y. Hewitt, noticed that there was a difference in how individuals react to music in relation to the media they use (Krause et al., 2015). At the moment of the data collection for their study radio and mobile MP3 players were the most common devices, but researchers were able to take down the idea of devices putting the listener into a passive position. According to their findings the most appreciated quality of technological devices is the level of control that users have through them. The arrangement of playlists, the ability to qualify songs or adding notes, the flexibility for adding or deleting content; all those features allow the listener to engage with music in ways that were not available before, more personal and individual. The music gains flexibility for the eye of the listener, a personal tool to fulfil more specific objectives, but also serve to different purposes through different devices.

But control is not the only transformation brought it by digital files. Consumption, as an act, has changed. For Janice Denegri-Knott (2015, p. 399) one main feature of digital music—particularly MP3 files— is that they encourage effortless accumulation, that is not possible with any other format, an argument that Attali (1985) made about the recorded album. In agreement with Jonathan Sterne (2012), Denegri-Knott argues that the compression algorithm have altered not only our listening practices, but what we listen to, acting as an active mediator. This is, the algorithm of *MP3* has decided before the music reach us, what is important to listen or not, hence, the algorithm have made the listening for us. She makes a critical reading of the file as a way to reduce listener's engagement and active listening, reducing the consumption to a *click* to a file. The creation of value resides in the personalization, the work of curating a playlist that demands to be updated constantly to remain meaningful (Denegri-Knott et al., 2012). It is easy to illustrate her argument; the specific experience of putting money together, going to the store, navigating the store and wait until the moment of getting home to listen to the desired album, accompanied by the smell of the

cellophane is not that important now. But that playlist for work might fit us perfectly and has in it a respectable number of hours in putting it together. The relationship with what we love, as avid music consumers, has been remediated, the value appears much more in our relationship with it.

Listeners actively engage in the formulation of value through valuation. In a study conducted in Sweden—using practice theory (Warde, 2005)—a group of researchers argue that music is not only a complementary element of everyday life activities, but part of them (Fuentes et al., 2019). Listeners build a soundtrack for every activity, and it involves a careful curation between what they have, the learning of past experiences and the expectations of the activity; there are activities that demand less in terms of music attention while for some others it has become a vital part of them. They recognise that the creation of *soundtracks* for specific activities is not exclusive to digital formats, but they show that digital devices make it easier, making it popular and relevant. Hence, sound and the process of acquisition have changed, some practice have disappeared partially, but the new possibilities of assembling a meaningful experience in everyday life makes music important through a process of personalization and flexibility.

Beyond the possibility of curation, Anahid Kassabian notices that while listeners pay less attention to music, a more intense relation might be happening from the new places where music appears and new *musics* that have become available. In her book, *Ubiquitous Listening* she considers not only that music can be listened in more places, but music that comes from different places (Kassabian, 2013). Her argument is that listeners are in a state of fluctuation between attentive and non-attentive listening and that, nevertheless, constant exposure to music still raises affective responses that shape the subject's experience of the world and their identity. She calls this 'distribute subjectivity,' which is a concept to describe the uneven and unpredictable ways of engagement with the world, its objects and ourselves through ubiquitous music. For my purposes here, the salient feature of her work is the inclusion of the affective responses to the world as a way to explore it, from musical

encounters. Also, her approach is not dismissive of inattentive listening considering it part of the actual sound regime.

For Anahid Kassabian, affect and feeling play a fundamental role in the actual ubiquitous *musicscape.* Peter Martin (1996, p. 56) affirms that identifying affects and interpreting them is the first step to decide an appropriate course of action. Raphaël Nowak (2016a, p. 79) will include this as a process of apprehension. For Nowak it is this process that provides the listener with a sense of adequateness 'patterns of music listening that entangle a particular role assigned to the content listened to, which are enacted by certain music technologies and their materialities, and which unfold within the everyday context they are associated with' (Nowak, 2016a, p. 83). Hence from the multiple listening spaces and sources studied by Kassabian, the listening can become singular, attention shifts and finds a pleasurable outcome that the listener will try to repeat, making an attachment emerge. This means that even those multiple practices can be studied and followed through understanding the rationale for each specific practice and the way the listener assesses the mediations and the outcomes of them.

Looking at that distributed experience in the world makes it possible to explore and understand the ways in which the practices of listening—and objects—get new sets of valuations and distributions. From this perspective, some research suggests that the objects that surround the Musical Experience are not getting devaluated but getting new places in the assemblage. For example, Héctor Fouce (2012) argues that through digital formats there has been a displacement in value. The album is not the main product of the Musical Experience, neither as an object or a collection of ordered songs, but that does not mean that music does not have value. In his research he finds that the live concert has acquired a new form of auratic value. The idea of newness, that used to command the recording market, is now just an initial step towards the concert, not only as the 'best' way to get the aesthetic experience, but also as source of income for industry and musicians alike. On the side of the listener it is an unrepeatable experience based on a specific place and time, in which a form of identity is also built up. This argument appears to be evident in the rise of festivals and big tours that some musicians

are making, but it is essential to understand how the process of valuation of that experience occurs within the listener's sense-making process. In other words, it is possible to analyse the change of the centre of attention or earning for stakeholders, but it would be incorrect to assume that the listener transfers the same value to other activities; the distribution changes through the whole network of mediations.

Beyond the valuation, digital technology also changed the meaning of the very activity of listening and elements around it. Fouce also shows how the very act of buying a physical record acquired a new meaning, as now listeners tend to buy records or attend to concerts not to expand a collection, but to support the artist as a solidarity statement. The intention is not to get them for listen at home—which might still happen—, or to learn the songs for a future concert, but to recognise the way in which artist should make a way of living (Fouce, 2012, p. 101). In a similar line Jane Hogarty (2015) shows that there is a significant attachment to material objects like CDs or Vinyl, and they are key players in the Musical Experience as a sensory experience and for the constitution of memories. Extra musical objects are mediators to build up an intense relationship with the music, they allow not only a sense of ownership but extended practices like reading the lyrics, appreciating the art or just listening more attentively. The sense of ownership is intensified by knowledge and sensuous elements of the objects. Even when her study is focused mainly on the relationship with physical records, together with Fouce's it is possible to notice how it is required to pay attention to the sensory dimension of the experience, as well as to the extra musical actors that help the listener to compose meaning and becoming attached to the experience.

A key element in today's technological musical context is the possibility of listening to music from a wide range of devices. Lepa and Hoklas (2015) researched the ways that fans in Germany navigate those resources in everyday life. They advanced research questions beyond one specific device, but in the reasons and meanings of each way of accessing music (p. 1256). In their mixed-methods study, they argue that listening practices are influenced by formative years experiences, creating a *Modus Operandi* (p. 1266) that is composed by implicit

expectations, as well as embodied scripts and competencies. This does not exclude the possibility of biographical interventions, that change the behaviour in listener's life course. Their approximation to the topic enriches the topic as they are able to consider all the flux and changes between technologies in everyday life; and their relationship with learnt practices, which considers the impact of past affective responses. This last point is expanded in a later publication (Lepa and Seifert, 2016) in which they focus on the socialisation and embodiment of listening practices, as well as in the non-attentive nature of those practices, showing that attentiveness is not a requisite to meaningful experiences.

There is constant state of movement between attentiveness and inattentiveness. According to Kassabian, that movement opens the possibility to sensory emotional experience through surprise. Lionel Detry (2016) presents an explorative research study in the ways that listeners use mobile devices to conduct their activities. In his research he uses two key ideas, 'listening environment' and 'production of attention'. The first one is useful to consider how listening to mobile music includes not only the space and time of the practice, but also what is at hand as devices and catalogues. The second concept regards the ways that listening in urban environments becomes meaningful, through a careful setting of the elements, from creating or choosing a playlist, to the emotional and affective qualities of the setting, 'listeners know what causes their attention and they need to look for it if they wish to listening closely to music' (p. 10). The outcome of the Musical Experience is full of unexpected happenings, surprises and serendipity. Uncertainty is its main quality.

In this section I have shown through previous research, how technological changes, particularly digital technologies, have transformed more than the fact of having everything, everywhere, anytime. It is required to follow the practical qualities each kind of device provides as well as the way the listener travels through them at different moments. It is also important to understand and analyse the way each format is produced and the materialities involved in it, as they are also part of the listener's experience. It is shows that each setting for listening is meaningful for different reasons and that the change of the places of

music consumption is also a change of its mediations and outcomes, particularly the affective ones. Finally, it is important to follow how the interaction with devices, places, possibilities and sounds, create new forms of value that overcome the monetary one, but also the individual one. That does not mean that material objects are not important, but that we must pay attention to the ways in which the values are distributed through different mediations. Finally, I explored some research that shows the importance of following the movements between attentive and inattentive listening as well as the role of unexpected happenings, surprises and serendipity as well as control over the Musical Experience that changes the attachments to the music. In the following section I will follow this last idea of control and curation that were briefly covered here.

2. 2. 1. Control, curation and appropriation

The possibility of accessing immense amounts of music almost everywhere, has an overwhelming dimension. How should I decide what to listen? What is appropriate at each moment? Should I still listen to a full album? I have insisted that some of those answers are specifically dependent of our personal histories, some of us cannot be bothered to swap a vinyl record, as we were raised mostly with CDs, while for others is a central part of the experience of the album. But certainly, those questions are also addressed at the way we understand our relationship with music, what we leave to the format and what we try to shape to our specific interests. In this section I want to explore more in detail the way in which scholars have approached to the practices of curation and ordering, and the way those practices illuminate more features of the Musical Experience.

One of the most salient qualities of digital music files is the possibility of moving or copying the files through different arrangements without actually affecting or making any permanent change in them. Metadata made this possible (Morris, 2015b; Morris, 2012, p. 852), this is the information that describe the object, both for the software handling it and for the user—without it we would see in our players only things like

'track one', 'track two' and so on. Metadata is also a way of re-inscribing the way the listener interacts with the files, like counting reproductions (Beer and Burrows, 2013, p. 51). The file remains the same, but the descriptor just gives it a new place and produces information about it at the same time. Metadata allows us to move, organize, classify and search our files. Metadata opens the possibility of creating reproduction lists and change them constantly.

This is certainly not a new practice, the mixtape had similar features. The mixtape is re-mediated constantly by the design of reproduction software for digital music files. The main purpose of the mixtape was sharing music (Fenby-Hulse, 2016, p. 175), either by copying from someone else, or by preparing a mix to give it away. However, the creation of a mixtape was a meticulous task that, according to Kieran Fenby-Hulse (p. 186), contained an element of storytelling; a narrative journey about how that specific music it there, and the work to collect it and shape it, an element that has been lost within the digital environment. Following this argument, the playlist is stripped out of time and place, particularly those produced by streaming companies and designed to cover specific functions or moments. Even the notion of 'friends' has changed, as it is now possible to share playlists with almost anyone, even without wanting it, and to take or listen to list made by others in a digital social network, someone that we do not know (Jones, 2011, p. 446). With these arguments together, it would not be risky to say that we listen and share a lot with people we do not know, and less with people that we actually know.

But some claims that playlists still contain some features from the mixtape to make them valuable. From this perspective, making playlists creates an intense engagement with music, constantly making decisions and practicing curatorial skills, opening the possibility for new meanings and attachments. At the early stages of digital files Marjorie Kibby (2009) conducted a study with 35 listeners on the way they collect and order digital files. She found out that the process of ripping *CDs* to the hard drive is constantly described as an act of redemption. A release of the music into an ampler existence (p. 435) that allows new meanings and orders, letting music fit a wider range of situations. In a similar fashion,

Flynn (2016) found that streaming provides listeners with autonomy and control, that become key elements to enjoy listening. Having control, on Flynn's research, could allow space for an expression of taste. Flynn also classified six listening positions—ways in which listening can be expressed— but only one that is unique to streaming: he calls it 'converse listening'. This expression of listening includes the way that streaming is affected by data and algorithms, alongside with the way in which listeners travel from one way of listening to the other according to his context and sense of purpose—as argued in the previous section. The listener gained power to create meanings and use music, beyond artistic and industrial discourses of the objectified album.

Curation is an appropriating and empowering action. By using **King Crimson**'s 2012 release of ***Larks' Tongues in Aspic: The Complete Recording**,* alternative media scholar Chris Atton argues that curation is not only a way of gaining control but also to create an authoritative argument over how to listen. In this case, the argument relates to the way new technologies help to re-frame recordings from the past, even those made by fans on tapes. His argument results are useful for my contention here in two ways, it shows that through that process the band tried to escape the 'progressive rock' genre label imposed by industrial standards, challenging its static nature and; it considers the process of curation as a 'musical exhibition' enhanced by technology:

> Curation is a reflexive process: to assemble the contents for a musical 'exhibition' is not only to describe a historical situation but also to argue for how we might attend to it, appreciate and understand it. In describing the historical situation, the curator constitutes the situation. I have argued that curation is concerned with taking care and taking control. It is not, however, sufficient to exert authority over the recordings themselves: the curator must also convince the listeners. (Atton, 2014, p. 424)

Even when he is talking about musicians, and ownership of their own work, that critical account could give us a hint of what kind of relationship the listener exerts when creating playlists. This is not only as a way to manage and navigate a musical library, but to appropriate and

own their music while showing some authority over its functions, challenging other ways of listening, like the album or radio.

This idea of control is also exploited by the market. In their analysis of streaming services Morris and Powers identify the main qualities that they offer the listeners (Morris and Powers, 2015). They explain that the very idea of streaming presents music as an evanescent consumption good, and that it raises questions about access and power— e. g. What content? Who can access? At what cost? Providers have to balance the wider content offer with a sense of control, accessibility and order. In those three principles services also try to offer a personalized experience, giving the listener 'exactly what you are looking for, even if you did not know it' (p. 112). That is, the user's enjoyment is based on the algorithm to offer better dedicated recommendations through a movement between beloved songs and new ones, which keeps the listening active and engaging (p. 113). Even when the idea of control permeates every dimension of streaming, it is not total control, there are contouring limits, such as the catalogue of the country where the listening is happening. As I will show further later, more than control is a balance between what the listener wants to manage and the possibilities that completes the interaction with the context, as in the idea of The Musical Experience that I am proposing above.

In my account for this thesis, the way that listeners experience streaming through control and curation is also creative and active. Listeners create playlists, or take them from somewhere else to appropriate them in specific circumstances. Anja Nylund Hagen (2016b; 2015) explored the forms and temporalities that streaming in Norway can take: (1) Static, which refers to playlists that remain with the same content; (2) Dynamic , to those made to be expanded or reduced constantly according to different purposes; (3)Temporary, which are those made for a specific purpose and that disappear afterwards; (4) Random, that she defines as those that play aleatory content from a limited sample, such as the 'Radio' function in Spotify or 'Genius' in iTunes. These categories are based on the idea of control and intentionality, although she also develops a more personal order, like those made by (5) genre or country or origin; (6) Individual categories,

made through personal meanings assigned to a set of songs like 'slow music' or 'party'; and songs about personal stories.

Those playlists are also shaped by different elements at different levels. Some of them seem to be particularly sensitive to the context, like holidays, parties, activities or moments of the day. The social context can also shape some playlists, like those based on very individual emotions or memories, or those made through interaction with others, in relation with others and/or to share. For Tom McCourt (2005, p. 252), control and curation are the main features of 'immaterial' containers of music, which seems to agree with Hagen's evidence. Hagen expands this argument by asserting that even if streaming does not surpass physical recordings in terms of intimacy or intensity of relation, it impacts listeners in everyday life through affective meanings and a diverse set of experiences (Hagen, 2015, p. 640). In her account there is also a rich description of the fluidity that characterises the whole streaming experience, as those playlists are easily movable from one category to other, the level of involvement can be changed by unexpected experiences and the users might display different uses through different moments. In other words, the quality that she finds in streaming—and its value— relies precisely in the chance of being a flexible attachment.

The flexibility of streaming demands arduous work to remain relevant. In that sense it puts the listener in paradox between detachment and intimacy. Wenche Nag explores this tension and the work that the listener puts to make that catalogue personal (Nag, 2017). In that process, she notices that playlists, as intimate curations, are also part of an identity work that relies precisely on the flexibility of the format and the work invested in them. That identity work is not making it individual, as listeners constantly add new music from different influences over time. In other words, the creation of playlists is not only about managing the catalogue, but about expressing different tastes, identities, and keeping a rational balance between the individual and the social. We are interpreting ourselves and our worlds through the work invested on a list, but we are also interpreting our music. In a small exploratory study based on iTunes, Krause and Hargreaves claim that the flexibility of files also can express the listener's self-perceived level of

engagement with music while at the same time creating new constellations and relationships between different pieces and meanings, even challenging the genres that are assigned by the seller or the media (Krause and Hargreaves, 2012, p. 541). Genre is not anymore, a way in which people explore music, even arguing that it sometimes is wrong for them.

To sum up, the sense of control is an important feature of modern music consumption. It allows the listener to navigate around a big catalogue of music while at the same time personalize the content. That personalization also provides them a sense of appropriation, that reaches how each person understands the content, creating their own sense of genre, mood, and usage. That process of appropriation relies also upon learnt experiences from the past, as well as what is expected from that specific moment and also implies work and time as a form of valuation. Through those playlists, it is possible to explore the idea of identity construction as an intimate feature but also a more socialized one. Finally, it is worthwhile to be attentive to the idea of developing a balance between control and surprise, as a way to keep the interest of the listener.

2. 2. 2. Collecting Musical Experiences

The very first vignette from Evan Eisenberg's *The Recording Angel* (1987, pp. 1-8) is a portrait of a house full to every inch with records. A collection that is most of the time silent but that still represents a lot of value for the collector, who—we learnt towards the end of the chapter— is deaf. Music related objects are not only carriers of music, they develop specific meanings and properties. Songs, albums and music files—or titles in the case of streaming—, also develop those meanings above their content. When they are put next to another they are able to tell stories about the collector, or to say something to the collector, or both. In this section I will review some academic literature interested in the

music containers as collections and forms of construction of the self and the other.

In an analysis of the social dimension of collecting, Roy Shuker (2004) presents a multidimensional account of this activity. His empirical report shows that collectors deploy certain degrees of obsessive-compulsive behaviour; different forms of completion and accumulation; an strategic discriminative and selective behaviour; and an interest in acquiring knowledge that might be related to other spheres of life, like academic work—or writing a doctoral thesis about The Musical Experience over four years. On the other hand, he presents evidence in how the act of collecting is related to social and individual identity, not only for self-identity construction, but also as a socialization device. Shuker also explores how memories, individual and social, are essential to create attachment with music and objects. Finally, he also relates the act of collecting and generating memories with the life-course, as adolescence seems to be the key point for the interest in collecting, and many memories for that period remain attached until older ages. Beyond the almost deviant portrait that Eisenberg offers of the collector, Shuker's work presents collecting as a rich and complex practice with gradations and subtleties, a practice highly relational process between knowledges, objects, subjectivity and social elements in it.

The accumulation of digital files and the way we manage them are important dimensions of the Musical Experience. In the previously cited article by Marjorie Kibby (2009), she argues that collecting in the digital era means not only hoarding files, but providing them with meaning through individual and social practices. As we have seen above, she also challenges the idea that the lack of material medium means a disinterested engagement for listeners. The work that the listener engages with digital files is what transforms them into a collection. Kibby shows an engagement that raises from practices around the moment of listening, like ripping CDs or creating lists. For her, those are strategies of appropriation in relation with a listener's identity. As music is more at hand for the listener, there are more opportunities to associate music with experiences, persons or events. She explored the participants' collections in iTunes, a software that was not intended to be a social

platform; nevertheless, listeners showed strong social dimensions of their collections (pp. 439-440). They were interested in showing themselves as innovators to their peers, while some others expanded their collections by getting what they found in other's libraries. Music acted as a good intensifier of friendship. At the core of Kibby's argument lies the idea that music was still treated as material objects; listeners develop strong senses of ownership and affective attachments to their files. For them, those files are part of their biography.

If collections are part of our life stories, we need to look for the story of those collections and how they act in our worlds. Starting from the idea of digital collections as ownership (Belk, 2014a; Belk, 2013; Denegri-Knott et al., 2012; Watkins et al., 2015a), Rebecca Watkins, Abigail Sellen and Siân E. Lindley talked to 20 participants in the UK about their digital collections (Watkins et al., 2015b). They propose a definition of digital collections as a set of acquired digital objects that are selective, have distinct boundaries, are valued for their unity, and are often actively added by the user (pp. 3430-3431). They also present a taxonomy of digital collection that is led by differentiated by levels of intentionality and the practices involved: (1) Pursued Collections, that are limited and specific, but require a high level of skills and knowledge from the individual; (2) Evolving Collections, that have more flexible boundaries and are more based on blurry terms, relying more on the excitement of the unexpected finding: and (3) Emerging collections, with very loose boundaries and intentionality, but represent a more intimate portrait of listener's story.

Similar to the closing element of the last subsection they found that it is the listener who makes those collections valuable, either by intentionality or surprise, knowledge and the unexpected. As I have discussed above, those collections have an important social element in them, as they show and share them with others. In that regards Watkins, Sellen and Lindley (2015b) identify a strong amount of reflection as they regard those collections part of who they are and what they present to others. It is the collection which might make them music lovers or casual listeners, as the vinyl does for those avid consumers of that format (Bartmanski and Woodward, 2015, pp. 9-10). In the digital realm Mardon

and Belk (2018) argue that there is a lack of some forms of collecting, but some other are enhanced through industries and culture, like the sense of becoming an expert, or to show time and effort invested.

In terms of the work and investment for getting music, the digital music commodity presents itself as easier to get. Alinka Greasley, Alexandra Lamont and John Sloboda explored this idea from the listener's collection from a psychological perspective (Greasley et al., 2013). Their findings show that, by creating a collection, and preference, the listener engages in identity work with a strong social influence. Listeners share what they have, and they get music from others. But they also show that this is not as free as expected. While some listeners are willing to listen to new music or music they got from other sources, some others feel more [socially] forced to do it when they are not interested in that specific music (p. 412). But another dimension of that social influence is related to broader social categories, like genres or styles. In their paper, the listener creates their own categories and expressions of what it means to have diverse preferences, and sometimes they do not even consider those songs as coming from different genres (p. 417). They argue that this would mean a challenge for the idea of genre and the conditions for it.

In their research there is also an interest in motivations to gather those collections (Greasley et al., 2013, pp. 413-417). Some listeners showed an inclination towards the musical elements, while some others were more motivated by the lyrical content of the song. Related to the genre distinctions I explained above, listeners also show two distinctive ways of reasoning about the music they like: sometimes they explain their preferences about what they know about the music, like genre or artist, while for some others it is just about what they feel. This reasoning is structured through explanations and justifications, and the authors were able to identify that those listeners less engaged with music have more difficulties to explain those disparate preferences. In other words, the more engaged the practice is, a more complex rationale is developed to make sense of the practice. This also explains the role of

the social in how listeners link and justify their collections based on intimate or cognitive events and associations.

On the collections explored so far, listeners accumulate things that are accessible to them and that imply some work in buying, downloading, accommodating and storing them. Yet, as I discussed before, streaming services challenge those notions. In Hagen's work, she notices that streaming also relates to personal reasons and social ties (Hagen and Lüders, 2016). In that case, the collection relies on the possibility of gathering songs into a playlist. Those playlists are an investment, relate to the personal story and are also influenced by interactions with others. Moreover, the playlist becomes personal to a degree that might be considered a way to share intimate knowledge with another person. This resonates with Steve Jones affirmation:

> Our preferences may change, but they are our preferences, influenced by others, but personal enough that showing an iPod playlist to someone is for many people too revealing an act (despite perhaps willingly sharing other kinds of personal information in Facebook). On the other hand, music is a communal experience, even when listening to it singly with headphones or earbuds, as it connects people in imagined communities and imagined communions, not only with its musicians but also with other listeners who have heard it, are hearing it, or will hear (Jones, 2011, p. 444).

Jones notes that the social is still constitutive of the Musical Experience, but that social might also be experiencing changes through social networking platforms and on-line identities.

Is there a difference between talking about collections and playlists? Based on this subchapter, both rely on similar meaning-productive practices. Physical collections appear to be made personal, through the work produced to make them, but also by the biographical attachment that they create through the life-course. They also allow the listener to create certain identities in specific social spheres. Playlists in their side, allow listeners to curate, label and use sets of songs that are not only part of their biographies, but that also has an intended use; in both cases, productive exercises that allow the production of intimacies and attachments with specific pieces or lists. In other words, through pragmatic processes, listeners produce attachments through forms of work and physical engagement that the format allows them, but both of

them produce them. Both of those practices require intentionality, memories and relations with other elements, like the context of listening or purchase. Overall, the literature explored here gives an account of the ways in which the breach between one practice and the other is not that big, and it needs to be explored based on how those collections or list are produced. In other words, it is required to follow the experiences that produce attachments to specific collections.

2. 3. The materials of music and their relations

The mediated nature of music is related with the format, the containers and the affordances they make emerge. So far, I have shown the new places and new forms of control that digital technologies offer to the listener and the role of the formats as modes of interactions. In this section I want to explore the material relationship that devices, technologies and containers develop among themselves, but also the exchanges that they make appear with the listener and the social setting. In other words, how some devices produce meanings in relationship with other technologies, either physical or symbolic, but also how those meanings create attachments for the listener and their social context. As I will show, much of that literature focuses on the vinyl record and the mp3, which makes possible to understand how certain material objects around music, acquire meanings and produce attachments. This section is about the material agents of the Musical Experience and their subjective experience with listeners.

Objects produce meanings from their shape and the way they allow us to relate with them in a long-term process, but those qualities are not alien to the way each object is understood in relation with other objects, and social understandings of them. For example, the vinyl which was the common format for music consumption during a good part of the 20th Century, which has acquired new meanings during the era of music digital files. Dominik Bartmanski and Ian Woodward (2015) inspected the reasons for the revival of the format within the current consumption trend. They argue that its value raises by the possibility of recovering specific ritualistic engagements like immobile and immersive listening.

There is also a historical dimension at play, as the vinyl record is commonly regarded as the native format of many rock and pop albums, adding a sense of auracity to the format. They also argue that the notion of fragility or weariness invest the object with a sense of uniqueness (p. 22). In sum, the vinyl record is valued by the practices promoted by digital consumption, its demands and very physical features. In contrast with the ideas surrounding streaming services discussed before—quality and control—the vinyl record cultivates a notion of connection to the artist and the work's aura (Kjus, 2016b). These arguments make us possible to understand that objects are signified by the practices they afford, but this always happens in relation with other objects or practices. In a more abstract level, it means that objects' meanings and values are subjected not only by the context, but also by the new objects appearing around.

When talking about the albums it is not possible to talk about an isolated and closed object containing sounds or songs, the vinyl album is not only a record, it includes a cover, leaflets and even cellophane envelopes. Brown and Sellen (2006) have attributed the revival of the format to the lack of physical involvement in digital music, the need for 'metatexts' like the box, the art and the possibility of accommodating them into a specific place of the house making those objects important. For others such as Belk (2014b), it could have to do with the notion of control and ephemerally, particularly in face of the rapid technological change that demands updates and leave some technologies behind; for example, the record can be scratched or broken, it demands care and delicate usage. From another perspective Bennet and Rogers (2015) state that the disappearance of certain formats impacts directly in the way in which nostalgia is perceived as an important idea for the value of objects; for example, the nostalgic value of the 8-track, that now is collected as a music object but from which music cannot be extracted; music is still important as those objects are not just empty cartridges.

That does not mean that MP3s are 'not-objects'. Listeners still talk about MP3 as things that are owned, and which offer specific possibilities to them (Sterne, 2012, p. 214)—as shown in the previous section, listeners sort those files in particular ways, change the order, select their

most valued to have at hand and assign them categories, as many other makes with vinyl records or as I used to do with my CDs. Furthermore, as shown by James Allen-Robertson (2017, p. 495), the digital can be understood in material terms. For example hard disks have limited storage provided by the way they work and the codes that enable them specific compressions. This materiality affects the ways in which people relate to the music by demanding certain uses and limits, even when most of the time its operation is made invisible.

The objects around musical formats also produce meanings when they interact with the listener, the social context and the music they contain. In three different pieces, David Beer explores some of those possibilities: first in the way that they allow the listener to move, organize and transport their music collection through a specific aesthetic (Beer, 2008a, pp. 79-84); second, as objects that through the production and exchange of data with other system develop new experiences in everyday life (Beer, 2010, p. 476); and third—closer to my argument here—as devices that produce in their very materiality attachments, stories and affections with the owner initiating from what we do with them (Beer, 2012); like my iPod Classic with 160 Gb, that I refuse to bin as it has been for a long time travelling with me around Mexico City. Objects interact in everyday life with different situations, enabling us to do specific things and change the Musical Experience, sometimes for better sometimes not, but those objects—and their attachments—are core components of it.

Those objects are also inserted in the social world and its practices. Paolo Magaudda scrutinized the way in which new technologies acquire meaning through its materiality among young Italian music consumers (Magaudda, 2012). His analysis focuses on the way listeners interact with digital music through specific practices that provide the objects with definitions and significance. He shows that the material relations that appear tend to be challenged and then integrated into everyday life, where they lose visibility. Each of those objects develop a complex relation between music and subject, that is enriched by their own meanings and values, that might also change over time (Magaudda, 2011). His argument illuminates the way that the objects are not only

part of the listener's experience, but of a wider range of social meanings that become familiar and transparent as practises become common for the social environment.

In her study about streaming Hagen (2015) showed how streaming services have a quality that is inherently unique to the digital realm, the possibility of creating and recreating playlists suitable for each occasion or with specific classification. This quality allows the user to get more deeply engaged and during a longer time with the content of their music and the way it operates. Then the material importance of musical objects is redistributed to many objects involved in new rituals, from the version of a particular song, to the software and its interface. Therefore, collecting has become an activity with new materialities, each one acquiring a particular value each time. In research conducted in Brazil by Fullerton and Rarey (2012) involving bloggers that use to collect digital music, they show that when listeners discuss their music is practically impossible to establish clear differences between those recordings in physical formats and the digital ones, implying that those separations are disappearing and listeners' focus could also be centred in content. These two studies are useful to point towards the way the digital redistribute and re-signify meanings through non-musical practices and elements both individual and social; on one side the listener is able to focus on the content and the long-term engagement with those devices becomes valuable; on the other that focus on the content allow them to demarcate themselves from industrial classifications.

A better way to illustrate all those relationships with materials and the way they transform our relationship with music is to explore them over time. Sally Jo Cunninghan (2019) reviewed three sets of interviews made at different periods, the first one between 2002 and 2004, the second one between 2006 and 2007, and the third one in 2016. In the first data set she found a form of relationship shaped by the space to hold collections, their meaning and allocation at home and the order that some of those collections had. That form of visible collection was not only part of the house, but a statement that delineates and identity (p.528). The cost of getting an album had a role, but the convenience of *ripping* the CD into an MP3 to take it everywhere, was already putting the CD

into a dormant object situation, but still the acquisition of the album was a central element of the relationship.

In the second period of time reviewed by Cunningham, new forms of music started to appear from the listener, there is a distinction between music that is gathered to be part of the personal collection and music that is temporarily listened to, even when they are found in the same place. Buying albums became an action reserved for preferred artists. But the role of active information in the decision-making process becomes more important, listeners tend to access more places to know more about the artist of the song before decide on integrating it to their collection, but stopping to listen samples of the album when possible. That is also a stage of easy circulation of music, which also engages the listener with the qualities of the digital file, ordering it, or putting it under different arrangements.

For the third period—2016— she highlights a transition to the digital as the most used form, that left album as a legacy reserved to important artist or albums. Collections became more amorphous and without clear limits. There is a shift from declaring a collection in number of albums or songs to number of Gigabytes of storage. But more interestingly, there is not a clear distinction between what could be considered listener's music and streaming services music that have been integrated into a personal playlist. The creation of lists and the active relationship with them were good predictors of the distinction between 'collectors' and 'music lovers.' There is also a sense of challenge in the way listeners feel about how to navigate and how much time they commit to specific *musics*.

Cunningham's work shows with clarity the relationship between affordances, practices and attachments to music. There appears to be a reduction in the effort to get and curate music, alongside an increased sense of having music accessible everywhere. This seems to have an impact of musical attachments for many, but also opens the opportunity for less musically inclined listeners to have personalised lists and a more intimate musical relationship with it. As with the argument made by Jane Hogarty (2015, p. 162), this is a relationship with the materials and

memory, not only because of its sensuous dimension but also because of the effort and practices it involves.

The content of the recording or file is important to establish a relation with it. Nevertheless, this section shows that it is not enough to make music important or to understand its importance to listeners' lives. This section illustrates the importance that the interactions and materials around each format create specific practices and attachments; research should try to follow those comparisons and relations. The listener, as I wrote at the introduction, flows through different technologies and ways of listening to music, the argument of this section is that it is these flows that new attachments emerge, by comparing technologies, engaging affectively with objects, talking about them and socializing them. Finally, this section allows us to see that the materials of the digital, either visible or invisible also matters for the Musical Experience. In the next section I will explore some advances in how listeners engage with those listening experiences in their everyday world.

2. 4. Auditory Bubbles and Affective Experiences

The story of technologies of music could be told as the story of moving music around. From making Gregorian chants travel around Europe through the *neumes*, passing through the recording as a way of capturing a performance that could be taken home, to the streaming services that puts music available through user-friendly platforms everywhere anytime. Putting music on the move seems to be a common trope of technological development. In this section, I would like to explore some research concerning music on the move, particularly through digital devices, and the way in which those transformations have been accompanied by individual and social notions about how to live with music.

As I have shown briefly before, the *Walkman* meant not only a new possibility of having individual music in the urban space, but also a cultural icon made of technological elements and a convergent network of meanings and signifiers (du Gay et al., 2013). But to capture the way that the portable stereo developed new understandings of our

relationship with music Michael Bull decided to set the focus on how it was used and integrated in everyday life (Bull, 2000). With a phenomenological approach, Bull developed an empirical analysis of the changes brought by those devices, particularly as tools for strategical managements of space, place and interpersonal relations, making the urban experience a technologically mediated one (p. 9). His argument became important not only for the relationship between music and technology, but for his focus in the way that devices transform individuals' relationship with their contexts. He expanded his project to the iPod (Bull, 2007) which allowed him to include in his analysis the amount of music available; the relationship of the personal collection, and the sensory expression of the listener on the move. He noticed a rise in the notion of control not only over the music but also their mood and, more in general, the whole experience of time and space (Bull, 2006; Bull, 2005). His account, own interests and empirical approach took the notion of the listener-music relationship to a complex appreciation that includes identity and the experience of everyday life, opening the door to considerations of the listener as an active agent of their own experience.

Listeners are able to negotiate the urban experience from a strategic management of mood, music collections and their cultural backgrounds. David Beer would expand that notion by proposing to understand the mediated relationship between the individual and the urban space as a process of *tuning out*, in which the listener is not necessarily escaping from the context but negotiating it. In this account the listener rewrites a set of narratives of the city—not only one—in a constant operation that jumps from attention to emotional responses (Beer, 2007, p. 858). Likewise, in her research project with London commuters Mirian Simun expands this by showing how the listener gets empowered to establish their own relationships, not only with the city but also with the social world (Simun, 2009, p. 929). Those accounts set up the scenario to include not only the way that the listener uses mobile devices to navigate the city, but also to integrate the different

encounters that happen in everyday experiences and how the balance of the mediation is in constant state of fluctuation.

In a similar fashion, Allan Watson and Dominiqua Drakefold-Allen (2016) propose to consider the possibility of *tuning in* which includes the ways some urban experiences could be intensified by the mobile devices (p. 1041). Their account includes an emotional response on one side, but also the production of data, that might, for example, reproduce specific songs at specific places for the listener to have a more intense experience. Furthermore, in a research project in Norway conducted by Marie Stran Skånland (2013) adopts a health and well-being approach to expand this idea, by showing that listeners not only manage comfort or discomfort, but also their own emotional state. This does not mean listeners are trying to change their emotional state everytime, they use music and mobiles to articulate the way that they feel—through the music that they decide to play after been changing it—, or to get deeper into a specific mood produced at the encounter between everyday life, the urban context and the listener sense of the self. These two accounts are important as they extend the elements to consider, from the data as a medium of intensification, to the multiple forms of emotional response to music and management that listeners do.

On those accounts, devices are not mere carriers, they are affordances also acting to shape the listening experience through specific functions and forms of consumption. Marta García Quiñones (2007) explores one of the most popular strategies for dealing with the size of the catalogues by MP3 portable players, the *shuffle* mode. She argues this mode is a way of balancing between control and delegation, as the user knows what is available in the iPod, but allows it to randomise the reproduction of it, playing with listener's expectations and managing a state of pulsating attentiveness (p.16). This state of attentiveness and expectation is not only positive as the listener can also find a song uncomfortable to listener at that specific moment. This is also related with listening to radio, but the catalogue is selected by the user making it more personalized. This also allows the listener to establish new connections to raise meanings—as in Walter Benjamin's library— but that also includes the place, the body and the very emotional state of the

listener. In her account the body is constantly interpellated as it is key in the process of getting a state of comfort while on the move, to raise a state of constant decision-making through the senses (García Quiñones, 2013). The disjunction between knowing what to listen to and letting the control go in specific forms is a key part of the Musical Experience, as it produces states of mind and specific forms of getting attached to music through surprise or management.

The accounts explored so far might be characterized as individualistic in different ways, as they only consider a private experience of listening through devices on the move. But as Bull noted, there is also a social dimension to that management. Through mixed methods research with University commuters, Andreas Heye and Alexandra Lamont (2010) noticed how listeners manage also their social world as a way to engage or disengage confronting the possibility of casual encounters during their journey. They also noticed a very careful process of decision-making that is behind the very moment of listening, as they have to deal with selecting the music that is included in their devices and measuring the journey that they are about to take in order to decide about the music. An alternative approach is taken by Raphaël Nowak (2016b)—following from the idea of algorithmic transformation of the social setting (Beer, 2013b, pp. 63-100; Beer, 2010, p. 479)— who argues that the iPod is at the same time an individual and a social device, as the range of interactions possible to it are increasing; like being placing it on a dock station to play music with a room. The iPod also helps the listener to intensify experiences and memories—that could be converted into appropriate or inappropriate music (Nowak, 2016c, p. 21)— and for the production of affects and life narratives (Nowak, 2016a, pp. 59-69). All these accounts set the basis to understand listening with mobile devices as a bridge between memories, emotions, the social world and the cultural surroundings. This understanding does not work in a unidirectional manner. It looks at it as a circulatory flow that sets the listener in a position in which it is not enough to analyse them in relation with the device, but all the mediations produced.

In this sections I tried to explore the relationship between the listener and the music on the move from the very negotiation of the

experience in the urban context to the complex forms of socialization produced by the data generated by the act of listening. Interestingly, some affects and emotions are constantly appearing through the literature reviewed. These sections show that academic accounts of the Musical Experience require us not only to understand what the listeners do in practical terms with those devices, but also the outcomes and mediations produced. From the affective engagements with urban space, to the strategic management of time and emotion, as well as the relationship with others, understanding digital music in the space requires to understand motivations, goals and affects. All analytical points should consider, insistently, the very affordances of the objects and the ways those objects are inserted in the listener's life. Like to role of shuffle to articulate emotions or to produce aural surprises that keep the listener interested. From this section, it is my contention that it is also possible to explore how those affects are learnt, produced, articulated and managed, not only by observing the act of listening, but also by exploring past experiences and the attachments that were previously produced. In the following section I want to explore further the idea of affect and link it some academic insights of the topics of memories and meanings.

2.4.1. Memory, affect and the body

As I have been reiterating, the past is a main element of the Musical Experience, hence the way we make attachments with music. Through the whole chapter, at different moments, the idea of memory appeared constantly. The topic will appear throughout the thesis constantly, which would make it an omission to not cover it in this chapter.

A first idea to explore is the relationship between individual and collective identity through popular music. José van Dijck (2006) explored this idea in a study of the comments made online to a radio event, the *Dutch Top 200*. She begins with the idea that human memory is individually embodied, technologically enabled and culturally embedded and that experience is constructed through narratives (p. 358-359). To

put it simply, memories are narratives that build who we are; those narratives are composed by interactions between the body, objects and the context, and they affect how we understand our experiences.

The first dimension she analyses is the embodied dimension of memory. In her analysis, she argues that music is an investment, listeners select music that engage them at some point. The selection of some of those objects relates to the way that we experience sensations that are shaped by devices and environments. In that she highlighted the process of interpreting and creating maps that relate our memories with those of personal experiences, feelings and emotions that can be individually or culturally situated, like when a song talks about something that we are experiencing at that moment or we make an alike interpretation of it. In an instructive analytical move, she includes the role of devices, media and the body as elements of engagement. The first two show how listeners refer to the specific sound of devices in particular settings, or the role of radio in enforcing a song through repetition. The last one to give account of the way in which music promotes physical responses like shaking the head or gesticulating, or simply for helping to interpret a comfortable situation (p. 360). This also relates to the way we map our memories through a process of relating it to different settings, from the very individual one of the personal experience to a moment in time in cultural terms.

The second element that she analyses is more focused on the technology and material objects of music, that shows how specific devices like radio afford us to develop certain practices, like enjoying better a song with headphones or the very sound of the transistor radio (p. 365). The other hand of this analysis is also the way that objects mean an investment of time, work or money that along with memories, create a specific individual value of an specific object, like when we do mixtapes from radio or have been using a specific record for long periods and the weariness in it becomes part of our own attachment to it. At this point it is worthwhile to note that at the time of her research digital downloads were available, but CDs were still regarded as key elements to build up a collection with a sensuous level of engagement. Again, there is

a relationship with the music that goes beyond the material and the individual, it is a process of interactions and experiences.

Those elements are never fully separated, but analytically it is important to attend to each to unpick them and understand them better, that is why in her third element she focuses on the role of interpersonal experiences and musical exchange (p. 367). These memories are also mapped at different levels, from the very act of exchanging music with someone, to music that is happening in the background while some group activity or to the sense of belonging to a group that media produce. This can also be integrated to the individual and the material dimensions of the analysis, as when we create mixed CDs for someone, or we borrow an other's albums.

On another piece of research about this topic, Ben Anderson (2007) explores the idea of memory as a pragmatic element of everyday life. Through an ethnographic study conducted in the UK, he argues that the use of music is intimately related to memory; again, starting from the idea of memory as something intrinsic to the body and senses. The author notices how some of those everyday practice pass unnoticed thanks to sets of embodied skills that the listener develops through time. In this sense, the listener can choose what kind of music to listen from their catalogue in specific socio-spatial dimensions. In a second key finding Anderson argues that there is a form of involuntary remembering that actualizes affects from the past to the present experience. In this sense, an act of serendipity articulates the experience. Finally, he shows that there is a constant practice of intentional remembering, that traces lines through the identity of the listener in time, which also helps them to constitute a sense of familiarity. In all those accounts space, time and the past interact to forge an affective self in the domestic environment. Anderson's argument is relevant to highlight the role of those practices that negotiate the past and the self in everyday life, while also including affects, surprise and knowledges on the side of the listener.

As a summary for this section it is possible to show music as a memory device that goes beyond the material, but through the sensuous and affective parts of the self. In that sense, through active engagements the listener makes sense of the individual and the

collective self. The pieces of research shown here also highlight the role of devices of sound to create those affects and to actualize those memories. When we play specific music we are not only retrieving a memory but also constructing new ones, particularly through intense affective experiences. Hence, it is not possible to understand the social and individual dimensions of the present without exploring the past of the listener and the ways they structure their own preferences through different mediations. Those are the Musical Experiences that I propose here to understand as ways to create and reproduce attachments to music.

2. 5. Fandom in the digital era

The Musical Experience in the digital era is still important whether it relies on physical objects or not. Yet, this social dimension goes further than the process of sharing music, positioning listener's identity and influencing others. Particularly within fans' communities, socialization also includes talking about the music and sharing knowledges to strengthen the sense of community. In his text, Steve Jones invites us to develop an understanding of how the transformations of digital music also pass through every other practice that we use to make sense of our consumption, like getting news, gaining knowledge and discussing about music and musicians (Jones, 2011, p. 444). On the other hand, Nancy Weiss Hanrahan is less optimistic, as she notices that through the increase of consumption and omnivirousness, the listener is getting a highly individual experience that might undermine the potential encounter with others, as the limitless of choice is limited by the idea of personalisation and algorithms (Hanrahan, 2018, p. 301). Following from those two ideas I explore here the ways in which academic accounts cover and expand those technological practices that connect the musical and the social experience.

Since its early introduction, scholars and tech businesses invested the Internet with an imaginary power of challenging boundaries of different types, from time and space to political power (Flichy, 2007). Some of those boundaries include the music world's cultures. David Beer

(2008b) explores this possibility through Jarvis Cocker. In his account through Social Networking Sites and Wikipedia, there is a reconfiguration in the relationships between the fan and the musician, not only as getting the perception of getting direct communication, but through expanding the knowledge of the figure. There are new forms of understanding who possesses authoritative and constructive knowledge about a genre, a movement or an artist.

As the listeners got new and different forms of sharing music with others, the Internet opened new spaces to deliberate, discuss and share knowledge about the Musical Experience. On one side there are music specific platforms that allow listeners to relate their music collection and listening patterns with others. Nancy Baym and Andrew Ledbetter analyse the use of *Last.fm* as a platform that from your musical collection and usage trends, offers information about artists and concerts, but also connects you with users with similar interests (Baym and Ledbetter, 2009). Their analysis shows that the socialization promoted by those platforms might not be as enriching as expected, as it tends towards homophily, the trend to relate only with people very similar to oneself. Likewise, the relationships made through that platforms are not strong and it is not common to establish strong social ties through those networks.

There are also sites that are focused on the exchange and formation of communities, that music fans use to establish connections and discussions in an asynchronous manner. Those sites—sometimes built by the fans themselves—are places where the fans show their commitment and knowledge through a rich assemblage of materials and interactions, not only with other fans and sites, but also with musicians themselves (Baym, 2007). Even when record labels and artists might be involved in them, it is fan labour to keep them running, they produce the value of those sites (Baym and Burnett, 2009). In both of Baym's explorations referred to above she focused on a specific moment of Swedish indie music, as it became internationally recognized, much of it through the on-line circulation of its knowledge and music. These cases show how fans, with Internet, challenged and engaged with the limits of

their role as fans, but also with the music and information that they have access to.

Those sites are also places where limits are established and reshaped in the very practice of fandom. In her exploration of R.E.M fan forums Lucy Bennett identified how fans use these sites as a way to resist trends in the digital era and challenge each other to not getting music leaks until the moment of the release of the album, that should be bought and listened in physical formats (Bennett, 2011). This practice positioned them as differentiated fans, with a particular form of cultural capital that is related to the way they used to get new music in the past—this is, until the very moment of having the record. On another piece from the same project, Bennett (2013) presents the ways in which they establish normative behaviour and what they expect a 'real' fan to do and talk about. Their community should constantly define who is allowed and under what terms to discuss the music. In relation to the limits of genre that I have considered above, an aggregation platform, Beer (2013a) also explores the ways that fans act to redefine a genre, in that case hip-hop, outside the industrial positions, in their own terms. Therefore, fans play a role not only in redefining fandom and their own identities, but the definition of their object of taste.

Those platforms and Social Networking Sites are also spaces to express about other dimension of the Musical Experience, the live act. Lucy Bennett's (2012) analysis of digital social media use by fans during live music events shows that fandom is challenging the traditional boundaries of the live event experience. Fans use social media to create expectations around a gig, to make it public while it is happening, to display knowledge and value judgements, and to engage in a communal experience with others, that might not even be present at the concert. Fans share their excitement about a song being played, publicly thank the artist, and exchange excitement, emotional impact and affects caused by the experience. Through those platforms, the musical event is expanded and shared beyond the limits of the moment and place, not

only through communicative action, but through the affective dimension of the exchange.

The size of mobile devices and their capabilities also play a role in how the experience is perceived. Jessa Lingel and Mor Naaman (2011) interviewed audience members about their use of mobile phones during the live events. For some attendants and artists, the use of mobiles to record videos or take pictures could be annoying, but they show that it is a way to extend the experience by creating a memory of it. That practice also extends a sense of community as they upload those videos to the Internet and share them. They also explain that, by having fan-made videos online, fans add an alternative version to the professional productions made by labels and artists. But recording a video can put the listeners into a paradox, as they usually record the moment or the song they have been expecting most. They have to decide either to record it or to live it fully. Those decisions seem to be motivated by the extension of the memory of being there, participating in a community of fans and, in some cases, the chance to get attention from the artist.

I would like to close this section by exploring the intervention of streaming platforms. Arnt Maasø (2016) through a four years research project about the relationship between a big Norwegian festival and a streaming service, found a relationship between the festival and a spike in streaming around those artists presenting in the festival. There is also a change in the behaviour of the listeners, while pre-festival consumption relies more on editorial playlists—those made by media outlets or services— and post festival consumption is a more individualised one (p. 12). But that spike is also fed by media, digital social networks and the socialisation of the festival in everyday life. Maaso's argument is that beyond the algorithmic shaping of culture, there is also an active role of media, festival producers and listeners in the process of creating the festival experience, anticipation and value. But that sounds possible since before the streaming services, like with the effects of radio; his answer to this in the transformation of the level of control and experimentation

that the listener has. Listening to something that is unknown through streaming services is risk free for the listener.

Anne Danielson and Ingvar Kjus also explored the role of streaming platforms but reading it through social media platforms (Danielsen and Kjus, 2017). They indicate that there is an intimate connection between the experience of the festival—as in 'here-and-now'— and a temporal mediation of the experience, through pre-listening, gathering information, discussing the quality of the acts or documenting the festival to show it to non-present audiences (p. 18). In their piece, they are focused on the role of the mobile phone, not only as a socializing platform, but as a way to associate different elements to build the Musical Experience. Their research shows a more complex relation, not only through the very process of listening and learning, but also by sharing the event and having evidence to exchange. Listeners adopt new roles with those devices and platforms and consider the live experience enhanced (Kjus and Danielsen, 2014).

Digital technologies are constitutive elements of the Musical Experience, beyond the act of listening, traveling with music, ordering or collecting music. They are useful to show that the Musical Experience possesses a social dimension which is performative in the way we interact with others through them. Listeners adopt new roles; communities are drawn beyond the place and time limitation in their own conditions and deciding their own actions; they communicate with their artist and present them with their own perceptions of their genres and performances; they build expectations around an event and build up long lasting memories of them. This section shows that the role of devices is not limited to consumption but extended to the constitution of new attachments.

Conclusion

Through this chapter I have presented some relevant topics in the relationship between the listener, the music and its devices. It has been possible to see more nuanced ways to understand the idea of format, certainly as containers of sound, but also as networks of interactions

between elements that promote specific practices and that are intimately related to their time and context while they are capable of transforming it. Through those formats, new places and times from music have appeared. The literature explored showed that digitization is more than the possibility of carrying more music, but also to redistribute meanings and values while understanding and using music in new ways. To challenge the idea of dematerialization of music, the academic literature explored here shows how the listener still appropriates music in diverse ways, through the possibility of curating and collecting it. There are similarities with the physical album, but there are also differences that are worth exploring as new relationships are produced. I also presented some relevant accounts about how to integrate and understand the material elements of the music, not only as mediators of the sound, but as producers of attachments themselves that circulate between the individual and the social. In the second half of this review, I explored important notions in the ways in which by studying music it is possible to understand strategies and ways in which the listener makes sense of their world, their affects and their own identities, mainly by the role of memory. Finally, I have presented an account of how to fully understand the change of contemporary digital music, through understanding technologically mediated practices around it, like ways of being a fan or to experience the live concert. Those elements are important to shape the questions that I am posing here as main objective of my thesis, to follow the role of technology in the attachment to music.

There have also appeared some overarching themes that are important for my own research. The role of devices, objects of music and formats in the development, sustaining and transforming a sense of the self in the individual which at the same time is social. The way in which the very pragmatical engagements that the listener develops with music changes their relationship every time, which means that it is important to follow those practices and the way multiple practices interact. The role of ordering, control, surprise, serendipity and constrain in the way certain experience become important or not. The way in which the value, the love and the meaning of music is redistributed through different objects, but also listener subjectivity is part of that redistribution. To include the

affective and sensuous role of the Musical Experience in relationship with the embedded experience of the space and sound. Finally, the way in which the present attachment to music is shaped by the past and actualized in everyday life in specific contexts. Those topics act as sensitizing concepts through the analysis of the empirical material here.

My thesis follows analytically form all those accounts, summarising their ideas to propose a pragmatic way of understanding the attachment to music. As said in the Introduction, I propose to follow the Musical Experience that constitute attachments, that are not stable but in constant movement and renegotiations. In that sense I am going to explore the present and the past of the Musical Experience for my listeners, to focus on key processes and elements that shape the importance that music has for them beyond the very cost of access to it or its containers. In the following chapter I will delineate the methods and rationale behind my research.

3 - Methodology

This is me in 2008, sitting in front of a computer, working at an Internet news website, editing video and producing some contents. I had a powerful computer and a powerful Internet connection. My computer, for reasons that I will not dig out here, was not in the network's system of the place, so it basically acted as a personal computer without the limitations of an institutional connection. In my spare time, I used to talk about music with my boss, a man open to listening to and discussing new music. All that activity was fed by blogs where we use to download music through *cyberlockers*. We both had mp3 players that we used to load with the music that we discussed. My spare time was basically composed by reading reviews from blogs, deciding what to download from them, buying a CD every fortnight, sharing with friends, discovering new blogs every week and filling my Zune up to listen to what I could during the long commuting times of Mexico City. That is the period when I asked for the very first time: Why do we do it? Not only me, but everyone involved in the process. In David Hesmondhalgh's words, Why Music Matters?

As I have shown in the previous chapters, the listening experience goes beyond the moment of listening. My own vignette above is about listening, reading, sharing, creating an identity, socializing it, and managing what was available at the time. In Hennion's words 'Listening is not only an instant, it is also a history.' (2010, p. 29). It is built by the present, the past and expectations of the future. And there are more ethereal agents: feelings, memories and affects. It seemed to be a question about value, but it goes a bit beyond it, it is a question about how music and technology strengthen our individual and social possibilities; how attachments act upon us, as listeners, and we act on them. Evidently, all those ideas grow from a moment in which the inclusion of everyday technologies for music consumption was discussed intensely.

In this thesis, I am looking at the role of technology in the ways that we get attached to music, a role in making music matter. But to include technologies is not only including devices, but a whole set of elements that act in the Musical Experience. When calling for new ways

for understanding musical expertise in the digital era Lepa, Hoklas, Egermann and Weinzierl (2015) included the changing environment of the Musical Experience realm, but also research assumptions from different fields. They argue that music research requires an understanding of the development of knowledges, experience and information, while they intersect with embodiment, materiality and sound. As in the chapter before, this means to understand music as complex multidimensional practice, but that can lead to some challenges.

The first challenge here is that technology, as well as social constraints, plays a fundamental part in the Musical Experience; there is not music without devices and codes to interpret it. Those devices are also agents of expertise, knowledge and sound. The second one is that listeners do not usually use only one device to get and listen to music, neither do they do it at a specific place or for a specific purpose; in everyday life, music moves around in multiple situations. In each of those places, music plays specific roles, certain qualities are expected to appear, and it is expected to accomplish specific objectives. Even when the devices could be the same the context actively shapes the experience. The third assumption is that music listening goes beyond the mere aesthetic experience, it also includes social and individual dimensions of affect and identity, but also knowledges, information, memories and embodied practices. To sum up, the Musical Experience is in flux, and any experience is discreetly separated from the others. In this thesis, I try to describe and analyse those assemblages that make music important for the individual in the social world.

In this chapter I will develop my methodological approach to cover those challenges. I did it through the 'Musical Experience History Method', which implies a set of relations between music, listener and researcher that I have developed following some approaches that I will detail further below. Its main element is the ethnographic narrative interview, but in a ludic and sensuous form in which listening to music and showing objects are main features. This method includes elements from Constructivist Grounded Theory, particularly in the analysis stage. This method has changed over the development of this research, so I will explain those changes and the places they led me to. In the following

section I will explore in more depth the idea of researching music in everyday life as a point of origin that sets up the methodological frame for this thesis.

3. 1. Music and technology in everyday life

My research starts from the idea of music as an element of everyday life. In that sense I am not looking for special or very meaningful experiences only, but the way in which those small experiences are entangled with special ones. As Kassabian (2008) and Prior (2018) explain, there are no grounds to separate the elements of the Musical Experience, or the attention we pay to them. If we want to explore them, we should be able to grasp the relation and distinctions between them. In this section I will explore some assets of this approach, as well as some limitations, while setting the ontological and epistemological grounds for it.

The body of work referred to in the last chapter explores the way that people engage with music in intense situations, like a concert, as well as in more quotidian ways, like when travelling. Raphaël Nowak calls this, the paradigm of *music in everyday life* (Nowak, 2016a, pp. 6-7). This model could be defined as an approach to the sociology of music that focuses on the individual practices of music listening, considering them mediated by the conditions of the listening practice. Its aim—as explored in chapter 1— is to move away from the analysis and interpretations of objects, but also from the social as univocal explanation. It also explores the ways that the listener makes sense of their own practices in order to repeat them and make use of them (Martin, 1996; Nowak, 2014). For DeNora, it means to show how music left its place as something to be explained—as passive object— to be considered an active ingredient of social life; a move from 'Sociology of Music' to 'Music Sociology' (DeNora, 2003a, pp. 2-3; DeNora, 2003b, p. 167; DeNora, 1995, p. 295). It does not mean to develop an understanding in which music remains unexplained, but where it is

explained in social terms in relation to what society—and individuals— do with it.

The research and methodological project that DeNora leads has some points in common with David Hesmondhalgh's position, particularly in their understanding of the role of music and the individual. Her concern is with music and emotions (DeNora, 2006; DeNora, 1997), as well as the relationship between music and identity (DeNora, 1999). In her book *Music in Everyday Life* (DeNora, 2000) she takes a micro-sociological perspective to analyse what music makes possible for listeners, how they use it and how music plays a role in ordering social life (p. 11). She also considers music as a resource for making sense of specific situations, like emotional ones (p. 13). In third place she also focuses on how music, through its very material properties relates to the body, the passage of time and the feeling of a specific situation (p.16). As explained in Chapter 1, Hesmodhalgh (2013) also considers the way that music is related with different forms of intimacy, identity construction and its liaison with the body. But DeNora makes an important movement, where she considers the music as a material-aural object.[9] This means that it is not enough to talk about music in abstract terms, it is necessary to pay attention to the specific features of the music in specific situations, material features in action: its *affordances.*

The concept of affordances was coined from the psychology of perception, but Hutchby applies it to technology to escape the radical notions of technological determinism and constructivism. In his own terms, affordances are 'functional and relational aspects which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object' (Hutchby, 2001, p. 444). This is, a consideration of the material properties of an object or device from where it can be interpreted. But affordances are not only occurring at the encounter of an individual and an object, they are also the product of moral and cultural conventions, of the role of other agents present in the shape of that object and the historicity of both the object and the individual (Bloomfield et al., 2010,

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[9] See for example the work of Lee Marshall on Bob Dylan used as an illustrative case in (Marshall, 2011).

p. 428). As such, affordances can change over time as the relationship and the agents involved change (Davis and Chouinard, 2016, p. 247). From this point of view, what we do with objects is guided by their shape and properties, but also with who we are, what we know and how our imagination is shaped.

Affordances are key to put music into sociology without letting it fall into a radical epistemological approach. It means to analyse how the individual interacts with music to let it be revealed through specific practices (Hennion, 2007, p. 98), and to use it as a resource to make sense of the world (DeNora, 2014, p. 103). Hesmondhalgh criticises this micro-analysis, mainly in three dimensions (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, pp. 40-41; Hesmondhalgh, 2008). First, the idea of agency that it provides to the listener, as it omits the understanding of the historicity of the conditions that limits what listeners considers as freedom. Secondly, his reading is that it leads to a very positive understanding of the role of music in societies, not leaving room to grasp negative or even harmful experiences. Finally, he also notices that it fails in giving account of how the aesthetic experience can contribute to social life, by ignoring the values that people bring to music. From that perspective, Nick Prior (2011, p. 134) also raises questions about the possibility of using music as a harmful weapon, or to consider only small moments of attachment instead of considering a broader picture.

The critique to the individualism in this approach—also sustained by Firth (2002)—also relates with the idea that bigger concepts of sociology cannot be developed from it, but mainly using tools from cultural studies (Bennett, 2008; Marshall, 2011). Nowak faces all those issues by including critical readings from the sociology of time and emotional reflexivity (Nowak, 2016a, p. 8). By doing this Nowak situates the focus on the "sound environment", the situated space and time in which consumption happens, but noting how that context also transforms the ways in which the individual and the collective relate through music. This is, enquiring how individuals choose to listen to music and in relation to which constraints (Nowak and Bennett, 2014). As the exploration of the musical expertise in the last section suggests, his concept of *sound*

environment is an assemblage of three main variables: body, place and time. But he also includes elements of time and affect.

Another critical instance to the approach of the *music in everyday life* paradigm, comes from Claudio Benzecry, who argues that the challenge of this approach is to provide explanations on long term attachments (Benzecry, 2011, pp. 5-8). In his account of the opera fanatic in Buenos Aires, it becomes crucial to understand the process of mastering the practice of listening to Opera, learning how to be affected by it, how to become part of the group and how to demarcate limits in it. It means to look after the everyday constitution of the idealized object 'music'. This means to admit that the listener has objectives and acts to achieve them through a process of validation and anticipating a future.

The concept of the Musical Experience is my attempt to approach those issues to analyse the attachments to music: it includes a biographical consideration of the individual with the object that allows me to follow its transformations over time. But I am also trying to bring back into the mix something that DeNora and Hennion seem to have left behind: technology. Both of them took notions from Science and Technology Studies, in particular Actor Network Theory, to the field of Cultural Sociology (see DeNora, 2014; DeNora, 2003a; Gomart and Hennion, 1999; Hennion, 2017a), but they used them to understand music as a technology—sometimes including instruments or recording studios—leaving behind the role of devices as agents of music, particularly everyday life devices. As I have shown in the last chapter, technology plays a fundamental role in how listeners experience music, and it is my aim to attend to its main role again.

In order to do that, I interpret *the Musical Experience* as an assemblage, one that produces and is produced by attachments. For Nick J. Fox—following Deleuze and DeLanda— pursuing those assemblages means to keep attention on flows of affects that lead to stabilisations and de-stabilisations and capacities to act; to pay attention to the feelings and desires produced rather than effects that look stable (Fox, 2013, p. 527; Fox and Alldred, 2014, p. 402). The Musical Experience leads to a series of indeterminate attachments, that are not permanently stable and

that require work to keep making sense (Benzecry, 2015). The attachments produced by the Musical Experience are also assemblages.

Choosing this pathway means not following others. Although my intention is to develop an open project that can add more than to 'critique', it is required to clarify the outcomes of some of those decisions. My interest with music is not in the way in which individuals develop and perform a taste; hence, I am stepping away from Bourdieu's (1979) productive ideas as well as his critical strategies. This means I might lose questions of power and social struggles, but I will try to remain attentive to those elements, particularly when participants recall those structural issues. The project is not looking at the production of identities or the art object in the way in which Becker (1982, 1953) understands them. This will produce a blind side in the way certain forms of objects are symbolically produced, but my analysis also shows how the cultural context becomes integral to individual views. As explained above, I still try to keep this project fruitful for those academic standpoints.

The standpoint of this project starts with DeNora's call to understand how music matters in particular social settings (2003a, p.39). In that sense, I am talking about how people get to love music and to integrate it strategically in everyday life. I am taking about quotidian practices that shape the listener's world and identity. In that regard, it is my claim that they are better analysed if we integrate an understanding of how the materiality of devices, sounds and contexts shape the Musical Experience. The way I understand that Experience is as an assemblage, which becomes the object of inquiry. I understand that assemblage following the terms that Peter-Paul Verbeek's (2005) postphenomenology does, as a set of intentional co-constitutive relations that are imminently material.

To sum up, I am framing this thesis within the perspective of the *music in everyday life* paradigm, but aware of its limitations and possibilities. I developed the concept of the Musical Experience as a way to put this paradigm in a more critical and historical perspective. At the same time, I am including the way that all the agents interact to limit or make possible the affects of others. In order to do that I also rely on the

sound, emotions and memories that fomented from them, while bringing back the technology as a main agent of the process. This will lead me to follow an unstable object that is constantly transformed and in flow. In the following section I will give a deeper account of the strategies and decisions—and surprises—that allowed me to explore those topics. What I call now, the Musical Experience History Method.

3. 2. The Musical Experience History Method

As Tia DeNora states, investigating everyday life 'involves detailed, fine-grained engagements with the singular and specific process by which realities came into being — *here, this* time, not *there, that* time; in *this* place, not in *that* one; through *these* procedures' (DeNora, 2014, pp. xx-xxi). This means that the method of research should be able to explain the convergent nature of the experience, but also, the intimate dimension of it. Based on those ideas I decided to take a qualitative approach to explore the Musical Experience. In this section I want to clarify how it has been shaped over the research process itself.

The conceptual focus of my research has changed. It started as an investigation into questions of value, ownership and quality in the process of music consumption. From that starting point, I was interested in how people made music valuable for themselves in the new technological environment. At the very first pilot test of the data collection, it became evident that I could explore some of those notions, but that would mean imposing my own conceptual frameworks on listeners' accounts. Listeners expressed themselves in other terms that were not as clear cut. Nevertheless, listeners recalled lots of memories to make sense of their experiences in a very particular and convergent way.

Hence, I moved towards the idea of attachments. As shown in Chapter 1, attachment is a very abstract concept, but it demands to be grounded on empirical evidence with a pragmatic approach in very specific settings. Attachments appear at a micro-scale, but that does not

mean that it is impossible to see the macro world through them, as Randall Collins claims in his defence of micro-situational sociology:

> Micro-situational encounters are the ground zero of all social action and all sociological evidence. Nothing has reality unless it is manifested in a situation somewhere. Macro-social structures can be real, provided that they are patterned aggregates that hold across micro-situations, or networks of repeated connections from one micro-situation to another (thereby comprising, for instance, a formal organization). (Collins, 2004, p. 259)

I also found out that listening to music was a complex set of relations that happen in a very specific moment in specific circumstances. For the listeners it was impossible to talk about listening to music without referring to objects around, affects, memories and situations. This led me to the idea of assemblage, an assemblage that happens over time. To consider music as an assemblage is not new, Georgina Born (2005) as well as Antoine Hennion (2001) give accounts of it; for them listening to music is a process of learning and practising. That process of learning is not as individual as it seems; the participants for this thesis showed that there were affections, memories and sensations to be brought in special forms, hence, the concept of the Musical Experience must have been expanded to include not only the moment, but the ways in which the past and the future, in the form of expectations, mingle with the moment.

All those objectives demand a method that is sensitive to the grain of stories and the convergence of the meanings produced. Therefore, I decided to use a qualitative approach that is capable of being sensitive to the context and the worldviews of the individual, as well as flexible where it is required to go deeper (Mason, 2002, pp. 24-25). But this approach also lets me engage with contexts and the observable environment that compose structurally everyday experiences in a systematic way (Taylor et al., 2016, pp. 7-11). Qualitative methodologies allowed me to be flexible and sensible beyond the verbal accounts but also focused on the biographical elements of the experience.

This is still a research study about value; in how music is important on people's life, what I called matter-*ness*. For Hesmondhalgh music is a resource for the flourishing of the self through the body,

affects and emotions; which relies on forms of intimacy, identity and affect that lead to sociability, synchronism and a sense of place (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). In other words, music provides elements to enhance the self from the most private dimensions of it, to the broader social ones (Hesmondhalgh, 2008, p. 333). He is looking for a form of value that relies on the cultural meaning of the word, nevertheless, my take on value implies the connections that people make with objects that make them repeat the experience and develop creative practices in order to repeat or gain new experiences; in other words, the attachments that make them interested in recorded music.

To connect those levels, I found some useful analytical instances in practice theory. Laurent Thévenot (2001, pp. 69-72) explains that practices are based on the individual's own accounts of good and wrong. His example makes the idea illuminating. Think about the room of a student, at the private or intimate level convenience and comfort take the lead: there might be clothes or books that might be messy for someone else, but it makes sense as they are used to it. In the second regime, convention leads. Our student has to leave the room for a friend who is staying there for a couple of weeks, this makes them arrange it in a basic common manner that is acceptable as tidy, a 'working order'. The third regime is that of Legitimate Conventions, in which there are levels of socially access to a more conventional agreement in broader social terms, maybe even an authority. In this example the student has to leave the place to be rented by someone else, probably an agency will come to arrange the place and fix any faults in it, but the student will have to make some arrangements to comply with a contract. All those levels of practice are material, affective and embodied, but also they are connected to each other as one makes sense and negotiate with the rest.

In this conception practices respond to a specific kind of good, that—as in Hesmondhalgh's *Constrained Agencies*—is not totally regimented, nor totally free. It is limited and enhanced by the material and the social, it is a form of distributed agency. But more important for my account, Thévenot recognizes that it is necessary to pay attention to the fluxes between them and how each regime redefines *the good* in each other, for example, when our student gets to live in a shared house

as a professional. This puts the practice at the centre of a decision-making process that is convergent; the listener wants something, a good experience, but in their assessment, there is always a sense of limits and possibilities, the search for comfort, the body and the possibilities of the norms of the social world influencing. Andrew Pickering explains this as a process of *tuning*[10] (Pickering, 1993, p. 564), a key process for *the Mangle,* a dialectic of resistance and accommodations that define human and non-human elements at the same time in a particular moment. Listening is different not only based on where we are, but who we are with or who can observe it—that is why we have the concept of *guilty pleasures,* for example that includes music that is valued in private but shameful in some social settings. Hence, listening is a constant negotiation between elements that can be separated in specific contexts but at the same time are entangled at different levels.

In other words, there would be a case of following the—as object—practice of listening. Much of my language and theoretical elements come from Science and Technology Studies, a tradition prone to ethnography as method. And all my framing so far points towards that. But early attempts to actually observe directly how people listen showed that myself as a social intruder affected the practice of the listeners too much. Also, in that sense getting information for different moments of listening—like driving home or in the shower—would raise discomfort for the listeners. Hence, I needed to design a strategy that could help me to cover most of those challenges while at the same time providing rich information about most of the mediators and attachments of the Musical Experience. I designed what I call the Musical Experience History Method.

3. 2. 1. Listening with listeners

Are you listening to some music right now? How did you decide what to listen or not to listen to? Would that decision be different if, let's say, someone else would be in the room? Maybe a friend? A barely

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[10] This will become an important idea later. While doing my analysis I came with this word as an informative metaphor for what I show. Nevertheless, this concept arrived a bit later to me. As I will explain, I see 'tuning' a bit differently.

known colleague? And most importantly, how would you feel if I were, next to you, taking notes about how and what you listen to? It sounds like a complicated project, either for you or for me. This is the challenge of researching Attachments through the Musical Experience in everyday life.

This idea took me to the semi-structured interview as a tool to approach the ways that the listener makes sense of their own Musical Experience, but also about their contexts (Kvale, 2007, p. 7). I understand the interview as a reflexive encounter in which the world view of the interviewee and the researcher is shared. That interview should be guided or semi-structured, which allows the subject to articulate freely the ways in which their practices and experience are related with each other, and the way in which those practices sustain their attachments. Under those definitions I am interested in two features of the interview: its flexibility and its sensitivity to contextual accounts (Mason, 2002, p. 62). These two properties will allow me to explore the ways in which the listener makes sense of the objects and ideas that are related to a particular experience.

I used this method already for a master's thesis (Ávila Torres, 2014) but without a special interest in the Musical Experience and the process of making sense of specific listening practices. Nevertheless, I got two outcomes: When talking about music, listener would constantly refer to a production of experiences in the past to explain the present. There was also a very blurry line between the experience itself and the interpretation of it; for example, the emotion that produces the moment when the lights go out before a concert starts. To be able to include those two topics I took a biographical narrative approach to the interview. The focus on narratives starts from accepting the non-specialized way in which the researcher approaches the topic, the narrator is the expert about their way of doing things and creating meanings from it (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 49). At the same time, it allows the interviewee to choose their own timeframe, from historical context to micro-situations to narrate and to move between them (p. 52). This

means expanding my own flexible frame but also be more sensitive to what could be meaningful to the process of interviewing listeners.

The idea of memories and production of positive experiences also has to be debated. David Hesmondhalgh argues that interviewing about music relies on memories that can be romanticised or sentimentalised, because it evokes feelings and collective hedonism (Hesmondhalgh, 2008, p. 338). If the listener chose what to talk about, there could be a bias towards only positive experiences, or towards the identity they want to perform which leads to the creation of distinctions during the interview. Hesmondhalgh shows this by telling how working-class interviewees struggled to make sense of those positive Musical Experiences. He calls for having sensitivity to historicity and how structural accounts play a role not only in positive experiences—or attachments—, but also negative ones (Hesmondhalgh, 2012, p. 374). Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson[11] talk about the *defended subject:* an interviewee that is assumed not necessarily able to tell the experience as it is, because their own actions or emotions could be opaque to them because of defences against anxiety (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008, p. 314). Their approach relies on narrative and free association, while the researcher becomes sensitive of the information provided, the associations created and the shared cultural assumptions that they both share (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p. 74). In these views, the interview is not only a way to gather information, but also a tool for the interviewee to explore relationships and experiences that are not always visible to the self, an exercise of co-interpretation.

The interview is also an encounter between two world views and two objectives, the interviewee, trying to make sense of the stories, and the researcher trying to actively participate while gathering relevant information. This encounter is also a place for performances. Hennion observes that the listener will be always, at some level, intertwined by sociological explanations and justifications, the listener is always trying to justify their practices according to its own position such as class,

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[11] Their method relies in psychoanalytical—and gestalt—assumptions that I do not consider here. For my purposes the method design is the important intake to develop an interview capable of grasping the challenges presented.

educational background, family issues or any other determinant. His perspective is precisely that one must "de-sociologise" the subject (Hennion, 2010, pp. 27-28), taking into account all those explanations as reflections but without trying to make a critique over them (Hennion et al., 1993). This means that the researcher should trace the accounts received, not try to unveil them or to judge them as false[12]. In Hennion, those beliefs and accounts are what sociology must describe and explore in depth as those are not justifications, but also active elements of the attachments that engage the listener and the object together (Hennion, 2007). This seems to be at odds with the critical instances that Hesmondhalgh is trying to explore, but it is my contention that it is possible to explore one with the other, which means exposing the structural and historical challenges by observing the individual.

The narrative interpretative interview that I use must rely on ideas of flexibility, openness and sensitivity to emotions, constraints and associations. This idea is also similar to the one used by Alessandra Lembo (2017), which she calls 'Aesthetic Life History Interview' (p. 65). In her project, she interviewed fans of country that came into it later in life. Her approach was to section her interviews in specific times and moments in which listener came to enjoy specific types of music. In my approach, I did not condition those associations; I left the interviewees to explain themselves and build up their accounts freely while I remain attentive to emerging possibilities. But as I noticed with my pilot interview, that was not enough to let the music itself have a role in the process as well as the devices. In that sense I had to expand the notion of the interview as a happening, as an event, which I will explain in the next section.

3. 2. 2. Listening to the Objects

In the perspective I am presenting the objects of music, as well as the music itself play an important role in the Musical Experience. On the other hand, external agents beyond the setting of the experience—such

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[12] See for example the critique of the iconoclast and the fetish in Latour's Pandora's Hope (2001)

as laws or institutions— are mediating the experience itself. In other words, the role of non-human agents, present and absent, solid and abstract, should also be included the method for this research. This section aims to explain how I developed a method to capture those roles.

To start, I want to highlight the idea of mediators of music by Hennion:

> Music enables us to go beyond the description of technical and economic intermediaries as mere transformers of the musical relationship into commodities, and to do a positive analysis of all the human and material intermediaries of the "performance" and "consumption" of art, from gestures and bodies to stages and media. Mediations are neither mere carriers of the work nor substitutes that dissolve its reality; they are the art itself, as is particularly obvious in the case of music: when the performer places a score in his music stand, he plays that music, to be sure, but music is just as much the very fact of playing; mediations in music have a pragmatic status-they are the art that they reveal, and cannot be distinguished from the appreciation they generate (Hennion, 2012, p. 253).

He is highlighting the pragmatic dimension of his approach. He sees music as a performance, an arrangement of elements that includes the body and the revelations that happen when all is in place. But also, he highlights that music is at the same time the appreciation that it generates. Mediators are at interplay, and when they act they reveal something bigger than the sum of its parts. In one interview with a musician for my masters, he started to show me his instruments, amplifiers and the new music he was creating. It was a six hours interview while I was following between his house, his studio and even a radio station for a presentation. At that moment I dismissed that interview and used only the bits that I was pursuing, but when planning this project, I realized how important that was, how I was given the privilege to see attachments in action at its most intimate level. For this project, I realized that I should let the listener show me their practices, guide me through their assemblages.

To understand the affordances of music Tia DeNora (2000) conducted ethnographic interviews with women (p. 48) focused on the role of music in everyday life and their music collections. Her research assistant—Sophie Belcher—conducted a participant observation at

aerobic classes (pp. 88-89) and they together conducted observations in shops to see how music structured the rhythms of shopping (p. 135). They wanted to follow the music in action. Both of their observations were conducted in very specific places that are part of everyday life and while they show the agency of music it still does not grasp how those attachments are formed. In my project the setting was so limited; to understand music in everyday life my intention was to go beyond those specific settings.

Following a similar approach, I found empirical work that helped me to integrate more elements into my methods. Ben Green (2015) conducted a research project in which he followed *Peak Music Experiences*[13] in Brisbane, Australia. He focused on memories and the way that some experiences are stored in the music itself and activated by them. Away from music, but closer to the domestic space Ian Woodward (2001) conducted interviews about the role of pivotal house objects that raised memories and hints about consumption and taste—epiphanies. Sophie Woodward and Alinka Greasley (2015) reported about personal collections of music and wardrobes, alongside with observation of interviewees practices to make sense of the materialities and temporalities that make those collections meaningful. Finally, Sarah Pink and Kerstin Leder Mackley (2014) explored through video diaries and home tours the role of media in everyday life, focusing on activities and the role of the senses. All these methods include the material, the body, the senses, and the affects of the objects around everyday life, which let us explore some elements of the intimacy of everyday life and personal history. Inviting objects and practices to the interview was a way to access those elements.

Objects are also part of the experience, so I had to invite them to the interview. Catherine Adams and Terry Thompson took some heuristics to 'interviewing the object' while investigating the role of technologies in educative contexts (Thompson, 2012). Their main method was the interview but considering how the people talked about

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[13] This concept links the idea of emotional, sensuous and affective memories that are raised in specific settings of the Musical Experience.

objects and the way those objects formed new assemblages with the users. For them, to interview an object is 'to catch glimpses of the artefact in action, as it performs and mediates the gestures and understandings of its employer, involves others, and associates with other objects in the pedagogical environment' (Adams and Thompson, 2011, p. 734). They propose a method of following the actor by gathering anecdotes, being attentive to the invitational qualities of things and discerning the spectrum of human-technology relations (Thompson and Adams, 2014). In my research these ideas reconnect with the narrative and intimate perspectives explored before, it would mean to be attentive of the ways in which words, experiences and shared practices give traces of specific configurations and how they open doors for specific mobilisations and associations.

So far, I have been able to include objects, memories and intimate experiences into the interview, but there was an element missing, those abstract actors of different size that might not be present but still acting on the Musical Experience. Mike Michaels proposes an analytical strategy that helps with the production of such accounts, the constitution of Co(a)gents (Michael, 2004). The concept tries to encompass the 'simultaneously distributed and the unitary character of these processual, emergent and relational hybrid entities' (p.7). This strategy allows the researcher to consider how sets of humans and non-humans create distributed, but more or less discrete, entities with specific qualities and possibilities. In a pragmatic sense, it invites the researcher to analyse what assemblage is enacted in specific moments, considering also the action of institutions and social settings such as, in his specific example, universities or fast food companies that are present giving specific qualities to the speaker. As I will explore, those roles are played as members of discursive communities but also kinships, for example, the listener in the club, or the feminist scholar will let different co(a)gents interplay at different moments.

I tried to put all this together for the pilot interview. My approach at that moment was focused on the *hows* of the listeners and their practices. I asked for example 'how do you get music,' forcing them to open their computer and show me software and processes in what I

perceived as a forced performance. I noticed that I was following the wrong object, I was following a technological practice and not a Musical Experience. I had to develop an interview in which the verbalisations and accounts of the subjects are complemented by sensibilities and apprehensions (Michael, 2012, p. 178). I decided that the interview would be more open and flexible, letting the interviewee show me the music that they wanted to in the moment that they wanted to. To achieve these two conditions must have been reached, first the interview should take place at their houses when possible, and at a moment that they feel comfortable enough; they should keep at hand those devices and things about around their Musical Experience that were important for them. This was not using music as elicitation (Allett, 2010), but using the interview as a probe for them to show me their attachments. It was an interview, but a ludic interview where we could talk about their objects as well about their stories and listen music together the way they wanted to show, incorporating some elements of the free narrative and ethnographic participant observation.

For different reasons, this listening-together interview was not always possible. Either they were not comfortable at home, or they had difficulties taking me there. Some of the interviews took place in public settings, while they might still bring some things from their collections. Some others took place through video chat applications— precise number of these settings are explained in the table below (Table 2). I tried to cope with this by asking them to still tell me their stories with specific pieces of music, but also to decide by themselves which objects or settings would like them to show me by sending me pictures in advance to discuss them at the interview. During some interviews the listeners would find something interesting that they have not pictured, so they would send those pictures later.

The Musical Experience History Method also includes my intentions of covering a wide range of tastes, devices and assemblages. In the following section I will detail the strategies to reach participants trying to cover the needs that appeared in the process.

3. 2. 3. Recruiting the listener

To recruit participants for this project, there was only one criteria: to listen to music. This sounds like a wide sampling universe. But as explained in the first chapter my interest was not limited to people with a special relationship with music—musicians, collectors, fans— as that would take me to exploring very particular attachments beyond everyday life. That does not mean those participants were discarded, but that they were just one part of the group of interviewees that were included here. The general aim of the sample is to recruit as many levels and representations of music practices as possible. I used a snowball strategy to find participants, but with a purposeful guidance, which means that while I was following social connections I was also trying to find variance in terms of practices and levels of interest in music.

Age and Gender were also important criteria. Certain music genres and technological practices are perceived and stereotyped as gendered (see for example Bijker and Bijsterveld, 2000; Born and Devine, 2015; DeNora, 2002; Whiteley, 1997). In that sense I was trying to capture those references and classifications, deciding to create a balanced sample between genders. As I show in the literature review many studies are looking for young people as intensive adopters of technology. On the other hand, I was trying to capture the opposite process, the integration of new technologies while comparing them with the old ones; the ways in which technologies can or cannot be adopted and on what grounds. Furthermore, the intensity of music consumption changes within the life course, which seemed important to consider in formation and expansion of attachments. As a result, gender and age group were important factors when recruiting. Nevertheless, when arranging interviews I prioritized conceptual variance over those two elements. That is, I tried to pursue mainly cases with different forms of engagement with music, not only technologically, but also related to genre, practices or preferred source of consumption. For me it was more important to have someone who had never bought a CD and someone who had barely used streaming, than someone that fits all the criteria relate to age and gender. As explained before, as a political instance, I am not selecting and classifying participants by social class; their challenges and struggles

are clearly represented without a label that is measured by sociological analyses. Also in many cases they have travelled from and to cities with very distinctive structural conditions; for that reason I have noted that in the list presented in Table 2. That created a sample less distributed than expected (Table 1).

	18-23	24-29	30-35	36-41	42-60	Total
Man	6	5	7	2	1	21
Queer				1		1
Woman	4	7	5	2	1	19
	10	12	12	5	1	41

Table 1: Gender and Age Group

My initial idea was to create a sample with 30 interviews in each country, distributed by gender and age as explained. But as the data gathering process progressed, I started to look for more specific participants, like people who others or themselves consider 'do not listen to music at all,' or that came from more deprived areas, like the rural zone of Puebla, Mexico. Those issues contributed to the imbalances of the distribution but helped me to cover specific topics that I was identifying in the process. It is precisely that approach to the data that also made me stop before getting the 60 interviews. After 5 months of collecting data in Mexico, I came to the UK with a very specific listener in mind. I realized that because of the model of the interview, there were not significant differences between both populations—beyond the language of the music, which will be explored further. Considering that, and balancing it in with time and resources constraints I decided to stop the fieldwork after 8 months and with only 7 interviews done in the UK. This again, has to do with my strategy for covering specific differences in the sample, in the case of the UK there was not much variance appearing.

For the initial stage of recruiting I created a poster to be distributed via Facebook, Twitter and some mailing lists of professional associations. I relied on a process of self-selection, where those interested and able to commit some time for the interview got in contact with me. This process did not provide perfect access to distribution and representation (Robinson, 2013, pp. 35-36) but it still allows me to get a

point of entrance to specific social groups. After that, I invited the participants to help me to promote my project in their social circles, particularly in cases when some specific profiles were required, using them as 'champion of the research' (Robinson, 2013, p. 36). This led me to a sample that was more or less interconnected, particularly in two or three social groups, but helped me to get to groups that were different from mine while taking into account how listeners describe each other.

I got contacted with expressions of interest by 61 individuals in Mexico and 18 in the UK. From those contacts I decided to contact them based on three principles of recruitment: their location and their availability to give me access to their place, and the possibility of them covering some specific profile that I needed to expand the variation of the sample; I verified this by asking them some questions through email before confirming the interview. As explained before this last principle— the variance—was the one which influenced more in my process. Some listeners had some particular situations that did not allow them to give me access to their places, either since the beginning of the contact or at the last minute before the interview. Some others implied complicated travelling arrangements. In other cases, such as with students, they did not have all their usual listening settings at their accommodation. With all that in mind, some of my interviews happened in public spaces such as coffee shops or restaurants, while some others were made through video calls. As explained in the section before, I asked the listeners, before and after the interview, to send me some pictures of things we talked about in the interview, or things that they would consider important in their relationship with music.

Before starting the process the University of York, Ethics, Law Management, Politics and Sociology Ethics Committee gave me the Ethics Approval to proceed. In that process they made me aware of the need to be aware of my own safety by going into people's houses, that could be solved by making someone aware of where I was at every moment. They also made me aware that the participants should not be talking about anything illegal that they do in their everyday lives. With this in mind all the interviewees were given a consent form and an information sheet—in their language—to explain the whole process and their considerations

during the research. All the data were stored in encrypted servers at the University of York, and the data anonymized since the very first moment, but I still decided to keep some information that is relevant in the analysis, like their occupation and the city where they are from, as those movements are part of their relationship with music. The process of transcription and analysis was guided by the Constructive Grounded Theory Method, that I will explain further in the next section.

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation	Country	Interview	Origin	Residency
Elena	30	Woman	Science Journalist	Mexico	Home	State of Mexico	Mexico City
Alfonso	34	Man	Postgraduate Student	Mexico	Home	Mexico City	Mexico City
Paulina	28	Woman	NGO Employee	Mexico	Home	Mexico City	Mexico City
Raul	35	Man	Graphic Designer and Musician	Mexico	Home	Mexico City	Mexico City
Elisa	28	Woman	Journalist	Mexico	Home	Mexico City	Mexico City
Cinthia	25	Woman	Journalist	Mexico	Public Garden	Mexico City	Mexico City
Sofia	31	Woman	Postgraduate Student	Mexico	Home	Jalapa	Mexico City
Fer	27	Man	Sound Producer	Mexico	Home	Puebla	Puebla
Karla	27	Woman	Journalist	Mexico	Meeting Room	Tehuacan	Puebla
Adal	21	Man	Student	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Guadalajara	Cholula
Julio	21	Man	Student	Mexico	Public Garden	Tampico	Cholula
Chispa	40	Queer	Arts Teacher	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Puebla	Cholula
Ernesto	19	Man	Student	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Puebla	Cholula
Roberto	39	Man	Photographer	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Puebla	Puebla
Lilia	36	Woman	University Teacher	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Puebla	Puebla
Maria	18	Woman	Student	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Tuxpan	Cholula
Rosa	60	Woman	Marketing	Mexico	Home	Puebla	Puebla
Pedro	48	Man	Chemical Engineer	Mexico	Home	Puebla	Cholula
Adrian	26	Man	Student	Mexico	Home	Mexico City	Mexico City
Alejandra	31	Woman	Social Media Strategist	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Cuernavaca	Mexico City
Saúl	31	Man	Publicist	Mexico	House	Aguascalientes	Mexico City
Alba	38	Woman	Fashion Design	Mexico	Home	State of Mexico	Mexico City

Raúl	39	Man	Graphic Design	Mexico	Home	Mexico City	Mexico City
Pamela	28	Woman	Publicist	Mexico	Restaurant	Mexico City	Mexico City
Pablo	31	Man	Graphic Designer	Mexico	Skype	Cancún	Cancún
Gloria	30	Woman	Office	Mexico	Skype	Cancún	Cancún
Israel	20	Man	Student	Mexico	Public Garden	Cuautla	Cuautla
Luz	23	Woman	Student	Mexico	Home	Cuautla	Cuautla
Miguel	23	Man	Student	Mexico	Home	Cuautla	Cuautla
Marina	24	Woman	Student	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Puebla	Puebla
Oscar	24	Man	Student	Mexico	Restaurant	Puebla	Puebla
Marge	22	Woman	Student	Mexico	Coffee Shop	Merida	Cholula
Carlos	34	Man	Journalist	Mexico	Home	Puebla	Puebla
Javier	33	Man	Journalist	Mexico	Restaurant	Cholula	Cholula
Alek	23	Man	Teacher	UK	Home	London	York
Claire	34	Woman	Social Media Strategist	UK	Coffee Shop	York	York
Edward	28	Man	Teacher	UK	Office	Leeds	York
Stuart	26	Man	Student	UK	Coffee Shop	Sussex	York
Cristian	34	Man	Health Services	UK	Home	Leeds	Leeds
Jessica	23	Woman	Student	UK	Coffee Shop	York	York
Sian	24	Woman	Student	UK	Coffee Shop	Leeds	Leeds

Table 2: Participants list

3. 2. 4. Listening to the Data Through Grounded Theory

As noted before, this research project has changed constantly while doing it. One of the most important changes was to adopt grounded theory as a way of going through the data and making assumptions from it. I worked with the specific version of grounded theory presented by Kathy Charmaz and Adele Clarke. The adoption came after the first three interviews, which also means that the whole design of the research is not based on it. Nevertheless, the process of constant comparison, purposive sampling and open coding—that I will explain in this section— are an integral part of the outcome for this research project.

Kathy Charmaz defines Grounded Theory as a set of systematic guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data which points towards the construction of theories from the data (Charmaz, 2014, p.

1). Expanding this idea, Adele Clarke's version included discourses, affects and non-human elements to comprehend the complex nature of the process of making sense of the world (Clarke, 2005). It relies on following an inductive path, and its basic element is a process of constant comparison in an iterative way. This means that it is a sustained process of going through and back between the data, the analysis and drafting. My approach to grounded theory came after I started the process of analysing my first set of interviews, as I understood that the way my data was appearing was through *how to's.* My interviews led to data that demanded a more open approach instead of looking for my initial concepts (value, ownership and quality). It proved difficult for the interviewees to talk about their own attachments without thinking about them as open-ended processes, one of the strengths of grounded theory.

A feature of Constructivist Grounded Theory is its sensitivity to what is emerging in the data. For this, the process of interviewing transcription, coding and analysis are parallel and inform each other continually by constant comparison. For Susan Leigh Star (2007) this process is key to developing abstract knowledge while at the same time keeping the analysis informed by the data. In her account, Grounded Theory allows the researcher to follow the action as the unit of research while at the same time being sensitive to following its ramifications and continuities. In my process that meant being open to what happened not only during the interviews but also in my data, as some ideas were taking the shape of memos. That would point me towards a systematic redesign of the interview and to look for specific participants.

The process of analysis starts with the collection of data; in my case, letting the first interviews shape the analysis itself without leaving room for imposing my own intentionality or interests. The initial coding was done through my own notes and with printed versions of my data. Once in the UK I used the software NVIVO for transcription and coding (Hutchison et al., 2010). The use of software made the process of coding more accessible, retrievable and flexible. At the same time, it allowed me to integrate annotations, my research journal, pictures and music as part of the same coding process. Finally, it allowed me to keep a record of the

different iterations that the project had as I kept working in developing new versions.

With the first 5 interviews transcribed and coded I reached a total of 190 codes that I categorized in 6 groups. With the memos that emerged from there I developed one draft that would potentially be four chapters. By comparing them with more data, those chapters showed themselves to be not perfectly defined, with the first of those chapters getting more dimensions. I decided to convert that chapter into three chapters to develop more the processual character of the attachment to music. The production of diagrams also helped me to interconnect elements of those three phases to be able to comment about topics that were cross-sectional to all stages (Wu and Beaunae, 2012, p. 258). From subsequent analysis—and the transcription and coding of the rest of the interviews—I identified what I called *drivers* of the attachments. Nevertheless, I decided that it was richer to develop the approach taken here in the stages, rather than the drivers that are anyway present and mentioned constantly.

The Musical Experience History Method is not only for the process of recruiting and interviewing; it was also part of the coding and analysis. While I was transcribing, coding and analysing I was listening to the music that the listeners mentioned during the interview. I knew some of them but not others. In both cases, it allowed me to find the emotions or meanings that listeners linked to those specific songs, instead of working with my own assumptions or artists' names that I never heard of. This is an important point, as I was not just 'interviewing' the song but trying to find the affordances that shaped its relationship with the listener. On the other hand, the objects that they were meant to show me and that I have photographed became important elements for my own analysis, as placeholders of ideas and relations. Nevertheless, those objects are not a relevant part of this final version of the project, as they stopped working as illustrations of those relationships as the project departed from the purely material analysis of the actual settings and objects to become an analysis of the life with music in a biographical approach.

With the change of analytical approach the project had to be reshaped, particularly considering the literature that was covering it.

Early iterations of Grounded Theory relied on the idea of the researcher arriving to the project with little knowledge about it to prevent any bias by it (Charmaz, 2014, p. 306). Nevertheless, the constructivist approach recognizes the active role that the researcher has in the analysis and the emerging knowledge (Ramalho et al., 2015, p. 14). When designing the project I developed a literature review aimed towards the initial version of the project. Nonetheless, as I decided to keep those elements from conditioning my analysis, other topics and concepts emerged (McGhee et al., 2007). This means that alongside the analysis, new literature became part of the project which has also been part of the constant comparison method to enrich the results.

For this project Constructivist Grounded Theory required me to remain closer to the data and to systematize the process of analysis and writing through constant comparison and an open sensitivity. Some literature argues for more strict versions of it but in my view, it importantly relies on the flexibility that it provides. On that regard, I would not call this thesis 'A Grounded Theory Approach' as I do not consider it so because of the nature of the research question, the designed method and the structural constraints that prevented all the points of the model fully covered. Still, the principles in it served as a productive prompt for extracting the best possible abstraction from the data.

3. 3. Listening in two languages (A Note on Translation)

My native language is Spanish, and in particular Mexico City's Spanish. This was also the language of 34 of the listeners that shared their stories and practices with me for this thesis. I also consider myself a competent English speaker, improved over the 3 years enrolled in the Sociology Department at York. Hence, I was able to understand and engage with all the ideas shared by the United Kingdom speakers, and they understood me. Translation has been a constant through the whole

research project, that is why, in this section I want to make a small reflection about translation for this thesis.

Translation is part of my everyday life. My partner is also Mexican, so at home we speak mostly Spanish. But while we are doing that, we are watching some TV show in English or reading a magazines or books. While we listen to music, we discuss parts of the lyrics, or —if either of us is capable of understanding them by ear—we might look for them over the Internet, but we don't really discuss the meaning word by word. The same happens when reading, I can read something about Music, a Novel or an article from a Social Sciences journal, fairly easily without thinking that much on the 'meaning' of those words. This has taken us so far that there are some concepts or words that we are only capable of saying in English and some others in Spanish[14].

Walter Benjamin's essay insists in the futility of translating literal meanings, but more as the artist creating relationships of language (Benjamin, 2002). But in the case of academic research, translation becomes an issue of quality and transparency. Nonetheless, translation is not a decision about just achieving something, but about what is being made visible in the research. While sharing stories with someone, the two persons involved create an attachment —a compromise, a debt, a promise, an engagement— to bring their story to its more rich and honest account. Translating by simply finding words with similar meaning, would be, as Li argues (2011), creating a gap between the words and the multiple dimensions of their own meanings, the intensity expressed and the language they used to make sense of them.

Translation also has political dimensions. To express someone else's ideas in another language is making a language invisible (Temple and young, 2004, p. 166) accompanied by all the ways that a language is full of sense-making elements for individuals and societies (Rodriguez Medina, 2019). It is also a way to contribute to the production of asymmetrical knowledges between the translator's world and the translated one (Rodríguez Medina, 2014; Rodríguez Medina, 2013). In

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[14] Attachment is a great example of this as the multiple words that it has in Spanish do not grasp its meaning in the terms here. Nevertheless, the summary of all those words do!

that sense, translation is also a concept connected with Actor Network Theory. For Michel Callon (1984) translation is—in very simple words— the act of transforming something into something else, that retains some features and changes others, making this new version, not only more transportable or durable, but carrier of a new specific set of intentions (see for example, Cressman, 2009; Hutter, 2015; Star and Griesemer, 1989; Undurraga, 2017). Hence, translating generates a position in which certain knowledges and forms of knowing are generated while some others are obscured. In that sense, translating is a very particular methodological and epistemological decision.

This thesis is produced to get a specific degree in a very specific context (a UK University), to be read and evaluated by specific persons and to be made available in a specific form. In other words, this thesis still has to comply with institutional codes and to fit within a specific discipline—like those practices explained by Laurent Thévenot (2001) presented before. In addition to that, there is only a limited amount of time and resources that I was able to commit to this project to, for example, hire professional translators (as proposed in Lopez et al., 2008). This thesis is still an exercise of translation that has many dimensions to negotiate, including my own ideas.

To balance all those challenges, I decided to assume my role as translator of ideas and languages in the way in which my knowledge of both languages and words could be better represented. While transcribing and coding, I did not translate any of the interviews. Until the very moment of writing memos and drafts, I started translating them in order to make it understandable for my supervisors. At the same time, I tried every time to capture not only the words, but also the emotional intensity that some accounts gave about their relationships. For that, I had to rely on my knowledge of both words. This means that none of the accounts presented in this thesis is a word-by-word representation of the transcriptions. They are inevitably my interpretations of them.

I have also followed the same procedure with literature or any other elements present in this thesis. A reasonable part of this research has been enriched by literature acquired and understood in Spanish. In those cases, even when there might be *official* translations available, I

decided to make my own translation of them. The proper reference is made, but it is important to note it as the reader could feel dissonance in some quotes presented here—or page numbers— as they might not be in the exact way that the reader knows it in the English translation of the text. In that sense, the reader is always exposed to my translation, either the interviewees, the literature or the word that I tried to make sense of here.

Conclusion

The best way I can define the Musical Experience History Method is as a playful musical engagement with people and objects. A playful research engagement that forces me to make what seems to be known for me—as also a music lover—exciting and challenging. It allowed me to engage with objects and songs that are also part of my own attachments to this research and my life. It also allowed me to expand and reflect on the very process of doing this research and the ways in which music, beyond my own experience, is a fundamental element of individual and social life.

The method includes listening with the interviewee, discussing their objects of musical attachment such as books or old tickets, allowing them to take the lead on the conversation and not assuming what relationship I was looking for. The method included open coding, but also listening while coding, giving me a tri-dimensional view of those attachments, an affective one. All of this through my own interpretation, that is still the view of a researcher and a music lover. In the following chapters I will present the findings and discussion raised by this method.

4- Getting attached to music and the self

The enjoyment of the Musical Experience is a process of discovery. It is also part of a network of relations between the individual, the social and the past self. As such, it does not appear in a blank space, it has triggering moments and intense relations, territorializations and affections, as well as objects and settings. From there, the Musical Experience becomes a point of encounter between the inner self and the socio-material world around, which includes emotions, feelings, sensations, values, beliefs, devices and contexts. Music is the centre of a vortex of uncountable convergences—devices and settings; intimate self and social identity; desires and possibilities; history and discovery; control and surprises— and all of those actors might be changed every time the experience happens.

Building attachments to music is a process of constant re-valuation, adjustment, and enactment of specific experience. At every Musical Experience those attachments can be created, enhanced, decreased or transformed through memory and the senses. This means that the Musical Experience is at the same time an enactment of attachments and a transformation of them. It is at the same time a feature of the Musical Experience and an outcome. You while reading can be listening to the song that changed your life, but at this stage it might be changing as your understanding of the social world is changing, or the very equipment you are using can make you discover new elements of that piece.

In this chapter I want to explore two main dimensions of the Musical Experience that I found relevant in listeners' accounts and that are related as they imply the way the productive movement of attachments. On one side intense moments that shape the listener's idea of music and attention to it. Those elements, in this argument, create certain forms of attention that developed certain Musical Experiences to the listener I talked to. The second dimension is the process of re-negotiation of attachments; listeners never remain the same, even through life course or other experiences that expand or move their interests in certain directions. The second half of the chapter deals with

the idea of identity and social representation in the formation of those attachments, from the social element, to the intimate one, to the idea, explored in the literature, of a Distributed Musical Identity.

4. 1. Threshold moments and Dispositions

Elisa was raised in the suburban area of Mexico City, she has developed a really interesting relationship with music, she thinks music is difficult to share, a really individual experience. She enjoys listening to music at her work as a journalist and writer, and she enjoys listening to soundtracks. While we were talking about her stories, she wanted to show me a very specific song that she was not able to explain with words: a piece from **Hans Zimmer**'s **Interstellar Soundtrack**. She was looking for it in Spotify, but suddenly she stopped. She went to her room and fetched a Bosé *bluetooth* speaker. While she was connecting it, she explained that listening to that piece from the iPad 'does not make sense.' Before that she told me this story:

> Since I was a child my father used to put on children's music for me, like **Cri-Cri**. But he tried to look for other things, contemporary music that would be suitable for us, his music. (…) He had really strange tastes, one day he came with an **Isao Tomita**'s album, one with songs named after the planets, so my father tried to set everything for as if it were an adventure story, like of we were astronauts or somethings. There was also another album, one with a higher beat, and was related with animals, and he tried to make us run through the living room. With rock and roll he used to make us jump from couch to couch, building tunnels and things like that.
> (…) He was really interested in technology, so I can remember him setting the speakers into specific places around the house to make us notice the stereo sound at high volume and for us was really exciting.
> (Elisa, journalist, 28)

Her vignette illustrates clearly some concepts of this chapter. Specifically the way in which attachments turn into practices, but more importantly, the way in which listening experiences reveal our attachments to music. Her two accounts were separated in the interview, but they make sense together. First, the disposition of listening to something shown by her father, not only because she trusted him or loved him but also as an excuse to play with him. Second, the

technological attachment that shapes the way she listens to music. It includes the sound and the devices that provide that sound as part of the experience, at the same time affective, embodied and intimate. This takes us to the third point, the way she listens to music now, with the same interest in sound and devices as she was guided by her father, but also music that allows her to do the same in her mind, put images over the sound, stories, emotions and interpretations of her own.

This example resonates with van Dijck's (2006, pp. 364-365) account of the role of technology and sound to make music memorable for the listener. In their study of German Audiophiles' Technologies Lepa and Seifert found that those with a more varied technological background are able to become in the future more versatile in terms of devices of consumption (Lepa and Seifert, 2016, p. 16). This will lead to the repetition of a pattern, the listener trying to repeat those affective experiences (Nowak, 2016a). But the data I produced with my interviewees, it seems that it is not always related with technology, but with other forms of intense experiences. I call this the Threshold Moment.

The idea of Threshold Moment that I propose here is inspired by Pedagogical research in which a threshold concept is understood as 'a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, interpreting or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress' (Meyer and Land, 2003, p. 1). In other words, an element of knowledge that opens new doors to understand other things. Joanna Latimer explores this concept from an ontological politics perspective of different natures: material spaces, knowledges or documents (Latimer, 2018). In other words, thresholds are passages that transform the self. Relevant for me in this account is the idea that those transformations are endless and multiple in everyday life, there is no single crossing point, identity becomes an endless project (Latimer and Munro, 2017). From both of those elements I want to use threshold moments as those

intense points that create attachments to the Musical Experience, they transform the way a listener practices music.

The threshold moment refers to something that was happening frequently in my data, listeners explain their musical history with a particular moment of intensity or an important memory, a point in which they crossed the threshold to their actual attachment to music, their very particular way of assembling it. The threshold moment crosses the listener from a moment of not being attached to that specific way of experiencing music to an intense interest or the establishment of a common practice. The threshold moment is not necessarily a definitive unique influence, but one that helps the listener to make sense of her practice in the world through a reflexive practice. The threshold moment does not have a definitive form or outcome, as I will show, some of those practices are more into the technicalities of the listening, like the devices or sound qualities, while others might lie into the contents or discourses of a song, rhythm or genre. It also implies that the life of a listener can be fulfilled by different threshold moments, one in which the discovery was about the qualities of an instrument while other about the political stands of the musician. Threshold moments explain the Musical Experience as—using John Dewey's language (2005)—an aesthetic affective experience that in its whole unity, as patterns and structures, highlight a dominant or guiding property.

Elisa's story continues into her teenage years, when she was listening mainly to **Linkin Park**. At first gaze, that band looks quite afar from **Tomita's** space-themed music. But when she describes her preference and use of Linking Park she shows intersecting points. For example, she used to listen to this music as a way to disengage with the world in her difficult moments, letting the sound wrap her while getting lost in the loud guitars and the sound of Chester Bennington's vocal. She was also interested in the peculiar digital sounds that the band uses to decorate their songs, some kind of robotic or space punctures in the middle of a rap metal song, as in **Tomita's** music.

At the time of listening to **Linkin Park** she did not know much English, so she was unable to fully understand the lyrics or memorize them. But for her, that music was not about a precise meaning, as for

many in Mexico, but a set of sounds, practices and cultural agreements about the music that allow for the territorialization of a specific affect. Language differences will play an important role in different process of building attachments as an element of surprise or a way to dig deeper in it, but not knowing the language in which the song is composed is not a restriction to create attachments with it.

She does not listen or assign meanings to music, she builds a Musical Experience that goes beyond the very moment of listening; **Linkin Park** related with her emotional state or discursive engagement with the music. It is not listening to a specific music, it is mobilizing meanings, sounds and practices. The attachments that listeners make at specific stages in life will become guidelines for the relationship and values that will be developed in the future. Another example can be the way in which some listeners learn to use music as a tool for interpreting the world, like those who love **Pink Floyd**, or punk as a genre. Elisa's example helps me to show how the attachments through specific Musical Experiences (threshold moments) can be transmitted, developed and transformed, starting from a specific meaningful experience. In an example that Hennion (2010) uses to argue around the reflexivity of taste he recalls a discussion in which a listener says to another listener: 'You keep loving but what you have been' (P.28). He uses this example to show how music is not something external, but deeply embedded within the identity as its mediator. He also shows the reflexive process of taste, and the way in which listeners can identify and explain their own constraints and determinisms for acting in specific ways. Hennion's idea here resonates with Elisa's history and practice, as she tries to reproduce in new forms a specific experience. Hence, the experience is mobile and able to circulate but is not solid; on the contrary, the attachment is not perfectly defined, as a circulatory entity it travels taking and leaving something every time (Straw, 2010). In other words, the attachment will act as guidelines for the listener, that will re-adjust in the following experience.

Let me pay attention to one key element of the account to explain this through the way she relates with devices. Elisa's interview showed me how she relates the senses, particular imaginaries and sounds, but

those were only achievable through specific devices. For her, listening with a high definition speaker is an important part of the experience, she committed time and effort to save money for that. Some of my other participants began listening in a piano room, others through a small pocket radio and some others through different sets of complex devices. That is, the intensity of the threshold moment will be also related to the senses and affective elements of the experience, and it makes the listener pursue objectives. The repetition of that sensation is what mobilizes the listener towards specific settings. But how does the listener discriminate the multiple experiences to convert them into threshold moments?

Being exposed to many sources of music has never been difficult for people, as tapes, radio, Musak systems and many other sources of music have been ubiquitous for a long time. This ubiquity has been expanded with the rise and popularization of what now Morris (2015b) calls the digital music commodity, which has made not only more music more available, but more *musics* from different geographical origins making also identities ubiquitous and distributed (Kassabian, 2013). According to Anahid Kassabian the process of creating spaces and identities through music is fluid and variable (p. 112) in which attention is not fixed in inattentive or attentive ways, it is in flux. Her account gives a hint about how technologies play a role in the process of assembling and managing that identity, but there is still the question of the switch in moments of attention. In other words, the listener has multiple musical engagements over her life—or even day— but which ones stick or trap her attention?

That is the role of what I call Dispositions. I am taking this idea from the expansion that Bernard Lahire makes of Bourdieu's idea of practice, in which dispositions mean possibilities of action, feeling, belief or thought, that come from an embodied past conception (Lahire, 2017; Lahire, 2003). In his account it becomes important that those disposition are not determinations, but paths of action with variable outcomes (Lahire, 2008). A set of conditions of different and unpredictable nature and size that allow certain moments to become meaningful. Let's go back to Elisa, it was her father who showed her those ways of engaging with

music. For her, the disposition raised from the relationship that she had with him, as she was usually away from home for work, and they had to develop meaningful moments, that happened to be through music. I will explore some other forms of Dispositions in the next section.

4. 1. 1. Dispositions and Threshold moments

The idea of Dispositions gives me the chance to observe what lies behind every new musical practice. To develop last section's idea, the affective and timed relationship between Elisa and her father was the disposition (or attachment, if you prefer) that triggered her threshold moment to create a new attachment to music, a new circular and distributed relationship with music. The disposition that she illustrates is affective; the love for her father and the expectation of spending time having fun with him allowed her to accept that new Musical Experience, that shaped her and she tried to repeat. But I want to explore further forms of disposition. In the data I collected for this thesis those dispositions appear in different forms, like positive and negative experiences, cultural meanings, a favourite radio station or presenter or any other elements that make the person admit that new music and attend to it in a differentiated way to that specific piece or form of experience. In this section I will explore further some forms of attachments and disposition as well as show the relationship that both of those conditions have in the Musical Experience.

Cinthia was raised in a home with her extended family. She was looked after by her aunt, as her mother usually was away for work and living in a farther away house. Cinthia describes the setting as a broken home. She experienced relegation and racial segregation as she was the only non-white and her nuclear family were separated. Her aunt acted as her formative guide, usually playing children's music for her. At some point, she discovered that music was also a way to remove herself from her hurtful context. While listening to children's music with headphones

she was able to let herself go to a different place, but she also learnt to make sense of her world through the lyrics.

> There used to be many problems of discrimination within my family, because I am the child of a single mother, and the colour of my skin, sometimes in a covert way, sometimes more openly. Things that you do not understand when you are a child, but you still feel guilty about. Then, I used to listen to 'The Ugly Doll' and it was cathartic. At least in the song someone feel or have felt the same as me now, and that worked as therapy. I learnt then to be with music all the time, I was not able to afford a *Discman* or even a *Walkman*, so saving my pocket money I used to buy little disposable radios. They were very small, smaller than my hand. Obviously every certain time they broke so I had to buy a new one. (Cinthia, 25, journalist, Mexico City)

The song that she refers to—**The Ugly Doll [*La Muñeca Fea*] by Cri-Cri**—[15] is a low-key piano and violin composition that tells the story of an old doll forgotten in an attic, where she cries while the rats, old brushes, mops and spiders try to comfort her. The moral of its fable is that there are people who forget about us and one should not cry for them but value the ones that are around now. The attachment to music, through certain Musical Experience, does not necessarily come from someone else but the context, the music and the devices assemble with her own life experiences to let her deal with her own crisis and make sense of her life. This process does not follows from a blank page, it comes from the possibility of having music at hand and being able to reinterpret her aunt's intentions.

In Cinthia's story there is an element of playfulness, the radio as a toy, as an experiment, the device lets her get unexpected outcomes, it is all that builds up the threshold moment for her. The music itself also works as an active element of the experience, with specific contents, forms and meanings. In this case, she finds the metaphors used relatable to her situation. In contrast with Elisa, she did not need someone to teach her, it was her own exploration that led to the kind of Musical Experience that she will try to repeat constantly in the future.

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[15] Cri-Cri is the musical character created by composer Francisco Gavilondo Soler.

The Ugly Doll by Cri-Cri/ Gabilondo Soler(1963)

Hidden in the corners.
Afraid of being seen by someone.
She talked with the mice,
the poor ugly doll.

One little arm broke off already.
Her little face is sooty.
And feeling forgotten she cried
little tears of sawdust.

Little doll,
said the mouse.
Don't cry anymore, silly little dear
You are wrong.
Your friends
are not those of the world
because they left you forgotten
in this corner.
We are not like them.

The broom and the dustpan love you.
The feather duster and the rag love you.
The spider and the old valise love you.
I love you, too,
and I want you to be happy.

Little doll,
said the mouse.
Don't cry anymore, silly little dear
You are wrong.
Your friends
are not those of the world
because they left you forgotten
in this corner.

We are not like them.

The broom and the dustpan love you.
The feather duster and the rag love you.
The spider and the old valise love you.
I love you, too,
and I want you to be happy.

It is not possible to separate what she is doing. Cinthia is not only using the song, interpreting her own feelings through the lyrics or shaping her context. Through her skilled practice, perfected by a continuous trial and error, she gets into an attachment that includes all those things. Again, it is a matter of her context and situation as disposition—alongside her ability to understand the metaphors in the song—creating a threshold moment and a specific memory. As a kid Cinthia had to develop strategies to keep listening, like the mini-radio that she was constantly buying with pocket money and getting removed by her teachers at school. But explaining the radio she also explains her context; the radio was a problem at school but also the material structure of the city presented challenges. She liked to listen to it when going to see her mother, she had to deal with the subway tunnels to get signal. That would make her take slower routes but free in underpasses. The Musical Experience is precisely the negotiation of those elements in constant process, the process of learning to listen, but also to improving that experience while the attachment is practiced and in the making at

the same time. In the following case I want to explore how some dispositions interact not only in a linear way but interconnecting past and present experiences through a process of interpretation by the listener.

Fer is one of the few musicians I interviewed for this research. He plays in a band alongside his work as multimedia music producer and venue manager. He insists that the most exciting thing about music is the possibility of creating specific sensations in the appropriate settings. His music taste has travelled through many stages, from teenage happy punk to experimental progressive rock. When he was young, he was not particularly exposed or interested in music, he can only remember moments in the car where music was negotiated by his parents, whom also happen to have very different preferences, his mother was prone to Spanish romantic pop while his father was more into **Pink Floyd**. They had a common ground on **Cat Stevens** and more pop adaptations of 'complex' music like Pink Floyd with symphonic orchestra and that is what they used to listen most of the time in the car.

> My mother used to listen to **Pandora**, **Mocedades** and **Mecano**. My father liked more *rocky* stuff. Their tastes used to encounter Cat Stevens, we had a Cat Stevens' tape in the car and one in which and orchestra played Pink Floyd stuff. The same tape, once and again. I developed a certain interest in those things, but it was until my uncle gave a CD with **Maná's** MTV Unplugged, in which I really discovered music. (…) I love to pay attention to the interaction with the public, and the sound of guitars, I used to think, that must be incredible live (…) A bit later, considering my past, I began to develop an interest in **Pink Floyd**, first in their sonic atmospheres, but bit by bit into the complex lyrics of their songs. (Fer, music producer, 27)

In Fer's case, there is a sense of knowing that music is an important feature of life, but he was totally unaware of it. It was not until the moment he got that record that the interest started, the attachment. First, with discovering a feature in the sound—the sense of space in the live recording— that would become later his interest in becoming a sound producer. He explains in detail how he was impressed by the small details in the record that seemed harder to notice, like the subtle sound of the *claves*[16] or the way they people get excited and he can get it by

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[16] A percussion instrument consisting in two thick wooden sticks that are struck to produce a clicking sound. They are popular in Latin music, particularly the one that follows the forms of Cuban son.

the recording. It might be worthy to note that this process was possible because he used to listen with a *discman* with headphones, which allowed him to notice those details.

What acted with this story as disposition was Fer's relationship with his uncle. But what I want to analyse here is what follows, as after discovering those qualities he attended differently to the music that his parents listened to. First, he went to listen to more Latin pop, slowly integrating Spanish pop and some music in English. As he became a teenager he would get into happy punk, mainly **Blink-182**. Through his attachment with music and the sound of recording he would understand his father's music—progressive rock—that he found interesting precisely because of its production values. As he said, that shaped his interest in sound production, but also the way he creates music with his actual band. This example shows how the threshold moment can make music from the past significant as well as providing a frame to read Musical Experience in the future. It also shows how dispositions are not linear, but they interact in different ways through the process of making attachments.

These two examples show the diversity of shapes that the disposition and the threshold moment can get. But also the multiple ways in which they interact in unpredictable ways. Disposition are here understood as the set of conditions of relationships that allow an intense experience to become a threshold moment. This could be a relationship with another person, a moment of attention or a previous experience with specific sounds, bands or ways of listening. Once the threshold moment occurs, it can become a new disposition as in the example of the preference for Latin music or a way of listening through advanced devices. As I have noted before there is not only one disposition or threshold moment in a listener's life course. There are multiple that can be sectioned by specific preference. The analysis focuses on those experience and what elements are into play to become attachments, but it is a continuous process that produces readjustments and new interests. In the following sections I will explore the role of those

negotiations and adjustments to produce specific attachments and new dispositions.

4. 2. Re/Tuning Attachments

In everyday life music appears multiple times and some of them can give way to important attachments. As shown in the previous chapter the circular relationship between attachments and dispositions is in constant movement. It is important to remark that dispositions are not directions, they are starting points that frame action (Lahire, 2017), but they are still soft enough to be challenged in every moment. On the other side, attachments are the resulting relationship among the actors, a relationship that is being shaped for those moments and that change the role and dimensions of each actor. A main feature of its relationship is a circularity, that not only travels forward in time, but can also travel backwards as seen in the last vignette by Fer. These two concepts allow us to think about the way new music is integrated into the listeners life. To discover new music is to negotiate between dispositions and threshold moments; material settings, identity and expectations. The discovery produces new attachments, reshaping the listener, devices, the music itself and the past. To put an example, some readers might have listened to Aretha Franklin at a young age, but we probably never really paid attention to it, until a later point in life, with different social, cultural and material frameworks. That is the process that I call Re/Tuning attachments. Once a threshold moment is crossed, some adjustments and negotiations need to happen to make sense of one's attachment. In this section I will explore some dimensions of this process as well as setting a starting point for the analysis in the following sections.

Edward from Leeds affirms that he grew mostly disinterested about music. He did not have any particular interest until, through his friends the pop group **S Club 7**:

I am ignoring **S Club 7**! Do you know them? ***Reach for the Stars***, everyone I know that is around my age knows every lyric of that song, it is just one of those things that is burned in there. They had a TV show, they were just everywhere, if Spice Girls were a bit too *girly* for you, **S Club 7** were like manufactured pop, just quite good pop music... So yeah, **S Club 7** would be the first band that I really liked. (Edward, 28, Teacher, Leeds)

He explores how the popularity and gender dimensions of his cultural surroundings where negotiated. Pop bands were famous in his context, but Edward had to explore and 'tune' the popularity of that music with something that fitted his person and interest. It is still pop, but an understanding of pop *tuned* based on his identity. Later, new music came in, while he was doing homework in his room his brother started to play the guitar in the next room, particularly rock music like **Cream**, **The Who**, **Queen** and **AC/DC**. At the beginning it was not an enjoyable experience, but through the process of repetition he would learn the guitar introduction of ***Stairway to Heaven***. From that catalogue, what attracted Edward was **AC/DC**, the speed, the look of Angus Young, and the fun attitude were the elements that struck him enough to re-configure his musical catalogue. New practices came along with the new music, to get deeper into it, a *Discman* was at hand, and the opportunity to listen to it while walking the dog. At that moment **S Club 7** was not displaced totally by **AC/DC** but he found that by following the path of rock music would be more interesting for him in his new situation. His brother's preference was guided by the building of an identity, the intention to become a 'rock musician,' a series of 'must listen' and 'must play'. That would constrain Edward's possibilities, but the example is good for showing that the process of re/tuning takes place in complex models susceptible to differential roles and actions from all the actors involved.

The process I call Re/Tuning Attachments involves integrating new music to listener's personal repertories. The listener is not a blank sheet but carrying specific forms of attachment from the past. But it also includes the way the listener makes sense of the self and their surroundings, not only cultural but also material. The metaphor of tuning refers to a carefully crafted activity of aligning and relating different things, as musicians do with instruments, to find an appropriate middle

point of balance, or as the radio listener chooses carefully the radio station in the dial to get the perfect sound in a specific location. Tuning, more than a way to find the *correct* setting is more about find the point in which different interrelating variables are adjusted to specific conditions and desires. The only expert in this process is the listener who constantly practices and adjust the new ways of being attached to music through a process of shaping it.

With this metaphor, I am thinking about a sound equalizer; a set of control that can be adjusted through a slider or a thumbwheel. Each time we get a new set of speakers, or we want to play a different genre or even a different person is listening at our living room we might need to adjust them. Even in portable devices, for those more interested in sound, a change of headphones or listening space might need a readjustment. We align them and decide which elements take priority for a satisfactory listening, it is a process of readjustment, that accounts for what we prefer, what we have and what we are expecting from the sound. Andrew Pickering uses a similar metaphor to explain the production of scientific knowledge as a process of adjustments between humans and not humans, with an unexpected outcome (Pickering, 1995, p. 14; Pickering, 1993, p. 564). The concept shows that scientific practice is full of unexpected encounters that need to be readjusted and that can change the goal, but that works both ways, machines need to be disciplined by humans and humans are also disciplined by objects. For this thesis, the idea helps me to integrate the way in which situations, cultural and material mean a realignment of the elements as in a valuation process. Moreover, it shows how not only present elements are readjusted but also past attachments and meanings.

Elena is a 30 years old journalist living in Mexico City. She loves music as a source of intimate experiences and meanings. For her, music can help to define one's self-identity. She explains how music preferences can influence her choice when dating someone, not because she cannot listen to specific genres or artists, but because music tells a lot about other's ideas and attitudes. At the same time, she finds in music an interesting topic to talk with others as a way of gaining intimacy, this second idea will be explored further below. Her favourite

song is by the Norwegian band **Kings of Convenience**. I want to follow a song to illustrate this process of alignment and re/tuning in the discovery process.

She discovered the band in MTV around 2009, when a video brimming with Scandinavian landscapes was playing without her paying much attention. For Elena, MTV became essential as it was easy to have it on while doing some other duties. She felt struck by the images of the song, not only because she considers herself a nature lover, but also because she used to guess the meaning of the images that the artists decided to use in each video and that one was challenging. Enjoying MTV, her interest in music videos, the idea of meaning and her identity as nature-lover acted as dispositions that led to the threshold moment when she discovered **Kings of Convenience.** When she saw the video for the first time, she liked it but she did not notice the name of the song or the band, so in her mind it was just a good memory. Some weeks later she found it again. At this second chance she paid more attention to it, the match of the music and the images raised in her a melancholy feeling that she enjoyed. She asked her mother for that album at Christmas and she got a *Discman* also. Since that moment, she had the chance to listen to the album once and again on many occasions, going beyond the song she started with. While listening she liked to hold the CD case, particularly the booklet, reading the lyrics and appreciating the art when she had enough time to do it. Through this practice she found another song in the album, '**Riot on an Empty Street,**' her favourite one.

> It's a dangerous game, that I'm not sure if I could keep playing for long.
> It's a dangerous game, it's a very fine line and if one step is wrong...
> I have no cards to play and that's why
> I've got nothing to say, tonight.
> I've got nothing to say, tonight.
> [Extract from Riot on an Empty Street, written by Eirik Glambek Bøe and Erlend Øye, 2009]

It was a long route to get to that song, a chain of unpredictable events, but what follows seems to be more counter intuitive. While she listened to that song something resonated that reveals an interesting

attachment: her past. The song helped her to re-signify a period of her life in which she was unsure about her own decisions and her resilience to cope with what life was presenting to her at University. She did not know the song when she was at University, which means that the song is not a repository for the memory, but an attachment to make sense of feelings, memories and situations at that time. The integration of this new song and band, means not only an adjustment in her tastes in general, but in the way she makes sense of her Musical Experience and the past; the new song re-tunes her memories. The process of re/tuning shows the quality of music as mediator, but also the impossibility of making a straightforward analysis of memories or life situations. The Musical Experience acts in unexpected ways, and all the actors converging are in a constant adjustment every time a new experience happens.

The negotiation and adjustment of mediators is a fundamental element of the Musical Experience, and the structural conditions play an important role in it. When Adrian (26, student, Mexico City) was younger, he used to share music with a friend and his sister. Through that process he discovered much music but getting a new CD was difficult for him. As some other interviewees he had to get music as a gift, mainly during Christmas and birthdays. But this implies a long wait and a difficult decision process, one opportunity in each certain period of time having to choose from a sea of options interesting for him. He dealt with this through counterfeit copies, that were cheap and accessible for him to discover new albums and have the opportunity to value them. This channel of distribution made it easier, but it was not perfect. As Straw (2009) notes, counterfeit copies reshape the consumption of music. In Adrian's case, as he lives away from the main musical market in Mexico City—*El Chopo*. Certainly, that was not the only way to get copied albums, almost every street market would have a stall or two selling music—nowadays, mostly movies. But as that is not a specialized place, only music that would prove popular would get there. For Adrian, that meant accessing to certain things from the catalogue he had, but fortunately for him, the vendor at the street market had his favourite band, the **Red Hot Chilli Peppers**. Money, access and successful artists

are still active agents of the Musical Experience through the process of re/tuning tastes, delivering specific forms of access even in alternative markets. That does not mean that the listener is totally constrained; the more engaged they are with musical practices the more possibilities to evade those limitations are available—like the fan who discovers different blogs on the Internet— but that means engaging in a different process of mobilizing mediations and assemblages, to tune them in different forms to create different attachments.

During this process of tuning different factors are playing an active role, and the outcome seems uncertain. Some of my interviewees admit that they were attracted by the aesthetic of post-punk towards the genre; the possibility of swearing while listening to the Mexican rock band **Molotov**; the sensation of belonging while learning the steps of a new club dance song; the adoption of an outsider perspective in the Mexican punk scene; or just the rejection of hip-hop when balancing its discourses about power, violence and women. The process of re/tuning means that nothing is stable and every new introduction will change all the other actors and the Musical Experience in general. Re/tuning is the product of a threshold moment, in which the listener discovers something new to integrate, that will transform the Musical Experience; new elements act as dispositions and some stablished dispositions might be left behind. The attachments will change through this process because it means to change the Musical Experience, we learn new things, we adjust some elements to make sense of them and then we carry on with new frameworks: that is the importance of understanding Re/Tuning. In the last instance the most transformed is the listener, and in the remaining sections of this chapter I will explore those transformations.

4. 3. Demanding the musical identity

So far, I have focused on the beginning of the Musical Experience as an attachment. There is a disposition that leads to a meaningful threshold moment that becomes a Musical Experience. The constant flow of Musical Experiences adjusts different sets of actors every time transforming the attachments to it. In the next two sections I would like

to take those conceptual elements and show the way they interact to negotiate a musical attachment. I want to explore these elements in action as they interact with social everyday life. To begin with that enterprise this section will develop the ways in which, as a constant process of negotiations, music becomes a constitutive part of the self (DeNora, 1999; Hagen and Lüders, 2016) not only at the most social-symbolic level (Larsen et al., 2010; Larsen et al., 2009) but also into a more intimate one (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2008). In terms of interviewees I will focus on the integration of new music to the individual catalogue, that at some level might re-define the Musical Experience for the listener.

While focusing on the music, the idea of the Musical Experience allows us to de-centre our attention from it, and to understand how other elements become part of the attachment. The liking of music might be related to memories and negotiations and—as the examples above show—there is not always a sense of taste or genre in them. Nevertheless, the notion of taste and genre are still part of the attachment as a social dimension of it.

> It wasn't much part of my life, but when I came to Uni that was one of the things that formed social groups, so when you are making friends you are always thinking about "what sort of music do you like" or "what live concerts have you been to", and I guess because I was spending more time on my own in my bedroom in halls at uni that's when I started to listen more. I guess because I needed that sense of company cause of the transition from home to university. (Sian, 24, Student, York)

> I can remember that at home there was music all the time, everywhere, at parties or at Sunday mornings. But it was not something that I were passionate about. It was when I came to secondary school, everybody was talking about music, but I did not had idea what they were talking about. At that point I started asking my parents to buy me records, I needed a topic of conversation. (Pablo, 31, Graphic Designer, Cancún)

Sian and Pablo give accounts of the standardization of the musical attachment, their experiences fitted into social terms, those of genre in which music becomes part of being someone in society. Music, in those terms, is not an aesthetic experience, but a way of being in the world, a way to know and be known. In order to fit that idea, they need to be integrated in certain forms of practices: to take decisions; to

discriminate; to buy records. As David Hesmondhalgh explains (2013, pp. 48-52), this is beyond the sense of distinction as analysed by Bourdieu (1979), but a form of competitive individualism, in which listeners are challenged to define themselves in terms of emotional sensitivity and hedonistic pleasure. He argues that this is a modern demand as a marker of superiority. In the cases exemplified above, there is also an enclosed demand to be accountable and defined to get access to specific groups (Nowak, 2016a, p. 121). In both cases, there is a sensation of demanding to participate, that led to an active reflection on what they found in music, although with different levels of engagement, as the following extract from Elisa illustrates:

> [At secondary school] Many people around me had very defined tastes in music and I did not even know what to answer when someone would ask me what music do I like. So I had to explore by myself and look for things that I would like. How can I introduce myself with people if I don't have a music that represents me? (Elisa, 28, Journalist, Mexico City)

Elisa shows a conscious version of the process of re/tuning. Her need is not about distinction, but about making her own self. When talking about fashion, Simmel recognizes the importance of imitation as an interplay in which the individual joins the social group and develops a creative way of thinking, from freedom and authenticity (Simmel, 1957). The music is not only an adjustment of the individual to the social, but the outcome of adjusting different elements of their surrounding in the process of developing an authentic self (Woodward and Emmison, 2001, p. 299). It is then, as in the examples above a process of re/tuning and definition of dispositions, while at the same time there is musical exploration. Hence, the Musical Experience becomes a point of entrance to identity work; a musical identity.

In considering this relationship between music and social identity work, music happens to also be the source of negative experience, such as shame and embarrassment. In specific contexts—that I will show as adjustable— some preferences can become problematic or uninteresting:

There are some friends that know a lot about music, they are experts. Sometimes being with them causes me…. I don't know how to say it… I feel myself small, I feel embarrassed of saying that I like **Britney Spears**, or two or three *regaetton* songs. But I also have some non-pop tastes that are not quite popular, like *bossanova*. Right now I have learned to admit my tastes and if I am with a music lover I let them recommend me things that they believe I can enjoy. I will have moments for my own music, and if I don't like the recommended music it is also OK. (Pamela, 28, Publicist, Mexico City)

The negotiation is quite mobile, not knowing about music, or liking specific music could be seen as a source of shame in very specific contexts, while in others it is regarded as an opportunity for getting new knowledge. What is accepted from others is also flexible depending on other dispositions. What is at stake is not what they recommend, but how they are regarded by Pamela. Some people know her well and can match that with her music tastes, making enjoyable recommendations. She also separates what she calls her 'own music' that might go into personal spaces. Through that process she discovered one of her favourite artists, **El Cigala**, a flamenco gypsy singer that also incorporates of Cuban son to his music. The tension between the self and the social is resolved by selecting recommendations, but also selecting places for her different listening. She values the others through that process while expanding her own Musical Experience.

The Musical Experience is not limited to how we relate to music, but how we relate to each other through the music. Music becomes an important element to select and classify—for good or bad— the self and others. The identity then, is not solid, but also flexible and adaptable to different consumption setting. The Musical Experience shapes identity, and it is sensible to the social world as well as the strategies that the listener uses to engage with it. It is a process of valuation (Hennion, 2017b; Muniesa, 2011; Varriale, 2015), not only about the music, but also the self and what is at stake every encounter and every new incorporation to the catalogue. In those terms, it shows that music can be understood not only in terms of the self, but also as a mediator of

social attachments. I will expand on the details of these ideas in the following sections.

4. 3. 1. The Musical Experience as social mediator

Shaping the musical identity is part of the Musical Experience and as such, it is composed by elements beyond the music itself or the social elements of it. Devices and places also play an important role in defining the attachments between the listener and the music, as well as the listener's identity. In the last section I showed the relationship between society, music and identity, and how the set dispositions for each other. In this section, I want to invert the focus on that same relationship, by attending to how the Musical Experience is a mediator of social life. In that sense, this will again rely on the idea of re/tuning, as a way to make sense of new negotiations that happen through that process.

Rosa (60) is a marketing manager that brings her past to her musical present in different moments. Her house is full of musical devices and a fairly good collection of records with wide range of tastes. Interestedly, during our encounter she only listens from one device at home, a TV with satellite radio. She comes from a very peculiar family that she describes as '*bohemian;*' in her words they were pretty conservative but with an intellectual vein that brought artists from different disciplines to have parties with her father for days or weeks. At those parties, music played a very important role, particularly tangos and certain form of '*bolero*.' In the 60s she got into the emergent music and challenging ideas that came with it, but that meant a problem at home— among other things her father hated **The Beatles**. She had to leave her house in order to get freedom to express her tastes and identity in a less restrictive environment.

> V: That is when you started collecting?
> R: Well, in that broad young group [of new friends] I was the only one living by myself. When Fridays came, all the parties happened at my place. I had a good sound equipment, with radio, tapes, turntable and an equalizer, all with fairly good big speakers. That why the parties always happened there. We would usually end up dancing, smoking weed, and with a mess of records around the floor. We used to listen to it one after another and talk about it. That motivated me also to be in the constant

search for new music, because showing new stuff was part of the whole event. (Rosa, 60, Marketing Strategist, Puebla)

When she moved out she was just 18, and invested her first wages in devices and records. At the same time, her music became a form of identity that was reinforced by those devices and spaces, transforming her place into a party quarter. By hosting those parties, she started enjoying the full experience of discovering new music and becoming the centre of those shared Musical Experiences. Her account shows how the sound system, the house and a specific cultural context shaped her as a collector. In order to make the music—and all its accompaniments—circulate, she has to enrol mediators of different nature, but then, as a mediator, she also acquires new agency and identities. It is the encounter of those elements that mediates her social experience and her own identity.

The format takes part in the assembled listener identity. According to Jonathan Sterne—in his proposal of a format theory—, the format is not only the containers, but the network of formations around it and the specific conditions that allow their reception (Sterne, 2012, pp. 9-11). Following Lisa Gitelman (2006, p. 7), this understanding requires us to analyse further beyond the device, but also specific moments in time, like within the concept of the Musical Experience that I am proposing here. In the case of Rosa, this means including a sense of cultural moment, but also her own personal moment and transition. The format changes over time and the change will also mean a process of redistribution of listeners' identities.

Paulina (28) illustrates this with a vignette of a technological change moment, the transition from CDs to iPod. That shift not only changed the identity of some of her friends but also the dynamic of listening in her group.

> I have a friend, Paco, that was known for showing us stuff all the time, he had lots of music and came to parties with lots of recordings, he used to be the one in charge of the music. But suddenly, the iPod became a thing in our lives. At that moment it was a luxury, imported from the United States, but it became a communal thing, everybody put something little by little in it, everything counts. Later, all of us got one, so it became a competition, who had more songs. We used to circulate them, borrowed each other's iPod for a couple of months, just to know what the other one had in it. (Paulina, 28, NGO employee, Mexico City)

The album and its demands were part of a specialist, an expert. I do not want to miss the intervention of class here. They live in a middle-class neighbourhood in Mexico City, and the *iPod*—as the albums some time before— is a good marker of that status. In a specific moment the *iPod* was only accessible for those who were able to spend a good amount of money on it and travel to the USA. In that context, with all her social circle able to digitize music, the music centre became distributed. The format made them change their role from passive receivers to active sharers. Later, with only one iPod for the group it would become a form of exchange, to show competence and taste by displaying their personal differences, creating bonds through those differences. But this changed once the penetration of the iPod became more significant within the country and all of them were able to get one. They used to get together to share and talk about music, but the real deal was competing to see who gets more music in their iPods, particularly full albums instead of songs. That practice appeared for some other interviewees; it was a good way for discovering new music. The friendship acted as disposition and the opportunity to listen together or discuss the music would become the threshold moment that would change their Musical Experience; to listening to a new genre or a new band. The possibility of fast downloading, alongside with the increased storage opened the possibility of hoarding files, that also became a form of experimenting, gaining recognition and exchange. The expertise got redistributed but the role of the social and cultural context still remains relevant.

If the Musical Experience operates as a mediator of the social and the social of the identity not all those mediations are straightforward. Those mediations are, metaphorically, in a clash of forces, and it is that clash that makes the process of re/tuning interesting. In other words, to

follow the series of attachments that lead the listener to a specific practice. The following quote from Chispa is rich in that sense:

> My father used to filter a lot, making me picky. I have a friend, who was not a friend at that moment because I did not listen to the same music as the rest, I was the weirdo of the group. We had our **New Kids on the Block** record or things like that, but not much. Then we discovered that we had some tastes in common like **U2** and we were the only two listening to that. The rest of the group did not want to listen to our music, but we did not care. (Chispa, 40, visual artist and cultural promoter, Puebla)

Chispa first was filtered by her father—a constrained agency for the listener—, while at the same time she was influenced by the cultural mainstream at the moment and her social context. In this case she decided to accept her father's influence, positioning herself as an outlier in her context. But is it precisely that status that acted as disposition for her new friendship, based not only on what they listened to, but also on how the rest of the groups classified them. I would like to insist here, that it was not only the music, as she narrates how she met her friend she talks a lot about the *walkman* with a **U2** tape, the t-shirt and an attitude towards others, the music is never just music. In her case, records and *walkmans* acted as catalysts of those attachments, but also the way in which her father used to relate with her, showing again an encounter between the past, the material and the present.

Re/tuning is not a unique feature of music, it is certainly similar to what we do with other areas of life, like identity through different forms of consumption (Bijker and Bijsterveld, 2000; Bottero, 2015; Craig, 2011; Warde, 1994). But my findings point in a slightly different direction. Nowadays, the Musical Experience as mediators of the social allow the listener to open their social circles, their interest and the possibilities. In other words, the identity that seems to appear does not intend to develop a coherent identity, but a multiple one. This quality seems to be enhanced by the digital music commodity, where listening was beyond a determined number of objects (like records) or places (I.e. specific homes). Adrian, a 26 years old student, explains how he got to a

point in which music became much more open for him to expand the social experience:

> High school was for me the moment when music exchange became important, it is like the base of my listening today. The girls at school would listen to pop or electronic music. My group would be listening to rock or metal all the time. It was difficult to find a common point. Later, one of my friends and me took the role of getting those two groups together, because he was really popular with girls. We began to organise parties where we put music for one group on for a while, then for the other, we even asked each one what would they like to listen to. Early parties were quite unbalanced, but we really liked it. For the following ones we had learnt how to balance the changes. At the end the rock group conceded, and it was more pop, because at the same time it was funnier. We used to get into rock when everybody was drunk or tired of dancing, but we played rock in both languages, English and Spanish, so everybody could have their share of music. (Adrian, 26, student, Mexico City)

Through this activity his musical horizon got expanded and he learnt to enjoy pop music. He learnt how to negotiate with that music and how to make the most of a happening in order to make someone else happy. One of David Hesmondhalgh's points in his defence of music is the possibility of collective flourishing through music by transcending social differences (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 130); at the same time he is critical of understanding it just as a powerful situated activity (p. 117). Working through this argument Nancy Weiss Hanrahan argues that streaming services, their affordances and practices do not allow it, creating a highly individualized listening that follows from the notion of control that I explored in an earlier chapter (Hanrahan, 2018, p. 298). Adrian's quote allows me to situate my argument more in the middle, it might not be an aesthetic experience at its political dimensions, but at the same time it is not a situated activity or an individualistic practice, it seems to be a way of opening for others. What the analysis that I am proposing adds to the discussion in this sense, is the attention to the disposition, that Hesmondhalgh and Hanrahan seem to overlook; the listener is interested in sharing with others and music not only catalyses those interactions but promotes them and shapes them. This is a good example of how the music mediates the social as well as it is mediated by it. The outcome relies in a middle point between the individual and the social, creating a new value for the Musical Experience, a new way of

making it matter, a Musical Experience to affectively bond with others by transforming ourselves.

What this section shows is the possibility of creating social bonds through the Musical Experience. This is again a circular process, but it is analytically important for this thesis to separate them and flesh them out one by one. The Musical Experience relies on contexts and possibilities of access, it is certainly mediated by constrained agencies, while at the same time subjected to the action of creative actors that will seek their own purposes. With this addition the argument around the dispositions and threshold moments are enriched, as it allows the inclusion of social elements and the way in which individualities are shared. The social dimension of those moments of sharing and discovery can produce new dispositions and attachments. Through this sub-chapter I also presented the concept of re/tuning as a useful metaphor to follow those negotiations and to observe what is being transformed in everyday life through the Musical Experience; what attachments are prioritized and which ones are left behind. In that sense in these last sections I have explore the role of the notion of identity as elements of those negotiations. In the following sections I will show more in detail the individual and intimate dimensions of these processes and how they lead to specific forms of the Musical Experience.

4. 4. Musical identity and distributed agency

Re/tuning is a decision-making moment, a valuating and choosing what elements will be prioritized or take the lead. It demands a lot from the listener, on the one hand it is the socio material constraints and possibilities, on the other, there is myriad of intersections with different dimensions of the identity, the biography and the immediate context. It is a process of making attachments from other attachments. Integrating new music to our own catalogue it is the result of those negotiations, as it sets up new dispositions and leaves the listener open for new threshold moments. For Nowak (2016d, pp. 142-144), to understand the process of discovery, it is required to pay attention to access to content as well as the affective responses to it. In my argument those affective

responses are not only led by the music or the listener, but by other affective dispositions, like relationships with others, or the way we perceive others and ourselves. In this section, following the idea of re/tuning, I will set up the focus on the idea of discovery as mediated by identity and interpersonal relationships.

The next excerpt is from Karla, 29, who values her access to specific music based on what kind of relationship she has with the person who is making the recommendation. Her trust in her friend is important for paying attention to music—the disposition that lead to the threshold moment is socially mediated— that even by language is inaccessible for her:

> I have a friend who can speak German, and I do not understand a word of it. But she recommended me some things and she is my friend, so had to trust her. She said, "not **Rammstein**, everybody knows them, so that one does not count". She gave me 3 bands, that I liked a lot, never heard of them before but it worked fine, I loved them and downloaded the whole discography. Now, if she recommends me anything I would totally trusted, even if it is not in German, because it worked the first time. (Karla, 29, Journalist, Puebla)

As seen in the beginning of the chapter, the relationship acts as disposition. She decides to trust her for then re/tuning, not only her catalogue but also the attention she pays to her in the future. Music is a way of knowing each other, but also to revise that knowledge. There is also a sense of challenge, of taking the other person into a differential status, to something that not everybody knows. However, the salient element for the purposes of this section is that also the relationship between them got transformed. She became her main musical recommendations entry, for any kind of music. The process of re/tuning is also about our relationship with others. In some cases, like the following one with Adal, there is an interest that transforms our attachments for a longer time:

> For example, banda music. I used to hate it. I was one of those who think that it is low class music. But my ex-girlfriend used to listen to banda music all the time, and today I can listen to any banda at hand. I started listening to banda because of her, to learn the songs and to have something to talk about with her. But now I like it, I do not have any problems with banda. (Adal, 21, student, Cholula)

This is a process of circulation in which music travels mediating different elements of the Musical Experience, but this is only made possible through the meanings behind the music, the dispositions that appear on the way. It is those interests that make the music more powerful than the rest of the soundscape, making the encounter significant. In Adal's case, the relationship with her girlfriend clashed with the overall meaning and concept that he had about that genre, but his interest in her acted as disposition to experiment the new Musical Experience. To reinforce the idea of re/tuning, it is interesting to note that he did not become a fan of *banda*, but according to his own dispositions he selected some elements of it that act in accordance with his interests. It is worthwhile to insist that, it is never the music by itself, the culture, the media or the devices, but a convergent assemblage that makes music meaningful. As we have seen, music gets affective power from the elements outside its own material form, which can also include the past.

> V: How did you shared with your boyfriend who gave you the *Discman*?
> A: He gave it to me because I liked it. He had his own *Discman*, so it was more about having the chance to explore my own preferences and to listen to more music. I can remember him listening to a lot of **Mecano**. I discover them through him. His parents are younger than my aunt [that raised her], hence we listened a lot of **Mecano, Pimpinela, Pandora** and things that are not as old as **Javier Solis**, that is what my aunt listens to. Thus, I knew different generations through my social circles, we used to get influences from everybody, and I enjoyed to know different genres and songs. (Cinthia, 26, journalist, Mexico City).

In order to expand the idea of mediations, Georgina Born (2005) argues that creative agency is distributed in time, which means that should be approached historically in order to follow the ontology that it adopts in a specific situation. In other words, those mediations are always a result of mediations in time, that might allow for the study of the way in which music materialize identities while transforming them (Born, 2011). Cinthia shows how **Mecano** in her catalogue is the sum up of attachments that became new dispositions that allowed her to get to **Pimpinela.** In other words, the interest that got her into that music can be traced back to the cultural context of a family that is not her, and that

she got already interpreted in a very specific form through a process of mediations and re/tunings.

To summarize, this section explores the relationship between discovery, identity and different forms of disposition. Behind it, rests that idea of the Musical Experience and its power, that is not acquired through a single element but as a form of distributed agency. This means that the attachment to music and its active role in life cannot be traced to one actor, but the ways in which they were gathered through affects, time and space. The integration of new music to one's catalogue is the result of the negotiation of dispositions and agencies that will transform our Musical Experience and the way we relate that experience with others. But there is one more facet of this idea to explore, the way in which more intimate relations are part of those tuning processes, and in the next section I am going to flesh it out with more detail.

4. 4. 1. Intimate attachments

A personal relationship as disposition allows for a threshold moment, and new dispositions are created as well as new attachments between listeners. This, in a very succinct form is the Musical Experience as mediator of interpersonal relations. But in my data, the Musical Experience is also a form of intimacy, not only affect. The listeners that participated in this thesis—as also does the person who is reading this—provided me with a number of accounts of special songs that relate with a significant other: a wedding song: the song in the background when a couple met; the band that was playing at a gig that brought to great friends together. My intention with this section is to explore those ideas of intimacy not only as a way to get new music or to expand the catalogue, but as a way to forge attachments with the music, its devices and those special others.

I need to clarify here that this is about forms of shared Musical Experiences, which means one of the listeners might have already

developed a relationship with the music they are sharing but apparently it can lead to new shared experiences and memories.

> I had a very intense relationship, and we used to dedicate songs each other. [He was living in a different city] […]. One morning I got a text message with an excerpt from **Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds**, and I loved that, because it was not the typical **Beatles** song that everybody dedicated to me because of my name. It was boring. […] Our relationship was based on dedicating songs constantly. It was not an epistolary relationship, but musical. That relationship marked me a lot. With my actual boyfriend who lives in England we are dedicating songs each other constantly. He is not as musical as I am, but is something that I feel to do, it is a very important language for me: Maybe I do not have the words, but these artists share what I feel and I can pass that on to my beloved one. (Cinthia, 25, Journalist, Mexico City)

Cinthia presents the exchange of music as an affective experience by itself, a specific form of communication. It is interesting to note that her partner at the time became salient for her because she compared him through what others used to dedicate her. She replaces dimensions from the face-to-face relationship with meanings conveyed in specific songs. Her account even denotes a certain degree of intimacy with the artist. There is a new Musical Experience appearing, one that involves affect, meanings and a secretly shared identity. She is also transformed by this experience, as she found out that it was a more effective way of communicating her feelings and repeated the experience in further relationships.

This is an expression of love for the other and the music. Love in a sense that enhances experience with others (Hesmondhalgh, 2013), through coded meanings and shared intimacies, that does not always have to do with the lyrics as in the example of **Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds**. It is also an expression of love in the terms that Claudio Benzecry (2011, p. 183) use, as precognition, recognition, socialization, moral obligations and the erection of boundaries around our object—and person— of affection. A continuous process that enhances the Musical Experience with others, through others, and for the self. These definitions of love, when applied to the musical object, will become relevant further below—in chapter 6, when I discuss the protection of the object—while the focus is the process of intimacy that the Musical

Experience reveals through that love, the attachment of appropriating the song and transforming a cultural product into an intimate object.

In another part of her interview, Cinthia recalls another relationship, with a person that was working in Mexico for a company from India. A temporary placement. When he left, he gave her his *iPod* as a gift—and important device for him as traveller. That *iPod* was a gift from his boss in London and worked as an accompaniment through some of his work-trips. It was filled with different music, and he thought that it would be a good form of 'making the relationship to transcend, to create a bond, a way of not forgetting each other.' Through that device she discovered some new music—her catalogue got expanded though the disposition of love. That device and its catalogue became a compilation of memories of that boyfriend once he left the country. Affect reshapes the Musical Experience, but it also allows the Musical Experience to transform other dimensions of life. Nevertheless, affect by itself is not capable of creating this attachment, it requires meanings, devices, sounds, devices histories to be mobilised, just like the process of mediations in history that Georgina Born (2005) presents based on Alfred Gell.

In sharing music, the affect can act as a disposition to make some music valuable. Chispa (40) tells me how she used to create mixtapes for her friends.

> It was such an accomplishment to make a good tape, you had to fit the sides of 60 minutes and if you did not it was not complete, hence you had to make it again. Once you made that and it had sense altogether it was a good tape, one that could be meaningful. It was a beautiful detail to gift, a great piece of work that you might complement with stickers or drawing. It was a way to send coded messages, you could give those to your crush or a couple of good friends about how you felt at a specific moment. [...] Nowadays I have a group of friends with a project called *misstapes* which is basically doing the same process in *Audacity* and sharing it through *Mixcloud.* (Chispa, 40, Queer, visual artist and cultural promoter, Puebla)

The affordances of the tape involved extra-musical elements to make music valuable. They should be carefully selected from a determined catalogue, that balances what the sharer has at hand and what they think the other person will find interesting (Fenby-Hulse, 2016). Also, there is a message, something that the other person should

get out of it, this could be a discursive element—like love or friendship. It cannot be simply the presentation of new music as it encloses the way that the gift-giver perceives the receiver. Moreover, the affordances of the tape demanded a careful crafting, to make the most of each side, measuring the length of the songs to fill the 30 minutes. Finally, Chispa created covers for them, with drawings and the list of songs to reinforce the coded message. Some younger interviewees—as well as I—used to do something similar with CD-Rs. In both cases, the meaning of the music is not only the songs, but the whole relationship between two or more persons embodied in a piece that took some work and time to create. That assemblage-object will transform the shared Musical Experience for both listeners.

Nowadays, Chispa works eventually as a DJ. Even when she is not totally happy with the features of streaming services, she uses them to animate parties that she usually holds with her friend:

> Sometimes I go with a friend to a party or something and I am DJ'ing for the party and he ask me "please put my playlist!" Some others start asking me for specific playlist, because they know what I have, bur this friend, as some others, has his own playlist to get crazy. I really like that interaction, it is a channel with the guys. (Chispa, 40, Queer, visual artist and cultural promoter, Puebla)

Chispa shows affection for her friends through the process of selecting music that she knows they like. They even expect how each person is represented in each playlist. It is this knowledge that enhances the shared Musical Experience, but also the affective bond between them. Music becomes a form of caring. The relationship is so intimate, that some friends can ask her to play someone else's playlist even when that person is not at the party. Music becomes the representation of the person, not only in the sense of memory (van Dijck, 2006), but also in the way the two persons know each other and can guess each other. There is no such thing as de-attachment.

Pamela, 28, used to have a very musical boyfriend, and they shared a good amount of music. Once they broke up, they eliminated each other

from any digital social networking site, besides the social features of *Spotify*:

> One day I notice that he was still in my friends list, but I decided to keep him there. Then, sometimes I can see what he is listening to, one song after another, and I can imagine perfectly 'he is doing this or this'. […] I see this and I can imagine 'he is with his parents or in a party with this person'. Even the other day I noticed that he was listening to something that he would never before, and I kept myself thinking: Why? What is going on? (Pamela, 28, Publicist, Mexico City)

Intimacy also works a place of freedom. As we have seen the listener is always negotiating with the social environment what it is acceptable and what is not in accordance to specific forms of identity. While an intimate relationship also allows the self to be expressed in a more transparent way. Marge is a 22 years old engineering student, who considers herself a person who cannot live without music in her surroundings, although she admits not knowing anything about it, and having preferences for the popular. She just wants music around her, but not to dig deeper into its meanings, knowledges and identities. In contrast to her boyfriend which is a rock musician and a fan of specific forms of rock and metal. She explains that one of the greatest things about their relationship is that they can share each other's music, 'even when I can get too much metal at a point'. At a more interesting level she admits that she selects her music based on who she is with: 'If I am with my boyfriend or my best friend, I can play whatever I want, **Queen** after electronic music followed by country. But when I am at a party, I have a list of "publicly acceptable songs", you can just put anything because you don't trust the people that much and can become embarrassing'. In this account, the possibility of expressing any form of musical identity works as a way of enhancing their attachments.

The Musical Experience is an assemblage of affects at different levels. In that sense, music stops being just music and becomes the memory or the flag of our relationship with someone else. The past section was about the acceptance of music from others, in this one the topic was the way that our relationships and emotions get embedded into specific *musics* and how our relationships are transformed by the Musical Experience. When getting attached to music, the interplay between

dispositions, threshold moments and tuning moments make it harder to disentangle the very object of music, its devices, ourselves and the others. In this chapter I explored how the Musical Experience can be understood as an intimate device that is circulated in different forms; this means that while we make the Musical Experience to circulate with others we are circulating a bit of ourselves. Intimacy plays an important role in this idea. In the next section I want to explore more the interplay of identities in less intimate settings and how the listener will move around different settings to adjust those non-intimacies.

4. 4. 2. The Plural Musical Identity

The research for this thesis has an intended focus on technology, as explained before, the research started as an attempt to grasp technological change and music in everyday life. I explained above the relationship between devices and practices, or how we relate with music; it produces a specific attachment if we have to buy an album and wait for it until we can get home, and then save money for a month for the next one. Through this chapter, I have shown some relationship between those relations and the self, either social and intimate with the help of key moments that I have labelled as disposition, threshold and re/tuning. In this section, I will explore the relationship between music consumption and the strategies of the individual takes to present the self and create different levels of intimacy. As in the last section this discussion presents an alternative to the dialogue between Helsmondhalgh (2013, p. 130) and Nancy Weiss Hanrahan (2018, p. 298) about the aesthetic experience and the possibilities of listening to others, as I present an open listener who acts strategically.

A common trope in my data is the separation between private and a public consumption. When I started finding this during the analysis, I was convinced that was about the easiness of streaming services and the possibility of having much music all the time (Hesmondhalgh and Meier, 2018). But according to some listeners—particularly those who had experience with other formats— there have always been separations between what is possible to listen to within an intimate context and more

familiar environments. The change with digital consumption seems to be that it allows for a more experimental listening, the listener does not need to limit their consumption to what they know they like; a few clicks and they can be listening and enjoying a different genre. Peterson has argued that omnivorous taste is a performance of a classed version of knowledge (Lizardo and Skiles, 2013; Peterson, 2005; Peterson and Kern, 1996), but the listeners are also allowing themselves to perform those preferences in an intimate context, which makes the case what Bernard Lahire (2008) conceptualizes as plural actor. In this concept there is first a dissonant consumer—which means that there is an awareness between the legitimate and the illegitimate (Hanquinet, 2016) to then become plural (Lahire, 2017; Prior, 2014; Trizzulla et al., 2016). Lahire's invitation is to change the theoretical focus to explore the intra-individual variation and the practices deployed in each occasion. This has a strong relationship with the multiplicity of musical sources, and the way in which musical tastes are learnt through the life course. The distinctive feature here is that there is no need to dismiss any music for good, some tastes can always be followed at some point.

> I think there is nothing I dislike at all. To set and example, I don't like **Kabah**, their music is formulaic for me, but if you play *La Calle de las Sirenas* at least I know the whole lyrics. It has also to do with video games in my case, like in Guitar Hero, there might be songs that I don't quite enjoy, but I have to go through them. (Saúl, 31, Publicist, Mexico City)

> I ended up adapting myself to everyone else's genres, my father used to listen to **Creedence**, **The Doors**, **The Animals**… My mother was more into *cumbia* and ballads, like *Los Ángeles Negros*, *Los Terricolas, los Yonics*. My sister is much more into Electronic and Dance Music, it is one of the genres I remember the most, and my brother was in broader preferences, pop at the beginning and then rock. I adapted from everyone, and now I more into rock, but I enjoy everything. (Adrian, 26, Student, Mexico City)

As examples of the focus of the chapter, the two accounts above show the interplay between dispositions and moments that produces re/tunings, and the multiple places from where music appears. None of the attachments created through those processes is dismissed, they remain as elements that link the listener to specific other actors, but also to shape a listener who is never formed enough. In some cases there is a

notion of where those genres belong to in legitimacy terms, but in many cases there is not. Listeners just know what they enjoy and can perform.

Saúl's account also points toward different sources and levels of interest, in his case Guitar Hero. During the interviews many of the listeners referred me to the use of public playlists from other users or media companies, lists that are made under different concepts like 'Cold Weather', 'Workout', 'Waking up,' and many more. Those playlists are curated from different sources in terms of genre and artists and listeners usually jump constantly from one to another in order to coordinate their everyday activities, enhancing again the exposure to different kinds of music. Evidently, the labelling process that those playlists do is also important in the acceptance of those new *musics* as disposition. All those elements lead to a broad consumption that the listener tends to classify, not only in knowledge, but also in practice. All the elements presented are part of the experience and play a role in the attachment process but there is also more to explore in the way in which those elements interact to display different identities.

Alejandra (31) works as digital media editor in an NGO. She considers herself an intense music lover, but music is also a way to share something with her friends. When she was at high school she used to listen to **Top 40 pop**, until one of her best friends introduced her to ***Nueva Trova*** a genre born after the Cuban Revolution, with lyrics not only deeply rooted in politics and revolution, but also in an attempt to escape easy listening music developing complex poetry and challenging metaphors. When she listened to it for the first time she was really attentive, because her friend had told her in many ways that this kind of music was really impressive. She listened to ***Ojalá*** by **Silvio Rodríguez** and was surprised by the sensation of nostalgic rage in the song, even when the voice was not quite nice. She listened to other singers with her friend, but she returned to this one constantly. In Mexico there was — around that time— an important rediscovery of *trova,* with some radio stations and many places to listen to it with amateur musicians. It was easy for her to get more and know more about it. She got into the political views of that music, that matched perfectly —while creating— her views of the world: 'With trova, we were sure that we could change

the world and everything' (Alejandra, 31, Social Media Editor, Mexico City).

She also makes an important clarification, as getting into this new music does not mean to get rid of all her favourite music from the past. Comparing **Backstreet Boys** with **Fernando Delgadillo** was impossible because there was deepness, complexity and challenge in the second, while memories and cheerful moments in the first one. Both of them were good enough for her, even when she recognises that in the *trova* world there is a constant segregation of any commercial music. At the same time, we can see this new experience changing her relationship with her music from the past: 'I had to separate them in different sets. Each thing had to have its own category and its own uses. This song is for the club, this is for enjoyment and this one is going to the bin.' Music coded as sound in the background that allow the listener to switch on and off in terms of attention, makes the listener to be exposed to a constant flow of music from different origins and genres, as said above, the listener is not constrained by records, but also for labels or even radio stations catalogues. In that sense I found that young listeners are less able to set themselves within a genre or sound of preference, they seem to be able to move among different settings to choose their music. As shown a couple of times in different sections, that does not mean that there are not boundaries, in the cases I had access to, those boundaries are set in negative terms, like in the case of *Banda* and *Regaeton.*

The salient feature of this phenomena is the process of creating different musical identities in order to have music to share in every setting. In many of the cases listeners perform different tastes in different social settings. This also leads to a private preference, one that is not accepted or that the listener does not wish to share with the rest of the world. Paulina and Marge explain the process of deciding upon this:

> Sometimes I am jealous with my personal preferences. I like funk a lot, and sounds alike, but I know that for people it might be upsetting, it saturates their ear, then I keep it for myself. I am jealous, and keep it stored for my private life. (Paulina, 30, NGO Employee, Mexico City).

V: How do you choose what to listen to with that broad musical knowledge that you have?
M: It depends on who I am with. If I am with my best friend, or even my boyfriend, I can play whatever is in my phone, even electronic music, Queen or country, some weird mixes. But when I have a party, or listen with specific people I have to choose from what I know can be accepted there, you can't just play anything if you don't trust them that much. (Marge, 22, Student, Cholula)

As seen in the chapter, there is a recognition that music is intimately entangled with identity, and as such it demands to be carefully crafted to fit the expectations and impressions for each specific person. For many the process of listening with others is enriching, not only in terms of musical catalogue, but in enabling them to act in differentiated social settings without limitations, even when the decision process for each catalogue is built upon limitations. This is a way of managing identities that allow them to show different things about themselves, but also show different things about how they know the rest of their group, or to negotiate what they can do with their own preferences.

V: Do you like to recommend music?
R: Normally, I would get recommended music from someone else, once I listen to it and identify which one I like the most then I make recommendations to others. Normally, my recommendations are good for the people, they like them. Once I have that compilation, I try to recommend to the others according to the personality they have, like with a gift, if someone likes football, I will give them football things. (Elisa,28, Journalist, Mexico City).

In the case of Elisa, listening together and recommending music is something that has to do with the way she knows the other person. She has lists with the music she shares and learns from the others in order to share appropriate music for each case. But as with many other cases, she tells me that there is music that she prefers to keep for herself, for different reasons there are levels of intimacy that make them keep specific things in a private dimension of life. This has also an intimate dimension when people decide on what level of knowledge is required to share specific musical preferences and how that changes through the time. Some listeners admit to following people they know in musical

platforms, like *Spotify*, and be able to guess the changes in their personal life through the music they are listening to.

The Musical Experience is a mediator of identities and intimacies; hence in the proliferation of experiences leading to a multiplicity of identities and intimacies, that does not cause disruption as it is a strategic movement from one place to another, and still the plural listener does not find the variation dissonant. Listeners decide on their listening practices by negotiating what they want to show of themselves to others, classifying levels of intimacy that can move as the interpersonal relationship changes. This is an active process that seems to be intensified by the catalogue and flexible form of control provided by digital devices and platforms. At the same time, circulation is made easy and the shared experience is perceived as less risky in the possibility of failing. Sharing identities and music is balanced between the public and the private, a distributed identity that does not belong to the simple dichotomy of the public and the private, but that displays multiple versions of them.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, I have been able to explore the ways in which musical attachments are formed and developed in intimate relationship with identity and context. It was made evident that there is not a single relationship between the listener and the musical content, but a contingent set of relations of different natures that sets listener's attention to the aesthetic object with specific expectations. The listening experience learnt through those specific forms seems to become part of future engagements and interpretations with music. This is the role of what I have called the threshold moment and disposition: to guide the Musical Experience in the future. The disposition is the condition of possibility in which the listener might want to pay attention to a specific new experience; while the threshold moment becomes that intense experience that will set new forms of consumption. Those two elements are constantly interacting and reshaping themselves through different moments in the lifecourse. That is, there is not only one, but many of

those elements in one listener's life, which makes the Musical Experience complex and multidimensional.

The process in which the Musical Experience gets layers is a negotiations and valuation in a multidimensional form. I called this a process of re/tuning attachments, as each of those elements change in relation with the others. In this moment of negotiations, the listener makes decisions on how to adopt and adapt the rest of their Musical Experience to integrate that new element. It is important to highlight that there is not a single form or type of actor leading this process, they can range from personal values, other musical sounds to social understandings of a genre. But as in the previous process the materials of the place and the devices play a role. This process is the negotiation that happens constantly to shape everyday music practices and experiences.

Through that process, music becomes part of the self and as such part of one's social identity. Music, as a cultural object, is imbued with social meanings and values, and as such becomes part of the assemblage that creates attachments to it. Through the chapter, it was possible to show that those negotiations are part of the Musical Experience as they shape what the listener understands as valuable and important. It is through those social elements and the affordances of the technical ones that the Musical Experience acquires new forms of agency that allow the listener to expand attachments to music. This also means that the Musical Experience is not only an intimate one, but also a social experience. The Musical Experience is composed by social elements but is also key for the social dimension of life at different levels. It helps to create social entanglements, and becomes a form of intimacy to, finally, allow the listener to choose what to display in each setting.

5 - Drilling the Musical Experience

The Musical Experience is a productive practice that generates attachments over time. As I have shown in the previous chapters those attachments are created through a process of interactions and negotiations among elements of different types, such as the devices, the music, the affective relationship of the listener or the level of intimacy with others. As in my concept of the Musical Experience—explained in 1.1.2—time plays a key role in the development of the attachment. Following from the available literature it is possible to argue that time is essential for practice, for learning to be affected (De Boise, 2014; Gallagher, 2016; Skanland, 2013), mobilized (Beer, 2012; Bull, 2005; García Quiñones, 2013; Watson and Drakeford-Allen, 2016) and control the experience (Hagen, 2016b; Morris and Powers, 2015; Nowak, 2016b; Prior, 2014) in order to make it repeatable. I will call this set of practices *Drilling the Musical Experience*.

For Michael Hutter and David Stark (2015, p. 3) valuation involves tasting and testing, and identities are made and transformed in that process. Nevertheless, testing and tasting is not enough to explore the attachment to music. I propose the concept of Drilling as a double-ended metaphor here. First, as a test, a repeated practice or rehearsal from which we learn the most efficient form of doing something—I think of something very common in Mexico: earthquake drills. In second place, the noun that becomes a word in English that refers to the rotating object to make holes or to reach places that are difficult to reach. The verb form is to make a hole onto something with the purpose, for example, to obtain oil or harmful shale gas. In both meanings, the metaphor accentuates an active and repetitive engagement, and through it an achievement. Coming back to the Musical Experience, the task of drilling is the repetition and test of specific music practices, in order to (1) get the most pleasurable or satisfactory experience, (2) get deeper into the meanings and affects of a specific experience in specific settings and, (3) gain control of the production and reproduction of those experiences. Drilling, as a tool for going deeper, as a repetition, but also

as a test through which the listener wants to make things more effective.[17]

Through this chapter I want to explore the ways that as a negotiation and assemblage of agencies, the drilling is developed and conditioned by socio-material mediations. In the first place, by using places, devices and practices as means to experiment with the Musical Experience. Second, the engagements with the Musical Experience through knowledges and discourses, that belong to the aesthetic, the social and the intimate. And third, as a process of learning to control and align the distinctive elements of the Musical Experience to make listening to music pleasurable and satisfactory. In this chapter, the constant is a process of negotiation like in the re/tuning case before, still with different aims: re/tuning refers to the attempt to align different dimensions of the experience to make it work in specific directions or with specific agencies; in the case of drilling the negotiation aims to enrich the Musical Experience, to get the most of the music and to set the affect into the specific situations that makes it more enjoyable. As in the rest of the thesis, the order that I am giving here does not suggest importance or sequential order, just the possibility of developing my argument.

5. 1. A room of one's own (Spaces)

Drilling is testing, learning and practicing the Musical Experience. To achieve it, the experience demands a set of conditions. The listener is in need for explorations of the Musical Experience, and—as seen in chapter 4— of the self. The philosopher Paula Sibilia (2008) explores the way in which the modern self has been transformed starting from the inner world, into a demand for the public gaze, the right to be seen to become a subject. She uses two different historical points of the self to make that transformation evident. In the modern era, the Big Brother phenomena, reality TV, *Facebook* and *YouTube* act as elements that not only bring the world to the interior, but transform intimacy into an

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[17] As said before, with the idea of attachments, this metaphor does not work as well in my own language, as they would imply 3 different words. Nevertheless, the English words, allows a more abstract idea in a single word.

spectacle. This is in opposition to Virginia Woolf's demand in her essay *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf, 1977), in which privacy is the possibility of exploring the inner world, and hence becoming a subject. My argument in this first set of sections is that, in order to explore the Musical Experience—and as a consequence the self— there is still a need for that room. But that room needs not be a specific four-walled space, it can just be a device, or the achievement of setting that allows the possibility of that experimentation and in-depth exploration of the Musical Experience.

5. 1. 1. The physical room

Let me begin with the most evident form of that room, the physical space. The room is a place in which the listener explores different dimensions of the self, one of those dimensions is the Musical Experience—at the same time the Musical Experience exploration will develop dimensions of the self. However, music is its mediators (Hennion, 2002; Hennion, 1997); the room itself would not be enough without devices that transform that room into an agent of the Musical Experience. Stuart (26) is a student in the UK; when young he was constantly exposed to music through his father, from **Prince** to Blues. While he was not uncomfortable with it, neither did he feel any particular interest in engaging more with music in an active from. Nevertheless, when he got his first personal stereo as a gift, he developed a new relationship both with the music and with his parents.

> I was 10 when my dad bought me a CD player, like a small stereo for Christmas. That was when I got my first personal music in my bedroom. Then I would listen to that for about 3 or 4 years, I would listen to music by myself in my bedroom. I would listen to different things than my parents as well, there was a stage in my teenage years when I did not want to listen to what they would listen to. I wanted other things. I would listen to **Metallica** or something like that, all in my bedroom. (Stuart, 26, Student, Sussex)

Through the small stereo system, the room—that has been his room since he remembers—gains new affordances and Stuart obtains forms of autonomy in his soundscape. It became a place for exploration and trying new cultural objects, that allowed him to distance himself from his parents. There is an expression of differentiation through age,

that is exploited through a new form of agency. The room, as an intimate place, allows the experimentation through music, and at the same time music becomes an element of identity drilling. The attachment becomes a composition between the possibility of exploring the self and expressing the self to others through gaining that control.

The *radio* with *CD* or *tape player*, the *Walkman*, the boom-box or the portable *CD* player are some of the most common responses the participants gave when talking about their first sense of having a private place to drill music; a new form of disposition and threshold moment that allows them to initiate from specific social circles. In there, it was possible for them to develop specific Musical Experiences, like listening attentively, repeat as many times as preferred and to engage other elements, like holding the CD or album booklet to appreciate the art or reading the lyrics while listening, creating a full sensory experience (Lepa et al., 2015; Pink, 2011; Wright, 2013); a multi-sensory listening. This is grounded through a series of interconnected affordances in the elements of the experience, like—for example— the format of the album, that makes changing the song more difficult and that gives the album a whole set of meanings and explorations.

The room of one's own acquires discursive properties beyond the realm of the listener-music relation. Elisa (28)—who we met at the beginning of Chapter 4—got a CD player for her room; like Stuart, she developed an interest in new things particular to those popular within her generation like modern pop music. At some point, a friend recommended a **Linkin Park** album, **Hybrid Theory**. She gave it a couple of listens in her room and highlighted two things, the voice of the singer, and the way in which loud sounds of the music were disliked by the people around, while for her, that music was a release of energy. She tried to understand and translate the lyrics through the Internet, she felt that all those components were matching with a moment of her life, she was 15. The room allowed her to intimate with the music, but also to make certain properties emerge from the music, like the sensation of challenging her mother when they had fights. She then would play **Linkin Park** at high volume 'and did fake singing, even when I did not even know the exact lyrics or the words had anything to do with my

problem' (Elisa, 28, journalist, Mexico City). She does not require lyrics that match with her situation or her feelings, the room becomes the performative separation between her and her mother.

Her story also makes visible that the sense of forming the intimate room is never separated from the social world, as the *iPod* is in the city (Beer, 2007; Bergh and DeNora, 2009; Bull, 2007; Nowak, 2016b; Prior, 2014). It is the world outside which raises the affordances of the silencing and privatizing sphere. This does not mean that a state of tension or neglect is the only driver of looking for a room of one's own, in the data there are other reasons, like having consideration for another's activities and preferences. But it shows the intimate mediations between private consumption and the social world.

The private space also shapes other forms of the Musical Experience, the experimentation is not only in music or emotions, but also practices. Karla (27) got a *Walkman* when young as a gift and might use it as a way to isolate herself and commit some time for the music. However, she did not have a big collection of music on tape or *CDs*: '[my parents] would buy me the blank tapes and they would buy tapes or CDs for themselves, but I would go and choose what I like of each of them to create my own mixes. When the CD came in, I still would have my *Walkman*, I could not afford a *Discman*, so I had to record from the CDs to have it with me. That is why I started making *mixtapes*' (Karla, 27, Journalist, Puebla). The room catalyses new practices and ways of understanding the Musical Experience, as something that could be less regulated and manageable. Hence, the room becomes a place to drill new practices and meanings of the Musical Experience, and the music itself.

In this section, I have revised the role of the room as a disposition to develop forms of drilling the Musical Experience. Yet, I have only focused in the room as a physical space and its interaction with other mediators to raise different assemblages, attachments and forms of agency. The room is a distributed place for experimentation, to commit time to the pleasure of music, gathering Musical Experiences and knowledges and to express the self in autonomy. Nevertheless, this is

not the only form of the room found in this research. In the following section I will analyse technologies as rooms for the Musical Experience.

5. 1. 2. Devices as rooms

Rooms are spaces for drilling the Musical Experience, the preference, the tuning. They are physical spaces interacting with other mediations to produce new agencies, new forms of experiencing, using and knowing the music. Nevertheless, my data provides elements to find those properties in other situations. It suggests those features could arise in different situations and in different mediations. In this section I will focus on the role of devices for those purposes. To extend the metaphor that I am proposing in this chapter, those devices, in specific interactions, can become rooms. Michael Bull studied the use of musical devices, the *Walkman* (2002; 2001) and the *iPod* (2007; 2006), as they allow for specific negotiations between the context and the listener, and transformations of the quotidian experience (Beer, 2007; 2010). It might be useful to distance this section from that approach, as my interest lies in those devices as metaphorical spaces and agentic assemblages, that will let the listener explore the Musical Experience with intimacy that will allow the formation of attachments, not as a way to experience and manage the urban everyday experience.

The threshold moment of many listeners was when they got their first private audio device. That audio device worked as mediation for negotiating spaces and practices, particularly in shared settings. As the physical room explored in the last section, those devices allowed them to explore, discover and curate their own Musical Experience. Those devices provided a sense of control over the soundscape: 'Before, in the car there was a dynamic in which, "one chooses a tape and everybody has to listen to it," not anymore. Now I had my own music with me, my own record and I was able to listen to whatever I wanted to' (Fer, 27, Sound producer, Puebla). The device transformed and redistributed the control over the musical choices and space, even working out tensions or discomfort among the family sharing, in this case, the car. The listener is

free to choose, with more opportunities to test and—in a more private environment—create different attention experiences.

Devices are not only aural isolating tools. Each specific way of experiencing music autonomously will lead the user to an engagement with its affordances and ways of experiencing music. The idea of technologies as rooms allows us to put under the focus the place of individual discoveries as drivers of the Musical Experience in specific settings. To illustrate this, I would like to use an example from the *Walkman* era:

> I discovered stereo sound and I was impressed. When I was at secondary school my dad gave me a Walkman, a golden model with *radio*. Then I learned to take it to my house's roof, in order to tune in to something, reception was better there. One day, I find a station that was playing **Alan Parsons**, I felt as if I had been struck by lightning when I listened to the game between the two sides. I went running to get that tape, and I listened to it hundreds of times, I got into Progressive Music, everything because of that moment. (Pedro, 48, Chemical Engineer, Puebla).

Pedro got into Progressive music through a process of search and experimentation with the limits of his devices. He did not have any tapes at the moment, so he had to listen with the radio feature of his *Walkman*. When he worked out how to tune better, he discovered new qualities of the sound. Again, he had to align the possibilities and limits of his surrounding and objects. The room-device allowed him to pay attention to the new thing that he was listening to, while also giving him a sense of achievement. Devices' features are sources of experimentation and new forms of experience, particularly the private ones, allowing full attention and a differentiated way of listening beyond the soundscape. In this case, the attachment started with a technical limitation, but shaped him, through drilling, into a progressive music lover.

The affordances deployed by each device and format, through specific practices, allow for specific forms of valuation. Many of the interviewees shared the excitement raised by the arrival of digital formats. They valued the format in two ways, by having more music available at almost any moment (Denegri-Knott, 2015, p. 399), and by arranging the music and ordering in personal ways (Kibby, 2009). The listener got rid of the album, as a collection of songs, with less effort

than with a mixtape; the album got new meanings, it was a restrictive format now (Cunningham, 2019). Downloading *MP3s* encouraged them to collect and complete collections that were not within their reach before, to contextualize their preference (e.g. full discographies), or to have an initial point for discovering new songs (e.g. by searching songs by genre). The music came to be part of a personal curated collection, with different stories or situations to explore (Kibby, 2009). Even those participants who declare a preference for whole albums admit that their most common practice is through playlists. For others, the common practice was to get the album and get rid of the songs they did not like, while some others like to keep those songs in a latent possibility of listening for the future. Digital music opened the possibility of creating personalized engagements to drill them and then create attachment for them, in what was considered a rigid context. Drilling, in this case, operates in different forms, from the possibility of exploring a genre; trying the rest of a band's discography or using the specific songs to engage in a creative way.

According to this then the device is this metaphorical room, not only because it offers private opportunities for listening, but also because of the personalised practises it affords for the listener. Digital music files are perceived as lacking monetary value, but as I have shown there are different forms of value emerging from different assembled experiences. The music becomes accessible, temporal and flexible. It also has enhanced possibilities for circulation without the listener feeling compelled to buy or retain, the perception of risk is lighter; a file can be deleted easily and recovered on a regular basis when required. On the other hand, there are fewer opportunities for interaction and listening together in that circulation. Files can be shared in a USB or through *Facebook* in high volumes, or even as a *permalink* to a video, but not as a face-to-face interaction. In any case, the Digital Music Commodity (Morris, 2015b) affords new ways of experimenting and drilling.

> V: What would you do after downloading songs?
> I would burn them in *CDs*, I had them already in digital then I needed to use them outside the computer. In the computer I would be able to create my own playlists with *Windows Player,* that I would use when I came home. I would burn some of those playlists in *CD* for specific

purposes. Sometimes I would like the whole album and that would mean that I would have to buy it, it was a guarantee that it would be worthy and that I might listen to it in full at certain moments. Like **The Killers**. In that case I also bought many TV shows soundtracks, like the OC. I would assume that if I liked the show and some of the songs I would like the whole soundtrack, and it was true, I would explore it and I would like it. That is how I discovered **The Killers**. (Karla, 27, Journalist, Cholula)

In the example above there is a set of convergences and assemblages that would make music valuable and worthy. With the lack of the album as a restrictive format the listener would be certain of what music to buy as an expression of taste. Meanwhile, the rest of the music would be relegated to playlist and home-made compilations. That is not making the music less valuable, as it would acquire new potentials and purposes that would not lead to actions like buying or attending to a live event. The second point that this quote illustrates is the sense of value as an assemblage that would emerge from other media, like TV. Again, from that interaction of sources the listener dares more willingly to try and explore things that are not always recommended by someone else. This also enriches the circulation and process of drilling, as something as diverse as a TV soundtrack, that leads to the discovery of new attachments, like the one that Karla expresses with **The Killers**.

As shown in this section, the room-device/format means that the listener gets new experiences, values and practices of the Musical Experience. This concept becomes helpful to explore ways in which devices go beyond private listening and the relationship with the surroundings, but with the way in which music is experienced, discovered, curated, shared and tested. In other words, the device acts as that room explained in the last section, a metaphorical room that lets new forms of agency appear, opening possibilities for drilling the Musical Experience and developing attachments. That does not diminish the structural features of technology, but it is actually in that interplay, between possibilities and limits that new possibilities emerge. Devices make available new forms of drilling, of exploring the Musical Experience, the self and the social. It is not only about privacy, but about forms of engaging with the musical object. In the following section I will explore more features of that metaphorical room as a space for drilling,

specifically as an ethereal assemblage that is resulting from those limitations and creative achievements.

5. 1. 3. Assembling and tuning the room

Having a room with the possibility for drilling is not as simple as getting a device or a space for it. The process in many cases seems to be more complicated and requires the active engagement of the listener. Antoine Hennion (2017a, p. 118) explains the attachment as a continually active process, an achievement in which the mediations are reshaped through investment and letting things happen. It is not a directed response, it is the sum of the intentionality and the possibility of something else, bigger, to emerge. The achievements that I am talking about are also negotiations between the limitations and will of the listeners to be able to let themselves go into the Musical Experience in its multiple forms. Working with the concept of the room in this sense, will let me explore and be attentive to structural limitations and strategic movements that shape the Musical Experience. In this section, the room is an achievement, tuning elements to get a desired experience and exploration. This exploration is one step away from the idea of bubble proposed by Michael Bull.

The room does not only come with the physical space or the device, it has to be enhanced by the practice of listening and setting ideal scenarios that might or might not become achievable. Pedro, that we met above, illustrates a dimension of this point with his *Walkman* and the discovery of **Alan Parson;** the radio signal is not available everywhere, going to the roof is a good option to make the possibilities of that new device emerge and explore new understanding of sound and music for him, even when that was not his main objective. Similarly, Chispa (40, arts teacher, Puebla) used to add an aluminium antenna to her radio and put some water on it to get enough quality to record tapes from the radio. Gaining agency and individuality in the Musical Experience set new challenges and practices, aligning or tuning the tension between those

elements as part of the process that adds new values and attachments to the Musical Experience.

Accordingly, the room is more than a place or an object. It is a specific set of arrangements in which the listening becomes successful and the listener can experiment with new musical meanings:

> I remember being 11 maybe, and saved pocket money and birthday gifts. We were in a Co-Op, while visiting my *gran*. I noticed that they had a CD and tape player combination thing, with speakers. It was half-priced so it was like 100 pounds or something. I would have been looking for one like this but it was expensive. I bought that one when I was 11 and it broke when I was like 22. That was where I started listening to music by myself, I mean, loud-*ish* music, because I had a *Discman* before that. (Edward, 28, teacher, Leeds)

> When my father bought a new sound system, I inherited the old one. It was a good system. It was a fairly old *Kenwood*, made of wood and aluminium, it had a good sound with a couple of speakers that my dad had made by himself when learnt electronics. I also had a small cassette player that I would connect to that system with the headphones output to the auxiliary input on that *Kenwood* for listening to tapes. In a specific moment, that player would have been changed for a *Discman*. That was my setting. The only valuable thing was the *Kenwood*, everything else was connected through the auxiliary input. (Raul, 36, graphic designer, Cancún)

The possibility of drilling depends on actively making something happen. The room is the result of the tuning—in the sense of Pickering's Mangle of Practice (1995, p. 14; 1993, p. 564)—or the management of elements of different types to create the appropriate tools for managing the experience. It is at the core of the process of valuation, not only as it requires work, but as it allows the listener to be attentive of what can be improved and how to enhance the experience (Hennion, 2017b; Hennion, 2015b). It is also a balance between the notion of 'proper ways' of listening and the devices to accomplish a desired objective while learning more, not only about the objects or the music, but also the self. These two cases are very technical achievements, but we all set our rooms—as accomplishments— one way or the other: Is it better to listen **Bjork** with headphones or with big speakers? Where would you enjoy better that Ska record having the chance to dance or is it the office good enough? Those are not complicated technical decisions but alignments of actors (as explored in Ellway and Dean, 2016; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013;

Pickering, 1993; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Warde, 2014) and practices to produce something specific.

The room is rarely purely physical or purely metaphorical with devices. The cases presented here show the room as a balance of creative negotiations. Whatever form the room takes, it is a site for testing, trying, learning more and going deeper, a form of practising attachments to music. A place in which musical pieces would be enriched and enhanced towards a more meaningful engagement. A place in which negotiations between desires and the challenges of listening in specific forms would shape creative actions and unexpected outcomes. As we have explored in these three sections, the room is actually making the opportunity for drilling, and the room could be anything that the listener's practice makes for this objective. This section broadens the notion of bubble, from private space to the urban context to the space for exploration. In the following section I will show some forms in which drilling engages with knowledges and meanings, and how listeners start to create a form of specific personal attachment to each piece of music.

5. 2. Getting into the music (Knowledges)

> If it takes time to get to grips with this music it's because, in some ways, too much time has been squeezed into it. (…) time in a cultural sense: each of the musical styles these artists digitally splice together represents a tradition that evolved and mutated over decades, that in some sense contains embedded historical time. Naturally, it requires many hours of fully attentive listening to unpack its complexities. Time, of course, is one thing that most listeners don't have at their disposal these days. (…) you might also say that 'restriction is the mother of immersion'. In other words, truly experiencing music in any kind of intimate depth means reconciling oneself to the reality of finitude: you'll never be able to listen properly to more than a fraction of the torrent of music being made today… (Reynolds, 2011, pp. 76-77)

The metaphor of drilling has a lot to do with the concept of immersion. It can be understood as those practices that let us get deeper into a song. But as in the act of drilling a hole in the wall, there might be resistances or oppositions, in this case not only on the side of the object, but also in the listener. To get specific meanings from a song might require for me, the possession of certain knowledges, like the language, to set the proper volume of the music, to be concentrated and to use

some formats that make the repetition easier, like *Spotify*. That is the case if we are talking about a band like **Interpol**, **Janelle Monáe** or **Lou Reed**, but if we are talking about **Cocteau Twins**, **Portishead** or even **The Strokes** I would always read the text from the sleeve or the Internet. But getting the meaning of a lyric is not the only way to get into a song; in fact, it would be short-sighted to limit meaning to words. In the following sections I want to explore the ways in which the listener relates to specific pieces of music to go deeper into them. I want to show here all the elements that intervene and the way in which they can re-mediate the outcomes and intentions of the listener. In other words, I want to show how getting deeper into a song is, in fact, building up meaning by mobilizing elements of different types, from the micro-social or intimate to the cultural and structural. Hence, not only the attachment becomes this heterogenous agent that I have argued, but the music itself becomes a set of de-centred meanings and agencies.

Simon Reynolds' (2011, pp. 76-77) critique at the top of this section points towards the excess of music that we are currently experiencing. Much music, easily available, leads to less engagement with it. In his argument, this new setting dismisses the aesthetic experience. Further he argues that this leads to a constant sense of security in the past, which ends up frustrating the evolution of music creativity. I agree with many of his arguments, I have experienced moments of freezing after choosing what to listen next myself—my always favourite **The Head on the Door** or the new album by **Lykke Li**, which now includes some extra remixes or any of the 10 albums released this week? This paralysing sensation is similar to the information-fear overload that Virilo (2012) describes. However, it is my contention to defend sociological understandings of music from the trap of assuming that every technological change is pernicious. From my perspective every technological change is a change in practice, and as it might bring new challenges it also opens new doors. This does not mean either that I position myself in the optimistic reading that Hesmondhalgh (2013; 2008) tries to overcome. My attempt is to explain how even in this digital

environment listeners develop an intimate relationship with specific musics.

5. 2. 1. Repeated Listening

> I like to listen the music once or twice in full, with full attention and calmly, if in a moment it seems interesting for me I'd download the full album. I like to have the full file even when my storage drive is running out of space every day. I have an *iPod*, that goes with me wherever I go, particularly now that the car has a connector for it. In it I do a selection of songs that I like to listen once and again. I also have a memory stick exclusively for music. While driving I go listening to whatever I am listening to at the moment. Sometimes, I try to commit some time to engage with things that are in my pending list, or something that someone recommended me. (Roberto, 39, Photographer, Puebla)

Listening to a song repeatedly is the most visible form of engagement with a song or album. It is also the perfect illustration of the metaphor of drilling, as what we do while repeating a song is to go deeper in every listening, finding details that we have not noted yet, or getting a sense of how the work matches different situations. Roberto's quote above shows how repeated listening is making the music travel through different devices, planning the way in which it can be carried away, and making decisions between different possibilities. Repeated listening is practicing the attachment, the love for music, but at the same time is, in Gomart and Hennion's (1999) terms, experimentation to learn the engagement. It is also the result of a constant process of learning and deploying, each listening leaving a residual interest of an experience that might be repeated (Nowak, 2016a).

The objective of repetition seems to be simple: to experience a pleasurable affect again. The song has a positive impact—a disposition—and the listener is trying to repeat while also becoming part of that impact, by learning the words or trying to anticipate what happens in every moment of the song in order to participate in it. In Roberto's account above, in order to get those repetitions, the music travels through different devices and settings, becoming part of different routines. It is in that process that some *musics* get tested to be suitable for some circumstances, while not for others. It is a process of relating the repeated song into a new context, in the other sense of the term

drilling. It can be the source for 'sountracking' of specific activities (Fuentes et al., 2019; Kerrigan et al., 2014). Furthermore, it seems to be an opportunity for the listener to dig deeper into the affects, meanings and aesthetic elements of the song.

Repeated listening is a multi-sited practice. It happens at different places and with different degrees of attention and intentionality, building experiences depending on the devices mobilized. Those interviewees that grew up with records, tapes or *CDs* would declare that the limit of having just one record meant to stick listening to it again and again until the chance to get another one. There is almost an intimate relation with this. Raul (35), a designer and musician, explains that 'was a ritual. Buying the record, come back home to listen to it with headphones for full attention. Meanwhile, open the booklet, read the lyrics one by one alongside the music, explore the design. You might be able to get something more from that. And that was once and again until you get the money for buying another album.'

On the other hand, listeners more digitally informed declare that they would constantly integrate new pieces of music to their everyday playlist, to extend it and keep the listening updated. This does not mean that repeated listening is lessened in digitized audiences, it is still a common practice, but with less songs, and in some cases, with less time.

> V: Once you discover something new, how do you decide if you like it or not?
> I think there are two ways. One way is listening again and again and looking for information about it. As a matter of fact, if I like a song a lot I listen to it again and again, if meanwhile I find another I listen both of them hundreds of times. I think that the repetition is to confirm that I like it, but in the end, I know that I like it since the very first moment I listen to it, and I know it exists somehow. In other occasions, I listen to a song I don't know nothing about, not even its name, then I start the exhaustive work of learning about it, and through that search I discover many other things. It is during the process of searching that you discover interesting things, I have to listen much music for reaching the song I am looking for, but in that process, I learn a lot. (Ernesto, 19, History Student, Puebla)

Ernesto shows repeated listening as the search for pleasure, but also to confirm what he likes about the song. It is also a way of getting a detailed knowledge of the song. Those connections can be made through extra musical objects, like videos, images, news or discussions—this is

something that I will explore below— but in other cases learning the lyrics takes an important role. It is a process of learning to be affected by the music (De Boise, 2014) in different dimensions at the same time (Krueger, 2003); by getting into it as an aesthetic object, but also as a public cultural object that produces different lateral outcomes. The difference between the album and the digital seems to be in the speed of consumption, but as Catherine Moore (2000, p. 91) suggests, both of them convert the individual into listeners; listeners that are attached to dig into the music, navigating the tensions of the music as an object and as a social element, creating own interpretations and attachments.

Repetition challenges inattentive listening trying to reach to a deep listening. The deep listening that Raúl and Ernesto show is an attempt to explore, in the first case the purchase, in the second the piece of music. Although there is a difference in both accounts: the time. Raul would also admit that he does not listen to music as an immersive activity because life circumstances have changed a lot for him; two jobs, a girlfriend, a band, social life. For him, it is not only about the lack of materials to engage in this deep relationship with a recording, but the lack of spare time. This takes the analysis to abstract levels; life course changes the opportunity of engagement, but also the sense of having to have more things done. A position emerges in which listening to music fells irrelevant or difficult to achieve, particularly if it requires a lot of attention.

Repeated listening is not always intentional. Some interviewees explain that they like to control what they listen to (Flynn, 2016; Krause et al., 2015), but that is not always possible. Listening to radio or in public spaces—like malls or bars— is another usual way in which that listening is repeated constantly. This inserts again a contextual element in the analysis and challenges the idea of drilling. However, that form of repeated listening is also a process of learning what the song can do, switching between inattentive to attentive listening, creating mediated memories (van Dijck, 2006) but also social encounters around the music (Bennett and Rogers, 2016). It is another form of drilling, one that will

engage the listener from different disposition. The cultural context plays a role in this form of drilling and creating attachments.

To sum up, repeated listening is not only a form of memorization, but also experimentation in how music works. It also takes the listener into a more intimate relationship with the music. The affordances of each format are key to develop repeated listening practices, but it also highlights the contextual dimension of the concept, as the same object at different life stages will develop different practices. Repetition is also a way of creating affects with the music, while exploring different signifiers of it. Repeated listening does not only encompass an active practice, it can be a matter of cultural context that could still create attachments. Repeated listening is the most visible form of drilling the Musical Experience. It allows the listener to get deeper into the music and to try it in different situations, and it is a way of getting into the meanings and the uses of music. In the following section I will explore in more detail the lyrical dimension of the music as a way to build up those attachments.

5. 2. 2. Digging out affects with the lyrics

The song itself plays an important role in the production of attachments. When drilling the music, meanings and emotions are explored in each song. Beyond the sounds, popular music has different meaning mediators and signifiers, one of the most important is the lyrics. Cultural Studies and Popular Music Studies usually use lyrics to explore the cultural impact of a song (for example Hesmondhalgh and Negus, 2002; Kotarba and Vannini, 2009; Moore, 2003). They tend to analyse the lyrics under the lens of the cultural context that produces it or its audiences. Nevertheless, for Simon Frith, lyrics cannot be isolated and should be understood beyond the simple semantic message, he considers them words in performance (Frith, 1996, pp. 164-182). That is, words beyond their meaning are intimately related to the music around them and provide preferred readings or articulation of feelings, like in the example that Lee Marshal (2011) presents on **Bob Dylan**'s **The Times They Are A-Changing**, relating the words rhythms and the beat of the

song. For David Hesmondhalgh (2013, pp. 22-24), lyrics are one of the semiotic resources that allow emotional affects, through the provision of elements of identification and relationship with it. I agree with both of those positions, although I would like to focus on how the listeners relate and interpret those lyrics, to engage or disengage not only with the song but also with the artists. In that sense the concept of drilling is kept in the notion of going deeper and repeating, but in this case will also include a new device, which is language.

Lyrics are not always the main element of attention. Some of my interviews recognize that in different occasions the music and different elements of the song are the point of entrance for them. At a later point they would engage with the lyrics when it becomes more interesting for them, when they want to drill deeper into the meaning of the song. That does not mean that they were looking to engage yet with the full lyric, but as they were more interested in being able to recognise what is it about. This uncovers three forms of understanding the song: being able to predict it, being able to sing along with it and understanding the deepest meaning of it.

> When in high school I used to listen to music through *YouTube*, with subtitled lyrics. Some magazines also used to publish translated lyrics. With that I was able to understand and then I used to decide 'Yes, it has feeling, I will sing it.' (Cintia, 25, Journalist, Mexico City)

> Later, I would choose by the words. I was not that focused on the rhythm; I would not make decisions that lightly. Now I was analysing a bit more: 'these lyrics are interesting; they are related with me" at some point. That is how I would decide from that moment. (Karla, 27, Media Producer, Puebla)

The search for the lyrics starts after some attachments have been developed, and a process of valuation begins, the re/tuning through drilling. Searching for the lyrics or tying to memorize them through repetition uncovers the process of valuation as an active process, one that involves work. In the first case, Cintia explores the emotion in it, and the way in which it matched with what she thinks the song is about. She is contrasting and negotiating with her own expectation and even labelling the song in terms of having or not having feeling. She also highlights the process of looking for them, in her case through

magazines, but also through the Internet, displaying a more attentive engagement. The quote from Karla's interview shows that there is a negotiation between herself and the song. The important part of this way of valuing—or making attachments with—the music is that it can only be understood from a situated perspective. This is, analysing convergent moments in listeners' life, like a sentimental breakup for listening to **Alanis Morrissete**, adolescence for listening to **Blink-182**, or the analytical view of the world for listening to *trova*. When engaging with lyrics, listeners seem to look for validation of their ideas or notions—dispositions—but also alignments between the affective and communicative part of a song and whatever they want to get and express through it. It seems like, when valuing music, listeners are valuing themselves.

Listeners are still conditioned with the way in which a song is culturally perceived. Through that cultural lens, it might be easy to assume that some meanings could be fixed, particularly within the lyrics. Nevertheless, some of the stories shared by the listeners I talked to show that music is still flexible and situationally mediated, particularly through the life-course. This is the case with some of my interviewees and their teenage tastes, or when getting a new position for understanding certain topics, like misogynistic content in Hip-Hop or Regaeton. Elisa (28, Journalist, Mexico City) for example, when listening to **Linkin Park** at her actual age—with a better knowledge of English language— perceive them as very dramatic. This is not a de-attachment, their songs are still important for her, but she relates to their meanings and emotions in a different way.

Many of these features are common between Mexican and UK listeners. Nevertheless, there are some differences, as Mexicans tend to listen to music in both English and Spanish—some even a third language. The UK listeners mainly report consumption in English. That means that Mexicans have to translate the songs or learn the other language to get a closer meaning to it. The processes of learning the song and translating the lyrics are not necessarily co-dependent, still both of them transform each other and the attachments between the listener and the song. Nevertheless the process seems quite similar to the one explained above,

as they first engage with the song as a piece of music, probably understanding a couple of words, and at a later point they proceed to translation. Cintia provides an example of this:

> V: Did you care what lyrics were saying at that point?
> R: No, until recently I began to understand that **Oops!... I Did it Again** (By **Britney Spears**) it is about cheating on a boy. I would not imagine that then. I just liked to dance it and the melodies were sticky, and they were everywhere. But for a long time, I did not understand a word, even when I used to sing to it. (Cintia, 25, Journalist, Mexico City.)

Interestingly, I found similar accounts among UK listeners, the music took the lead and some words from the song might stick with them in the first instance. At a later point the whole engagement with the lyrics might come. In the case of the Mexican listeners, this might also create a separation in terms of preference, as some listeners prefer listen to music to which they can relate immediately. In both languages, lyrics, as element for valuation of the music, create separations and distinctions that make easier for the listener to discern what to listen. Certain genres like *trova*, seem to be regarded as lyric-centred, while some others, like Top 40 Pop seems to be more focused on the sensations of the sounds. This does not mean that every song will engage equally within the listener, as when a song is enjoyed the process of re/tuning happens and some songs might remain in the listener's catalogue but not necessarily important and in a longstanding attachment. In this sense, this also shows that attachments are different, depending on what makes them possible and what they make possible.

As this section shows, lyrics and liaising with them, are ways of drilling with the music. That is, by going deeper in them and having the chance to re/tune them with their own interests and affections. Understanding the lyrics is part of a process of valuation/attachment in popular music but not the only one. The stories from the listeners suggest getting into the lyrics is a process that can be a consequence or a starting point for different forms of Musical Experiences. Lyrics are the central element of a work that is never fixed in its outcomes, as even the very meaning seems to become flexible for the listener, but the attachment is never broken. Finally, this section shows how the intimate relationship between the lyrics and the listener makes it possible to

understand how both of them are shaped mutually. In the following section I will explore other forms of constructing an attachment with specific music, in this case by focusing on something that is outside the musical object itself, the extra-musical assemblage.

5. 2. 3. Networks of meaning

The idea of drilling has to do with going deeper into a song as a form of creating attachments and making an intimate relationship with it. It is a process in which the listener learns the sensations that the song offers and the user seeks to know how to activate it and enrol others. Explaining the process of becoming an marihuana user, Howard Becker (1953) argues that smokers need to learn to conceive marihuana as an object which can be used for pleasure and be socialized. In their side, Gomart & Hennion (1999) invite us to also consider the active role of agents—such as drugs or music— and the way they exchange moments of activity and passivity from the user/listener as well as the moments of transition and reflection between them. That is, their analysis starts from paying attention to the exchange of skills and agencies of the mediators as well as to the moments when one of them takes the lead in the experience, which is not a constant. Developing further this idea Claudio Benzecry (2009), when analysing the course of becoming an opera fanatic, points to the mediations that transform the initial attraction into attachment. He will expand his argument by analysing how individuals rebuild their attachment to opera and Boca Juniors jerseys when they started changing and become objects prone to be updated every year (Benzecry, 2015). That is by an active work of socialization and through semiotic work that includes objects that are also mediated by other elements like brands on football tops. The literature presented serves to explore how the relationship between objects and consumers/users is not stable and one directional but mobile and prone to change; but also that there are external mediators that through a learning process produce those attachments. In this section, I want to examine the way listeners assemble the object/music through gathering knowledges around it to

appropriate it, but also as a way to collect elements to re/tune it and let them be affective.

Music, as the attachment object, is not only made of sounds, as it is constantly related to non-musical signifiers. Once Pedro (48, Chemical engineer, Puebla) got into **Alan Parson** through his *Walkman*, he became more attentive to the music around himself. As a young science lover, he watched Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* in the TV, the content of the show was for him an enlightenment itself, but he could not separate that from the music appearing there. It was **Vangelis**, and once he knew the name of the artist, he started searching for every piece of music by them available to him. Later, at high school, he had to make a radio capsule about genetics, and his easier option was to find something like **Vangelis**, he then found **Mike Oldfield**. For him, that music became the sound of science. Although, for him, the crucial step towards becoming a progressive music fan came later, at university where he met his best friend. Pedro describes him as bohemian and extravagant, an art lover and great drawing artist. It was with him that Pedro started exploring the genre as an object of knowledge. This would lead him to become a collector, with hundreds of perfectly ordered CDs and albums, books and videos, but also as a writer and radio presenter specialized on the topic.

In his case, the process of drilling is not only about getting more music or learning the lyrics, but also by connecting people, moments and other attachments, like science. He is socializing the knowledge, but he is actually creating a network of knowledges that will shape the music, making it more solid, while at the same time shaping him as a progressive music lover. For him, the music is not only a genre, it is a set of knowledges that make the music satisfactory as well. The object also acts on him; it makes him get a new record, be part of online social groups to exchange information and difficult records. The object becomes complex from our view, but actually more solid for himself.

Information around the music, bands and scenes are resources for the moment of re/tuning, negotiating what is around with what the listener desires from it. Some of my interviewees go beyond knowing the name of the artist or the album but getting to know some details as nationality or history. Those are forms of drilling the intimacy between

the music and the self. Like the example of Elisa (28, Mexico City) who explored **Hans Zimmer**, not only through his work, but the way he develops it by watching interviews with him and reading information in specialized websites. That allowed her to make assertions like 'he is really intelligent and good person'. By gathering information, the listener is trying to make sense of the music and the attachment that they are developing with it. Georgina Born defines the musical assemblage as a 'particular combination of mediations (sonic, visual, artefactual, technological, social, temporal) characteristic of a certain musical culture and historical period' (Born, 2005, pp. 8, footnote 1), but this account still relies in the broader cultural setting. In my argument this assemblage exists, but it is also a mediation of an intimate assemblage, the attachment between the music and the listener, which also mediates other experiences.

The relationship between popular music and media has been always intricate, from **Elvis Presley** to **Slipknot**. Media plays a role not only in presenting the object itself, but in providing it with images and discourses that become part of the listener's network of meanings (Jaramillo, 2013). Media curates and makes music accessible in certain ways. Those elements enhance the sense of digging and assembling meanings in a song, while also reveal the *situatedness* of those networks of meaning. Alfonso (34) explains how having access to a satellite antenna—a luxury in the eighties in Mexico City—allowed him to get music from MTV. Otherwise he listened to the only alternative radio station in the City, but that was enough for him to recognize bands like **Alice in Chains** or the **Red Hot Chili Peppers**. When he found them in MTV, it was not only being a few steps ahead of his contemporaries in Mexico, but also a new way to relate with those bands and the world around him:

> I would have not imagined the **Higher Ground** video by the **Peppers**, it was a breaking point for me. Trousers made of stuffed bears, it left a mark on me. That changed my idea of fashion, or how people can do things without minding what others say. Watching **Jane's Addiction**'s **Being Caught Stealing**, in which a man dresses up like a pregnant woman to rob a store. I was not able to imagine those things before, it opened my world. (Alfonso, 34, translator, Mexico City)

Structural access is not only a determinant, it is also a valuation agent, like in the case of Raúl (35, Graphic Designer and musician, Mexico City) who decided to listen to groups like **Caifanes**, **Santa Sabina**, and **Café Tacuba**,[18] instead of **Led Zeppelin** or **The Cure**: 'At least I can always buy a cheap ticket to see my artist and have the complete experience… How many times have **Led Zeppelin** played in Mexico? None'. His decision to follow only Mexican bands as he could access a fuller experience shaped his musical consumption as a disposition. In this case the place becomes a mediation of the process of drilling and in some cases the very decision-making element when choosing in a band or a genre, but for other listeners other structural factors influenced those decisions, like language or cost.

The live experience is the expression of an attachment, but it is also part of the network of meanings. It lets the listener set the body and the Musical Experience in a different setting that becomes more intense but is intimately related with what we expect from the event. Alejandra (31, Social Media Editor, Mexico City) never listened to the Icelandic band **Sigur Rós** before, until a friend of her took her during a festival: 'it has been the best experience in my life, and nobody understood a word of what they were saying. But the whole visual experience, the band, the audience, the sensory experience of the whole presentation made it particularly incredible for me.' The example is turning us back to the discussion about language, but I am using it as an illustration of another way of the drilling in a more experiential way. Live music is an interaction that impact the senses beyond hearing, and this is what is making the band interesting for her. She is testing—drilling—new ways of letting that music affect her.

The process of making networks of meaning is situated and flexible, it will be different with the position of the listener and the activities around it. Javier (33), is a radio and video producer from Puebla, and among his different activities he is volunteering in a community radio station in a small village close to his town. The radio

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[18] If you are reading this outside Mexico and the USA, go on, search for bit of these bands from the late 80s that grew with the development of Mexican Rock.

that he produces has little to do with music, and he declares himself as someone with no musical ear or interest. But doing grassroots radio is an important activity for him, and he says he often uses music to illustrate his contents. This has changed the way he listens to music: 'I started valuing a couple of songs that I used to listen to before, because I wanted to use them for an audio capsule, but for doing that I must be sure what the lyric says. I think that the community radio has made me more aware of the lyrics, I also sometimes watch the video to be sure'. In this case he is making sense of the process of listening through a whole set of connections between what he wants to say, the audience, the content, and his role in the radio station, from that point new valuations come out in the music.

Through this section I have explored the idea of networks of meaning, which is the way the listener gathers more elements to re/tune the Musical Experience or to make sense of it under new experiences. As I have shown, those networks are ways of drilling into the Musical Experience: testing it as well as going deeper into it. The outcome of the network of meaning is a musical object that is possible to re/tune with more elements, but also the creation of an intimate knowledge of the music. The distinctive feature of the network of meanings is that, by following it, it is possible to recognize the different elements that the listener uses to make sense of the music and the features that become meaningful for them. This concept also allows us to notice, in an empirical way the heterogeneous nature of the Musical Experience. In general in these three subsections, I have explored the role of practices of knowing that the listener uses to develop the Musical Experience. In the following section I will scrutinize the role of devices and their affordances as ways to drill into the Musical Experience and develop affective attachments.

5. 3.   Drilling through technologies (Devices)

The Musical Experience as a mediated object is the object of negotiations among a number of mediators and their affordances. The listener is tuning those mediations, letting some of them take priority

over others at specific circumstances. Getting the right experience is a craft work, creative and affective. The first two subchapters deal with how the listener goes deeper into the music by setting specific spaces and by engaging in specific forms of producing heterogeneous musical objects. In this section, I explore the more active dimension of the process of drilling, testing devices and learning how to engage with them. As such this drilling goes beyond the music as an object and deals with my broader idea of the Musical Experience. The listener develops ways of valuing the practice, making it pleasurable and building attachments.

Technological devices are an integrative part of the format, as they are at the same time practices and affordances (Beer, 2008a; Denegri-Knott, 2015; Detry, 2011; Morris, 2015b; Sterne, 2012). Since the recorded album, users are hardly attached to one form of access to music. Listening travels around everyday life, through specific conditions and desires. Listeners test those devices, their affordances and their limits to accomplish a satisfactory experience in those contexts; a work of tuning (Pickering, 1993), and valuation (Hennion, 2017b; Pinch, 2015). In simpler words, it is a drilling made of experimentation, assessment, correction and new experimentation.

5. 3. 1. Drilling experience of access and control

The argument of this chapter has shown that the objects of the Musical Experience act as mediators of music's value and importance for listeners individually and socially. In this section I will show how specific devices are part of a negotiation between access, control and change. Each of those interact over the listener's sense of attachment to the Musical Experience. This is a relevant point in light of the fast pace of formats transformations over the digital era. During the physical albums' era access was part of their value, music less accessible would become more important to get and care about (Shuker, 2004). The regime of scarcity allowed not only the creation of industrial surplus, but also a form of valuation based on the display of cultural capital, which is distinguishing between the listener and the 'fan' (Harrington and Bielby,

2010). Digital music allowed access to specific forms of value raised through different practices (Cunningham et al., 2017; Denegri-Knott et al., 2012; Watkins et al., 2015b), but also through the way its access is valued. In this section, I will to explore the way in which practicing and working out access act as ways of drilling the Musical Experience, not only as testing, but also as getting deeper in specific Musical Experience.

The procedure for getting convinced to buy some music, involves in itself various mediations and forms of work that invite the listener to build up the attachment:

> V: Why did you start buying music?
> R: It was not like these days. Now you listen to something and you already know who is playing and everything. It was through the radio, radio people played whatever they wanted to and whenever they wanted to. Now, I play it when I want. For getting it… it was kind of fun but horrible, because you had to record your tapes from the radio and they would insert their audio signature or the broadcaster would get in because they were aware that people would do that. Then to avoid that I had to save some money and buy my OWN music, now I HAD music. I was now able to have my own music whenever I wanted to and get locked in my room to sing and dance. (Rosa, 60, Marketing Strategist, Puebla)

In her account, Rosa wanted to have access to her music whenever she wanted, and she would put some work towards it by making tapes from the radio. Yet, the outcome was not ideal. She would have the songs at her disposition, but not in the quality expected to get the Musical Experience that she wanted. She would be able to control what to listen to and when, but the radio would still be an active mediator as that selection is pre-made through the broadcaster profile. She does not dismiss her practice, she just finds it, in technical terms, unproductive. Recording from the radio and all the care involved could have been seen as a source of memories (Anderson, 2007; van Dijck, 2006) and attachments. Nevertheless, control was a strong driver of the sense of ownership. The ownership for her was related with choosing freely her music and dancing to her favourite tunes.

Rosa's quote also shows the role of the monetary cost, in balance with opportunity, as a challenge for getting control of the music. The Musical Experience is inserted in a more complex set of life needs, desires and possibilities, and in order to access it, the listener has to

mediate through them. Many of the stories I gathered are deeply related with age and the life course (Lepa and Hoklas, 2015). There is a change between the youth experience, as more open to experimentation and with intense affections and adult life, with enhanced access but diminished time or interest in the Musical Experience. Nevertheless, at any age, there is a process in which listeners try to get the Musical Experience through different devices, testing them and using them creatively. This produces attachments not only with music, but also with some devices, which are now intertwined by expectations, time, and the process of learning or getting them.

Some of the listeners I interviewed experienced the transition towards the Digital Music Commodity. They provided me with rich accounts of how they balanced each mode of access for gaining control of the music they listen to, as well as the way they decide on them and create differences among them. In Mexico, for example, *counterfeit tapes* were common since the era in which taping was popular (Ávila Torres, 2016; Straw, 2009). With different degrees of 'imitation' and 'curation', the objective of those copies is to get access to the pieces of music and put them at disposition of the listener. This would mutate later to *Counterfeit CDs*. These devices provide the listener with the opportunity to try new music and new forms of control, but also to discover through new mediations. Cinthia (25, journalist, Mexico City) used to get recommendations of new music from teen magazines, checking the reviews in them and how they would relate with her interests. She was not able to buy those albums, but she could get some counterfeit copies and compiled CDs to expand what she was listening to and later, when she got a computer, to create her own CDs or playlists.

The changes of the experience through access, act in relation with knowledge, discovery and a sense of exploration. Fer (26, Musician and Producer, Puebla) illustrates those changes. The challenges of accessing the music he wanted motivated him to explore *Napster* and similar services, he got into it when he started discovering music that was too expensive or difficult to get through the established outlets. For him the most salient feature of those systems was the possibility of getting music that he would never get by other means, and so it was a technology for

discovery: 'As I was getting into music my preferences were made more versatile. Internet helped me to broad my musical knowledge. There are bands that I had no way to know, but thanks to *p2p* I had the chance to discover.' The new availability was an opportunity for exploration and drilling, but the discovery was not in a vacuum, it was related to the music and the knowledge he already had. He also found an opportunity to explore the 'classics' without losing new emerging music. Still he found in it a way to go deeper into the music he liked, downloading full albums of music that he already knew. That means not having to choose between following an artist, exploring the past production of a genre or getting new music. All those activities were made together:

> When I was at University, I was more interested in music. *Ares*, *Limewire* and alike systems were gone already, so I was looking for new alternatives for downloading, like *torrents*. There were pages with and impressive catalogue, it meant a musical renovation for me. I had already much music, like 2 or 3 albums per artist, so it was the chance to dive into new things from those bands, or things that I was missing. To check what they were doing at the moment. I also recovered some punk bands that I have forgotten for a while and it was a chance to update myself about what they were doing. (Fer 26, Musician and Producer, Puebla)

Learning how to use devices produced opportunities for drilling the Musical Experience, to make it more exciting and keep it interesting. I am going to explore that more in depth in Chapter 6, but in this section it is important to observe how the devices open affordances (Bloomfield et al., 2010; Hutchby, 2001) to the listener who creatively engages and assembles new practices in order to expand their possibilities. Those assemblages are not free of work, and it is precisely this work that listeners do (Cunningham, 2019; Hogarty, 2015), where the attachment to those devices and the Musical Experience resides. The drilling for some listeners resides in the possibility of exploring music, practices and technolgies as ways of building the different dimensions of the Musical Experience they are interested in. Examples of this are numerous in the data, listeners who learn to make connections to assemble the sound, listeners who set different devices for different listening situations, listeners who buy records to have them while driving but never at home. The listeners drills—in the sense of test—how to control and create

Musical Experiences every time, and those become dispositions for new objects to come.

Drilling through devices, in this section, means to explore the possibilities of the mediations of the music. It is not only about controlling the music, but negotiating desires and objectives to accomplish objectives. It is choosing between practices and managing the everyday. This drilling and tuning form new ways of relating to the music and ways of using the Musical Experience in specific situations. To follow the drilling through devices in control opens the possibility of looking at the ways the listener challenges their limitations, not only personal, but also structural, testing new chances and making technologies behave. As seen in this chapter the listener tries new forms of deploying the Musical Experience In the next section I will show how those new formats also allow and drilling in terms of sound and the aesthetic feature of music.

5. 3. 2. Drilling the sound

The Musical Experience, as based on sound, holds a particular relationship with sound and the body. Music relies on devices to exist as sound and reach the listener, which means that when exploring devices and ways of listening, we are also exploring ways of letting our body relate with the music. In this section I want to enquire into the ways in which those user technologies help listeners to experiment with the Musical Experience. This will raise questions about the interaction and affordances of specific spaces and devices, but also about the embodiment of the music and negotiation between possibilities and expectations for the listener. As before, none of these processes leave the listener in the same place, transforming the attachments between the listener and the Musical Experience and the music itself.

Technologies of music reproduction are what Wade Morris calls transectorial innovations (Morris, 2015b, p. 21) They are not single devices, but they engage with other developments to reach the user in efficient forms. The CD is a good example of this, as beyond the container or the format of the recording, it requires advances of players,

speakers, headphones, mastering processes, etc. As such, when those advancements are made, they might come down on an uneven basis to the consumer. That means that, at the user-end, different technologies might interact with each other—as shown in the previous section—and their penetration might come at different rates. According to the listeners I interviewed, that allowed a process of learning while at the same time doing comparisons about each of them and what they allowed. But also it allowed the use of creative assemblages of devices to get the expected experience, like connecting old speakers from a high-fidelity system inherited to a *Discman*:

> V: Where did you listen those records?
> F: Normally with my computer. I used to spend much time in front of the computer, it was better for me not having to put the CD in the player, but straight away from the computer. I copied the *wavs*[19] to the computer and that is it. I had a pair of speakers, but they were small, so I always had the desire to listen louder. I worked a summer for that, to save money for a *JVC* stereo, so from there I got accustomed myself to listen that way. (…) A bit later, I was transferring all my records to the computer. At that point, I knew already about formats, like the *mp3* and *wav* and their differences. They don't have the quality of a recording, it is a FLAC. *Mp3* is like a pixeled picture of the audio, *wav* has much more quality, hence that was the format I liked more. It might be almost imperceptible but there are differences. Since then, I would search for the better quality, 320 kbps if an *mp3*, but *wav* would be better, and FLAC much better. That was the moment when CD players started to play mp3 and other formats, therefore I started doing mixed CDs and playlists from all the bands that I downloaded so far. I really wanted to burn CDs to take the music with me. (Fer, 26, Musician and producer, Puebla)

In their interactions, music devices are elements of assemblages that have to be adjusted to the needs of the listener with different outcomes. In Fer's case, and the way I presented the quote, it is possible to see the journey from the CD to the file format, to be back at the end with a new form of the CD, a curated one, that responds to the need of travelling around with music. He is also aware of the formats and the differences between them, even when it is not possible to explain them in words. In this case, Fer tried to explore the best sound quality, technically speaking. The very idea of formats as containers would

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[19] Waveform Audio File Format (.wav). It was an early standard for digital sound for Windows. It is considered a format without compression.

allowed him to do that. For younger users and not music fans, that idea is more or less clear, but most of them have had gone through a process of experimentation to find the devices and settings that deliver the sound they want. This is not a straightforward notion, it is mediated by the media—as in devices—, social groups or even the own experience of listening and comparing. This is another dimension of the sense of drilling, getting the sound that allows the listener to get a more satisfactory Musical Experience.

Choosing among the devices available means to establish a balance between the body and the listening spaces. Testing, or drilling a device is not only a matter of features or qualities, but how it can be adopted for specific purposes. The place and the body itself play also an important role in those assemblages. Saúl is a publicist from Aguascalientes that has one deaf ear:

> V: Can I see your headphones?
> S: I can listen to anything with my left ear. That means that with the ear-in headphones I cannot hear nothing. What I need are over-the-ear headphones. I bought this wireless from a friend, for some reason they did not work with her computer but they work perfectly with my phone and my computer with *Bluetooth*. They work perfectly for me, even when they are not noise-cancelling, but at least they block like the 80 percent of the noise I get in the right side, and I can listen to whatever I want. Sometimes, I listen to *Podcasts*, with the other headphones [earphones] it is impossible in the subway, you just can't understand any word. I used to have a pair by *Skullcandy* for workout, but they got broke in my backpack. (Saúl, 31, Publicist, Mexico City)

Saúl is highly reflexive of the features of every device, he has to rationalize them to make better decisions, his body demands it. He also makes visible the way that he has learned to listen and the differences in the content. Listening to podcasts—or anything talk-based— requires a more detailed attention than music, particularly if in a foreign language. Sound relies on devices to allow the experience in specific ways, which intersect with the contents, making them enjoyable or difficult to bear for specific listeners. Similarly, some other informants tend to refer more to rock or pop music as ideal for loud devices, while the nuances and qualities of slow or acoustic music are better enjoyed through headphones. Also, the stereo sound is better experienced through the headphones. The condition that Saúl experiences with the ear is not a

limitation to listen to the stereo effect with headphones, he just swaps the headphones to listen the content allocated on the other output channel: 'you can discover lots of new things.' Beyond these peculiarities, his account represents a good share of the others in terms of the balance between the senses, the body, the place, sound, devices and content. The process of drilling resides precisely in trying to develop a balance that allows the listener to enjoy the Musical Experience. In other words, it is an exploration—of sound and devices—, that opens the door to more explorations—of Musical Experiences.

The process of drilling—the body and the sound—is also the opportunity to engage better with specific pieces of music and make it more personal—as explained in 5.2. Among my informants this experience is explained with a well-known song that they had later the chance to listen in new settings. For example, Elisa (28) when listening again her teenage pop or **Linkin Park** through her recently bought *Bosé* speaker: 'When I was in High School apart from the tape player that I had I use to listen in the computer. Both of them have poor sound. Now, I listen to the same music again and I really enjoy it more, this allows me to have a different appreciation'. Listeners know their song, as they have been attached to it for a period of time, trying it in new devices does not only help them to compare between those devices, but also to find new elements of the music that will make it different, they will go deeper in it through new sensations. Drilling through sound is also drilling deeper into well-known songs.

On the whole, this section explores the dimension of drilling that has to do with sounds, senses, body and devices. Devices are not only tools to arrange and manage content, but a new way of letting them affect our bodies. The body is not only a receptor of the sound, but is integral part of the effects and affects of the Musical Experience. We do not listen to music, we embody the Musical Experience (Crossley, 2015). This leads to an intimate relationship between what some devices in certain places let us hear, and how we feel about it. Drilling the sound

allow us to create more attachment to our music, making it relate to our bodies and emotions.

5. 3. 3. Challenges and technical knowledge for drilling

Each device demands a specific set of skills and knowledges from the user. Those knowledges are practical and experimental, developed through interactions over time, or transferred by someone else. We have seen so far, the role of those devices in terms of control and sound. In this section I want to explore the features that shape the decision-making process when developing the Musical Experience. The listener has to negotiate some knowledges and drill, in the sense of test, the ways in which specific technologies extend the Musical Experience. I will be focusing on the ways listeners use their backgrounds, past experiences and intentions to produce certain forms of listening.

Technologies demand skills for engaging with them. But those skills are not evenly distributed in any scenario. A body of knowledge about the domestication of media and technology shows that technological devices are gendered from its very design and sets of relations (Habib and Cornford, 2002; Lie, 1997; Oudshoorn et al., 2005; Sørensen, 1996). In the case of musical devices, these distinctions appear in diverse forms.

> V: Did you ever use whatever your parents had to listen to music?
> R: Well, they had records, but all of them were *LPs* y I was not allowed to use them, because it was delicate, I think they needle could broke or the record could be scratched if I would do it wrong. Anyway, it was not attractive for me. Later they started using CDs, they stopped using records, like after 1990. It was also a fancy equipment, but all the music that I remember from CDs is Christmas Music or Pavarotti… I preferred radio, by far. (Cinthia, 25, Journalist, Mexico City)

The turntable is not only gendered, it also involves a set of knowledges that make access impossible for a child. Those separations also follow from the perception of the device as something fragile and expensive (Ward, 2005). Later the CD player became a more normalized device and she could get access to it (Pantzar, 1997), but she could not find anything interesting for her in her catalogue. This conditioned her

interest and preference, as this disposition is to choose radio as her main access. The impossibility of drilling does limit the range of Musical Experiences, but not the possibility of listener's attachment to music. Among the interviewees, there are some who, opposed to Cinthia, developed those devices as a desire object, a visible representation of musical knowledge or expertise. In other words, its inaccessibility made them valuable.

The relationship between knowledges and technological devices is mediated by the background of the listener and their ability to engage with those new devices. Among those participants that developed skills in computers, the transition to digital music practices was a small step. But those new practices were the source of more challenges to test and overcome as well as new knowledge. Through this process, the drilling of the devices would become multiple (Prior, 2014), more customizable and open to opportunities for control. the amount of knowledge and fear of technology would change what each listener expects from each device and the Musical Experience in general, hence it would change the decision-making process each time.

> V: Was it difficult for you to control those new softwares?
> R: I do not think about it as a difficult transition, because we used to have computer skills at school, so I was familiar with many of the functions and the way computers work. Also, it is a kind of easy skill for me. Sometimes, I might get interested in customizing stuff. One of my cousins was also a computer geek, so he would solve my doubts. From him I learned to download songs from *Kazaa*, *Ares*, *Limewire* and that kind of applications. It was about downloading the music but at the same time keep eyes open because the virus could come at any given moment. I was not really bothered by virus, I just wanted the music. But it also opened the window to get different music and knowledge about record labels, bands and genres. (Fer, 27, Musician and Producer, Puebla)

The assembling of new experiences and challenges does not lead to new ways of listening to music, but also ways to connect those musical pieces with a broader context, creating networks of meaning (see 5.2.3). In Fer's account, the strategies he used to handle technological change, the socialization of certain skills and his own experiences meant the opportunity to drill deeper in the Musical Experience by getting information to reconnect the musical pieces, to transform it into an

experience: to create attachments. This makes the case to show that the Musical Experience is not stable but subject to adjustments that not only come from the aesthetic experience or the social setting but also by the way that technologies deploy and demand new practices, like needing to update an anti-virus software. The opportunity to drill, in the different dimensions explored in this chapter depends on the ways the listener strategically manages limitations, opportunities and knowledges to satisfy their own expectation, but also to shape future experiences.

By making different technologies interact, the listener assesses their new possibilities and compares them in order to make specific decisions around them. New technologies are not isolated, they rely on design and forms of knowledge that are already familiar for the user (Morris, 2015b), but they develop a new assessment of all the other objects at reach. Nevertheless, these processes of comparison and valuation are constantly changing within the Musical Experience, as it relies on the advancement of different sets of technologies (Pinch, 2015) and their affordances. When the *iPod* initially came out, the common version would have 4GB of storage, that was a lot for that time. The growth in downloading systems and their users converted that storage as something small in a few years. Those downloading systems would open access to specialized versions, what bootlegs used to do before, but accessible from a computer with Internet. The last version of the *iPod* had 160 GB, but it lost its functionality as streaming systems became popular, even when those *bootlegs* would not be available there. This explains how drilling is also conditioned by the affordances of the devices and by the industrial growth and speed of change of technological systems. Under this idea, some listeners when deciding to invest in a technological device, would try to be prepared and guess how its future would be.

In this section I have argued that the listener's drilling relies on the affordances of the assemblages given, but to explore those assemblages, the listener also requires specific set of knowledges and skills to overcome limitations and challenges. The strategies that the listener takes in each step will transform the Musical Experience at each moment. Hence, the listener is not only drilling the music, the devices or

the sound, but their own strategy to fit whatever is at hand to provide a satisfactory experience. The problem of access and knowledge is not limited to socioeconomic factors, it also includes the way that in specific settings some technologies are regarded as *fragile*—as in not for inexpert hands—or requiring specific expertise. At every step, new knowledge and challenges are experienced, and through that process drilling—and the Musical Experience as a whole—is transformed in a micro-practice highly individualised but at the same time socio-material. This sub-section argues that the drilling is also a process of testing the self and getting new knowledges through technologies. In the following I will explore briefly how through those interactions and productive practices listeners develop differentiated valuations and attachments to other devices at hand.

5. 3. 4. Drilling as resignification of devices

I have led this chapter to explore the process of drilling, mainly in terms of getting a deeper understanding of the music through heterogeneous elements, the creations of spaces and the practice of listening to music through specific settings and devices. Through that process all the elements involved take new shapes and meanings (Fouce, 2010), that become part of the Musical Experience. To close the sub-chapter, I want to explore how through drilling, devices and objects acquire new dimensions and values for the Musical Experience. This fits in the actual multi device environment in which listeners could get music through a set of different devices in everyday life.

Technological change, from the consumer side, is not a straightforward transformation from one practice into another. It involves the adoption of certain elements that are inserted into everyday listening practices. Beyond the idea of format as a set of connections proposed by Sterne (2012), for the user there are not standardized flows or connections, the development will be in the direction of their own interests and possibilities. The pathways for that exploration are

composed by previous experiences, their context, socioeconomic context and other attachments.:

> V: Are you interested in *Spotify* now?
> R: I had resisted to it for a long time, until I understood that I would be able to listen to the albums and decide if I would like to buy them or not. Now, I am a big Spotify fan. I love this feature of the weekly discovery, which is personalized. I has given me the chance of discovering music, and when a song that I like appears I save the whole album, and when I decide that I like it much I try to buy the album. I am still really attached to the physical format, but now I am more selective. Particularly, because I don't have money to keep buying and buying every time. (Pedro, 48, Chemical Engineer, Cholula)

New technologies seem to challenge practices and attachments from the past. However, as Pedro shows, it is through a process of drilling—in the sense of testing—that certain features can be inserted in the particular flow of practices. When they are adjusted, the whole set of practices changes. Pedro makes technologies interact to serve not only his interest in progressive music, but also the way he likes to listen to it. Nonetheless, when in encounter with the specific moment of this life—as father, partner, adult, employee—the physical album becomes a special treat, something that is not regular anymore. Those new engagements also transform his way to discover music and to enrol different devices, like the Internet to have the chance to discover or drill new music.

The integration of new elements to the Musical Experience as drilling also changes the way that devices are understood, chosen and valued. In the last section I explained how the *iPod*, the MP3 and the possibility of downloading transformed storage as a prime feature of the Musical Experience. With more recent changes, the transformation has been in Internet access and data packages. In Mexico, some mobile network providers offer data plans that does count the consumption of certain platforms, like *Facebook*, *Apple Music* or *Spotify*. This allowed users to replace the storage as a prime element to value devices of the Musical Experience. When drilling the Musical Experience devices are

valued in relation with other technologies that the listeners has used before or is using at the time.

As certain technological devices develop and get integrated into everyday practices some others are left behind. Alongside this, some notions about how to value musical albums got lost.

> I used to collect CDs. When I was from 10 to about 14, I collected a lot. I'd probably had like 100 CDs or something like that. It was important for me. Then, I moved that manually, disc by disc into the computer. Later, I started to add from that by downloading stuff from *Napster* and *Limewire*. Then the [digital] collection got much bigger very quickly because I could get music for free, stealing. As soon as the collection got so big and it became intangible, you could not touch it, I lost interest in collecting music because it was digital. I guess that it like you can't see the collection growing you don't feel like collecting anymore. It's just like inside the computer. (Stuart, 26, Academic, Sussex)

> What it used to happen is that many times you would buy the whole record, and maybe you were buying it only for a song that you loved. Sometimes, if you were lucky, you might find another 2 or 3 songs that you like, but the rest was boring. Sometimes you might be really lucky and the whole record was great. With that idea of downloading music you would be able to just download whatever you wanted, and maybe give a try to the rest of it, but only keep what you really wanted. (Alejandra, 31, Social Media Editor, Mexico City)

These quotes capture reflective transitions between different technologies and the meanings that appear around them. In the first case, Stuart stops engaging with physical albums when he became unable of catching up with his digital collection. For him, the ethical position is still important, as he tries to buy music through digital platforms, but as with Alejandra, he now curates the music he likes in playlists and dismiss the rest. He would tell me later that he only keeps the songs that he likes from an album for not having to listen to the things he does not enjoy. Alejandra shows the way in which the album got a new dimension, based on the notion of risk—paying for something that it feels worthless, beyond the music in personal terms (see Marshall, 2019). Hence, the album becomes a restrictive format, one that does not allow personal curation, nor paying just for what it is good for the listener. Still, the album could be valued, particularly for its materiality that allows the creation of memories and physical practices (Bartmanski

and Woodward, 2016; Bartmanski and Woodward, 2015; Hogarty, 2015; Sarpong et al., 2016).

The process of drilling shapes the way in which the listeners understand the Musical Experience and the devices involved. In the process of testing and integrating new elements to everyday practices objects and devices acquire new valuation elements and meanings in everyday life. Devices, as attachments, do not disappear from the Musical Experience when they are not used anymore, and they still shape the way in which we understand new technologies and how we relate with them. This last dimension of drilling makes evident the re/tuning of the devices in specific context and in relation with others.

Conclusion

Drilling the Musical Experience is learning, testing and engaging intimately with music, from finding and actively producing spaces and opportunities to explore it, to the ways in which we hinder limitations, restrictions and barriers to satisfy our own expectation of how the Musical Experience should be. It is through drilling that we connect meanings in our Musical Experiences and objects. As Lash and Lury (2007) suggest in the case of football, cultural objects are not experienced in a steady way, but in the movement and complex environments in interactive forms. In other words, what I call networks of meanings, that are produced by drilling, are multiple and personal, it produces meanings and ways to make meanings of other things intimate.

The chapter developed the concept of drilling as the process in which the listener tests the Musical Experience, but also as the process through which it makes possible to get deeper into it. From the creation of spaces in which music could be listened alone, to devices that allow testing music in different spaces both individually and socially. The process of drilling also passes through a constitution of heterogeneous networks of knowledges that allow the listener to explore signifiers and re/tune the music with themselves in order to explore their own relationship with it. The last part of the chapter showed how devices play an active role in the drilling, as they are also tested and subjected to

gather knowledges. Those devices are also mediators, and as such, the acquire new meanings, uses and agencies through the process. This chapter also made evident that drilling the Musical Experience is a matter of embodied practices and affects that will develop specific affordances.

As I have shown through this chapter, the process of drilling is also productive of the ways we relate to the devices and sound. It is by testing, moving and assembling devices at hand that the Musical Experience acquires new dimensions for us. Expanding what Bull (2007) and Beer (2007) claimed about the management of the experience of the space, when drilling the listener experiences and manages their experience by aligning devices and certain music that works in that assemblage; not only space but the whole Musical Experience. This is not something that the listener knows in advance, but something that must be tested, embodied and managed. Drilling will produce the game of expectations, embodied scripts and competencies—that Lepa and Hoklas (2015) call the *Modus*—that guides our behaviour and the flux of the Musical Experience among different contexts and situations or new dispositions.

Music can make the individual flourish in society, not in an individualistic way, but in connecting with a sense of memory and time; the integration of different aspects of being; the reflection of kinetic pleasure, and the understanding of the feelings of others (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, pp. 53-54). It is my contention in this chapter that by analysing the process of drilling it is possible to follow the elements that constitute that understanding, from the systems of meaning to the very intimate biography, from the structural constraints to the constitution of signifiers. Through this chapter I explored the elements that shape the Musical Experience and helped the listener make sense of it and the world around it. Those elements are, I insist, of different natures, and it would not be enough to understand it only from a cultural or musical perspective. The integration of devices in the analysis puts the focus on specific practices and the creative ways in which the listener develops their attachments. This will feedback into the creation of threshold moments, dispositions and identities and will re-shape the Musical Experience every time. In the next chapter I will

present what happens once the listener has built attachments with specific music to make it work out in the complexities of socio-technical modern life.

6 - Managing the attachments to the Musical Experience

To produce the Musical Experience means that the listener gets something in it that makes them keep the engagement, repeat it and enhance it. The attachment is not an affect, attachment is a series of processes of co-constitution that the listener, the music and the device mobilize to produce a passion, the Musical Experience. (Gherardi, 2009; Hennion, 2007). Attachment is a pragmatic idea of the multiple and convergent nature of our relation with things, that constitute our objects and ourselves (see chapter 1.1.1). In this thesis I have explored some of those mediators such as identity, social belongings, structures, sound, affects, devices and intimacy. Through that lens, I have shown that the Musical Experience also acts as mediator at the same time as being a product of different dimensions of everyday life. That is why for the listeners I have portrayed in this thesis music matters, because it is not only music, but a way to relate to the world.

The road from the previous chapters has followed the specific tactics from which listening to music is transformed into a Musical Experience. By using concepts such as disposition, threshold moment, re/tuning and drilling, I have followed the work of developing that co-constructive relationship with music. I have followed the path of the love of music, or specific pieces of music. In this chapter I want to explore how those attachments are managed and kept alive in everyday life; how the Musical Experience is protected, expanded and made flexible. In other words, how the listeners manage and keep alive their Musical Experience.

The focus on this chapter is in the ways that the Musical Experience is performed in everyday life. It is my contention that the analysis of such activities reveals the objectives and drivers of the music that convert that sound object into a loved object. The analysis in this chapter also makes possible the scrutiny of the way the listeners use the music experience to mediate the world around them while also transforming it. In other words, once the music experience in specific forms have become important through attachments produced by

threshold moments, negotiated through re/tuning and enhanced by drilling, it does not remain static and reified, it keeps moving through the life course and everyday life. It is precisely that quality—the evanescent nature of attachments—that make the listers take strategies to keep them alive and rich; to protect its matter-*ness*. This chapter explores, in summary, the management of the attachments already made in order to get specific outcomes, make them useful and keeping them alive.

6. 1. Keeping the Musical Experience alive

Listening in everyday life implies the skilful repetition, testing and valuation—drillings—of different forms of listening. Through those repetitions new mediators appear and the Musical Experience is never the same, sometimes in big transformations or subtle ways. That way, the listener keeps the Musical Experience interesting and exciting, which keeps the repetition going on (Nowak, 2016a, p. 12). This is not the end point of the attachment, it means the point of refreshment and enhancement, keeping it in circulation, and expansive. Listeners actively and strategically keep that sense alive through everyday practice by making specific alignments and assemblages. In this section I will explore some of those strategies and their implications for the attachments.

6. 1. 1. Looking after the object that wears out

In this thesis music moves from its status as cultural object to become an intimate possession. To overcome the idea of ownership, as a set of legal constraints and possibilities, Rebecca Watkins, Janice Denigri-Knott and Mike Molesworth (2015a) recover the idea of possessions in Belk's work. In his account, this refers to the 'thing we call ours' (Belk, 1988, p. 139), as extensions of the self (Belk, 2014a; Belk, 2013). Possession is the form of attachment to music that I am looking for, one that is mediated by ownership and structural elements and that can go beyond *having* the record. This possession creates an intimate relationship with the music that becomes a specific mediator of other

forms of the world. The music possessed hence becomes an intimate dimension of the self and as such something that needs to be managed in the world, something that must be looked after and that can be worn out. This section will explore how those objects that are attached to the listener express specific forms of care.

The love for a song, and the attachments created with it, seems to rest upon the possibilities of appreciating it and to be affected by its qualities. Those qualities which we drill in and test, are continuously discovered (See Chapter 5). In that sense, music can stop surprising or affecting the listener after the process of drilling is exhausted. The music can be worn out. Tim Dant characterises the social properties of a material object with the concept of Material Capital, which accounts for the valuable elements of the object that are not coming from its production or consumption, but from their meanings in consumption and practical use (Dant, 2006, p. 299). This concept decentres the material in valuation and allows us to include, for example—his example— the car as it can become unfashionable, become uncomfortable, or inappropriate for the current needs. The value of the object is in relationship with individual, cultural and material factors. Music beyond the format—as content—is also prone to this wearing out. In the data for my thesis, that sense of weariness can come from different circumstances, but one of the most common is the lack of control and the multiplied presence of a specific song in repeated places.

> I have my favourite songs, and I love them, but if I consume them a lot, I stop liking them. I have to stop listening to them for a while, let them rest and come back to them. […]. It is like what they did with **Rolling in the Deep**, it is a great song, but they wore it out, you would have listened to it at least 10 times a day. Hence, it got to a point where it can get you crazy. Recently, I listened to it again after a long rest and it was like 'it is really amazing', you even listen to it with pleasure again. (Alejandra, 31, Social Media Editor, Cuernavaca)

Alejandra highlights the numbness to the qualities of the song that emerges from being out of control of the soundscape. The song was 'everywhere', making it impossible to escape from it, while at the same time affecting her attachments to it. She strategically avoids the song in order to regain pleasure and being able to value it again. The attachment

is also mediated by the knowledge of the experience and be attentive to when the music stops being pleasurable and surprising. The attachment can also detach at specific times and points. The work invested in making an object a possession involves, according to Denigri, Watkins & Wood (2012), processes of changing, storing and re-materialisation. Their research explores the way in which in the balance between possession and ownership acts upon digital virtual goods, through sets of material and embodied practices (Magaudda, 2012). In a sense, recorded music has always been that, it is possible to possess the record, but the object—the music—, is free out there, and it is not possible to control it every time. The listener has to look for strategies to keep it as a possession that is still relevant in everyday life.

Looking after the beloved object needs technological devices and their affordances, it implies managing them and tuning them. In some of the participants I talked to this includes putting it in specific places and moments or limiting its accessibility while still knowing how to make it appear easily. I find it interesting that the love for certain songs relies on having limited access to it, and sometimes letting the song appear as an act of serendipity. Listeners are making decisions around specific forms of listening in everyday life that are not only related with the availability of music in different settings, but how music is made available. Luz lives in Cuautla, she is studying Law and she explained me that she stopped listening with control, because she does not have enough patience to learn every process, she does not feel interested in it. She would rely in her boyfriend to choose the music, but when alone she would rather listen to the radio.

> V: Why do you use radio?
> R: That way I don't get bored of the songs. I mean, in the station that I listen to music is from different times, from really old songs to new ones, but within the genre I like. Before, when I used to download music to my phone it was limited, because it was difficult to find music or my phone had a limited storage memory. Hence, I would get easily bored because it was the same once and again, even if I liked some of those songs. That is what I like about radio, they play songs that I like, even when I don't necessarily know them. (Luz, 21, Student, Cuautla)

Luz uses the mediation of the music programmer as a way to control her access to music (see Hennion and Meadel, 1986). She is balancing what she knows about the station, what she knows about herself and the possibility to keep herself up to date about new music. Although she might be considered a very specific case, one way or another, listeners constantly seek strategies that let them release the control to get a less repetitive experience. The balance between records or albums and radio seem to be switching to playlists, particularly those made of recommendations such as in *Spotify* and *Apple Music*. Other listeners use *YouTube* based on its recommendation algorithm. All those examples are based on a similar principle, getting different music, the listener does not have control but can still be limited by the kind of music that she enjoys without being the same; with the possibility of a surprise or discovery every now and then.

Looking after the beloved object makes also possible the separation between disposable or temporal music and that one that becomes more intimate and important for the individual. In her research, Anja Nylund Hagen (2015) shows how specific temporalities are performed through the playlists, some of them remain permanently with the same content, some of them are expanded or reduced constantly according to different purposes and some of them are created specifically with some purpose and then disappear. It is a tuning between control and delegation like the one promoted by the shuffle mode (García Quiñones, 2007). When some of the listeners that I interviewed talk about new music, they show that this can be a strategy to protect a 'basic catalogue' of beloved music, while other music is just listened to in order to participate in the social fashion of the moment. To look after the object is not to dismiss and keep some music, but to distinguish what purposes music is serving in specific situations; which attachments are mediated each time.

Looking after the music is not only about wearing it out, it is also protecting it from different things that can affect the relationship that the listener has with the object. In particular, some listeners are interested in

protecting the music from the intrusion or judgement from others. Claire provides a good example of this:

> V: You have a lot of knowledge about music and bands, in your daily basis, how do you choose what to listen to? How do you deal with all the things that you like?
> C: I do have lots of bands I'd listen to more, and then... I don't have much patience to finding new music anymore, I do not know if there is an age thing, it can be.[…]. I don't have much time for different things unless something is particularly good. I don't let anyone else tell me which bands I should like not. I don't like bands just because everyone else like them. I will say that I like **Katy Perry**, even knowing that someone could tell me "don't listen to that pop music". I like it, and I'm gonna listen to it. If I enjoy it, and it makes me feel good, and I'm kind of impressed by the sound of it then I will keep listening. (Claire, 34, Social Media Manager, York)

Claire is also a musician, and as such, she moves in her daily life among different performances of her personality. Among her friends there are music lovers and musicians, each of them with a particular view about the way 'good' music should be classified. The exchange of valuations, and judgements, seems to be a constant within her group. She is not the only listener who told me that those kinds of valuations are also a threat that might wear out or diminish their attachments to music, and that looking after the object implies defending their beloved pieces or bands against those criticisms, either through ignoring them or through actively defending. Some others prefer just to hide some of their preferences from others converting that music in a separate catalogue.

Looking after the object implies being aware of the nature of the musical object as something that can be worn away. Music becomes almost a material object through the process of appropriation, and the listener must make it circulate strategically in order to keep its importance and meaningful attachment with the listener. The weariness of the musical object does not only come from the constant use and exposure, but also from the opinions and valuations from others that are not in accordance with those from the listener. Devices are part of these strategies, as they allow to separate and leave aside some songs from everyday life. Nevertheless, listeners' catalogues must still expand, not only to have new experiences but to have something that is listened to

instead of the beloved music. In the following section I will explore some of those strategies.

6. 1. 2. Refreshing the Musical Experience

Listeners are not only attached to specific musical objects, but to the Musical Experience itself. They care about the listening with specific purposes and in preferred settings. In this thesis, the successful listening experience is an alignment between the past, the present and the expectation. The adequacy of those moments relate to what Raphaël Nowak calls 'role-normative modes of listening', moments in which the listener finds a coherence between their own expectations, their devices and the structure of everyday life (Nowak, 2016a, p. 88). According to him, these are moments of alignment that the listener seeks to repeat by listening again. Likewise, I want to follow that process, but include a different element, the catalogue available for the listeners. In his account of music as enrichment of life David Hesmondhalgh (2013, p. 53) argues that the commodification of music has encouraged the search for new Musical Experiences through a negative sentimentality, which is the negation of anything new under the argument that all the past is better. Nevertheless, my data suggest that a way for the listeners to keep the Musical Experience interesting is through balancing their own catalogue with new meaningful pieces of discovery, allowing them to refresh their attachment. In this section I want to explore the elements that participate in the updating of the personal catalogue to keep the Musical Experience interesting.

The catalogue available and known plays a role in this feature as it needs to be controlled to prevent it from becoming boring, or lose its impact—as shown in 6.1.1. —by integrating new music. At the same time the known catalogue acts as a point of reference or frame for the extent of the exploration into new territories. From my thesis, this is a matter of control and delegation, a negotiation between identity and the comfort of past experiences promoted by the affordances of each medium. As an experience itself, that delegation has to be built on previous experiences and certainty—or trust. In the following example, trust is built from past

experiences, but also as a way of valuation and empathy for the work developed. Elena discovered **Fionna Apple** at university, when she was trying to learn better music to fit into her new social circle. She found a friend who used to make his own recorded *CDs* from the music he was downloading and ripping. They would usually share and discuss the music that they would find interesting:

> R: (…) He designed his own covers. He was from Philosophy; hence the covers were quite abstract and exotic, and that was my main way of choosing. I trusted everything from him, so I just had to take the most appealing cover to take home and listen. One time I took the one with **Criminal** by **Fionna Apple**, and for me it was an amazing song, it was not pop, but it was alike, it is not easy to describe its genre. The song is about someone with a broken heart, but it was not a ballad. (…) I like those kinds of surprises. (Elena, 30, Journalist, Mexico City)

Her account of trusting her friend relates to the notion of dispositions presented before, but here, the attachment that it creates is purely musical. They would not need to be friends, just to know that in other experiences that person recommended music that fits her tastes. That does not mean that an affective relation is not possible—Chispa making playlists for her friends in previous chapters is a good example—, it is just not a requisite. She is also attracted by the way he stores and designs his CDs, the possible meaning behind each cover. A third element is her background as someone who used to listen to pop before trying to get into those new genres in order to manage her own identity. Those three elements are guiding not only her decision to listen, but the way she gets close and pays attention to the music on those *CDs*, what she allows to get into her catalogue. There is an element of surprise, a rupture in her expectations of how a broken-heart song should be, which makes it interesting for her, within the limits of sounds that she can find familiar. The song—**Criminal**—becomes the materialization of those elements and creates new boundaries, in this case, to explore more about **Fionna Apple**. The trust is balanced with the sounds discovered and her past experience that will allow her to refresh her catalogue, to get new Musical Experiences.

As stated above, this trust or interest to learn from someone to expand the catalogue is not only from other listeners. Recommendation

systems play an important role in offering new music to the listener, through a balance between beloved songs and new ones (Morris and Powers, 2015, p. 113), the listener learns to manage it and trust them. But there are other mediators in which the listener allocates that form of trust for discovery. New music can be found in a radio station, as some listeners learnt that a specific station plays their favourite music, as well as some new pieces that can be interesting for them. Some others said that they would follow specific Record Labels, producers or blogs. As explained in relation to dispositions (Chapter 4), the integration of new musical preferences does not happen in a vacuum. Those mediators have a social component too, they are wrapped in social discourses that interest certain listeners to them, like the cult status of **4AD** or the clash between rock radio stations with Top 40 ones —very common in the case of Mexico from the mid-eighties. Some songs found during those explorations might be, or not, shared within the social group, nevertheless that music is always compared to the social group. Experimenting with new Musical Experiences could be considered as a risk, in terms of investment of time or money, but it is also a social risk related to the relationship between identity and music presented in sub-chapter 4.4. That risk can be controlled by this sense of deployment in strategic places.

The cases for *radio* and *mixed CDs* are interesting because they imply a sense of delegating the control that appeared as a main feature of some devices (Flynn, 2016; Hagen, 2016a; Hagen, 2015; Krause et al., 2015; McCourt, 2005; Morris and Powers, 2015). But the sense of delegation is not a free open exploration. It is a limited one that allows moments of control and release, as well as moments of distraction and attention, like the ones presented by Marta García Quiñones (2013; 2007) in her account of the use of the *shuffle mode* with certain digital musical players. Listeners' decisions to listen to radio, was—in some cases—grounded on the option of leaving it as a background to other activities, as it might include spoken shows and only-music hours. The trust comes from the listener being confident that they will not find any uncomfortable music, outside their frame, and letting the sound go along with their activities. In that scenario attention also switches constantly,

either when they want to find something more interesting or when the music that appears appeals directly to the listener (Kassabian, 2013; Kassabian, 2008). The music hence is responding to new place as background sound (Hesmondhalgh and Meier, 2018) that might also be limiting listeners in opportunities to explore differences (Hanrahan, 2018; Hesmondhalgh, 2008).

It is a paradoxical position, listeners want to let the control go, but align with certain conditions and boundaries. They want to listen to something that they might have not chosen but that appears as if someone has chosen it for them. This will make two phenomena possible: in the first place the transformation of the Musical Experience into a comfortable background that provides pleasurable surprises, allowing the listener to create new attachments at every moment. In the second place, listeners might expand or contract their listening framework based on the station's —or mixed CD— catalogue, while becoming familiar with songs that they usually are not attentive to. A creative interplay of 'anticipation' and 'surprise' (Gasparini, 2004) that let them be surprised within a specific predictable framework. In short, the switching listening allows them to be comfortable while discovering new pieces in a less challenging way. In the next account Edward will make evident the process of discovery through this balance:

> .. Or for instance, **Angel Olsen** I heard her on the radio and I like her noises and I looked who it was, and then I'd forgot about it, and then they played it again and I said "*C'mon I really like this.*" then a friend happened to mention it separately. "S*omeone who I'd think you might like is playing in Leeds*" and I went "*I know that name*", I was vaguely familiar because of the radio. So, it is the same sort of thing that you might get when you read book reviews, and then if somebody mentions "*oh I really enjoyed this book*", you go like "*it rings a bell*" and try to keep up with stuff, so rather that reading reviews it is just that the radio is on. On the other hand, yesterday, abnormally I was trying to do some work, I'd listen to **Gill Scott Heron** or **Mogwai**, or stuff that is jazzy.... It is more blurred than I'd make it now... There are bands that I'd put attention to and sometimes they are just background noise. (Edward, 28, teacher, Leeds)

The alignment explained above is fully illustrated by Edward. Through inattentive listening, **Angel Olsen** became interesting new music for him; he does not want an uncomfortable experience that makes listening to music annoying, but he does not want something too

challenging for him. This listening makes sense when he reads a review or someone else asks him about that artist. He discovers and expands through the catalogue available in the radio, in his playlists and in his social clique as a way of keeping music interesting. Everyday listening is the reach of an active balance that keep the listening experience interesting and it requires the enrolment of different mediators for it.

Streaming services and platforms know this balance between surprise and expectation very well. They play an active role in the process of refreshing the Musical Experience through their algorithmic system that assumes this kind of framed continuous listening. For example, when you—the reader—start reproducing a song in *YouTube*, it can continue playing music from the same artist or some similar music that it is related to it.

> V: How do you feel that (your practice) has changed, since *iTunes* and *Spotify*?
> R: I think is brilliant, we pay for *Spotify* premium. (…) You can get a whole set of recommendations based on what you have listened to in the past, and I find lots of different artists and stuff that I haven't heard before, some of them I like more than others of course. but the ones that I like I can just type their names and listen to the whole album. I really like *Spotify* in the sense that it lets you find new artists, like recommended for you, or like related artists, and then I usually do quick trip through the related artists tab and listen to their top tracks to try and work out whether I like them or not. But I also like it because you can create your own playlist in *Spotify.* So I have a chores playlist, work out playlist, like my old playlists from my first account and you can just drag and drop as you like. (Jessica, 24, student, Leeds)

Those services are based on the notion of control that explained above, but also trying to demand less from the listener. They are intimately related with other elements of the cultural context, they would recommend music that other listeners play together or music that usually go along in specific playlists. They are also mediated by other structural mediators, such as radio stations and magazines that produce their own playlists, or brands that create playlists for specific functions. This can produce a way of endogamous cultural consumption, in which the listener does not challenge and expand their musical knowledge (Beer, 2016; Beer, 2013b; Hanrahan, 2018; Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Prey, 2018). Notwithstanding, they also afford new possibilities for circulation, a

couple of clicks and the album or the artist could be explored in depth or shared with someone else. At the same time they present the control feature explained above, as they allow to skip easily and change to a different playlist. Finally, there is a constant navigation between what they consider 'their' music or lists and what they listen to in different situations, listening constantly places the challenge of having to choose what to listen at every moment. The level of control changes as the engagement with new experiences changes.

This section highlighted the ways in which listeners keep their listening practices interesting as they are part of a complex set of activities in everyday life. Refreshing the beloved practice —continuously listening to music—is not only about successful experiences in the past, or trying to repeat them, but to know how to balance the known and the new, control and trust, and access through everyday life. The Musical Experience is kept fresh and interesting as it can happen in new places and in new forms. While relying in some practices from other media, new devices and platforms allow listeners to engage in new forms, which also imply understanding music in different ways. The listeners are exposed to more music, in easier ways, they can change it more easily and they feel compelled to, the limits of boredom seem to be moved. In the next section I will explore how my interviewees deal with those new rhythms.

6. 1. 3. The Musical Experience against the Musical Experience

The Musical Experience is changing by its technologies and contexts. But the proliferation of devices is more than multiple sound sources, it also means constant access to multiple forms of catalogues, either official or unofficial. This access makes it easier for some listeners to find different versions of their favourite songs without being limited by place or purchase, like a special remix, a unique live version or a session for a radio station. This seems to keep the listening experience constantly updated and fresh, although it also threatens it. The speed in which new music appears in all those forms, and the possibilities it opens in terms of control and operation—such as skipping, clicking to learn more, new playlists—, demand from the listener to keep updated and

overwhelm them up to a point in which the same Musical Experience seems to be threatened. In this section I want to explore some of the ways in which the listener is confronted to that speed and the way they try to manage it to still keep an interesting Musical Experience.

Discovering new music and the need to engage with that new music is one of the most mentioned sources of tension in the data. As seen in the last section, listeners use new streaming services to manage their preferred catalogue, discover new things and as background listening that can be constantly switched to an attentive one. These uses expose listeners to constant new music updates, that are usually replicated by other media, like radio. Raúl, at 35, is aware of this change in his own practices. He used to listen to his records once and again until it was possible for him to buy a new one, the decision of buying a new album was made with a slow reflective process, mainly because of money limitations, and by a perception that he must get familiar with the whole album as singles are just part of a broader creation.

> V: Do you listen radio much?
> R: I have two radio stations, *Ibero 90.9*[20] and *Reactor 105.7*. I used to listen to *Radioactivo 98.5* a lot while it existed. *Ibero* has this concept of playing indie songs constantly, sometimes so *indie* that you might never listen to a song again. They are always behind the novelty. Now *Reactor* is doing that. My head got into that loop, my memory does not work anymore with the names of bands, they are so many because of the Internet! Some time ago, you might even know the names of each member of a band, and a bit of their biographies, but now, you might barely now the name of the band. (…) They are not interested in creating hits, or developing bands, they are just to putting new songs into your ears. (Raúl,35, Graphic Designer, Mexico City)

The relation with information and knowledge has changed. Listeners seem either to stick to the music they know or being —like Raúl— caught in the need for updates. According to the listeners I

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[20] Reactor 105.7 is a state-funded station that despite different changes in name and personality has remained as alternative rock music for a long time. Ibero 90.9 is funded by Universidad Iberoamericana—a private Jesuit university—, with a permit from the government as cultural radio; its focus is on international alternative music and news shows. Radioactivo 98.5 was a private radio station with commercial purposes that focused on international alternative music, it disappeared in 2004. For around 10 years those 3 stations were the only national radio to address contents to youth under the *rock* umbrella. Before that period, there have been other options but constantly within a very reduced spectrum.

interviewed, there is a constant sense of accelerated version of the Musical Experience. Particularly with playlists, which constantly updated produce a sense of a normative temporally of consumption (Eriksson and Johansson, 2017, pp. 73-74). Other researchers have found that this can still intensify the need to listen constantly (Johansson et al., 2018, p. 166). Nonetheless, it appears that it just freezes in the listener the possibility of intimacy with their Musical Experience; they feel compelled to participate in an accelerated consumption (Rosa, 2003) that, as Simmel (2002) argues—when talking about modern urban life—, could lead to overstimulation, boredom and indifference. This means the loosening of the attachment to the Musical Experience.

As argued above, this seems to be common within the playlist environment, but the social setting also plays a role. As I have argued in 4.4.2, the multiplicity of access has led to a distributed, or compartmentalized musical identity. That is, to have different musical preferences and attachments for specific Musical Experiences in relation with social and physical settings. For some listeners, this means to have more compartments to update, more possibilities of missing out something important[21], downgrading the aesthetic experience (Hanrahan, 2018). Many listeners try to keep this need for updates under control through different strategies. Some for example listen to their catalogue at home while new music at the car, some others try to engage with 'temporal music' in very short time spans and only in defined situations— like the club. To find the balance between keeping the need for update under control, while still keeping the Musical Experience rich, seems to be a constant challenge.

> I don't like the fact that I consume music in a more disposable way. Particularly with the 'Weekly Discovery' feature in *Spotify*, every week I listen to it, find a couple of things that I like, follow them up a bit and then I forget them totally. Sometimes I don't even put them in a playlist. I don't like the fact that I am using music as a simple accompaniment or just to fulfil blank spaces. I am really a fan of **Café Tacuba**, or **The Sounds**, but I haven't listened to their latest albums, not even those from two or three years ago. If I find a band that I like I listen to it a lot

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[21] This is known as Fear of Missing Out or FOMO, characterised in (Przybylski et al., 2013). A discussion of how marketing explores this can be found in (Hodkinson, 2019)

for a while, but it is not like before that I had to like everything. I listen to a couple of songs and then I find something new. Now my point of reference is my younger brother, he is a bit more into music than me. It is because of him that I liked **The Killers** and **Muse**, I have seen them life like 3 times now, but again, I haven't listened attentively anything new from them. (Saúl, 31, Publicist, Mexico City)

He is reflexive about this new situation, but it seems unstoppable. He had solid attachments with the bands he is mentioning, but they are now only accessed through past productions and nostalgia as Hesmondhalgh (2013, p. 53) argues. Saúl also shows an inability to keep himself interested in new music as albums seems to be very demanding. Some other listeners still buy CDs or LPS, but only as an expression of fandom, those albums never get listened to. Listening to albums for them seems to be something that requires attention and time, something that life does not have anymore, that is what vinyl lovers seem to promote and stores to exploit (Bartmanski and Woodward, 2015; Hracs and Jansson, 2017; Sonnichsen, 2016). This paradox created by keeping ourselves updated extends to other spheres of life, like movies, books, series and games.

To sum up, the availability of many more music spaces, through multiple devices, and the possibility of access to big musical catalogues has transformed the way in which people manage their own relationship with music in a paradoxical way. On one hand, they might discover new Musical Experiences beyond traditional barriers; on the other, the speed in which content updates has become overwhelming and creates new tensions with the loved music. Live music and collecting albums seem to act as ways out of those speedy engagements, but they are also subjected to the velocity of everyday life and the many dimensions that compose it. Multiple devices and multiple songs exponentially multiply the Musical Experience, both as new possibilities and as constraints, while listeners feel obliged to set up new strategies to manage their own attachments to make them last and remain important.

Overall, in this subchapter, I have explored how the Musical Experience is looked after and challenged—a topic that I found scarcely explored by academia. From the perception that our intimate songs acquire a material dimension and can become worn out, to the speed in

which the world seems to demand us to keep up to date. I resisted in this subchapter a pessimistic view of this trend, trying to keep the focus on the strategies that listeners use to keep the Musical Experience interesting and important. It can be said that as the very nature of the Musical Experience, these menaces and risks exist not only by the means in which music is consumed, but by the arrangements and demands of social life. It is possible for us to intimate a lot with our music by drilling and diversifying the experience, but it can also become uninteresting by overexposure. We can enrich a lot our catalogues to keep listening, but we can 'update to remain the same'. In any case, for challenging those risks, we need to mobilize a diverse network of actors and practices.

6. 2. Deploying attachments and musicking in everyday life

From a sociological argument, the key dimension of the music value for society is that of creating attachments to other elements of social life, intimate life and the world. Music not only provides the listener with affect through sound, but also acts as mediation to create new attachments. This is, the Musical Experience also belongs to a network of experiences that become meaningful through it. It is worthwhile here to recover Hennion's explanation of mediations: 'On the end of one mediation, it does not appear an autonomous world, but another mediation. Their relations compose a global network that cannot be summed up into a unit, but that can produce agglomerations as gigantic as the world of the intermediary' (Hennion, 2002, p. 221). From that perspective the series of connections is endless, making it difficult to follow empirically; the music as an object is constituted with a diverse set of elements that we are calling the Musical Experience now, which also mediates a myriad of other agents around the listener's word while the listener is also transformed. Hennion and DeNora explain that, in order to understand music from a sociological perspective, it is required to analyse it as a practice in specific places and times (Hennion, 2001, p. 18), in real time (DeNora, 2003a, p. 155). In empirical terms, it means

that those connections can be traced and limited to what the listener experiences and intends to achieve in everyday life.

In this sub-chapter the focus is on the strategic process through which listeners deploy their knowledge and experience in order to achieve specific experiences and attach with specific dimensions of their life. From a more comprehensive view, I present some everyday negotiations and decisions that the listener confronts everyday while a multitude of musical outlets are made available for them. This will lead to an exploration of the classical perspectives about the urban environment and the sound as strategic achievements—covered in the Literature Review; but showing what can be enhanced by using the perspective I am proposing here, leading to an exploration of the body and affects. This by showing how the listeners relate to the Musical Experience strategically in everyday life, focusing on how places, sound and affects co-constitute themselves with the Musical Experience. In other words, I intend to show how music matters in everyday life by transforming itself from our surroundings and affects, while at the same time transforming them.

6. 2. 1. The flow of the Musical Experience in everyday life

When thinking about the Musical Experience, it is possible to centre our view in a moment of listening, through a single device or specific music. Nevertheless, the concept of the Musical Experience is also the sum of all those elements, a comprehensive concept for making sense of our attachment to music in everyday life. With the age of digital consumption, mobile devices and technologies of sound music has acquired this new dimension as ubiquitous, in which music could be in and out of control (Gopinath and Stanyek, 2015; Kassabian, 2013). Through that multiplicity of devices, what we are mobilizing is not only music, but the Musical Experience. In this section I want to examine how listeners reconnect and connect with multiple forms of the Musical Experience in everyday life; by doing this I want to make evident the way in which listening is not only conditioned by everyday life, but both are in a constant exchange as a way to mediate the experience of the

self in the world. My argument here is similar to the one made by Tia DeNora (2000), in the sense of putting music as a structuring force for everyday life, but I want to highlight the movement of the Musical Experience through different assemblages in a reflective way, by mobilizing objects and intentions; mediators of the Musical Experience to constitute the Musical Experience.

There is no isolated technology of listening to music, a very common account at all age groups in my data is that people are constantly using different devices for different purposes. Those devices and the moment they choose are part of a process of valuation of what they want in every moment, moments of practice. Those devices interact and create distinctions between them, as they are still part of a complex system of music flow. I will illustrate this with Pablo, who considers himself a real fan of music. He plays the Bass as a hobby:

> V: How does music appear in a regular day?
> R: Well, I could start from the alarms. I set lots of alarms, and all of them are from songs that I am enjoying at the minute and represent something. While we are preparing to work, we listen to a local radio station that I like a lot, there is a good show there and that is at the mornings. My father picks us up and drive us to work, from where she steps down I still have a 10 or 15 minutes trip to work. At that point I would listen to some music, like for getting ready to work. I work at a shared office, so it is not easy for me to listen to something. If I would wear headphones, as people is constantly talking to me it would be a burden removing them and putting them up again each time. There is a radio that is playing for the whole office, it plays some music I can listen to. But listening specifically to something that I can listen and that I like would be until I go for lunch, which is an hour, plus 30 minutes going and 30 coming back. Apart from that, it would be until the night, when I am with my wife at home, sometimes I would put something, sometimes she does, but that would be while we are doing some other stuff, like cooking or so. Afterwards we might watch some TV. (Pablo, 31, Graphic Designer, Cancún)

Pablo, like some other listeners is constantly trying to engage with music in the interstices of everyday life. They are constantly making decisions towards it, like eating at home, or commuting by a longer route. But music appearing in non-private settings is also important, like the shared radio in the office or the café. Those settings also condition how it is possible to listen to music, against the demands of the office. It is a creative management of everyday life that enhances the Musical Experience and the quotidian at the same time. As more events would be

narrated more music would appear, from different sources and with different outcomes in his practice, all of them allowing the listener to do different things with it and demand different things from him. For example, for his attentive listening moments, he would download *FLAC* files and move them to his phone, which is connected to a special set of headphones; in the other hand, listening at home with his wife would include the TV with *Spotify* and a set of speakers from an old stereo system. It is this multi-modal way of being that allows the Musical Experience to become relevant, the possibility of making it travel and adjust to different settings and at different moments.

The Musical Experience does not travel by itself, in order to actively engage with a management of the soundscape (Beer, 2007; Nowak and Bennett, 2014), it demands preparations, knowledges and techniques. It means to domesticate the assemblage through a series of trials and preparations (Lehtonen, 2003; Nag, 2017). As I have explained in section 5.3 there is a constant exploration of what the listener can get from every device and how it affords interaction with others. Rosa illustrates some of these processes effectively. When she was young she was privileged by having access not only to a rich cultural capital, but also access to different innovations of the time by traveling constantly to the USA, where she would get many technologies and records in each of those trips. This would make her prone to try different technologies. Recently, her daughter introduced her to downloading through *p2p*, digital stores and streaming services. She is really happy about the change, she is aware of some outcomes of the technological change, but she enjoys the possibility of having music everywhere all the time, mostly curated by her. The interview takes places at her house, a big house in a gated community for upper classes in Puebla. She takes me on a tour, and although she is not a collector, or a musician, it strikes me how much musical devices and possibilities are in every room, even in her car:

> Normally, this [the kitchen/dining room with a portable speaker] is where I put music while doing something, I just plug in the phone and that is it…. I got headphones in every have I have, earphones. I have this iPod, they don't produce it anymore (…) After the iPhone, I found that I did not need anything else, that is how it works for me, I like to have the

newest, but if the old still works for me then I would stick with it for a while. When I plug this speaker, I would be able to listen everywhere in the house, it has a great sound and the house has a really nice resonance, I have even identified this spot, which is where I get the best sound everywhere.

(She opens a small bag from her purse)

Obviously, I cannot risk myself to run out of battery, so I have these power banks and leads everywhere I go. This never changes, but this does [A set of 4 usb sticks from her bag], the content in these memories change a lot. They are mostly for when I am driving, I got really excited when I found out that the new car would have an USB input, and I would be able to carry lots of music in it. I don't always know what each of these sticks have inside, but all of them are music. I only know perfectly this one, this one is the music of my life, I add things every now and then, but it is my music. (…)

I travel a lot for my work, from door to door an 8 hours trip, I would not be able to stay without music that long. So I start listening in my car, if I am driving to the airport; then the ipod with the lead that would not last much, then the other one, while this one is charging. It is not possible for me to use the phone for music a lot, because when I travel, I would be answering emails and *whatsapps*, so saving battery is important. But it I need them for music in a particular case I would use them. (Rosa, 60, Marketing, Puebla)

Listening to music means more than having a device to play music; with technological development it implies the coordination of different objects, aligning them and preparing them to accomplish a set of learnt practices. Musical experiences are the result of these negotiations in which everyday life is important, and music is inserted in empty slots with different degrees of preparation. Rosa is an interesting case, and her quote can synthesise a number of accounts in terms of planned action and objects. She plans ahead, by accommodating albums, music files or headphones in her routine, listening to music is the articulation of her decision through aligning specific objects. She shows that everyday life is an integral part of managing those objects, she plans ahead according to her routine, but also when that routine is disrupted and more planning is demanded, like when travelling for long hours. Device choice is a negotiation between what fits better to her body, in terms of weight, shape and room within her belongings, and the process of being able to operate it, it is embodied (Simun, 2009). But it is also a matter of materials and spaces, the house, the airport, the house, the office, the plane, are different settings that require a differentiated form of engagement and timing and they are incorporated

in the decisions made for the Musical Experience. In other words, the Musical Experience becomes a multiple interconnected experience.

To enact the Musical Experience is to mobilize objects, expectations, sounds and contexts, it is to manage the experience itself through those engagements. Listening to music becomes a multi-sited place that cannot be understood without observing its relations with other listening experiences. Ola Stockfelt (1997) challenges the idea of an appropriate form of listening by invoking the many *musics* in many places that could become adequate for specific outcomes. As the data suggest those modes of listening are not just affective, but the product of valuation and learning and the way in which the listener has learnt to deploy different assemblages through everyday life to make it adequate through detailed planning. The management of those attachments within the Musical Experience is a constant negotiation and valuation that leads to different levels of agency and delegation. To understand these fluxes and movements, it becomes necessary to understand how the listener deploys different forms of cultural and economic capital into the Musical Experience and manages their 'constrained agencies' (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 79). The following sections are intended to go deeper into this argument and to show how the Musical Experience is mediated by specific actors like place, body and emotions.

6. 2. 2. Managing places, the Musical Experience and everyday life

The relationship between the space and music has been widely studied. The place is a source of sound that intersects with the listener's interest, emotion and possibilities. Those sounds can be welcomed or uncomfortable, and the Musical Experience is useful to manage some of those elements (Bull, 2007; Bull, 2000; Nowak and Bennett, 2014; Watson and Drakeford-Allen, 2016). The space can be part of the successful Musical Experience and the place can be enhanced by the Musical Experience, both are mediators of each other. The listener then has to show skills and knowledge in the way in which the Musical Experience in specific places is deployed and becomes part of their biography. In this section I am trying to focus on how the place acts over

the practice of listening and the effect that it has in the attachments of music. In this case I would like to focus on the constraints that the place sets for the listener, as it rises new forms of understanding the Musical Experience as a whole.

The Musical Experience, as a conceptual achievement that the listener builds up, makes it possible to analyse how certain notions of success and failure (Suchman, 2005) are created in everyday life through an exchange of expectations and surprises. In the next example Elena tells the story of a failed date, caused by the place, the devices and some very specific elements that are not there, like her interpretation of the music there:

> I went out for a date with a guy. We went to a bar, and it was our first date, and going there with big speakers behind us turned me into a horrible mood. I did not work at all. […] I would like to think that for a first date you have to go to a quiet place, to talk, to meet each other. I feel that when you go to other kind of places the objectives are different. First, the place is really important, it was supposed to be a bar, but it turned to be a Karaoke. I did not know.[…] I do not like to sing songs. At the beginning the place was nice, with a bohemian ambient, low lights and all. Suddenly, we were completely in gloom, and the table we took had the speakers behind. I would never have imagined that they would raise the volume so hard, I was there, trying to have a conversation. I was not able to listen absolutely nothing, and with Banda music. That collapsed my mood. (Elena, 30, Journalist, Mexico City)

The place becomes an uncomfortable experience, not by itself but in the sum of her expectations and the devices around. The setting is not only the karaoke bar with loud speakers, but a scarcely known guy who did not understood what a first date was about for her. She explains later that the relationship was over, mainly because she noticed that he liked a lot of banda—that is why he choose that place—, hence, he may have a violent personality. Banda, is a genre of music rich in brass and percussions, usually related with dance in rural areas, but recently related with narco and violence. Banda lyrics are sometimes related to life in the rural areas and romantic stories, but some others include references to territory control, masculinities through violence and drug dealing (Dávila, 2012; Jaramillo, 2013). She displays expectation based on a cultural framework that interacts with the material setting and her own musical preferences. As Nick Prior (2011; 2008) suggests, focusing on the material and the mediators, does not mean to dismiss class

struggle, representation and violence (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Her example does not show violence or risk in specific terms, but it is precisely her perception of it, linked with a set of elements which not only ruins the Musical Experience, but also the possibilities of having a good date. When exploring the deployment of elements of the Musical Experience, it is possible to follow the lead to find out interpretations that go beyond the individual and rely on the social.

Devices are a good starting point to unpack the role of places in the Musical Experience. This is a common constraint among my participants, the space is not only the possibility of sound—as I will explore in the next section—but a set of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. Listening to music at work, or on the street, or in shared spaces deploy the expectations of being respectful with other's soundscapes. In many of those occasions, headphones seem to be the only form to deploy the Musical Experience. But —as any device— headphones are situational, they can be highly problematic in some other situations, like riding a bike or walking around the city in a busy day. Some informants, in the urban context of Mexico, explain that headphones can also be a sign that something valuable is hidden below, like an *iPod* or an expensive mobile, which could call robbers' attention. Kathleen Ferguson (2015) argues that Michael Bull's account of the iPod as a positive medium for realization is rarely critical, the iPod can be a source of problems. She is interested in the problems for social life and Bull's argument of auditory bubble, but I am interested in the contextual nature of those problems, and the strategic ways in which listeners try to overcome them in the search for the Musical Experience. For example, some informants buy cheaper headphones for their new devices, either for not showing the iconic 'white lead', or to not let the 'good ones' break in the urban use.

> V: You are showing me mostly individual devices. Do you prefer to listen alone through headphones?
> C: I like to listen to music loud. So, is harder with headphones, obviously, if I wouldn't live in a terraced house, my music would be a lot louder when I listen at home. I am really aware of sound, like for gigs, so I have like professional earplugs, because I've been musician for a while so I can't risk to damaging my ears. I wear professional plugs at gigs, so it kind of block out the level of music. Some of those, the proper ones,

block out all the bass and all the high, so you get like a really good sound in. It is still loud but not hurting. […] Sometimes I walk to work, if I walk on my own and is a long walk I would listen to music, and I pick something, maybe something quick to rather make me walk faster. But if I am having a bad day, I might listen to something like a punk song, to make me feel more confident, not on my own. So, generally, I listen to it when I walk on my own, I listen to it in the car. I like singing but I don't like to sing in front of people, so in the car I would sing, and I would make playlist that I know the words of it to sing along in the car. (Claire, 34, Social Media Manager, York)

In this vignette, it is evident that Claire is aligning places and the Musical Experience all the time. Through it, she is representing places as a series of invitations and demands, all different. Her body, her knowledge and the sound volume make her to buy ear plugs for live performances. The distance she has to walk, her mood for the day and the genre of specific music make the day more manageable. The car is interesting as space of comfort and public intimacy (Bijsterveld, 2010). She is not the only one who sings in the car, but certainly for most of the listeners who drive it is still a very public space and one could feel exposed. Nevertheless, the car for many of the interviewees becomes a place with much more possibilities in terms of music and loudness, some interviewees even admit being less careful with loudness in the car than at home. Michael Bull proposes the car as a new place to understand the urban space and the mobility though it (Bull, 2004). The interesting thing here is that it becomes a place with less constraints in the sound, but still some form of the exposure. This shows the role that the Musical Experience plays to create comfort and intimacy in urban environments, although there should be preparations to make separate places together in a seamless way (Vertesi, 2014). Listeners, like Claire, do not want to establish complicated connections at each space, the devices that build everyday experiences must be able to be carried and interconnected to work though, and the listener has to learn how to master them.

The relationship between the Musical Experience and places— entails the enrolment of discourses and activities that make the experience complex and convergent. When analysing the deployment of the Musical Experience in specific places in everyday life, it is possible to see the strategic management of attachments, that make possible for the listener to keep on listening. The attachments are negotiated with the

surroundings while those attachments transform the surrounding and anything that they touch around. The music that matters in everyday life can enhance our mood, fail a date or convert our car into a better version of our room. In the following section I will explore with more detail the elements of sound that are involved in the Musical Experience and how they become affective attachments to the music.

6. 2. 3. Managing sound and affects

When managing the Musical Experience, and its attachments there is a series of elements that should be negotiated and prioritized. Sound is a key element of the Musical Experience and the material of a song, as I have shown in 5.3 it is a source of elements to discover, to learn how to get pleasure and to intimate with the music. Furthermore, sound as an attachment is always technologically mediated in everyday life, it will change with our learning and engagements with new devices—which also changes with our economic capital— through the life course. In the information I gathered from the listeners, sound is a key element in the process of deciding and management of the Musical Experience. In that sense, the management of sound as an attachment is also a strategic one that needs constantly to be renegotiated and shaped.

The sound is the material of music, and it is analytically inseparable from the body. Will Straw explains that by centering in the sound it is not only a form to explore the aesthetic dimension of the listening experience, but also to de-centre the individual as the main driver of the relationship (Straw, 2012), which allow us to make sense of how it circulates through different moments, devices, places and attentions (Straw, 2010). The desired sound —and Musical Experience— is negotiated with other elements in everyday life and in a series of strategic practices that feedback into future practices. I would like to revisit the case of Saúl (31, Publicist, Aguascalientes) whose left ear is deaf (see 5.3.2.). That condition makes him choose specific kind of headphones for specific forms and places for listening, but with those devices he frequently deals with stereo sound in music, he turns around the headphones, putting the one intended for the left ear on the right

one. For him, listening is always better in open spaces, he can feel—in the literal sense—the music with his body and get a fuller experience. But he cannot do that in public transport. The sound from his headphones has to be good enough to deal with the sound of the subway or the street, particularly if he is trying to listen to podcasts. The sound is conditioning its device choices and investment, but also the way in which he travels and how he learns the music he loves.

When trying to describe the ideal sound there are different accounts depending on the situation, but as a synthesis it must can be 'felt', and as such it can be hurtful. In that sense, good sound is not a stable idea, it is constant movement, while centring the argument of the body. Karla's explanation while showing me her devices illustrates this point:

> R: I hate the headphones that come with the phone, because they are not good quality. I am really picky on that regard. I got a pair of *Kenwood* when I was a child, I got a professional set of *Kenwood headphones*. I was a child, but one way or another you can feel the quality, and your ears get used to it, you can tell the difference in quality. It is now the same with *MP3*, those with 128 kbps are not the same as 320 kbps, it just feels wrong. It is the same with headphones. I started with a regular one, then I got the *Kenwood* and noticed that those were superior and everything else was rubbish. But those headphones are really heavy, so I use the small ones when I am travelling. Also, I don't have where to hide them, they are really flashy, that is not good at the street. I use these [the mobile ones] that are for heavy use, they resist a lot. (Karla, 27, Media Producer, Puebla)

When talking about sound, listeners tend to display two elements: mastery and capital. The first one is made visible through the mention of the kilobyte per second (kbps), a unit of data transference that became popular during the *Napster* era. It means basically the amount of information that is stored in a second of the file, more information— higher kbps— meant better quality, but also a bigger file. In *Napster* and other sharing services, this was shown as a feature of the file so the listener could decide what to download. Alongside, sound becomes a display of capital, as it is assumed that expensive devices deliver higher sound quality. Both of them set bars for her that cannot be easily met. Not every listener is interested in those technical dimensions of sound, much of it depends on specific backgrounds—dispositions— and life

courses, nevertheless, all of them are constantly engaging with sound—as a sensory dimension—when trying to listen to their favourite music, and this sense of the sound changes under the light of new experiences. In some other cases the emphasis is in the sensory dimension of the music.

> V: Are you concerned about the quality of sound?
> R: To be honest, no, I am not. For me music is more like an amusement. I want to sing or listen to that song. I download it, I carry it with me, I put it in the car for keep listening to it, but I am not too much into quality. Now that I am married with him (Raúl) I can tell the difference, but I am not bothered. I am more concerned about the state of mind that music produces than about quality. (Alba, 38, Fashion Designer, Mexico City)

Sound knowledge is performed in some dimensions as an 'epistemic culture', it is not only a practice of knowledge, but a way of practically producing knowledge and, in the case of the Musical Experience, pleasure. Each time the expert listener tries to set up a new pair of speakers or equalises differently for punk vinyl or pop streaming, the listener is enacting knowledge and generating new knowledge. Every experience is an experiment. Even so, it is that practical display of knowledge that keeps some listeners, like Alba, outside of it. She can appreciate it, but the complexity of getting to it makes her focused more in the content and what is produced in her head.

The subjective relation that some listeners establish with sound is, in my data, always blurry, some argue that the vinyl should sound better, while others argue that new recordings are digital just transferred to a vinyl records, which makes it unauthentic. Some other think that sound quality is related with clarity to identify subtle elements in the music, while others with power and changes in loudness. For some others it has to do with nice voice and breathings, or with vibrant baselines, which is explored by manufacturers that just produce headphones that enhance the perception of bass. Interestingly, all of them have a clear line about what 'bad sound' is, that has to do with fuzzy sound or inability to distinguish the words in a song. From that measure, their experiences are assembled to produce a minimum of engagement that would be required. When they make those decisions, they are not only

displaying their attachments for music, or knowledges, they are managing them to make it adjusted to their needs.

Sound provides the listener with an aesthetic material to experience listening, hence with material and affective dimensions:

> V: Why do you say that you need to listen to music?
> R: In that is because I live alone, and I have been the only child in my family, then I enjoy been by myself most of the time. Therefore, music is like an accompaniment, a way of not being alone. It sound kind of depressing but it is not like that. Music makes some noise; I don't like when everything is in silence. It even relaxes me, I can't drive without music, I get stressed. (Marge, 22, Student, Merida)

Sound fills up rooms. The attachment deployed through sound is not only the way in which the sound fills the space (Tacchi, 1998), but helps the listener to experience specific emotions (Tacchi, 2003). Silence is not the lack of sound, but loneliness. In her case listening to music can take many forms, but the point is to expel silence. In fact, she is not particularly inclined to follow specific artists or buy albums, she gets music from her friends and plays it from her sources at hand; sometimes a speaker, the car's stereo or just the phone without any connection. In this sense, the negotiation tends to prioritize the idea of tackling the uncomfortable feeling rather than to deploy specific forms of listening. This does not mean that she does not have preferences and distinctions over her practises, but this one is particularly related by herself to her past.

The production and deployment of sound, in the Musical Experience, is knowledge, sensory material and affective engagement. It is through those three elements that transform the Musical Experience in the agent that DeNora (2000) describes in *Music in Everyday Life*, David Hesmondhalgh (2013) in *Why Music Matters* and Michael Bull (2007) in *Sound Moves*. A couple of sections ago, I showed Claire (34, York) who listens to punk when she walks around specific places by herself, to make her feel more confident. Similarly, Adal (21, Cholula) listens to **Steve Aoki**, before entering the field when playing American Football, it raises his heartbeats and feel ready. Israel (20, Puebla) listens to electronic music awhile playing war video games because it matches the sense of

attention that he needs to beat the game. It is not possible to reach an understanding of the Musical Experience without considering how, through all the mediations and practices explored above, the listener creates and ultimately displays affective attachments to it.

In the whole sub-chapter, I have analysed the ways in which the listener practices and drills the Musical Experience to keep it pleasurable and interesting, while at the same time producing it. I have shown how the management of attachments is present while the listener is trying to make it flow through different devices and spaces, while at the same time they try to make it strategically functional for their purposes. In the spaces between those two elements sound appears as a material of knowledge and distinction, that produces affective reactions and attachments that will affect the Musical Experience as a whole, converting it in agent of social life. This expands the affective dimension that Raphäel Nowak (2016a, p. 12) includes in the concept of normative ways listening, my argument with this thesis is that it is now possible to understand how that power and interest is build up and maintained. In the final subchapter I will explore how, once the Musical Experience acquires agency, it mediates the world and the way in which the past is understood.

6. 3. Musical experiences and the mediation of everyday life

The way that I am exploring the attachments to the Musical Experience is not isolated from the world. The listener gets specific points of entrance that come from the outside and they develop networks of meaning to appropriate the song and intimate with it. The place, the body and emotions that surround the experience are constituents of the Musical Experience in a personal and individual fashion. This means, as I have argued, that the Musical Experience is much more than the relationship between the individual and the object, mediated by a device. The Musical Experience is mediated by the world and, through the

practices of the Musical Experience our relationship with the world is also mediated.

For the listeners interviewed by Tia DeNora, music in everyday life is a resource not only in an intimate dimension, but also to texture social encounters (DeNora, 2000, pp. 110-129). It can facilitate communication between two persons or undermine their relationship. For Michael Bull (2007) music with the help of headphones is a way in which listeners can manage their experience of the world—make it more affectively manageable. Finally, for DavidHesmondhalgh (2013, p. 87), music can enhance feelings of shared experiences, attachment and solidarity towards other human beings. My intention with this subchapter is to expand those three notions. To explore, how by managing their attachments to music the listener also relates specifically with the word, not only as *others*, or a material space, but as a series of affective relations and emotions while creating a bridge between the inner self and the world around.

6. 3. 1. Mediating the world through Music

The music, once it has gained agency through the processes explained above, becomes an agent that shapes the ways in which the listener relates the self with the world. By expanding the argument made by Alfred Schütz (1951), regarding making—music as a model for social interaction, Peter Martin (2006, pp. 220-221) proposes an analysis of how music provides a narrative, which sustains a sense of identity and sense of belonging. From that perspective, in this section I want to demonstrate how once the attachments are made, the listener is able to use music to relate with the world in specific forms. Specifically, I want to do this from three perspectives: the way in which they use music to understand, separate or classify others; how they use music to understand themselves; and how they use music to interpret the broader social world.

The listener goes through a complex process to appropriate music, by making sense of it and actively exploring different possibilities from it. Alongside that process some assumptions are created about the way that

music relates to one's identity. This is, about how others act based on their musical identity. This could be related to the notion of distinction developed by Bourdieu (1979), but in contrast, its intentions are not only based on class, or certain forms of capital, but into a more nuanced relation of signifiers and practices (Prior, 2013) and intra-individual variations (Lahire, 2008). A couple of examples of those distinctions used in other sections are *Regeaton* and *Banda*. Interviewees talk about those genres, not only as class distinction—the blurry word *Naco*[22] appears as mobile as the music itself—but also the way those who listen that music behave: Loud speakers discomforting others; misogynistic messages and portrait of women as sexual entities to satisfy men; violence in their lyrics but also in the behaviour of the listeners when they are around; low educated and with very provocative dancing or talking. Those assessments are also influenced by how they are portrayed in other media, such as social media and television and the way they are related to specific settings, like markets or public transport stations in which there is a common perception of danger, dirtiness and, in general, disgust. Nevertheless, those classifications are porous, they often can enjoy certain artists or songs from those genres, depending on other mediators.

This classification process is used for certain listeners to act upon their own social relations. In the story narrated in 6.2.1., Elena dismissed a date because of the setting, but also as she felt she had little in common with the other person, based mostly on musical preferences. She assumed that as the guy enjoyed *banda* and the *karaoke* setting, he must be a violent person. The example suggests that the classification through music is only by looking for similar tastes, but apparently the idea is more flexible and can lead to positive experiences. Elena, with her following partner, had very different musical preferences making it interesting for her, as they share music that she found exciting to learn. Her boyfriend became part of her Musical Experience and a mediator for

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[22] The word is commonly used as distasteful, and as Sofía Chaparro (2016) argues, it is a derogatory term that follows from class perspectives. Nevertheless, in everyday use it is flexible and moving as the very notion of taste.

new pieces. Through the music her relationship gained interest and adopted new forms of communication. Another interesting example of this is the couple that I interviewed together, Alba (38) and Raúl (39). They have different tastes: while she is into Grunge and Goth, he is more into diverse forms of Metal. During their time together they have developed communicating bridges beyond genre. In the car, they listen through a *usb* stick, that is always with them, but that they load independently with new music that they know both can enjoy. Their genre listening is confined to working spaces. They have developed a new dimension of taste, a shared musical catalogue that does not participate in any of their individual ones, and that belongs to both of them while linking them together. Their musical attachments become intimate attachments between both of them.

The second form of mediation that the Musical Experience develops is through the self. Through musical practices, some listeners interpret their own emotions and forms of acting in the world. They talk about how at specific moments in their lives, music was a tool to make sense of their own emotions or acting in the world. I am trying to differentiate here from previous research that explains music as mood management help (Bull, 2005; Chen et al., 2007; Siles et al., 2019), but more as a tool for making sense of an affective or social situation focusing on themselves. This is achieved through what I explained above as drilling and assembling networks of meanings. The music acquires agency by relating certain specific forms with the listener. The assemblage of attachments created before activates this possibility.

Elena told me—in 4.2. —how a **Kings of Convenience** song made sense with a new stage in her life, as a university student, basically as the songs explores 'a feeling of not being good enough for something, but still keep trying'. Other listener mentioned how **Linkin Park** and **Blink 182** conducted them through teenage years anger and changing emotions. Both cases are related with lyrics and translation, but in other cases the relationship is more abstract. Paulina, 28, went through a difficult process in a romantic relationship, 'it was like some songs, some sounds would be telling me all the time that I should finish that relationship.' At that time, she went to a festival in New York, where she

listened to **Ryan Adams** for the first time, she related herself to his music, even without understanding the lyrics in full. She found pain in his music that was somehow related to her own emotional state that lead her to break up her relationship. Later, she would drill into Adam's music to find the album 1989—with versions of a **Taylor Swift** album—, she learnt that the artist was making that album through a process of mourning, which related further with her and used more of his music through her own mourning period. Music is not a stable entity it has moments of perceived stability for the listener, and when those attachments are managed it led to new attachments through a continuous process. While the individual listens more, the attachments are renewed and expanded.

The last dimension of this mediation is the way that the music is used to make sense of the world. As the previous discussion suggests, this is related to what network of knowledges the listener builds around a song or a genre, but subsequently, it deploys into specific contexts and moments. The individual interprets specific places or situations through that music. Adal, 21, makes this mediation visible, when he learns about the ironies of urban life with a song from the Mexican rapper **Lng/SHT 'Llaves, Telefono, Cartera'**,[23] about the only things that someone needs to look after when going out and partying in Mexico City, but also about the social clashes at parties, as Adal paraphrase 'we talk about rare records and Game of Thrones, while those are talking about their dammed brand new phone.' In a similar fashion, Oscar (24) a writer from Puebla, travelled to New York inspired by his favourite artist, **Billy Joel**. When he got there, he found little relationship between Joel's representation of the city, which was disappointing for him, until he found **Paul Simon's Songs from the Capeman**:

> I play it while walking around in my *Discman*. It is a mixture of **Simon's** folk and Caribbean music, that happened to be a failure. But for me that was a more real New York, according to what I was living there. A city

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[23] Keys, phone and wallet

challenging and fun. And that is how it became one of my favourite records.

In this section I have explored some accounts of how listeners manage their attachments not only to relate with the music. Beyond the idea of music as a way of sustaining identity (DeNora, 2000, p. 73), it acts as a way to relate to others (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, pp. 54,142; Martin, 2006, p. 221), or to places. In this section I discussed how the attachments to music are deployed and re-shaped as a way to interpret something outside the music. It can be used to interpret others, the self, situations and places. Those mediations are uncertain in their outcomes, they should not be assumed to be positive, or even sustainable over long periods of time, but the attachments created in that process shape the Musical Experience of the listener. In other words, the Musical Experience shapes the listener's making sense of the world, and the world transforms the Musical Experience. The Musical Experience also creates attachments to the world. This idea develops a better understanding of the Musical Experience as something that also has consequences for how individuals interact among them, and how it becomes a resource for sense-making. Through specific practices, expectations and surprises, the Musical Experience builds a world that some of my listeners seem to understand better, or at least that allows them to share themselves in it.

6. 3. 2. Memory and time mediation in the Musical Experience

The Musical Experience is a pragmatic object of research that—in the ways of Born or Lahire—looks at the past as an influence for the practices developed in specific contexts. At the same time the Musical Experience is individual and social, intimate and contextual, sensory and abstract. In order to assemble those forms, the Musical Experience and the listener mediate memories, moments and time. The management of attachments is also the management of the past, and a process of constantly reconstructing it, while looking after it. This section explores the way in which the Musical Experience mediates interpretations of the past and time, not only as a way to look after the memories or the

attachments themselves, but also as a way of understand them and interpreting them constantly.

The mediation between music and memories has to do with consumption and the way the listener encounters that music. Tia DeNora shows how music's power to affect the listener is the summary of the aesthetic elements of music, the ways that the listener attend to it, the memories and associations created, and the specific circumstances of consumption (DeNora, 2000, p. 43). In other words, the listener acts in the production of agency in the Musical Experience. Hence, there are two elements to attend to it, the ways in which the listener can interpret the object—lyrically— and the ways in which music is made present. This is a key element in Anahid Kassabian's argument about attention and distributed subjectivity, as attention to music in an ubiquitous music era is permanently in flux but that does not mean that affective relationships cannot be build up because of its sensory qualities (Kassabian, 2013, p. 114). This is a common trope between many of the listeners I interviewed, particularly the younger ones, as they are more concerned with listening to music all the time and most of their social lives seem to be textured by it. Adal (21, Student, Puebla), for example, shows me how he is able to relate every person that he has met with a song, and almost every song that is important for him can retrieve a moment: 'I have a song for every moment in my life'.

In many cases, there is a synchronous relationship between the music and the context, which means that the listeners experienced a sense of adequacy between the music and the mood of the moment (DeNora, 2000, p. 67; Nowak, 2016a, p. 70). Some of the memories explained by Adal are asynchronous interpretations of the past while listening in another context. He narrates how, now he thinks about one ex-girlfriend through a song that he was listening to—years after that relationship—while having a haircut, and the lyrics and the topic made him think about her personality. This kind of reinterpretation of the past through musical objects appeared a few times in the data. Other examples are less concerned with attention or enjoyment, as in the case of Paulina, that can evoke the smells of the cookies that her grand used to make for Christmas, even when she does not like the music. Attention,

alignment and synchronicity do not seem to be the only ways in which the Musical Experience relates to memories, but also a sense of randomness and reinterpretation. The actual technological environment seems to multiply the possibilities of those musical memories and the way they can be created, but also it opens the door to understand through that 'unrelatedness' David Hesmondhalgh's (2013) concerns with negative experiences and affects. By accepting the asynchronous production of musical memories, it is possible to advance the argument towards the topic of this chapter, the management and strategic production of memories.

The listener is an active agent in the mediation of time that strategically moves and displays her attachments to create specific moments and spaces. Playlists provide the listener with a better sensation of control (Flynn, 2016; Hagen, 2015; Morris and Powers, 2015), as they can assemble certain music in advance for specific purposes, as well as having access to jump from one to another in any moment. Some interviewees create playlists 'on the go', which is capturing music that they are listening in a given moment for listening later; they also plan activities, like trips or parties, pre-imagining the appropriate sound setting for the activity they want to or the 'mood' the think they might need. But some listeners use it as a repository for memories or specific periods of time, that they use later to remember that period. They tend to save the music that they discover in a *year's*—a month, a school term—playlist, that they can revisit at a later time it in order to re-evaluate or revive a memory of it. By creating lists this way, listeners ensure access to 'mediated memories' (van Dijck, 2007) that at the same time encapsulates the device, the moment and the mind of the listener, and that are prepared to mediate this moment in the future. By using this concept is important to note, that, for José van Dijck, the production of those memories is not an individualistic process but a socially and culturally embedded practice (van Dijck, 2006, pp. 358-359). The listener does not only access intimate interpretations of the past, or moods, but also contextual settings and social changes, as when

Alejandra (31) retrieves trova to remember her time of trying to change the world.

Curating music is a form of owning it, creating attachments, that is not constrained by synchronicity, genre or even a part experience. Playlists invite the listener to create their own relations with the music, in a temporal way or not, but they create interpretations of the past through different semiotic strategies. Cintia defines herself as a 'playlists-maker':

> V: How do you make playlists?
> R: (…) Then, it was related with the dates and the lyrics. If the song is about someone who should be alone or something like that I would think 'Yes, I need to be by myself.' I used to give my own meanings to certain songs, and then they would take me to specific moments, certain parties and specific periods. This [playlist], to take an example, I was really into parties at that moment, and there are the songs that I liked for that. My playlists are around what I know and what I feel at specific moments. (Cintia, 25, Journalist, Mexico City)

The playlists that Cintia creates are not constrained to genre, emotions or time periods, but her own interpretations and sense of curation (Atton, 2014). Later during the interview she shows me an interesting use of those lists. She has a boyfriend who was doing a masters in Bristol, when she had the chance to travel to England they took a trip based on musical interests, particularly Manchester and Sheffield. She knew some bands and titles from those cities, but she wanted to get deeper into them before travelling, so she searched for music around those cities and created lists in her *Spotify* around them. She listened to them during the trip and made herself familiar with all the music: 'for me those cities now sound like that, like the **Arctic Monkeys** and so.' The transformation made available through playlists was not only about the memories that happened and the meanings, but also about creating an expectation about what she wanted to learn and discover with those songs, the songs where the expectation of the city. David Hesmondhalgh (2013, pp. 122-123) is sceptical about the importance of those notions of scenes, as they can be mostly produced by private interests by record labels. Nevertheless, it also helps to develop the ways in which memories are not as individualized as they appear, particularly through the process of producing the future. Some

other listeners create playlists for their future drive, or for a party to come. The importance of those examples. is that they create the case to understand lists as memories for the future, that merge expectations, knowledge and the autonomy of the listener to re-signify the Musical Experience. In the case of Cintia, those lists related her previous notion of the city and created new memories, until they became the cities themselves.

The Musical Experience is intimately related to time, world experiences and memories, and new technologies are allowing listeners to manage them in new ways. In this section I have explored that relationship as a way in which every element is not only changed by the music, but the music itself changes through the relationship with everyday life. As argued by Jane Hogarty (2015), the production of memories through music is not only because of its sensory dimension, but it also implies the effort and time that listeners invest in creating them. In this section I showed that is precisely that 'practical' work of memories, which allow to disengage the idea of musical memories from time and cultural meanings. The Musical Experience becomes a mediator of the world, as well as a repository for memories and time that can be activated at listener's convenience, who is also looking for specific forms of negotiating between those memories and ways to keep them powerful and interesting for them. It is not only recreating attachments but producing new ones while managing the ones that they already have.

In this subchapter, I have explored the ways in which the Musical Experience, as a component of everyday life, is not only the product of mediations, but also produces new mediations of different nature. It can mediate the way we interpret the world or also how we retrieve it from the past. This is not a casual happening, but a strategic one that has to do with how the listener manages attachments while relating to those elements of life.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, I was able to explore the active role of the listener to manage and keep the Musical Experience interesting and

refreshing. The music becomes an object charged with meanings that adopts an intimate form in the life of the listener, who feels the need to adopt certain strategies to protect it and look after it. This not only shows the precarity of the attachments—they can change every time, not disappear—, but the musical object as a plastic element that is prone to wear down or even, become too public. This is interesting as we talk about cultural objects that are available for many people at the same time. In contrast, the Musical Experience needs to be kept alive by selecting new experience to be included and using a strategic use of the devices around. The Musical Experience as a source of attachments can also be in risk or put other attachments at risk. The Musical Experience as the product of different attachments is mediating other life experience all the time, to transform them, in a positive or a negative way.

The attachments that are created are not only looked after, but also managed to create experiences that could make life richer for the listener, or more manageable. Some listeners protect certain music from over exposure or from others; some other use technological devices to keep the experience interesting with new music; some others prepare music for their trips around the city as well as devices; in some cases that preparation might include the very sound environment and the ways of manage it. While they manage those elements, they also manage their relationship with the world and with other, but also with their own feelings and memories.

The Musical Experience structures everyday life and creates different ways of experiencing it. While managing the heterogeneous attachments to music, we also manage everyday life and our affective selves. The Musical Experience is a strategic management of different elements of everyday life, and while it changes the present experience it also changes the way we relate with our past. Music in everyday life is not only a resource, but a way to transform the way listeners make sense of everyday life and try to make it more fitted for their interests. The Musical Experience provides with agency while gaining agency through different managements. In general, this chapter has shown, how

music in everyday life is more than an aesthetic resource or a tool, it is integral part of everyday life.

7 - Conclusions - How Music Matters?

My argument for this thesis is that music matters for individual and social life by mediating our individual self and the social identity through affects while it can be appropriated; music feels like belongs to ourselves. Close to the end of this thesis, Daryl Martin introduced me to a radio programme and *podcast* called *Soul Music*, produced by the BBC. The show takes a song and tells different stories around it and the way it was created, known or written, to the way it became the hymn of a social movements. On the episode dedicated to **Shine on You Crazy Diamond** (Gregor, 2018), it is possible to hear an account by **David Gilmour** about how the song is dedicated to former band member **Syd Barrett**, and how the sounds started to assemble; there is also a story about how a woman surpassed through the pain of losing a son to mental health problems and how the song talks to her about that experience; finally there is a story about how a DJ, at a party, left the song on repeat for hours in different versions, to let his friends penetrate deeper in their dreams. The show claims to be about the emotional force of music, but it is always about something more; how people get to interpret, appropriate and love a song. This is, through other means, the main objective of this thesis. To show that music matters for multiple reasons for individuals in society: it matters beyond costs.

Music matters by creating attachments in multiple directions. This thesis explored the formation of this value. This was achieved by conceptualizing the relationship between music and the listener as a set of practices, with emotional, semiotic and material components, that includes the past, the future and the future constrains (Lahire, 2017). Expanding what Christopher Small calls *musicking* (Small, 1998b), listening to music is a pragmatic assemblage of heterogeneous nature and mediations, not only about materials and spaces. Music is a manifold idea (Mol, 2002), it is at the same time a verb, an object and an assemblage. The findings suggest that, the love of music is composed by sounds, places, memories, affects, devices, formats, stories, images, knowledges, and a very reflective and skilled listener who deploys all those elements in each new experience. The listener also creates new

affects through those active engagements and new attachments are formed. Forming attachments to music—making it matter—is also a non-linear mechanism that produces, intensifies or diminishes some other attachments. In other words, almost every time we listen to music our relationship with it will change.

Music matters because it can be owned, intimated and managed as our own multiple identities. With the help of some metaphorical concepts I have shown some elements of the mechanism of the attachment to the Musical Experience. In the first place—chapter 4—the listener gets and uses a disposition, something that attracts and conditions attention, that is triggered by a meaningful experience—threshold moment—that starts different explorations and negotiations between the listener and the experience. This moment starts a negotiation with the listener's own ideas of the self and the world, which help her manage some elements of those composition to make sense of it. In other words, the listener gets an intimate knowledge (Raffles, 2002) of the objects and the experience. That is, the individual is competent in how to use it and what is produced by it, but also as in having a very individual and private relationship that includes the body, the context and interactions that might be invisible for others. Through that process the listener also uses it to manage different dimension of her identity that is also deployed and displayed through music in specific forms and contexts. Once we learn how a song has been made ours, we integrate it to our everyday life and use it according to our interests.

Music matters by being mediated by other actors while mediating them. It is at that point when the entanglement of listening experiences gets complicated. The listener never experiences this process as a linear path in every single case. Multiple *musics* and experiences are in constant interaction and negotiation. The listener, once interested in a piece, evaluates the ways in which it fits with other elements of her life. An interaction that I call her re/tuning takes place, as the listener tries to make sense of the new music as object and mediator of the world. The listener constantly adjusts all those elements through her life course and adjusts again the place that specific songs could take in her life. This is happening with different music, different objects and different devices in

different contexts all the time. The Musical Experience is always a strategically ordered mess, that is how we create attachments to it.

Music matters by not being only music. The analysis that I present in this thesis—chapter 5—shows that the attachment to music is developed through practices that involve the spaces that we use and produce by listening; the diverse knowledges that we constantly get, integrate and use to make music important; and the ways in which specific technologies allow us to get specific experience through the body and the way we relate to them. We, the listeners, drill into the music that we are attached to. That is, we test it and dig deeper into its different dimensions to enhance our intimacy with it, while also developing a knowledge about the social world and ourselves. Drilling attaches us to our music; while it looks that we are separating that music from the world by making it ours, it is actually creating new forms of attachments to it and to ourselves, cultural meanings and identities, our present and our past.

Music matters by being in constant movement and by being sensible to new adjustments and meanings. Hence, the listener feels the need to guard it, protect it from being transformed into something else, while—paradoxically—still keeping it interesting and alive. In chapter 6, I have shown how through certain forms of control and management of the attachments to music, the listener treats music as a material that can be worn out. The listener is aware of this moving quality of music attachments, as it becomes an intimate part of the self it has to be protected and meticulously shared in specific spaces and places. The music becomes a dimension of intimate life (DeNora, 2000), while it still belongs to the world. Nevertheless, music also shapes the way in which the world is experienced, perceived and understood. As an expert in that specific intimate object and its assemblages (Hennion, 2010), the listener controls it, to perform specific forms of the Musical Experience to manage its affects and sense of being. The listener is not only using the music, but the heterogenous Musical Experience.

Music matters by being a convergent practice that mediates other elements of social life. The key argument of this thesis is that to understand music from social sciences—music in society—requires us to

understand it as a practice that is shaped by the devices, contexts and intentions at every moment. I suggest that, as a practice (Ingram et al., 2007; Lahire, 2017; Warde, 2005), it is required to pay attention to what is mobilized from the past and the contextual constraints that lead to that moment, and how the listener elaborates on it to build a satisfactory relationship with it. This expands the possibility of including affections, intentions and creative strategies into the analysis. The listener does not only use music (DeNora, 2000), devices (Bull, 2007), or cultural meanings (Bourdieu, 1979), but all of them. The assemblage mediates the relationship with the self, with the object/music and with the world. To expand the understanding of Christopher Small above, music is not only a verb, it is an experiential assemblage, a way to relate with the self and the world through a relational mobilization of elements.

Music matters by being a way of being in the world and making sense of it. At the beginning of the project, I was attempting to create an argument around the value of music in the digital era from a user valuation perspective (Hutter and Stark, 2015; Stark, 2011), but that has changed. I realized that to talk about the value of music—outside institutional and capital value—a more ethnographic approach should be taken; which means to approach to the listener. Hence, I had to interpret value as importance/*matter-ness* for the listener and, in consequence, to social life. As consequence, this thesis shows how music is important as an integral part of the self, the social world and the way the listener relates to the world through memories and affects. Music, I insist in this thesis, is a way of relating, changing and being in the world. It is not the only one, but it certainly interacts with many others, and is sensible to life changes.

Music matters by being an object that can produce transferable knowledge. In his book, *Why Music Matters*, David Hesmondhalgh (2013) explores this possibility of a critical defence of music. He proposed to understand music as a way of creating relationships between the individual and the world. As such, music sociology should be sensible to structural constrains and negative experiences of music. I tried to follow that project with this thesis, but my strategy was to untangle the ways in which, starting from individual life and identity formation, the

relationship music-listener gets to that point of importance. This—I argue— was still an unexplored pathway from the social but also from the technological point of view. My intention is to enrich the ways in which social sciences can understand music and, saving the peculiarities of this object, other cultural products by getting closer to the experience and how is built through different elements.

Music matters by allowing room for exploration by social scientists. By its very nature, this project has left some unexplored elements. I attempted to focus on the listener, as it is an actor that I find neglected in some accounts of the role of music in social life, particularly from cultural studies and musicology. As a consequence, I neglected the role of the structural and technological conditions in the production and distribution of music. Those conditions are important in the comparative cases of Mexico and the UK, as I tried to highlight, but they are not covered in this thesis. On the other hand, although I tried to emphasize music as mediated by technology, it is still possible to use this approach to extend the understanding of the role of new technologies and forms of consumption in how music is valued. I did try to grasp the multiple experience of consumption but a more focused approach on, for example, streaming[24], and using the approach I propose would make an interesting case. Conversely, I suggest that this thesis expands a bit the way social sciences understand music consumption through the concepts of attachment and the Musical Experience; as well as an understanding of subjective technological change in consumption. In the following sections, I would like to develop these arguments.

7. 1. From attachments to the Musical Experience

I suggested at the beginning of the thesis that music in social life could be understood from two main concepts: Attachments and The Musical Experience. Both of them are intimately related as they are both

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[24] There are certainly some interesting approaches to streaming not using precisely this framework (see Flynn, 2016; Hagen, 2016a; Hagen, 2016b; Johansson, 2018; Kjus, 2016a; Morris and Powers, 2015; Sinclair and Tinson, 2017)

co-producers of each other. The first concept refers to the interests between two actors to co-exist and interact, by focusing precisely on those elements that shape the interaction and the production of the practice. The concept of attachment allows me to focus on the actions and the way in which they re-shape the relationship between the listener and the object, through a range of mediators (Hennion, 2017a; Hennion, 2010). Those attachments—pragmatic and embodied—produce The Musical Experience. This second concept is an expansion of Georgina Born's idea (2010b, p. 80), in which I want to introduce the past, the present and the future with the help of the concept of practice by Bernard Lahire (2017). In other words, through those two concepts it is possible to focus on the ways the listeners make sense of their own everyday experience of listening to music, and the way they interact with other elements, like devices, spaces and social determinants. In this section I want to summarize how this idea worked through the thesis and how it can be useful for music sociology.

By following the attachment, it is possible to follow a conditioned relationship that at the same time is open to new interpretations and developments. Understanding music through its attachments is to focus on the Musical Experience that is not closed, although it is intending to repeat itself. The listener who is attached to **Hans Zimmer**'s music that she only listens through big speakers, is performing the way she learnt to make sense of the music in the past—with **Tomita**—but exploring new technical and meaning making possibilities with soundtracks. This is the role of attachments, to understand something that is an intimate knowledge between the listener, the objects and the music, in an experience that does not necessarily will provide capital for exchange but pleasure and connections with other elements of the self.

The Musical Experience is a heterogeneous practice, integrated by elements of different natures and sizes, with also differentiated levels of influence. Those elements, when put in action, are the attachments. The idea of attachments as constitutive part of the Musical Experience allows the integration in the analysis of those elements, like social meanings, structures, objects and ideas. When some of my interviewees tried to explain their disgust for banda, regaeton, or top 40 pop, they are aware

of how those elements are judged in their social world. The disgust or attraction for certain genres can intersect with class, gender, race or any other social dimension of the self. But the attachments show how some of those relationships can be transformed in specific settings, for example, when they listen to *regeaton* at a party, assessing it differently. By using the concept of attachments, it is possible to grasp flexibility, transformation and renegotiations, but also—in this case— the way the listener explains and perform dissonances, incoherencies and pluralities.

Hennion (2002) sees attachments as networks of mediators instead of isolated relations, which means that those mediators can affect other relations and attachments. When a new attachment is formed, like in an affective relation with someone else, it can reshape the way in which some objects are understood and enjoyed. A genre of music dismissed in the past, becomes a new loved music in the present, as the listener finds new strategies to make sense of it. By using mediators as a guiding concept those transformations can be traced beyond the very isolated notion of taste. Those attachments and processes of sense-making are constantly shaped networks of actors from different nature, and they become visible as they are traced through listeners practices.

By following the attachments, the composition of the Musical Experience, it is possible to trace the multiple nature of the love for music, which is never only about music. The love for the **Red Hot Chilli Peppers** is not only related to the music, it is integrated by images of the band, news, concerts, shared listening, the exchange of knowledges, books, clothing and many other elements. All of them, shape and condition the beloved object, all of them are the Musical Experience. Those elements are not always positive, they can also weaken an attachment, like leaving pop music behind when going to the university. Attachments promote the integration of those elements into the analysis, but also to track their changes over time in their interaction and production of positive or negative experiences. In that sense, the concept of attachment and the constitution of the Musical Experience seem to be

key tools to understand technological change through the lens of user's subjective relation with devices.

The concept of attachments, as mediators within complex networks, allows the analysis and grouping of different set of elements to understand their role within the Musical Experience. This analysis is not aiming to create generalisation or straightforward causation but to understand different dimensions of the experience and the way in which the cultural object is performed. In this thesis, I used place, affect, devices and the body as examples of those transformations; like the way in which headphones play an active role in the valuation of the sound; or the ways the places are valued through their musical elements. Those analytic dimensions are not pointing towards a simplification for analytical purposes, but as a dissection to analyse the ways in which those elements behave in the valuation of the musical objects. In short, the notion of attachment allowed me to follow the multiplicity of elements that are taking part in the relationship between listener and the cultural object.

In a reverse movement to the one explained in the last paragraph, when the musical object and the Musical Experience are contemplated as a whole, it can be weighted in perspective with other elements of everyday life, giving place to a form of attachment that is not possible to understand by analysing each of its elements and summing them up. The concept of attachment allows those movements between different levels of analytical lens, that helped to understand the active role of music in social and intimate life. In other words, by following the attachments to the Musical Experience, it is possible to look at the music from a sociological perspective (DeNora, 2003a; DeNora, 2003b; Martin, 2006), but not only focusing on its production elements, or the object, but the way that music is put into action to create specific forms of understanding the self in the world.

To summarize, I suggest the concept of attachment as an analytical tool useful to produce rich understanding of the relationship between the listener and the object, as well as the role of technologies. This is by building the concept of the Musical Experience. In that sense, the analysis presented in this thesis is extensive, which might leave

some detailed, extended versions of the moments and relationships open for further exploration. In the following section I want to present a metaphor to understand music as a socio-material assemblage, that could prove useful for further explorations of this idea: the concept of plasticine music.

7. 1. 1. Plasticine Music

The way that I proposed to understanding music, more precisely, as the relationship between music, devices and the listener, tries to de-centre the focus from just one element; to look for interactions and practices. I suggest that, as music is not a stable object, its importance resides in the way that listeners use it and let the music use them, not only in individual terms, but also around the social world. The value of music is the possibility of being managed, used, curated, controlled, re-signified, shaped while at the same time it also mediates our relationship with the world, memories, loved ones and ourselves. In that sense, it seems difficult to recover a way of understanding music itself as an object that can be followed and explored. In this section I want to propose a way of understanding this distributiveness in music, in a way that allow us to re-focus attention to it: the notion of plasticine music.

The findings in this thesis suggest that music in social terms should be understood as a heterogeneous assemblage that is build upon the experience. By applying the idea of assemblage to music means that it has no essence, but 'a plural and distributed socio-material being, enabling music to be cognized as a constellation of mediations of heterogeneous kinds, sonic and social, corporeal and technological, visual and discursive, temporal and ontological' (Born, 2012, p. 268). This is a similar idea to the one proposed by Anahid Kassabian to understand distributed identities, which 'does not reside in a single subject, rather it is a flow across a field which constantly morphs into different shapes and contours, depending on the circumstances' (Kassabian, 2013, p. XXVII). The mediators hold the Musical Experience and the musical object, but the listener is still able to do things with that object; they still consider one song *their* song; they still *protect* it from wearing out; share it with a

significant other and protect it from interventions. It is my argument here that we can understand the object that the listener perceives through a material approach following from the ideas fulfilled in this thesis.

The music-object travels from one life moment to the other, among different devices and interact with other songs in different arrangements with different meanings. As I have shown, the listener could be leaving it behind for a while or having periods of intense listening. Along all those trips, the music-object changes while remaining the same, it becomes a mutable mobile (Law and Mol, 2001, p. 613). John Law and Annemarie Mol propose this term to explain fluidity of objects while traveling through different networks, specifically a Zimbawe bush pump (de Laet and Mol, 2000), as an effort to explain the different configurations that the object makes to hold together. They are particularly concerned with different spaces where the object needs to change in order to remain functional as a network. The pump could have different arrangements depending on the settings where it is placed, not only in terms of connection and shapes but even in what clean water means. The change is not only in their network, but to travel through different spaces the object changes its properties. This seems to be what have been happening with music in many of the stories portrayed along the thesis. The object does not only acquire sense in its distributed nature, or assemblage, but from different meanings and uses in different moments in life and different places.

I want to explore this notion further as a methodological outcome of this thesis. Attachments are those elements that keep us relating ourselves with the object, created and developed through the Musical Experience. But those attachments, as I have shown, change and transform at every listening, the object is open to new interpretations, and as it is highly related to the self and the world, it changes as the position of the listener regarding those dimension changes. A song that our parents used to listen to a lot, changes from being annoying and becomes a repository of familiar memories, knowledge around a kind of music or a mediator of a social group. It is prone to be affected by others and the listener in every new Musical Experience. It is not only fluid, but

plastic as it allows the transformations without changing its very materials. Philosopher Catherine Malabou (2005) proposes the concept of Plasticity to make sense of the ways in which individuals and assemblages as porous, they receive form, modifies and mutate, but with material resistance by the object. Objects can receive form but still hold the power to give form to other agents. Nevertheless, this concept also holds the possibility of destruction (Breu, 2016; Pierre et al., 2016; Ulmer, 2015). Following from this simplified version of her ideas, I am trying to work with another metaphor, one that shows better the integration of elements, but also the impossibility of becoming exactly the same: Plasticine. When I think of plasticine, I am thinking about the clay material that children use to play, or some creative people use to make animations. A material that remains the same, can be shaped multiple times, get additions or be diminished; a material that remains the same while it is never the same.

Plasticine Music is a way to understand how people relate with music, doing things with it while transforming it. The music, in order to remain significant for the listener is shaped and reshaped through different arrangements and practices. The way in which the listener creates attachments with music, is constantly changing the form of the music itself. As in the idea of affordances used by DeNora (2000), there is a specific resistance from the music as an aesthetic object that can only be developed to a certain point. Still, music is an object that is in constant process of re-stabilization (Benzecry, 2009), particularly in the current digital context, where material representations of it are becoming less stable. This does not mean that this concept imitates Howard Becker's principle of *the fundamental indeterminacy of the artwork* (Becker, 2006), in which he claims that the work is not arbitrary, but cannot be understood beyond a contextual form that is impossible to settle definitively (p. 24). This also means that the work only makes sense frame within the specific conventions in which it is experienced (p.22). Plasticine music shares this anti-essentialist position, nevertheless, it not only focuses on the conventions but on the story of the individual with each specific piece of music. This does not mean that

those conventions are ignored. Rather, they are actually part of the object as experienced by the listener

Based on the findings of this thesis, the listener perceives music as an object, one which is changing its form and can be enriched or diminished in each occasion. The idea of Plasticine Music helps to make sense of the socio-materiality of music beyond its materials or devices but focusing again in the music itself and the way it circulates through spaces and time, changing and changing them with sticky properties (Straw, 2010). Each step does not affect the materiality of music—the content—but the way in which the specific listener shapes it. That quality also explains the difference in music, a Song for me, could be an unrecognizable object for you, based on the attachments or values that it conveys for me. You might be able to identify it, and to analyse it from the society that produces and consumes it but that would not be enough from my approach. What I am proposing is also following the personal stories that bring that song into being for me, in negotiation with those conventions and social contexts. The concept of plasticine music could be a useful way of thinking music that could be followed ethnographically and analysed in its transformations.

7. 2. Technological change and the Musical Experience

Technology is the main component of the Musical Experience. From the musical instrument, to the venue to the format. Through this thesis, the main focus was on the role of devices and platforms in building the Musical Experience. They deploy affordances—possibilities and constraints— to shape listener's practices and, in some ways, boundaries and definitions about what is the good and bad Musical Experience through elements like sound, body and curation. Over the past years, the transformation of album as container to files and streaming services has changed the Musical Experience deeply. As this thesis was organised under the topic of attachments, some interesting findings around technological change were spread across the different chapters. Therefore, in this section, I highlight some of the main

transformations that appeared through my data, not only as conclusions, but also as leads to explore further.

The flexibility and apparent immateriality of the digital music commodity provides the listener with a lot of control over how to curate and mix music. The music object has changed from sets of songs to units-songs. Some listeners explained how the music they thought as albums now was perceived as songs, and they would find difficult to engage with full albums. Jacques Attalli (1985) does a critique of the album as a format that allows conspicuous accumulation in a similar way in which Janice Denegri-Knott (2015; also in Denegri-Knott et al., 2012) understands the *MP3*. The first one sees the problem in the object dimension of the music, as something that is put to rest, while the second one sees it in the lack of effort. The common point between them seems to be true nowadays: music becomes easy to accumulate, in the case of *MP3* some pieces will become lost in hundreds of other options and, in some cases, never to be listened again. In the case of the album, it becomes a pure collectible object; some listeners report buying albums but never listening to them, either they don't find the proper time—which will lead me to another interesting point below—, or they just find it more convenient to use the curated versions of it. In these last cases the album is pursued because its inherent value, and in some cases as a militant act to support favourite bands. Furthermore, for other listeners, particularly the younger ones or those less invested in music, the album has changed its meaning, it has become a restrictive format, something that cost money but that will probably deliver a couple of important pieces for them. Sally Jo Cunningham (2019) gives an account of some of those changes, but it would be possible to explore the dimensions in which each of these levels of consumption—song, playlist, album— acquire different meanings in everyday practice using the very idea of the Musical Experience.

The idea of control and curation is definitely not new, the mixtape is possibly a good predecessor of it, although it is not the same. These curated objects share some ideas, like some planning, envisioning the way in which it might get used and possibly sharing it with someone else (Fenby-Hulse, 2016). A notable difference is the way in which they

travel, some playlists that users make are just visible to anyone else who has the same platform, or can be shared with a link, nevertheless, there is not exclusive object that accompanies it. The discursive element of the *compilation* has been transformed, the balance between the public and intimate dimensions of it has blurred (Jones, 2011; Nag, 2017). But there is another transformation that has to do with the durability of the curated list: they are flexible, they can be easily adapted and changed according to new entrances or interests. Some of the listeners that appear here are constantly making playlists, and they can notice how it affects their engagement with music. Over-curating could lead to a least durable engagement with music, songs can easily be left behind. There is a sense that the limits of the object produce attachments to the content, but also, they forced listeners to discover interesting elements inside the same container—like that last track that becomes really important but nobody else seems to care about. Time seems to be an important variable for this argument that could be further analysed in future investigations.

There is also a dimension of access and value that has been changing. Since its conception, the record transitioned from a recording tool to an art form, making use of its whole materiality; creating an image to present it, using art and pictures to refer to the creators or their discourse, and the side by side recording form (Katz, 2004)—that later changed to a seamless longer recording with the CD. On the listener's side this implied specific practices that were part of the work of making it valuable. An album, particularly in Mexico, might have a high cost, and access to certain forms of music were limited to radio or bootleg tapes. Some of the listeners interviewed bought their most valuable records in the United States, while some others might spend a long time looking for it at second-hand stores or exchange meetings. Beyond the cost, the album's scarcity included work as a form of value and worth (David, 2010). In terms of the Musical Experience, this kind of consumption included a form of value that came from expectations, raised from different outcomes like media, friends and scarcity itself; everything around not-yet-getting the album added value. After the acquisition many reported listening deeply, not only because of a limitation in what

was available —as other albums were already listened to a great deal already—, but because a sense of responsibility was created with the object, a form of attachment that was delayed. This led to attentive listening and forms of value. In the actual case, much of the music produced in the world is just a few clicks away. It might be interesting to find how those access changes might transform specific forms of valuation and engagement with music to create attachments and the Musical Experience.

In the same sense the curatorial and cultural experience has expanded, the notions of music as genre and culture have been transformed. In my data there is a new form of omnivorousness, not the one that use expanded taste as a form of cultural capital, but one that occurs as the result of a less deep engagement, and the possibility of compartmentalising the musical self. The ways of getting music explained above were an integral part of the cultural coherence and groups formation. In smaller settings, specific *musics* circulated within more intimate social networks, like partners, families and close friends, reinforcing forms of identities while not only rejecting, but not even having access to anything apart from those specific genres or *musics*. Conversely, listeners more engaged with digital music practices would be less aware of these limits, as they can share, even for short time spans, music from different genres and preferences. They would be able to define some genres, but in it seems to become seamless, particularly when their shared practice showed easy transitions from hip-hop to pop, from rock to bolero or from classic to cumbia.[25] All of those practices are chosen reflectively in terms of place and social context, what I called Compartmentalised Musical Identity, as something that is crafted and carefully practised. Further, it is my contention that this form of heterogeneity has some practical consequences in the rise of hybrid genres —on the side of creators—, and the success of big music festivals, as a broader range of music can be enjoyed by broader publics. From

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[25] In Mexico there is a whole new movement led by **Camilo Lara**, and his project **Mexican Institute of Sound**, to integrate genres like cumbia or folkloric sounds to modern music. Another good example of this is the electronic collective **Nortec** and they integration of banda elements.

consumer research, Chris Andersson might talk about a 'long tail' (2006) but apparently, digital musical practices are leading to heterogeneous individuals, or 'multiple tails.'

Finally, as with other technologies, there is a notion that presumes that the first transformation of technology is the subjective sense of time (Kendall and Michael, 2001; Vostal, 2019; Wajcman, 2008). As explored in this section, this transformation has an impact in music and cultural consumption in general (Eriksson and Johansson, 2017; Krause and North, 2016; Stewart, 2014). For me the most impressive example is the sense that, beyond life changes, listeners seem to not find the time to listen to music, as a direct activity. Music seems to be relegated to an activity alongside with others (Hesmondhalgh and Meier, 2018), even in music festivals where music is just one element of the whole experience. This notion of technological change, everyday life, and aesthetic consumption might be a more important avenue of future research, as it seems to diminish engagement with music and overall the possibility of music as an aesthetic experience. These encounters, as this thesis, are not only about music, but about analysing the Musical Experience as an element that could lead to further explorations of modern societies.

7. 3. Music that matters

This thesis pursued two main purposes. The first one was to show that music matters for society and the individual beyond the industrial system around it. Beyond the detail in each chapter I was able to show that music matters because it helps us to make sense of ourselves, manage our identities and negotiate ourselves with and within the social world. It matters because it connects us with our past and our present. It allows us to define and select how we want to share ourselves with the world while it allows us to communicate intimately with some other individuals. The music itself allow us to reconnect and re-assess our past and our emotions from it. The Musical Experience in general, at different

levels according to the level of fandom of each person, matters because it is a form of understanding and being in the world.

The second purpose is the process through which the technologies and practices are important to what we now can call the Musical Experience. It is through devices, from the instrument to the iPod that we relate our body with the Musical Experience. It is through devices that we establish specific ways of managing and relating with our music. It is through devices that we learn ways of making sense of the music we love and the ways we relate to it. We learn about it to create a solid concept of how we need to use it and display it through objects and devices. We also learn how to explore our context to those objects in relation with our intentions and desires. It is through devices that we can access music and make it a Musical Experience.

Following the Musical Experience and the attachments in each individual network shows how music matters and some interesting avenues for research, particularly when digital platforms are constantly mediating our cultural experience. Exploring those topics does not diminish the value of approaching the technological change from other perspectives, like revenue for artists from streaming platforms, new business models and the separations created by technological access across other dimensions of social life. I am not diminishing either the analysis of musical contents, genres or aesthetics in society. I am merely showing that music is important for society beyond those dimensions, and that we can learn a lot both about music and technology from approaches like the one that I am proposing here.

As might be clear enough already, this research comes from a very personal approach to music. A personal attachment that got me into working around music for more than 5 years. This is an attempt to also honour those personal attachments and make them matter beyond my personal interests.

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Appendix

First version of the Interview guide:

- What is your relation with music in a day to day basis?
- How do you use the devices at your disposition?
- Tell me how did you decided what devices you acquire, use and keep…
- How do you create your favourite musical setting?
- Is there any technical setting that you prefer or do you work with the default settings? How did you decided that?
    - **Let them play and activate their devices.
- Can you show me some of your favourite music memorabilia, devices and places for music and explain why they are that in your life?
    - **Talk about their objects
- How do you decide what music to buy and the formats that you choose?
- Is there any device that you think it would enhance your musical consumption and you don't have?
- Could you explain how your music and/or your devices are part of your interaction with others?
- Could you explain how your favourite song got to you and how do you relate with it in your everyday life?
    - **Listen some of the referred   music while doing it and explain their favourite parts.