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Disruptive Ambient Music: Mobile Phone Music Listening as Portable Urbanism

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Abstract: This article explores the use of mobile phones as portable remediated sound devices for mobile listening — from boom boxes to personal stereos and mp3 players. This mode of engaging the city through music playing and listening reveals a particular urban strategy and acoustic urban politics. It increases the sonic presence of mobile owners and plays a role in territorialisation dynamics, as well as in eliciting territorial controversies in public. These digital practices play a key role in the enactment of the urban mood and ambience, as well as in the modulation of people's presence — producing forms of what Spanish architect Roberto González calls *portable urbanism*: an entanglement of the digital, the urban and the online that activates a map of a reality over the fabric of the city, apparently not so present, visible and audible.

Key Words: Portable urbanism, mobile phones, mobile listening, sonic presence, territoriality, urban acoustic spaces.

Introduction: Mobile Listening as a form of Portable Urbanism

On a Saturday afternoon, four young men sit in a commuter train in the South of the Madrid region, chatting while the mobile phone held in the hand of one of them plays a hip hop tune. When they hear the refrain of the song they stop talking and repeat the lyrics. In Retiro Park, in central Madrid, on a summer morning two middle-aged women sit on the grass facing each other. A mobile phone playing Romanian songs lies between them. A thirty-something man walks fast navigating the pedestrian traffic, attuned to the rhythm of an upbeat pop tune coming out of the pocket of his jacket. Other pedestrians just hear a few fleeting notes in passing.

Elsewhere, a group of teenagers after school crowd together on a bench in their neighbourhood park, playing pop and dance tunes while chatting and joking loudly. A skater sits on the floor of a concrete square in the centre of Madrid taking a momentary rest. He watches his friends' moves and listens to the electronic music played by the phone by his side. A Dominican woman living in Lavapies tells me that she loves listening to music all day long and how, when she takes a morning shower, she sings along with the reggaeton song coming from the loudspeakers of her phone on the bathroom shelf.

A young man waiting for his train in Atocha station plays an electronic dance music tune, another young man passes by, stops and says to him: 'great track, what's this? I think I've heard it before in some club'. A bald man in his mid-thirties, wearing a suit and a tie, gets on the commuter train at Sol station, the mobile phone in his hand plays rock music. While he takes a seat, a young couple near me sends him disapproving glances and look at each other in disbelief: 'If he was a kid I could understand, but a proper grown up!'

These ordinary scenes are some of the many fieldwork examples whereby mobile phone practice takes on an assemblage of different techniques and tactics for listening and urban sonic making in everyday life. These techniques include playing tunes loudly on their own or with other people; at home or in public places; using public transport; strolling in a Mall; walking on the streets; or sitting in a park or a square with their friends. Songs are stored in phones, forming different playlists, or played through different music and video apps or online sites. Smartphones playing loud music are held in the hand, kept inside the pocket or lie somewhere among the group of listeners. Often, this is a mobile listening enacted while moving, walking, humming, singing, finger tapping, attuning the walk and gestures to the music or even dancing. People playing music on their phones distribute their attention between the music and other activities such as having a conversation, walking, running, cycling, daydreaming, thinking, watching a video in the same mobile phone, or even kissing and caressing – as the phone also provides the background to affective demonstrations of lovers. It can also offer musical background to a conversation, when people alternate talking with humming the refrain and moving with rhythmic gestures following the tunes they are listening to.

In the public modalities of this practice, the tunes are not only heard by the mobile phone owners and their friends, but they are also shared with involuntary listeners, who apply different degrees of attention and inattention to the music and to those who play it. They contribute the ambience of urban spaces as part of a shared and embodied common (McCulloch, 2013). These mobile uses and practices can intensify being in a particular place with different affects, such as enjoyment and comfort, disturbances and controversies. Mobile sounding (conversations, ringtones and music

playing) as well as hearing and listening to these sounds contribute to produce contemporary acoustic urban spaces.

This article contributes to a few intersecting fields of exploration: current reflections about the sonic aspects of space (Labelle, 2010); the spatial implications of mobile media (Goggin and Wilken, 2012); and the role of sound in contemporary locative and mobile media cultures (Behrendt, 2012). It focuses on the mobile mediations of sounding and listening (Licoppe, 2011; Bull, 2000, 2007; Thibaud 2003; Horokawa, 1984, Simun, 2009; Gopinath & Stanyek, 2014) drawing on current debates about listening (Szendy, 2008).

In particular, this article focuses upon how playing music with the phone — and the consequent listening practices play — can be considered a way of disfiguring and refiguring the mood and ambience of urban public places. In these sonic practices the online, the digital and the urban are entangled producing what Spanish architect Roberto González called *portable urbanism* (2013). González discusses the implications for urbanism through the uses of locative media such as hook-up apps whereby intimate strangers can reconfigure their engagement with the city. He explains how these apps contribute to shape urbanism by overlaying traditional maps with a geo-localisational dimension.

An example of this geo-locative overlay can be found in the multiplicity of personal profiles one can access in a geo-localised search in a particular urban place. This search makes visible often-invisible features such as non-normative sexualities. In this aspect, these apps can be considered a re-mediation of the visibility and collective presence enacted by meeting places like saunas, beautifully described by writer Samuel Delaney (1988: 173-175) in his autobiography. By making sexual encounters once private *public*, these gay men become public and contribute to affect and produce the public, in both senses: the public as the urban public space, and the public as the political. The vision and sensing of the crowd of gay men bodies contribute to challenge current ideas about deviance. From this experiential awareness of the collective emerges a 'sense of political power' and 'political possibility', as stated by Joan Scott (1991) in her discussion of this passage.

In this article, I discuss how these interwoven three aspects — making something public; making oneself public; and making the public — are deployed in the uses of mobile phones as portable sound systems. Unlike the focus on visualisation and visibility of geo-localisation in the hook-ups examples, other sensory aspects of the modulation of presence are explored: the increase of people's sonic presence performed with the help of loud mobile phones, which entails a different urban strategy from other forms of mobile listening using headphones, such as the 'walkman effect' (Horokawa, 1984; Bull, 2000, 2007; Thibaud, 2003).

Considering portable urbanism through sound practices and experiences can also help to understand how locative media interactions not only happen in certain locations but they always unfold in time (Behrendt, 2012), and contribute to colour and texturize places and moments with layers of affects, memories and resonances. As Labelle (2010) argues, sound can *create* a relational space, like a thread from body to body linking people in a temporal instant. In this way, place is generated by the temporality of the auditory through sentiments such as 'this is our moment', 'this is our place' and, potentially 'this is our community'. However, the acoustic politics of place mobilised by this practice relate this sense of comfort and being at ease with a potentiality for controversy and conflict. For example, playing music loudly with the phone increases

the phone owners' public presence and can become a sort of disruptive ambient music for the involuntary listeners in the surroundings.

Portable urbanism is produced by the shared agency between people and digital devices. By using the term *shared agency*, following actor-network theorists such as Bruno Latour (2005b), I stress the importance of the articulation of both: people's gestures, intentions, desires and meanings, and what technologies and other aspects of their material environment afford and prevent. Thus, in order to produce the practice and its multiple senses, agency is shared or distributed (Licoppe, 2011) between devices and their applications, individuals and groups, the features and regulations of websites and apps, the formal norms of use and the unwritten rules of etiquette, and in this particular practice the norms and rules regarding how to behave in urban public spaces as well. This shared agency can be considered a kind of choreography of spacing, where spaces and places, in their materiality, meanings and affects, are produced, maintained and reconfigured.

Moreover, the material and regulatory particularities of spaces take part in this shared agency. The notion of sonic choreography is also used by Labelle (2010) to refer to the relational character of acoustic spaces. It allows us to highlight the performative, relational and collective aspects — as well as the mutual attunement, clashes and resonances involving people and their bodies, the artefacts and their technical infrastructures, and the particularities of the urban environment. In addition, the notion of choreography indicates the existence of a score, a script, a prescriptive and normative set that is learnt, sustained, challenged and modified in the ordinary enactments of the practices (Foster, 1998).

Portable urbanism relates to the notion of *spatial self* (Schwartz and Halegoua, 2015), explored in other contributions of this issue, a notion that stresses the link between location, digital devices and subjectivities. This spatial self is also shaped by how we signal, perform, preserve and share our territories of the self in mobile media practices and locative uses. In this particular form of mobile listening and music playing the spatial self also relates to our augmented sonic presence in public and can be addressed through the following questions: How do mobile practices contribute to the making and un-making of territories? In which territorial controversies are they engaged? Which is their role in signalling, performing, preserving, and sharing territories of the self? Which disturbing and comforting aspects of urban territoriality emerge?

Fieldwork

This exploration of the auditory aspects of portable urbanism through mobile phone practice draws on both ethnographic research carried out in Madrid between 2010 and 2015¹, and online ethnography regarding different social media discussions and initiatives concerned with the controversies elicited by this practice. Observation was carried out in different places of Madrid: parks and open-air public spaces in the city centre, such as the Retiro park, the streets and squares of Lavapies, and those surrounding Sol square and the commercial pedestrian area around it; as well as in train stations such as Atocha and Sol, and public transports (commuter trains, buses, tube trains). As in the fieldwork vignettes quoted above, in these observations different aspects of music playing and listening were registered regarding the tunes, the people playing the music, their movements and attitudes, their gestures, as well as the reactions

(of lack of them) of the people in their surroundings. During these observations, informal interviews were carried out with the mobile phone users, where I asked them about their listening practice and the reasons for not using headphones.

Sound and hearing specificities set the sensory requirements of this ethnographic fieldwork. Listening is an embodied practice. We hear and listen with our full bodies, not only with our ears. Moreover, listening is always an enactment of the heard. Sometimes we can grasp this enactment in forms of performance-listening, as in dance, or when we attune our walk to the music we are listening to (Hosokawa, 1984; Thibaud, 2003; Bull, 2000), but other times this is an invisible enactment (Peters, 2010). Therefore listening to listening entails attending to gestures, movements, resonances and situations. Thus, the ethnography work asks for the interconnection and collaboration of senses (Pink, 2009). For instance the view and the hearing, in order to listen to how people listen, to how people and their mobiles sound, and to how these different sounds and ways of listening contribute to the configuration of public spaces, which are acoustic spaces as well. This is listening to space — which is to sense the presence of an ambience made of atmospheric attunements (Stewart, 2010) — takes into account the temporal qualities of sound in its unfolding as well as in the listening experiences.

In order to grasp the controversial meanings and reactions elicited by this listening and sounding practice, ethnographic observation took place online as well, where social media discussions and complaints have taken place for a decade, such as a multiplicity of Facebook pages. This online observation and the analysis of discourses inscribed in those digital platforms helped to register the critical reactions to the practice and their arguments, which are not always accessible through the observations in urban public places. This kind of discourses can also be found in commercial media articles about mobile phone etiquette and about the more annoying features of mobile phone use (as the British article on ‘sodcasting’ quoted below).

One of the online reactions to this public listening practice is the ironic initiative called movement MEMPEC (Spanish acronym of ‘Métete el Móvil por el Culo’ which could be translated as ‘Put your mobile phone up your ass’) which created a Facebook page with this same name and a logo intended to be shared in personal blogs, social media profiles and web pages in order to visualise the collective annoyance and rejection of this form of music listening. Other pages observed are ‘Odio a la gente que cree que el móvil es un radiocassette’ (‘I hate people who believe that the mobile phone is a radio-cassette player’), as well as proposals asking for the ban of such practice ‘Que se prohíba escuchar música sin auriculares en el transporte público’.²

Some of these Facebook pages were created ten years ago and have already disappeared, such as ‘NO al escuchar música sin auriculares en medios de transporte público’ (‘NO to listening to music without earphones in public transport’), ‘Niños que van escuchando música a todo volumen en sus móviles’ (‘Silly kids that listen to music loud in their mobile phones’), ‘No me gusta que escuchen música con el móvil sin auriculares al lado mío’ (‘I don’t like when people near me listen to music on the mobile phone without earphones’). Similar Facebook group and pages can be found in other languages, such as English, or the already disappeared pages ‘People who play music loud on their mobile phones on the bus/train are annoying’, ‘Playing Mobile Phone Music on Buses or Trains should be banned’. The names of these web spaces clearly reveal the affective oppositional intensity elicited by this practice. All these online discourses, exchanges and initiatives ground the claim made in this article that this particular way of mobile listening constitutes a form of disruptive ambient music.

Mobile phones as portable sound systems: engaging the city through music playing and listening

Goffman's notion of territories of the self (1971) and Deleuze and Guattari's views on territory as an on-going dynamic between the making and un-making of territories (territorialisation-deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation) (1988) can help us to understand this mobile music practice as a way of engaging the public and the city. Territory is acquired by repetition, habit and rituals. De-territorialisation can be understood as the loss of certain habits that cease to be repeated, the weakening of ties between particular meanings, senses, practices and places or the movement of declassification of objects, animals, gestures, signs, towards new uses and definitions.

Nowadays mobile media — and specifically this particular way of music listening in public — are involved in both aspects: the repeated habits and rituals of everyday life and the withdrawal of previous habits, senses, meanings and practices associated to certain places. Territorial dynamics are specifically deployed by auditory experiences, such as those afforded by mobile phones, as these experiences may be located in the combination of intensity and ephemerality, where sound may create a relational space that also incorporates the dynamics of interference, noise and transgression. Acoustic spaces bring forward a process of acoustic territorialisation in which the disintegrations and reconfiguration of space become a political process (Labelle, 2010). These processes are political because power relationships are deployed and because the experience and definition of the public and its norms, as well as the modulations of public presence, are at stake.

The territory of the self is a temporary, situated and personal space. Its variability is socially determined, according to power, rank and privilege, among other features. One shows interest in another by approaching this space. Goffman (1971) describes how the territory of the self is the ground of a ritual idiom around will and self-determination, embodied in interaction choreographies and different forms of attunement and negotiation in public. Territorial dynamics reveal the paradoxical aspects of sociability: avoiding contact is a way of keeping respect whereas making contact is a way of establishing bonds. Thus, bonding requires renouncing to some of the limits and barriers that usually separate individuals' territories and can be perceived as a lack of respect. As it is shown below, the implicit invitation to listen to the music selected by mobile phone players in public can be perceived as a sound aggression and lack of respect for the strangers within hearing range.

Deleuze's and Guattari's (1987: 310-350) considerations about the *ritornello*⁴ can be helpful to analyze the territorial aspects of this type of mobile music listening. The *ritornello* is defined as the set of materials of expression that draw a territory. It evolves in territorial motives and territorial landscapes in three different ways through mobile phone practice. First, the tune helps to create a centre within the chaos, a hint of stability, for instance, by singing to us when we are not at home and want to give ourselves courage and comfort. People I talked to explicitly acknowledged this by stating that they find comfort and company in the familiar sounds of their loved tunes when they move around the city. Secondly, singing to ourselves at home, moving in our territory, organizing the space, leaves the chaos outside, as well as building a wall of sound with the help of records, radio, tv, computers or smartphones. This is illustrated by the example of mobile listening while taking a shower described above or by youngsters who arrange a personal connected space within the family home. Thirdly, the *ritornello* helps to open the circle, the territory, the personal space, either to let

someone in or when we leave home and go out. The two first aspects could be found in traditional uses of personal stereos and mp3 players with headphones, whereas this third is specific to playing music loud achieving both: mixing the music played with the city sounds and sharing our listening with other people.

These three ways align with Christian Licoppe's considerations about musical ringtones as a precedent use of mobile phones to play music. Besides being summons, musical ringtones are an 'invitation to be listened to' and are signals of the mobile owner's music taste. Both cases are a form of self-expression that projects an individual's preferences into the public sphere, as well as auditory 'treats' increasing comfort and pleasure (Licoppe, 2011), whereas for the involuntary listeners this treat can turn into annoyance. Thus, the musical invitation of mobile users, a 'deliberate strategy of affiliation' in Licoppe's terms, can be perceived as territorial violations, as forms of sonic intrusion, obtrusion and interruption. In the case of musical ringtones, the brevity of the music sounding is one of the keys of the pleasure, or the treat, proposed as this strategy or affiliation. In the use of mobile phones to play music, this fleetingness can be found in the cases of people walking while carrying loud mobile phones, but not when this practice happens in public transport for instance, or in other public places where the involuntary listeners feel forced to listen for a longer time. These are the situations that elicit more controversy and anger, as it can be found in the social media complaints and evaluations of this practice, and occasionally in the silent public display of annoyance of some fellow commuters and bystanders, observed when doing the fieldwork.

Playing music with your mobile and listening to it in urban public spaces can be an example of what French musicologist Peter Szendy (2008) calls sharing and signing a listening: the possibility of signing our listening that stands on the ability to identify and sign a sound event that can be shared. For instance, any particular interpretation of a musical piece is a signed listening. DJ mixing, remixes and music sampling can also be considered as ways of signing a particular listening. Arranging different tunes on a playlist and sharing it can be another signed listening. Fans forums and music discussions in social media are another way of signing and sharing our listening, by sharing music evaluations and classifications. Szendy highlights that technological mediations of musical reception — phonograph, recording and digitalization — have facilitated and increased this possibility of signing and sharing what we listen to. These are ways of making listening audible, found in the boombox of the 80s described by Schloss and Boyer (2014) and in the practice of loud mobile listening today. In both cases, making listening audible to third parties, as a way of signing a listening, can be a way of signing a space as well, of marking, fleetingly, a territory within the city, by mixing the sounds of the tune with the sounds of the place. Those are ways in which music lovers listen to their music, sign their listening and share it with people within the hearing range, whether they like it or not.

Thus, signing and sharing a listening is also a case of personalisation as a form of mutual stylization between people, devices and places: the mobile is personalised by the tunes it plays and keeps; the owners are personalised and presented in public by the tunes their phones play (Licoppe, 2011), and the urban auditory territories are challenged and reconfigured by these personal listening and sounding practices, in a clear example of what Labelle (2010) calls individual sonorities provided by boom boxes, mobile phones or personal stereos as ways of personalising movements by adding ingredients to the regulatory humdrum of the street and its management. These sonorities reshape or supplement urban street structures and their audible shape. They

enact a mediating dialogue between individual bodies and the greater structuring sounds performed in the city, or a mediating argument as it is discussed below.

The desire of listening to both, the chosen music and the city sounds, at the same time is one of the reasons not to use headphones, according to the people interviewed during the observation, the other main reason is to share the music listening with their companions. They do not want to isolate themselves from the surrounding acoustic space but they want to contribute to its composition according to personalised rhythm that often appears out of place. They insert themselves through the music selection and playing into the sonic signature of the urban streets, which is a mixture of human made, machine and natural sounds (Labelle, 2010: 97). They achieve comfort and sustain their territory not by isolating themselves from the urban sound space, as in the case of headphone users, but by willingly, and sometimes wilfully, taking part in the sonic choreography performed in the streets, by adding their chosen music to the sonorities of the place in this particular practice of lo-fi music listening.

This form of mobile listening is not new, but part of a long history of how sound fidelity is sacrificed to portability (Marshall, 2014; Gopinath and Stanyek, 2014). Therefore mobile phones can be considered remediations (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) of the transistor radio, boom boxes (Schloss and Boyer, 2014) personal stereos (Hosokawa, 1984, Bull, 2000) or even the boom car (Bull, 2003; Labelle, 2010: 133-261). Mobile phones remediate all these previous forms of portable music and mobile listening as ways of engaging with public urban spaces. Unlike technical mediations that intensify the bass range, such as the boom cars and the big ghetto blasters, in this case the lo-fi sound reproduction entails the loss of the basses and a sort of *treblification* of sound or *treble culture*, (Marshall, 2014). The poor quality of sound does not seem to be a big problem for those who practice this music listening as it is counterbalanced by a parallel listening. In fieldwork, participants noted that the poor audio quality was not a problem because they knew the tunes well. That is to say, we are listening to the actual sounds coming from the mobile phone and, simultaneously, to the sound memories from previous occasions when we listened to the tune. This is, at the same time, a mode of self-deception and of auto-correction inherent to the listening process, which highlights the enacted character of listening.

Mobile listening is a form of active listening that remembers or imagines the bass sounds that are missing. The listening enactment does not only happen in the moment but has its own history and complex temporality. These are made of ephemerality and resonances, linking this territory of the self within the public place to other personal territories of listeners' everyday life, related to the music played and to the listening situation. But only those who know and love the music played can perform this mode of auto-correction. This could explain that, according to the online ethnography, the poor quality of the sound is one of the main reasons to find this practice annoying by those who otherwise would not be bothered by listening to other people's music in public.

Disruptive ambient music

These modes of music playing and listening in public entail different levels of attention to the sounds and to those carrying the loud phone. They also give off disruptive ambient music. This can be considered a contemporary digital version of French composer Eric Satie's notion of *furniture music* (*musique d'ameublement*), this is, music that creates a background for other activities instead of being the main focus of attention, that could be part of the surrounding noises and take them into account.

Different tunes can become furniture music when they are part of particular listening settings. In this case mobile phones and their owners acting as music selectors provide musical furniture for public places and activities. They contribute to the mood, the ambience, of a particular place during a particular time. Furniture music affords a rhythmic accompaniment to everyday chores and activities. As people interviewed acknowledged it, mobile music listening in public allows them to enjoy and focus on the music, instead of fulfilling certain social conventions or worrying about their public performance of behaving appropriately like strangers (Hirschauer, 2005) and among strangers. This is also afforded by other mobile phone activities, such as talking, messaging or playing, which provide distraction and entertainment, allowing for specific rhythms of attention and inattention to the physical space and the auditory space generated by the phone (Bassett, 2003).

In mobile listening with earphones, music becomes a substitute for silence and a shield against urban sounds. However, this loud form of mobile listening does not offer an immersive sound experience that separates us from our surroundings. The music played is a personal sonic contribution to the mix of urban sounds and noises. Thus, this particular digital *ritornello* can give us courage and comfort when leaving home and moving in the city, and as these tunes are listened by others, they can open our territorial circle to those who, willingly or not, share this listening with us.

So these mobile music practices produce a particular form of atmospheric attunement and ambient music, not because the sounds and musical parameters of the tunes coming out of mobile phones' loudspeakers correspond to the kind of music labelled like this by Eric Satie or Brian Eno, but because of the kind of listening enacted and the ability to accommodate 'different levels of listening attention, without enforcing one in particular; it must be as ignorable as it is interesting' (Eno, 1978). The rock, pop, hip-hop or dance tunes played on smartphones become ambient music by the way their listening is enacted. Different types and degrees of listening attention can elicit different forms of dancing, singing and humming in public. Those who carry the phones and make the choice of playing music, move through different levels of attention to the music, and people in the surroundings as well: friends, fellow commuters, other pedestrians; all produce different rhythms of attention and inattention, instead of a fully immersive sonic media experience. These practices bring forth a variety of positions, views, ways of listening and moods perceived.

Moreover, this mobile listening can be considered a kind of disruptive ambient music, susceptible of eliciting controversies and territorial conflicts around what is suitable and expected public behaviour, revealing the inherent contentious politics of the urban public spaces, made of plural and divergent practices, concerns, tastes and sensitivities (Jaques, 2011). This heterogeneity and potential for contentious politics of urban public spaces is even more evident when dealing with the acoustic features of such spaces, as they often mobilise a disruptive spatiality. Acoustic space sparks annoyance and outrage while affording opportunities for dynamic sharing and for knowing the other. The music listening practices discussed here are a good example of how the emergence of an acoustic space brings forward a process of acoustic territorialisation in which the disintegration and reconfiguration of space become a political process (Labelle, 2010: xxii-xxiii). It is interesting to note what is considered disturbing: not only, or mainly, being forced to listen to loud music, but also the bad quality of the sound, the music style and the attitude attributed to the mobile owners.

Sometimes playing music on the mobile phone in public involves some defiance in public interaction and territoriality tactics, or at least it is perceived as such. It has

even been labelled *sodcasting*: 'Sodcast [noun]: Music, on a crowded bus, coming from the speaker on a mobile phone. Sodcasters are terrified of not being noticed, so they spray their audio wee around the place like tomcats' (Pascal Wyse cited by Hancox, 2007). The conflict between this practice of music listening and the written and unwritten norms of public behaviours generates online and offline debate where issues about class, ethnicity and age are risen (Hancox, 2007, Marshall, 2014), configuring often an identification of the loud mobile listener with subaltern features: youngsters, lower class, foreign or/and non-white, person. According to ethnographic observation, this identification is a misattribution rather than an accurate description of the diversity of loud mobile listeners. Judging by most of the opinions and accounts of the complainers found online, this practice is generally perceived as typical of the 'other', 'the silly kid', 'the cani' (Spanish word similar to chav), the migrants. 'This is not my music'. These complaints resonate with a long tradition of complaining about the urban noises of the lower classes (Sterne, 2005).

Though most criticism associates this mobile music practice with the arrogant attitude of people willing to enlarge their personal territory and lacking respect for others, this is not the intention of most loud mobile listeners I talked to (though it could be to a certain point an effect of the interview situation). Some of them are so keen on their music they can hardly imagine that other people could not enjoy their 'invitation' (to use Licoppe's terms) and prefer the silence or the usual noises of the urban environment. However in fieldwork most people interviewed affirmed that they check the reactions of people around and try to adjust the volume accordingly or that they only play music in public transport when there are no people around. Some youngsters expressed the belief that in public places — such as public transport — no one has the right to be annoyed by what other people do, as these places are not ruled by personal views and considerations, and one has just to put up with anything that happens. The progressive decline of loud mobile listening in public transport seems to indicate that defiant territorial tactics are not a common aim in this practice. Disruption can occur, but not always as a voluntary intention.

The debates and complains reveal conflicts about music taste, which music deserves to be listened in public, how to deal with these controversies and differences, and what are the appropriated ways in which different music fans can share their listening in public. However, online inscriptions of these controversies — such as the many Facebook pages created when this practice started to be noticed — are less prevalent as this practice is less frequently found in public transports, whilst it remains very present in parks, squares and streets, where the auditory requirements and expectations are different. The more or less silent ways in which fellow commuters show their annoyance, as well as the advertising campaigns of public transport companies, in Madrid as well as in another cities, asking people to use earphones and not to play music loudly on their phones, have certainly contributed to the minor presence of this mode of music listening. Thus, playing music on the phone has not followed the pattern of other mobile phone uses that were considered disruptive at the beginning, as they clashed with the unwritten rules of public behaviour, which have become common, banal and almost unnoticed — such as having personal conversations in public transports, bar or restaurants (Lasen, 2005).

The complex and controversial mobile performances described here articulate public and private beyond well-known modes of mobile privatization (Williams, 1974). Private forms of music listening using earphones reinforce invisibility and diminish public presence by attending to music that no one else can hear — either at home or

through the earphones of mp3 players (Bull, 2000, 2007). However listening to loud music — as in the boom boxes of the past or with the mobile phone loudspeakers today — modulate presence in a different way, increasing visibility, or better said: audibility. When we play music on our phones is not that easy not to worry about one's public performance. Music lovers increase their sonic presence, 'doing being a stranger' (Hirschauer, 2005) differently: by increasing the possibilities of sharing and being noticed, increasing the ability of eliciting reactions and making encounters, good and bad. They can enjoy an increased comfort feeling through the musical aestheticization of their everyday routines, but an increased vulnerability as well, as they attract other people's attention (Licoppe, 2011).

As the mobile listeners studied by Bull (2000), this practice can be considered a strategy for managing time and experience by constructing sites of narrative and order in certain urban places and moments, as a way of negotiating urban fragmentation. But instead of doing it by filtering out the mixed flow of urban sounds and reducing their public presence, a very different modulation of presence is enacted. The implications of this kind of mobile listening are very different to the aesthetic control of public experiences and places afforded by Walkmans and mp3 used with headphones (Hosokawa, 1984; Bull, 2000, 2007; Simun, 2009; Thibaud, 2003).

Music listening is not a protective bubble that limits one's accessibility towards those in the surroundings. Firstly, mobile listeners in this case are able to hear and notice what happens in the place where they are. Their strategy consists in taking a explicit part in the urban sonic choreography, giving themselves the choice of attending to their music as foreground or background regarding the other sounds that can be heard. Secondly, they do not withdraw from their environment but increase their sonic presence. The aestheticisation and theatricalisation of the urban space where they operate are not secret, unlike the Walkman effect described by Hosokawa. And as Sterne (2010) reminds us, the acoustic shaping and design of public spaces is not just aesthetic, but political and ethical, a sensuous experience and a claim about what and who can make sounds, listen and being listened to.

Thus, this engagement with the city through music enacted by these music lovers and their smartphones can be understood as a way of giving a "new tonality to the streets" (Thibaud, 2003) and a kind of atmospheric attunement, according to Kathleen Stewart's notion (2010), this is, an 'intimate, compositional process of dwelling in spaces' where 'things matter not because the form they are represented but because they have qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements'. Playing music loud with the mobile in public places is an example of ambient intimacy (Hjorth et al. 2012) as personal comfort provided by the phone when being in the move, afforded by the pleasurable experience of listening connecting the physical surroundings with the familiar loved sounds and their previous listening.

However this phenomenon can also afford a different ambience for the involuntary listeners: noisy, annoying and unpleasant. This highlights the affective aspect of portable urbanism in connection with ordinary uses of mobile phones for affective and aesthetic purposes, operating on the pleasure and displeasure levels of everyday life, by creating occasions for affective expression and experience, as well as contributing to emotional labour and the management of affects (Lasen, 2013). This affective aspect of mobile mediated atmospheric attunements points to the augmented capacity to affect and being affected when our agency is shared or distributed with mobile phones.

Ambient intimacy corresponds to the first and third examples of territorial activity described by Deleuze and Guattari, as this form of music listening is mobilised when one has to leave home. It is a way to open the circle of the territory of the self, by sharing the listening with the people in the surroundings, risking to fall into the territorial paradox that links bonding and disturbing: by sharing their listening with others they are breaching the boundaries of other people's territories of the self, disrupting the conventions of the negotiation of such territories in public.

Conclusion

At first sight, mobile phones as portable sound systems can seem very different to the mainstream uses of smartphones for conversation, messaging, or online connexions using geo-localisation. However, playing music in public through the phone shares several aspects with those ordinary uses and practices: such as the use of the phone to get personal comfort when being on the move; the role of mobile phone uses in the ways we invest our attention and inattention in public (Basset, 2004); the multi-sensuous relationship with the device, with the relevance of touch and hearing; personalisation as a form of mutual stylisation between people and devices; the creation of a personal space or territory in public places; the mobile as part of public performances of self-presentation, as well as the role of mobile media practices in the ways we act and interact as a stranger in public.

To summarize, let us return to the questions around portable urbanism formulated in the first section of this article. The mobile media practices described enact portable urbanism through the creation of ephemeral sound spaces, which contribute to set the mood and ambiance of the particular urban places where these practices occur. Several mediations and remediations are mobilised in the shaping of these sound spaces, not only regarding different media but meanings and practices as well. These collective practices involve mobile phones and their music and video apps, the tunes played, the mobile owners, people in their surroundings and the material and normative conditions of the particular urban settings. This multiple agency can be considered a sort of choreography where these ephemeral sound spaces are produced. In these choreographies of spacing territorial dynamics are deployed through shared listening and sounding. By playing music loudly on their mobiles, mixing the music they love with the sounds of the places they are in, people and their smartphones share and sign their music and their specific way of listening to it. This is also a way of signing a space, of signalling a personal territory within the city where they move.

However unlike forms of mobile privatization (Williams, 1974), the sharing aspect of this way of performing and signalling a territory of the self enhances people's sonic presence and opens the circle of their personal territory to the people around. Becoming more audible and visible increases the possibilities of exchanges and interactions, as well as the occasions for territorial controversies. Thus, the territorial aspect of this form of portable urbanism deploys a territorial paradox, as it can be comforting and disturbing at the same time. It can increase people's comfort in public by the pleasure afforded by listening to their music, but it increases as well the possibilities of troubling current expectations and formal and informal norms of appropriate behaviour in public, annoying people in their surroundings who become the unwilling and forced listeners to the music.

This practice of engaging the city as music lovers is a clear example of the ability of sound to 'lend a dynamic materiality for social negotiation' and mobilise 'acoustic

politics of space' (Labelle, 2010: xix). It is another example of the heterogeneous and inherently controversial aspect of urban dwelling and urbanism. In this mobilisation of acoustic portable urbanism a triple articulation of public is deployed. Firstly, making public the music tunes and the music taste and selection of the people playing the phone (making something public). Secondly, it increases one's sonic presence (making someone public). And thirdly, it contributes to disfiguring and refiguring public places and ordinary urban acoustic politics (making the public). Other articulations of these three aspects can be found in the mobile media practices and ways of shaping the ambient described in other articles in this issue, regarding working practices, domesticity or the 'quantified self', as these contributions describe as well the potential for revealing controversies provided by mobile media practices and their digital inscription of spatial dynamics.

Notes

1. Some aspects of this research, regarding the notion and practice of listening and its methodological implications, is part of the project CSO2012-37027 *Innovaciones metodológicas para prácticas emergentes: Controversias y desasosiegos en torno a lo público/privado* (Methodological innovations for the study of emergent practices: controversies and disquiets around the public/private divide), research team: Elena Casado, Antonio García, Rubén Blanco, Laura Cassain, Héctor Puente and Juan Carlos Revilla, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness through the National Plan of Research.

2. <https://www.facebook.com/MEMPEC>; <https://www.facebook.com/Odio-a-la-gente-que-cree-que-el-movil-es-un-radiocassette-37191268745/>; <https://www.facebook.com/Que-se-prohiba-escuchar-musica-sin-auriculares-en-el-transporte-publico-117483858349605>.

3. <https://www.facebook.com/People-Who-Play-Music-Loud-Off-Their-Phones-Arnt-Cool-129868380390911/?fref=ts>

4. This Italian term means 'little return', referring to a refrain or little tune, as well as to a musicological notion referring to the return of the section played by the whole orchestra in the Baroque concert.

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