

Downloaded from UvA-DARE, the institutional repository of the University of Amsterdam (UvA)  
<http://dare.uva.nl/document/204671>

---

File ID 204671  
Filename Chapter 3: Concepts and cases

---

SOURCE (OR PART OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCE):

Type Dissertation  
Title Where credit is due: cultural practices of recorded music  
Author B.G. Jansen  
Faculty Faculty of Humanities  
Year 2011  
Pages 204

FULL BIBLIOGRAPHIC DETAILS:

<http://dare.uva.nl/record/366831>

---

*Copyright*

*It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use.*

---

## Chapter 3

# Concepts and Cases.

## Introduction

In the previous two chapters I provided a birds-eye view of the historical roots and contemporary parameters of a poignant socio-cultural debate, namely the discussion on appropriating, owning, and reusing recorded music. In the first chapter, I looked at contemporary society and identified my topic. I took as my central concerns (a) the question of who deserves credit for doing what in popular music culture, and (b) how the answers to that question are changing in relation to new technologies. I described the traditional commercial and anti-commercial answers to these questions as well as some novel ones, such as generalized artistry and the advocacy of sharing economies. In the second chapter, I chose a historical perspective and investigated the origins of these answers to the credit question, with special emphasis on the commercial theory of appropriate credit.

In the remainder of this dissertation, I will leave the birds-eye view behind and investigate actual practices. This is because I want to argue that different practices all come with their own solutions to the problem of rewarding participants for their contributions. To try and press these various 'systems' into the mold of a single theory that purportedly governs all of popular music culture can only result in misleading views. The commercial theory of appropriate credit is deceiving in this way. As explained above, it maintains that all people in popular music culture can be divided into the categories of artist, industry, and consumer, and that the proper reward for each of these, respectively, are financial facilitation plus admiration, financial compensation, and the (passive) enjoyment of a musical product. As a result of its 'one size fits all' approach, it covers up many complexities that, in my view, matter.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the three subsequent chapters are case studies. In each of these studies, I will look closely at a particular cultural practice, and make a careful analysis of the complexities of credit-giving at stake. In this chapter, I prepare the way for these case studies by elucidating matters of conceptualization and of analytic method. Below, I will first make explicit the theoretical underpinnings of the cultural practices approach to which I have already referred above. Subsequently, I will address an important concern that may well have entered some readers' minds: Is the cultural subject a kind of *homo economicus* who can only be motivated to participate in culture by means of a reward? I then discuss why I selected the cultural practices of mix taping, re-mixing, and deejaying as cases to study. And finally, I go through the details of my analytic method.

## The concept of cultural practices

In the first chapter, I defined "practices" as activities that people perform in a routinized way, so that many aspects of how they perform and conceptualize these activities are taken for granted. I defined culture as the aggregate of ways people use symbols and concepts to understand the world around them, ascribing meanings to this life-world which are shared and which appear to be self-evident. The term "cultural practices", then, refers to situation where two kinds of self-evidence connect, namely those of habitual action and of shared ways of understanding the world. To emphasize the importance of understandings that are shared *within* cultural practices, I use the term exclusively for collective activities.

My use of the concept of cultural practices is intimately connected with one of the central points in this study: the argument that overarching theories of appropriate credit, which are assumed to apply to pop music culture in general, have important shortcomings. I advocate a 'natural setting approach', which attends to details and particulars. It is first and foremost for this reason that I turn to the concept of cultural practices. There is no way to investigate all of pop music culture in detail. The scholar must delimit his or her object of study. Such delimitations, however, are not without hazard, because they influence the cultural scholar's perception of his or her object. In the case studies that will follow, I have chosen to delimit my object by concentrating on specific cultural practices. There are several reasons why I favor this way of marking out my object of research.

Objects of research are inevitably informed by *a priori* decisions about what is worth attending to and what is not. Therefore, it can effectively blind the scholar to crucial aspects of the object in question. In the previous chapter, I have described several historical practices as aggregates of heterogeneous elements. In relation to the *Empfindsamkeit*, for instance, I discussed the cultural practice of performing chamber music in an amateur context in terms of a discourse derived from *Sturm und Drang*, a particular social group (namely the middle class), the cultural form of the sonata, and the economic transition from a patronage system of music production to a market system. The heterogeneity of the elements of culture that can be taken into account using a cultural practices approach is one of its main advantages. At least three types of elements play an important role in my research, namely discourse, technology, and the activities of cultural subjects, or in other words, what people do, which technologies they use, and how they think, write, or speak about this.

As an additional advantage, a cultural practices approach does not presuppose a particular order in the way these segments of reality are interrelated, and in no way does it presume a causal order between elements. Thus, for instance, if I assumed the causal priority of human action, I could easily fall into a 'great men' narrative on technology, in which new technologies are the products of the minds of genius inventors. On the other hand, if I assumed the causal priority of technology, I could easily fall into technologically determinist accounts of society according to which, say, new digital music technologies cause the demise of the traditional consumer and the rise of prosumers, producers, and the like. It is necessary to keep sight of the fact that causation rarely operates unidirectionally. It is in this sense that Raymond Williams uses the term "cultural practices" in passing in his classic study on television, in which he devotes much attention to a critique of technological determinism (Williams 1974). Sociologist Andreas Reckwitz uses his term of choice, "social practices", for a similar purpose when he argues against treating 'the social' as something that is either mental, textual, or intersubjective. His social practices approach attempts to give a place to minds and concepts, symbols and texts, as well as interactions (Reckwitz 2002).

The cultural practices approach I advocate uses the habitual nature of much of human activity to get the interplay of segments of reality as heterogeneous as discourse, technology, and human action into view. Practices have become habitual or customary, and exist only as long as they are repeated. In this, my approach differs from that of philosopher Michel de Certeau, who investigates practice rather than practices, and thus foregrounds human action in relation to other aspects of culture. It is the habitual or customary aspect of practices that

gives human activity a chance to become connected to particular tools and technologies, and to develop a discourse around it.

Only those practices survive in which the heterogeneous elements involved become connected in such a way that the result is an assemblage, which successfully reproduces itself. The way in which human action, technology, discourse, and other segments of reality are connected may therefore differ from practice to practice, as long as the result encourages the activity in question to be repeated. In this way, the cultural practices approach I advocate distances itself still further from overarching theories of culture. Also, because repetition is never exact, a cultural practice is an inherently temporal object of study, which to a certain degree resists atemporal understandings of culture.

It must be stressed that I use the notion of cultural practices as a conceptual tool for understanding pop music culture. It guides the way I interpret my data. These data, however, will be mostly discursive in nature, consisting of written accounts and interviews. Discursive data thus serve as informants on human action, technology, and the discourse that surrounds the practice in question alike.

## The agency problem

I argue that different cultural practices come with their own answers to the credit-question, and these particular answers make more sense than the general answers invoked in copyright debates. It must be stressed, however, that this claim about cultural practices is rooted in two assumptions. First, practices are considered successful if they persist for some time; activities that have occurred sporadically are excluded. And second, practices are community-based rather than solitary. Concerning this group of practices I propose three things:

- Cultural practices provide different answers to the credit question, the issue of what kind of reward is appropriate for what kind of contribution.
- From this it follows that a single overarching theory, like that of the commercial theory of appropriate credit for instance, oversimplifies the issue. Practice-specific answers to the credit question are adequate solutions only for the specific practices to which they belong. General answers are not.
- Practice-specific solutions to the credit-giving problem are necessary to make their practices work. If a cultural practice does not provide an adequate system of credit-giving, the motivation of its participants will be undermined and the practice will dissolve.

The first two points are mostly an invitation to look more closely at what actually happens in pop music culture. They will likely prove uncontroversial. The final point, however, may cause some eyebrows to be raised. Does it mean that people will not engage in any activity unless they receive some reward? Does it deny the enjoyment of an activity for its

own sake and the pleasure of expressing oneself, replacing them with calculation? Not exactly. There are three nuances to observe.

My notion of credit includes things that are not commonly understood to be rewards. Getting credit may mean being acknowledged as the one who made a particular contribution. I chose the word “credit” because its range of connotations is markedly wider than that of the word “reward”. Here is a list to illustrate the range of meanings I want to include. Getting credit may mean: being acknowledged as the maker of a contribution, getting attention, getting praise, getting admiration, being accepted within a community, winning status within a community, maintaining control (for example over what may be done with a creation you made), receiving material goods, or receiving money.

Furthermore, I do not argue that credit is the only thing that motivates and activates people. Instead, I deny the opposite, which involves a subtle but crucial difference. It is the withholding of credit which undermines people’s motivation to participate. Suppose that I enjoy polishing pebbles into perfect geometric shapes. I enjoy this activity for its own sake, not needing any reward. Two things may happen to undermine my motivation if I take this practice into a community. The first is that this activity, which is highly meaningful to me, is deemed utterly pointless by others. This would prompt me either to stop believing in the value of pebble-polishing or to continue my hobby in solitude. Technically speaking, the value of a collective activity is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966), and an activity will not be performed indefinitely in a social context that does not construct it as valuable.

Alternatively, someone could quench my motivation by passing off my cubes and pyramids as his or her own. This is the so-called “free-rider problem”, well-known in economics and biology and in the anthropology of gift-giving (Axelrod 1990, Hyde 1983). In this situation, too, I would be extremely unlikely to keep polishing pebbles without seeking to be appropriately credited. This example makes clear why I limit my claims to collective practices. In solitary practices, where the social construction of value and the free-rider problem are not at issue, activities may well be pursued indefinitely for no other reason than their inherent enjoyability.

The third and final nuance I want to add is that my claims concern practices and not individuals. Consequently, my foregoing claims apply to most people, but not necessarily to everyone. Individuals are unique. It is possible that certain people will pursue their favored practices within a community without getting any credit whatsoever, possibly in the face of the fact that their contributions are socially constructed as inane or that they invite free riding. My claim, however, is that there will be too few of these persistent actors to fuel a successful practice. For this reason incidental practices are excluded from my proposals.

Despite all these nuances, my claims impose important limitations on the individual agency of cultural subjects. My proposals are not compatible, for instance, with the expressivism that underlies the commercial and anti-commercial theories of appropriate credit and generalized artistry. A drive towards self-expression is not properly understood as a characteristic of subjects, whether in general or only in the case of exceptional talents. Rather than emanating from isolated individuals, creativity emerges within particular contexts and practices. Creative acts are always embedded in a cultural context, which enables and constrains them (Giddens 1984, Hall 1980).

More importantly, my claims are not entirely compatible with the widespread enthusiasm for consumer agency that characterizes the very disciplines upon which this study

builds. Popular music scholars have spent much effort to dispel the passive and victimized picture of the popular music consumer that Frankfurt school sociologist Theodor W. Adorno had painted. In the words of popular music scholar Simon Frith:

In broad terms, the analytic response to Frankfurt pessimism has been to accept the organizational account of mass cultural production, to ignore the complexities of Adorno's aesthetic theory, and to look for the redeeming features of commodity culture in the act of consumption. The task (...) was to find forms of mass consumption that were not "passive" and types of mass consumers who were not stupefied. (Frith 1996: 13)

Indeed, cultural studies, and especially its Birmingham school variant, used ethnographic studies of television viewers, among other things, to criticize the passive and victimized picture of the media user that film studies had put forward (Brunsdon and Morley 1978, Ang 1985). The valuable insights of these initial studies were followed by a vogue for studies that portrayed consumers in an active light. Viewers interpreted the television shows they watched in ways that contested dominant ideology (Hall 1980). Consumers appropriated media content and technologies, and converted them to their own needs, contesting dominant ideologies in that way (Fiske 1991, Willis et al. 1990, du Gay, Hall, et al. 1997).

By emphasizing the embeddedness of individual action in contexts and practices, and by insisting that human agency has no primacy over other segments of reality, such as discourse and technology, I am self-consciously pouring cold water on this enthusiasm for consumer agency. The kind of scholarship in which this type of cultural studies engages is critical theory, which means, in Ang's felicitous short-hand description, that it aims to be 'on the side' of the subjects it investigates (Ang 1985). A cultural scholar cannot be objective, Ang argues, but she can be explicit about her affinities. As much as I admire this sentiment and share these affinities, however, I think it has resulted in a repetitive insistence on consumer agency that has gradually become a paradigm, which invites cultural scholars to presume, and consequently to find, substantial levels of agency in any act of consumption they study. With my analysis of processes of credit-giving, I hope to elucidate the conditions of the specific kinds of activity that actors enjoy within the cultural practices investigated. I thus focus on the conditions of this activity rather than on the question whether subjects have or lack agency.

## **The selection of the cases**

There are a vast number of cultural practices that involve recorded music. Therefore, the question presents itself why I chose the three that I will discuss in the following chapters: Mix taping, the practice of rerecording of a selection of songs onto a blank cassette tape and possibly giving it to someone as a personalized gift; re-mixing at ccMixer, where community members all reciprocally reuse one another's work in their own musical compositions; and deejaying, in which preexisting recorded music is used to bring a particular mood to a party.

My choice of cases can be explained from my hypothesis, which is that different cultural practices have their own ways of distributing credit among contributors, and these different solutions to the credit-problem are both appropriate to the practice in question and

essential to its perpetuation. To show how these things work requires an in-depth analysis of each practice, so that only a small number of practices can be investigated. My claim that the pattern described above pertains to successful and collective practices in general is best supported if this small number of studied cases are as different from each other as possible. After all, if my case studies were all similar in some respect, this would make my argument vulnerable to the criticism that this pattern may well hold only for practices involving a particular technology, or from a particular period, et cetera.

For this reason, I have selected my case studies to differ along several axes. The cases focus on different technologies. The DJ study devotes much attention to gramophone technology whilst also including contemporary digital technologies; the mix tape study focuses on cassette technology; and the re-mix study concentrates on online digital technologies. Thus, different kinds of analog sound technology and different kinds of digital sound technology are included. This variation in technologies naturally leads to a certain spread in temporality. The heyday of mix taping coincided with the heyday of the tape cassette, and occurred in the 1980s. The re-mix practice studied in chapter five, on the other hand, is contemporary. The data from the DJ study, finally, span several decades. The emphasis lies on current practice, but some of the experiences that DJs narrated in the interviews date from as early as the late 1970s.

The selection of my case studies was also designed to include variation along the axis of what might perhaps be called “apparent creatorship”. Assuming that the traditional concepts of the artist and the consumer need no elucidation, I have chosen my three case studies to occupy different positions on the spectrum that runs between them. A re-mixer quite clearly creates a novel work, even if this work is more obviously derivative than the work of a traditional artist. Thus, a re-mixer seems to be more like an artist. Whether a mix tape counts as a new artistic work is far less obvious. Mix taping is more commonly considered as something that consumers sometimes do. The deejay is presumably located between the other two, but deejaying falls apart in two sub-cases. DJs who play songs ‘back to back’ (that is, one after the other) would have more trouble claiming an artistic status than would DJs who mix songs together in a single ‘meta-song’ of sorts. In fact, there is an actual difference in the perceived status of these two types of deejaying; a phenomenon I will discuss at length in the sixth chapter.

Finally, one might say that two of the cases concern a type of production. A mix taper makes a mix tape and a re-mixer makes a re-mix. A DJ, however, is a performer. Thus, the DJ study ensures that the aspects of improvisation and ‘liveness’ also receive attention. In summary, I have selected the case studies based on their complementary nature. In the following sections, I will discuss my method of analysis for each of these cases.

## **The analysis, part I: mix taping**

In chapter four, I analyze one hundred mix tape stories: first person narrative accounts created by mix tape compilers or gift tape recipients, in which the narrator reminisces about specific mix tapes or about the practice of mix taping in general as it existed during the 1980s and early 1990s. Stories, in other words, are my object of investigation. I will be performing a textual analysis of a reflexive discourse of the cultural practice of mix taping.

In a sense, this is a forced choice, because the cultural practice of mix taping is all but extinct. Mix taping is now a practice that exists primarily in memory. Such memories are mediated and shared in the form of narratives (van Dijck 2007: 77-79).

Nonetheless, these narratives make highly interesting objects of analysis. Mix tape story writers devote much attention to describing what they actually did in a material sense. For this reason, the stories offer a window on the heterogeneous elements involved in this practice, and the way in which they were connected. However, the corpus of mix tape stories is more than a window upon a practice of bygone days. These mix tape stories are also interesting in their own right, as a discourse. In these stories, tensions between the commercial theory of appropriate credit and practice-specific concerns are played out. In other words, apart from providing a window on the practice of mix taping itself, these narratives also provide information on the mix tapers' ideas on the credit question.

The stories I analyzed came from three different sources. Thirty-nine stories were obtained by selecting all the mix tape stories from the book *Mix Tape: The art of cassette culture* (Moore (ed.) 2004). Twenty-one stories were found on the website of the exhibition "*KassettenGeschichten: Von Menschen und ihren Mixtapes*," in Januari 2006.<sup>18</sup> The remaining forty stories have been obtained by using Google Blog Search with "mix tape" as the search entry, and searching through the hits in numerical order, accepting all accounts that conform to the above definition, and only those. This sample was obtained in December 2005. The stories reminisce about events taking place mostly during the 1980s and occasionally the early 1990s.

The collection of stories is heterogeneous, because the three sources yielded sets of stories from different communities. They were written both by recognized artists and by 'ordinary consumers', and for different reasons. In the presentation of the results of my analysis, I will treat the mix tape stories from the three sources alike. Here, I want to briefly discuss the differences between these samples and their possible consequences.

The mixtape stories taken from the book *MixTape: The art of cassette culture* come from a community of befriended established artists. The book's primary aim is to forcefully assert that mix taping is highly valuable, and that it is in fact an art. The fact that the contributors to the book are mostly recognized artists lends weight to this assertion. Aside from the references to mix taping as an artistic enterprise, what sets the mix tape stories in the book apart from those in the other two sources is that it contains a minor number of contributions that are more literate with respect to cultural theory than any of the mix tape stories from the other two sources. Aside from these more 'theoretically informed' contributions, however, there is no discernible difference, whether in style or in content, between the mix tape stories written by recognized artists and those written by individuals generally categorized as consumers.

The sample of mixtape stories found through Google Blog Search contains two professional writers. Their mix tape stories resemble articles more than blog entries. The other thirty-eight stories from this source were written by 'ordinary people', whose writing was not motivated by a request or a professional need. The inspiration for the writing of most blog entries was provided either by Moore's book or Hornby's novel *High Fidelity* (Hornby 1995), in which mix taping plays an important role. The bloggers have clearly been influenced by

---

18: "*Die Ausstellung: Unsere Kassettengeschichten*" <http://www.kassettengeschichten.de>, available January 9, 2006.

these books in the way they write about mix tapes and mix taping. Both works are occasionally cited.

The sample of mixtape stories taken from the website of the *KassettenGeschichten* exhibition, finally, differs from the other two samples in the sense that they are edits from semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the choice of topics under discussion may show the pattern of interest of the interviewer more than that of the respondent, although the researchers have taken pains to make the respondents talk with the least possible interruption (Herlyn and Overdick (eds.) 2005). The most visible difference between this set of mix tape stories and the other two is that the *KassettenGeschichten*-stories cover a wider range of topics. The unsolicited stories tend to concentrate on the more anecdotal aspects of the practice, such as making tapes as gifts, whereas the German stories also devote attention to aspects that make less good story material, such as solitary mix taping.

## The analysis, part II: ccMixer

In the fifth chapter, I present an analysis of the website of an online remix community named ccMixer. The distinguishing characteristic of this site is the fact that all its musical content is subject to creative commons copyright licenses. This alternative to traditional 'all rights reserved' copyright enables uploaders of content to indicate what rights they wish to retain or to waive. Consequently, reuse of ccMixer content is always legal. The website thus provides a window on creative possibilities that can only exist where the constraints of a pervasive copyright regime have been lifted. In a sense, ccMixer is two things at once, namely a remix community and an advertisement for the counter-movement to pervasive copyright. Because the method I use for this case study is less common than those of the other two cases, I will discuss it at greater length.

The question of how my object of investigation should be conceptualized induces anything but a straightforward answer. In preparation for a discussion of this issue, let me first point out a few elements that will be crucial to my analysis. I assume 'remixing' at ccMixer to be a cultural practice, in the context of which ccMixer community members navigate and understand their own actions with ease, as if everything about this practice is fully 'transparent' and self-evident. I believe, however, that much about this practice is implicit. My objective is one of explication - to bring hidden structures to light. My actual object of investigation, the ccMixer website, will be my informant about credit-giving within the cultural practice of remixing at ccMixer.

I could say the ccMixer site is a text. I read this text metonymically, as a *pars pro toto* of the ccMixer 'micro culture' of which it is a part. I use the site, in other words, as an informant about this small slice of culture I seek to explicate. Viewed in this way, my case study could be called a discourse analysis (Gee 1999, Potter 1996). The ccMixer website is a text which 'speaks for' the discourse of which it is part. However, an objection to this conceptualization is readily apparent. This is the fact that ccMixer is not a discourse. It is the site of a cultural practice that involves, but is not limited to, a discourse.

Alternatively, I could say that the ccMixer site is the result of a multitude of human behaviors. I interpret these behaviors, again, metonymically, as a *pars pro toto* of the ccMixer micro culture of which they are part (Forte 2005). And once again, I use the site as

an informant about this small slice of culture I seek to explicate. Viewed in this way, my case study is more akin to an ethnographic thick description (Geertz 1975). The ccMixer website provides a window on human behaviors which 'speak for' a cultural system. However, one may then reasonably object that the traces of behavior I study are inextricably intertwined with the mediated character of this behavior, and that these traces take the form of a multi-modal text.

In the cultural form of the website in the 'web 2.0. era', behavior and textuality inter-mingle in novel ways, not anticipated by the methods mentioned above, which predate the phenomenon. The form my method takes is determined by the cultural form of the online community website and by the objective of my analysis. I would describe it as a particular kind of textual analysis. Any text can be read as an informant on many different issues. In an 'intentionalist' reading, the text informs the scholar about the intentions of the author; in a formalist reading, it informs the scholar about its own structure; in a 'culturalist' reading, it informs the scholar about the conceptual environment from which it emerged, et cetera. In my reading, the ccMixer text will be taken as an informant on the cultural practice of remixing at ccMixer. However, the nature of the text makes this a special kind of reading. Let me highlight a few of the most important differences between this and more conventional readings.

First of all, the text is a website, and for me this has meant looking both at its content and at its architecture, or, to put it in the terminology of Schneider & Foot (2005) performing both a discursive analysis and a structural/feature analysis. Although these two forms of analysis often appear in isolation, the idea of combining them is by no means new (Park & Thelwall 2008).

In line with the interests I have stated above, I will look closely at the ccMixer community's style of credit-giving. A style of credit-giving can be instantiated both in the material aspects of a practice and in the norms and unwritten rules that inform it. A reading of ccMixer allows investigation of these two possibilities: The website's architecture should provide clues about the materially instantiated aspects of ccMixer's style of credit-giving. The site's written content will likely give hints as to the unwritten rules of the community. (I will return to this point below.)

Second, the text I study is vast and ever-changing. I have coped with the size of the site by concentrating on recurrent features. This was easy for architectural elements, because ccMixer contains a limited number of 'types' of pages, such that pages of a single type are arranged according to a strict template. Each song or composition, for instance, has its own page, and all these 'song' pages adhere to a single template. Furthermore, most of the general observations I make regarding the site's written and musical content concern aspects of the site which are so common that it would take a considerable effort to find even a single exception, although such exceptions undoubtedly exist. Where observations concern less common-place phenomena, this will be indicated in the text.

The ccMixer website is continuously changing, and this brings my analysis closer to ethnographic method. The case study took place between May 19th 2008 and August 7th 2008, and future investigators of ccMixer will never be able to investigate the exact same text. However, the main aspects of the site to which I draw attention are so general and fundamental that, if they change at all, they do so at a slow rate. They have not changed discernibly between 2008 and 2010.

I will analyze ccMixer's architecture and content jointly, giving these aspects an equal status as informants about the practice of remixing a ccMixer. This analysis can only proceed the way it does because architecture and content display a high degree of agreement. Let me explain this point.

The architecture of a website is both enabling and constraining to its users. It is important to take note of this, and to analyze how users respond to such architectural choices. In the tradition of British cultural studies, we might ask whether users submit uncritically to the web designer's choices, or whether they produce something like a 'negotiated reading' and convert the site to their own ends, so that we may attribute agency to them. In all aspects, the behavior of community members at ccMixer agrees very closely to the intended use of the site. (The intended use, that is, as can be inferred from how it enables and constrains online behavior.) But this does not mean that ccMixer members are uncritical in their acceptance of the ccMixer website.

There are several forums on the website, and among these forums there is an active one devoted to features. Here, members can post and discuss proposals for architectural improvements. There is little need for ccMixer members, then, to engage in 'tactics' as Michel de Certeau describes them (De Certeau 1988). In fact, ccMixer members are highly reflective with regard to their remix practice, but instances where this reflexivity leads to harsh criticism of the site or its moderators are virtually absent, as can be illustrated with the search for a new owner for ccMixer after Creative Commons, the organization promoting the alternative copyright system, wanted to shed the financial burden of maintaining the site in November 2009. The decision making process was highly transparent. Members were invited by means of a forum and a survey to share their opinions, and many of them did so, in a constructive manner and with respect for the way the site had until then been maintained. In the end, ccMixer was bought by the company ArtisTech Media, whose CEO Emily Richards is a vocal artist and a long-standing active member of the ccMixer community.<sup>19</sup>

Members of ccMixer, then, are not engaged in a micro-political conflict with their website, and neither can we say that they are unreflective in their acceptance of the site's structure. Therefore, I will approach the architecture of the ccMixture website, provided by Victor Stone, and its content, provided by all the members quite simply as two different windows on a single practice. This simple approach, then, is not the result of any lack of sensitivity to the tensions between technologies and their users in general, but merely of their relative absence in this case. In other words, if I use the architecture of the ccMixer website as an informant about the material instantiation of ccMixer's particular style of credit-giving, and the written content as an informant about the norms which tacitly underlie ccMixer's particular style of credit-giving, this approach is only defensible because there is no discernible tension between the two.

In my explorations, I have understood the architecture of ccMixer in terms of its 'affordances', that is, in terms of the possibilities for behavior it opens up (Gibson 1979, see also DeNora 2000: 38-41; Weber 2008: 60). Discussions about research in the online world have sometimes made much of the differences between real and virtual spaces (Turkle 1997, Lysloff 2003: 236-8). However interesting such ontological questions may be in their own right, I will leave them aside here. They are not relevant to the processes I describe. Instead, I

---

19: "The Future of ccM" <http://ccmixter.org/thread/1285> Available 03-03-2010. "Thoughts on Expanding CCM" <http://ccmixter.org/media/thread/1278> Available 03-03-2010.

opt for a pragmatist approach, in the philosophical sense. I will consider virtual spaces to be as real as the possibilities of action they afford. In other words, a virtual button is a real button inasmuch as pressing or clicking it means performing an action.<sup>20</sup>

I performed two studies of selected samples of written content on ccMixer. At ccMixer, when a user uploads a new remix, community members can post short, written comments in response, known as “reviews”. In the first subjugated case study, I studied all reviews between June 21st 2008, 9:17 am and June 24th 2008, 12:00 pm. This limited the corpus to one hundred and fifty reviews. What struck me in these reviews was the fact that they were variations on a single theme, and the theme was praise. This made me curious about the status relation between remixers and reviewers and led me to perform a second subjugated case study. At ccMixer, when members upload a new remix, they can append an explanatory text to it, known as a “commentary”. In the second subjugated analysis, I studied all commentaries between July 2nd 2008, 8:37 pm and July 13th 2008 5:12 pm. This limited the corpus to one hundred commentaries. In both analyses, the selected time window was determined by the extraction of a particular number of reviews or commentaries from a self-updating list of recent reviews or remixes. In doing so, I acquired a sample that was free from bias towards the parts of the site with which I was most familiar, bias towards my own musical preferences, or similar biases. In this way, I wanted to undercut the risk that my personal surfing habits might lead me to make general claims which are not actually generally applicable.

### **The analysis, part III: deejaying**

In chapter six, I analyze the cultural practice of deejaying at parties, with a special emphasis on DJs who use vinyl (or even bakelite) records. For this chapter, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with nineteen DJs. Semi-structured interviews are a well-known method in ethnographic research (Seale 1998, Cresswell 1994). My heuristic point of departure has been to compare DJs who have a preference for gramophone technology and older music with DJs who prefer contemporary technology and music. Eight of the DJs I interviewed could be labeled ‘conservationist’. I have chosen this term to emphasize that they have a particular engagement with gramophone technology and/or older popular music. A ‘preservationist’ impulse plays a role, more or less important for different respondents, within their DJ activities. Another eight DJs are, or were, more or less contemporary in their choice of technology and music. They are a very mixed bag, which has made it difficult to find a familiar term that applies to all. I have opted to coin a neologism and to call them ‘contemporist’. Three more DJs switch fluidly between analogue records and digital technology, between contemporary and older music, and between mixing and playing songs back-to-back. I will refer to these as ‘intermediate’ DJs.

The DJs were found by means of the ‘snowball method’. This entailed searching starting from my own network, and asking each DJ I found to list five DJs from his own circle of acquaintances. In using this list to approach other DJs, I gave preference to the DJ whom

---

20: The limit case of this is one of the oldest websites still in existence (if not in its original incarnation): “The Really Big Button That Doesn’t Do Anything” <http://www.pixelscapes.com/spatulacity/button.htm> Available 10-02-2010. The button itself does not even do anything (except link back to the page it is on), but the act of pushing it definitely means doing something in particular.

my interviewee considered most different from himself. However, in choosing new DJs to interview I have also taken into account my objective of comparing users of vinyl and users of digital DJ technologies.

All of the DJs I have interviewed are party DJs, although some not exclusively. For example, several DJs produce as well, two are also radio DJs, and one has furthermore often performed as a turntablist with a band, while another organizes music quizzes in pubs. Despite these differences, however, the nineteen DJs in my sample have in common that a central part of their job consists of filling up a dance floor, whether at a venue or a pub or at a private party, and generating a good atmosphere. Now, however, I turn my attention to the first case study, and analyze the craft of the mix taper.