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Cédric Parizot

Report on the closing event of  
Accoustic Commons

4-9 October 2022

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# THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF ACCOUSTIC COMMONS

Report on the closing event of  
Accoustic Commons

Creative Europe's Small  
Cooperation Projects

4-9 October 2022

Cédric Parizot,<sup>1</sup> January 2023

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## INTRODUCTION

### LISTENING AND SPEAKING LANDSCAPES

With my H5 zoom recorder in hand, I navigate the stream of students, teachers, members of the Aix-en-Provence School of Art (ESAAIX) and their guests from different parts of France, Slovenia, Finland and the United Kingdom. Together we slowly climb the slopes between the small town of Rognac and the first foothills of the Arbois plateau. The difference in altitude is noticeable. I can feel it in my legs, through my breathing, as well as in the breathing of my neighbours that have changed rhythm.

#### First matches

It is about 10 o'clock in the morning. The sky is blue, the air is slowly warming up. The atmosphere is relaxed, joyful, almost festive. I pass Sena, Tim, Nuno and Sacha, the four residents of Locus Sonus Locus Vitae, the research laboratory of the ESAAIX. Further on, three female students recently enrolled at the

school are laughing together. Like most of the newly enrolled students, they are looking for their place, adapting their rhythm and gestures in this flow of over a hundred people. Others, second or third year students, have already taken part in this ritual walk which marks the start of each school year. Some are chatting with their teachers, others improvise small performances to mark their presence. One of them plays music on a portable loudspeaker, circulating among the others. A student dressed sixties style, working with Radio Zai (a web radio from Aix-en-Provence)<sup>3</sup>, hails other students using a very shiny microphone decorated for the occasion.

Starting out without instructions, the walkers gradually began to correspond. Without noticing it, they articulate the movements of their bodies, the frequencies of their voices, in relation to one another. Because even in this unorganised flow, it is necessary to avoid stepping on one's neighbour's feet, or pushing him or her. You also need to adjust the level of your voice and distance from others in order to make yourself heard, respect conventions and avoid offending your fellow walkers. We are all evolving in relation to each other, our pace,

<sup>3</sup> <https://radiozai.com/>

our rhythm, our tones are becoming more and more conditioned by this moving and vibrating environment. It organises the conditions of possibility of our individual movements, our feelings and our subjectivities. We enter a proprioceptive and perceptive common. However, this commonality does not refer to any kind of uniformity. As François Julien reminds us (Julien 2016), the common never refers to the same or to the identical, rather, it refers to the sharing and articulation of differences. If our trajectories are conditioned and condition those of others, they remain singular.

In the middle of the flow, I meet Julie De Muer and Peter Sinclair. She is a co-founder and member of the Bureau des guides GR2013 (BdesG)<sup>4</sup>, the association created for Marseille Provence 2013 which co-organised the event

<sup>4</sup> Co-founded in 2014 by Julie De Muer, Baptiste Lanaspèze, Loïc Magnant and Alexandre Field, the GR2013 Guides Office is an association that brings together artist-walkers, collectives of inhabitants and architect-builders. Together, it works to pursue and develop the GR2013 adventure by proposing through its different projects and activities such as walking in a peri-urban environment, artistic exploration of the territory, surveying to gain a deep and tested knowledge of the territories, but also the story as a possible basis for the construction and planning gesture.

with Locus Sonus and which will supervise the two walks planned for the closing of the European Accousticcommons project. The first walk is intended for students and staff of the Art academy. It will take place over two days, on October 5th and 6th. The second, open to the public, is reduced to half a day and will take place on Saturday October 8th. The departure is planned at 10am from the Aix-en-Provence TGV station and the return at 4pm. Peter is one of the founders of the Locus Sonus laboratory and the Accousticcommons project. He introduces me to Julie: “Cédric Parizot, anthropologist, [...] he has an official role as he is the rapporteur on the European project”. Intimidated by his remark and not really knowing how to respond, I smile, exchange a few words, and apologise before taking refuge once again in the flow of walkers to soak up the atmosphere.

This walk is so pleasant. Augmented by the audio delivered through the recorder and the headphones that I wear on my ears, I am bathed in the vibrations that surround me; vibrations that I perceive in a different way, firstly because I take advantage of the device to amplify the sound, secondly because my audio perception is altered to operate less selection, and thirdly because the machine registers frequencies that are very different from

those that my ears could usually pick up. If this experience is possibly banal for sound artists, such as those who accompany the group and who will each offer us proposals during the coming days, it is a real novelty for me. Until now, I have made little use of sound recording equipment to carry out a field survey. A fact that possibly makes my hosts uncomfortable. Moreover, I had only considered using these technics for recording discussions, whereas here I was discovering another device for accessing the sensitive. The use of the H5 zoom was all the easier since, during these few days dedicated to the Acousticcommons, my recorder was much less noticeable than the notebook that I had to take out of my pocket regularly to write down reflections and thoughts before they escaped me.

Despite the number of walkers, our group was unable to cover the sounds of everyday life in the small residential area of the town of Rognac and rising from the shores of the Etang de Berre which were beginning to appear to our eyes as we climbed the slopes of the plateau. We were thus melting into a sound and visible landscape that we were contributing to animate. Our voices, laughter and footsteps mingled with the sounds of cars slowing down as they crossed paths with the group and then

speeding up as they passed us, the barking of excited or frightened dogs, the pneumatic drill and the siren of a lorry reversing. The articulation of these sounds also resounded and evolved differently as we moved away from the residential area and, on leaving Rognac, passed under the railway bridge and onto the small road on the hillside that allowed us to complete the ascent of the plateau. But even as we went deeper into the scrubland, our way of moving, of vibrating and of exchanging remained conditioned by the resonant spaces offered by the topography, the geology, the fauna, the flora and the sounds of the planes that approached or took off from Marignane airport, or of the helicopter that briefly flew over us. Even above the plateau the distant hum of the motorway was still perceptible. The different acoustics of the banks of the Etang de Berre and the slopes of the Arbois plateau thus organised, even from a distance, the conditions of possibility of our exchanges and our perceptions of our immediate environment. The space was obviously as talkative as we were (Blessner and Salter 2009).

## A world of multiple trajectories

We finally reached the ruins of an oppidum located on a rocky outcrop. Armed with a microphone and one of the two portable speakers carried by the BdesG, Julie De Muer started by pointing out to us the capacity that walking has to offer us a different experience of these spaces. Her remark was all the more relevant as most of us had only previously crossed them by car, train or bus: in other words, with different speeds, rhythms and body postures. This walk thus engaged us in other ways of inhabiting these places and invited us to pay attention in a different way to the elements that they are composed of.

Julie unraveled for us some of the history of the place. Directing our gaze and our listening to contrasts or vibrations, she identified remarkable clues. Signs which, once articulated with her stories, allowed us to understand that the elements which shaped the landscape were for the most part the stigmata of former modes of settlement and more or less recent events which had shaped these places. The traces of *bancaous* in the valleys around us bear witness to ancient dry farming practices. The remains of the oppidum situated on the rocky

spur that dominated Rognac and on which the most reckless students had perched, recalled the place where the Salians had once settled, a Celto-Ligurian population that had exploited the salt of the lagoon well before the creation of the city of Massilia by the Greeks. The *cuestas*, these geological formations, composed of calcareous and clayey marl, full of fossils, attested to a time when life had been mainly aquatic. It was then Antoine Devillet's turn, another guide from the BdesG, he pointed out that the very low height of the vegetation reminded us of the fire that had ravaged the region in 2016, and that the large pink spots apparent on the rocks were not only an effect of their characteristic marl, but also traces of the red colouring left by the fire retardant dropped by the *Canadairs* (firefighting aircraft).

Our second guide went on to emphasise that the elements of the landscape that opened up before us along the shore of the Etang de Berre were also vital strategic devices for the lives of populations located far beyond the lagoon and the surrounding towns. For the Etang is not only a resource, but also a node. It is a node formed by the waters that meet there: the salt water of the Mediterranean Sea and the fresh waters of the various rivers and canals that feed it. But it is also a hub because its banks support

a combination of industrial and logistical activities and infrastructures linking spaces and actors on a local and international scale: petrochemical installations, the hydroelectric power station of Saint Chamas, the exploitation of salt, but also motorways, railway tracks, high-voltage electricity lines, relay antennas, the runway of the Marignane airport, and finally the logistical installations of large goods-distribution groups.

Over the past 150 years, the development of these activities and infrastructures have profoundly affected the lives and activities of local populations, leading to the drastic reduction and then, for a time, the closure of fishing, water and air pollution. In short, the nodes that our guides mentioned, their mutations and the power relations that they generated and that continue to emerge, were constitutive of these places (Walther and Rétaillé 2012; Anderson 2012). They were shaped by the articulations between past and contemporary worlds and reminded us that, as Baptiste Morizot says (Morizot 2020), *to live is above all to navigate in the weavings of others*.

However, this story of a dirty, polluted lagoon, to which the inhabitants of the region had gradually turned their backs, to the point

where it temporarily disappearing from the 2015 Michelin map, was not presented as a fatality, nor was it even told in the singular. As Julie reminded us at the beginning of her talk, the interventions of the BdesG do not aim to present us with the history of a place, but to unfold several narratives; narratives which are not presented as counter-narratives, but rather as reminders of the multiple trajectories which are intertwined to constantly shape and transform our living spaces. Our guides thus reminded us of the multiple futures of the world that are too often omitted or even evacuated by the great hegemonic narratives.

It is also in this spirit that we were invited to develop another form of attention towards the *Etang* by listening for 5 minutes to the streambox prepared by Peter Sinclair and the Locus Sonus team. Grégoire Lauvin had installed it two days before on the buoy in the middle of the lagoon with the help of the GIPREB (a public interest group for the rehabilitation of the Etang de Berre created in 2000)<sup>5</sup> and their boat. The binaural microphone, an “artificial head” made of PVC, operated

<sup>5</sup> <https://etangdeberre.org/>

autonomously thanks to a marine battery powered by a solar panel offers an audio field similar to that captured by human ears.

However, paradoxically, as Peter reminded us, this microphone allowed us to listen to the vibratory field produced by the fauna, the flora, the lagoon and human activities that none of us would have been able to experience in situ. On the one hand, because the birds that were sitting and singing next to the microphone would never have come so close to a human being. On the other hand, because the presence of a boat, however light, would have affected the vibratory field differently through the lapping of the waves on its hull for example. In short, this open microphone simulated a human listening device to generate a non-human listening experience. Finally, to remind us that the abandonment of the Etang de Berre is not inevitable, Hortense De Lary was invited to speak on behalf of GIPREB. She told us about the multiple efforts and measures deployed by this mixed syndicate and its actors (elected representatives, technical staff) to reclaim, watch over and take care of this magnificent lagoon.

I

## SEEING THROUGH LISTENING

*This week there were one hundred and ten of us...*

*One hundred and seventeen... One hundred and five...*

*Well, a lot.*

*A curious group of walkers, mixing art students, teachers,*

*sound artists... From the Aix-TGV station,*

*we walked to the Réaltor*

*Lake, passing by the heights of*

*Rognac which overlooks the Etang de Berre.*

*From the lagoon to the lake, finishing*

*with a few drops of sweat. If we had our eyes full of it, it was above all with our ears that we*

*travelled*

*the path.*

*What better way to*

*explore the notion of*

*the common than to listen and cross the landscape together.<sup>6</sup>*

The walks and workshops proposed by the BdesG, Locus Sonus and Acousticcommons during these first two days, and then on 8 October, led us to move in different ways between the region situated between the Etang de Berre and Aix-en-Provence. Firstly, they led us to move through this space by following routes other than those usually taken by car (departmental roads, motorway), train or plane. These journeys on foot have thus inscribed us in other velocities and other rhythms, but also in the proxemics and the singular relational dynamics that have emerged from the groups that have been made and unmade.

<sup>6</sup> This text concludes the magnificent Fanzine which was produced by the students of the Ecole supérieure d'art d'Aix-en-Provence under the supervision of the two teachers of the silk-screen printing workshop from photos, drawings, poems, made during the inaugural march of the students of the School. This text ends as follows: "The object you are holding in your hands is a kind of 'place of the common': it gathers the materials collected and produced by us - students, artists - during our joyful journey. It has been printed and shaped by our hands in the EsaAIX print-editing workshop.

By contributing to the systematic reorganisation of the modes of coupling between our motor and sensory systems and the environment, and thus leading us into other proprioceptive, olfactory, auditory and visual experiences, these journeys gave rise to other modes of attention, other rhythms and rates of perception, thought and imagination. What was at stake was not to replace one mode of enaction, i.e. one mode of coupling of our sensory and motor systems with the environment, with another more efficient one. Such an ambition would not have made much sense. No, what was particularly stimulating was to succeed in constantly (re)inscribing ourselves in different modes of coupling; each transition or passage from one coupling to another allowed us to feel the contrasts between these modes of enaction and questioned us on the effects of these multiple ways of being in the world and navigating the common.

In order to explain this singular dynamic and its capacity to generate a heightened awareness of the complexity, depth and multi-dimensionality of the space-time that we crossed and participated in constituting, it would not be sufficient to make a successive and chronological list of the different interventions of the artists during these three days of walking. Such a summary

would isolate each intervention or proposal and would prevent us from understanding the particularly interesting effects of the modulations which their articulations opened up, as well as the singular synesthetic processes that they produced between our different senses. Moreover, I deeply doubt that the participants in this event projected themselves into a fragmentary and sequential analysis of the proposals. Rather, I think that they were moved by their movements and sensations to a point where new questions arose. Thus, instead of a chronological description of the stages of this journey and the artists' interventions, I propose instead to highlight the reflections that this event as a whole inspired in me.

## Reappraising the extent of body and space

From my perspective, by restoring listening to a primary role, the walk, its phases, and the artists' performances not only disrupted the hierarchy we establish between listening and seeing, but also led us to experiment with other ways of sharing and articulating our motor and sensory systems with each other and with our environment. In Donna Haraway's words, the

walk reminded us of how we are *bodies-in-the-making* (Haraway 1987). And it was through these movements of (re)configuration of our corporealities that we were able to experience in a practical way the constant evolution of the agential cut between the agents we were and the objects we were confronted with.<sup>7</sup> Through these movements, we were thus able to deepen this test of the common, whether through inter-coporality (Thibaud 2015) between the members of the group, but also and above all through the differential ways in which our corporealities integrated the elements of the human/non-human, living and inert entanglements through which we were moving.

<sup>7</sup> According to Karen Barad's theory of agential realism (2007), the agential cut between agent and object is constantly redefined by the intra-actions that organise their relationship. She takes up the metaphor of the blind man used by Gregory Bateson (Bateson 2000). Like him, she explains that the limit of the blind man's body (his corporeity) evolves according to his actions. When he moves with a stick to find his way, the stick is part of his body and his cognitive and sensory apparatus, since it allows him to feel his environment. Conversely, when he listens to a lecture, the stick no longer serves any purpose and is no longer part of his physicality. In this framework, to understand the evolution of people's corporeality and their coupling to the environment, what counts is not what they are, but what they have and what they do.

What constituted us, both in our corporealities and our subjectivities, was not our biological bodies, but those transitions between different couplings or modes of enaction (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 2017) that organised our relations with the environment.

During the first walk (October 2022 5th and 6th), the participants were immediately placed in a listening situation as soon as they arrived at Rognac station. Each stage was marked by a juncture during which Julie De Muer, Antoine Devillet, Noémie Behr or other members of the BdesG intervened to unfold narratives. Therefore, we looked at the landscape that was unfolding through listening to our guides, because it was according to the way they directed our eyes and our sense of smell that we developed an attention to the signs they identified. Listening had not only taken precedence over our vision to decipher and understand landscapes for which we had neither the codes nor the means to sift through them and recognise significant lines of force. But we delegated the orientation of our attention to our guides. We were a bit like young urbanites taken into the forest by a friend; a friend who had asked us to spot specific fungi among the roots and dead leaves yellowed and reddened by the autumn. Without her teaching us what

to look for, it would have been impossible for us to grasp the relevant contrasts or differences that would have allowed us to distinguish a mushroom from a piece of root, or a dead leaf.

We were thus experiencing not only the limitations of our own senses and knowledge to identify meaningful differences in the world around us, but also our dependence on our guides. For we had to rely first on those who knew how to see to shape and sharpen our attention to the world. Our guides had learned to see, listen, and identify clues, because they had walked these spaces so many times, that they had developed a keen indexical knowledge of them (Kohn 2017). They had not only developed an erudition made up of a set of stories about these places, but they had also, by dint of habit, learned to recognise their mutations and transformations. They had learned *with* and *from* these spaces (Ingold 2018). By listening to them and relying on their ability to pay attention to the world, we were gradually able to detect what our eyes and ears were unable to perceive, let alone understand.

We also depended on the senses and knowledge of our guides to (re)know and resituate the Arbois plateau in our daily world. The stop at the oppidum had already allowed us to

understand that we were neither on the margins nor on the periphery of our contemporary capitalist world, but on the contrary, at the heart of it, at the heart of its veins and of the flux that run through it to feed its constant ambition of growth and expansion. Although situated out of sight of the great infrastructures we had contemplated earlier, the pine forest under which we stopped for a picnic at around 1pm was not on the fringe of our anthropised world either. Our guides helped us to understand that not only were the landscapes and paths leading to them maintained for the pleasure of the walkers we were, but that they were also criss-crossed by power struggles between farmers, pastoralists, hunters and local authorities who argued over different zoning.

This visibilisation of the world through listening and walking continued throughout these three days. It allowed us to perceive a world that our everyday usage of the territory that stretches between the Etang de Berre and Aix-en-Provence, makes imperceptible. Through their rhythms, their vehicles, their velocities, and their rules, our movements tend to divert our attention from the more or less coherent development of these territories and, above all, from the redeployment of our actions and our corporality in this post-digital era.

For if the infrastructures and conventions that organised our circulation in this ‘territory’ made it possible to fluidify our movements, to access, produce and consume most of its resources, they also diverted our trajectories from a set of strategic devices.

Such is the case for the Marseille canal, that carried the waters of the Durance to the metropolis, access to which is restricted by a series of devices – barriers, fences and signs warning passers-by that they are not allowed to approach it. This was also true for the data-centre installed in the former Télécommunication de France building, not far from the Aix-en-Provence TGV station. Surrounded by fences bristling with rolls of barbed wire, situated on a by-road and sheltered by pine trees, we had to rely on our guides to understand its function. Far from anywhere and difficult to access, this building was nevertheless part of our corporality. The data-flux that were constantly processed by the machines it contained were almost certainly home to some of our documents or the information that we exchanged via our mobile phones or that we keep on the “cloud”. It thus contained part of our memory or the digitised memories of the inhabitants of the region, and even those of individuals located much further away in our world.

Moreover, one could wonder whether the route that Locus Sonus and the BdesG had drawn on Google Earth and that we could visualise on our mobile phones, had not partially, or even entirely, passed through this datacentre. The building once again raised questions about the increasingly technical and digital nature of our contemporary bodies.

Finally, it was the local knowledge of our guides and their attention that allowed us to understand why a line of cars had formed by the side of the road. This queue, which Ester Salmona, one of the artists invited to the event, mistook for the fringe of the TGV station car park, was due to the presence of a *cruising* area adjacent to the data centre. As Antoine so rightly pointed out, this abandoned space, located slightly off from the main traffic routes and hubs and therefore from society’s gaze, had been reinvested as a place of freedom for paid or unpaid encounters.

## Navigating Soundscapes

The different phases of the walk and the interventions by members of the BdesG, were articulated by several artistic proposals allowing us to experience the power of listening



and sound in the organisation of our coupling with our environment. If the first proposal temporarily cut us off from our immediate sound scape, the others allowed us to plunge into it in different ways developing perceptions that we would not normally have been able to access. The first was composed by students of ESAAIX and broadcast by Radio Zaï, just after lunch on October 5th. A piece of electronic music composed by a student, in part from sounds collected at the beginning of the march (planes, birdsong, etc.), put us in a situation of contemplation. In fact, as the piece started, most of the students, teachers and guests laid down on the blankets that had been set up for the picnic under the pine grove. In the shade of the trees, the articulation of the electro-acoustic music and the postures taken by some and others imposed a scenic apparatus (*dispositif*) and an atmosphere of rest and contemplation. If some simply closed their eyes to better navigate this vibratory space, others dozed off. The sound, especially the bass, was so pervasive that it became impossible for us to perceive the sounds outside the woods during the 9 minutes that the performance lasted.

Half an hour later, when it was time to leave, Tim Shaw offered a 30-minute sound ambulation for a first group of participants,

followed by a second. He handed out about twenty wireless headphones, that connected to a shortwave transmitter, which in turn was connected to a computer and a portable mixer. This device allowed Tim Shaw to compose the sounds of the environment collected using an array of microphones and sensors then mixed and transmitted to the listeners. A pair of lapel microphones attached to the outside of the bag allowed him to capture the ambient sound in stereo. An SDR (Software Defined Radio) sensor picked-up short and long wave radio signals. Finally, a hydrophone and an electromagnetic wave sensor capable of rendering audible the normally imperceptible but omnipresent parasites generated by electrical and electronic installations completed this equipment. Followed and preceded by the members of the group, Tim improvised and composed with the sounds he captured: those produced by the participants while walking or talking, those of the relay antennas and high voltage lines, the radio streams captured by his sensor, those produced by the fauna and flora. The universe of sounds that came to life in our ears was totally bewitching.

If the performance broadcast by Radio Zaï had momentarily isolated us from the surrounding soundscape, Tim's device had plunged us back

into it in another way. Using his apparatus, he had substituted our (natural) auditory system to offer us a perception of both the perceptible and the imperceptible. The sonification of the waves that passed through the electromagnetic field was looped with the sounds of our foot-steps, our words, our laughter, the sound of the wind in the leaves, the songs of the birds, etc. Not only did he make the perceptible differently perceptible, he also made the imperceptible perceptible. Not only did he make perceptible wave articulations that we were unable to perceive and imagine, by playing with them differently, he created other soundscapes.

He was therefore not only proposing listening, but an alternative navigation of these vibratory spaces and other couplings between our bodies and this environment. His proposal was an exploration of other possibilities within common acoustics. But this was not the first time I had done a sound walk with Tim. He had already offered me this opportunity, once in April in Aix-en-Provence, then three more

times during the Soundcamp in May 2022.<sup>8</sup> What strikes me is the vibratory relationship that he had managed to develop in such a fine way with sounds that are perceptible and imperceptible to the human ear. It is from this vibratory relationship that he is able to propose such singular compositions in real time.

We repeated this walk with Tim on the morning of October 8th with the public who had responded to the invitation of the BdesG and the ESAAIX, in the context of the

8 "SoundCamp" refers to both sound camps and the eponymous artist collective that focuses on live, remote and local listening. Together with partner sound artists, this collective, which runs the Accouti-commons project, organises annual sound camps from dusk to dawn to approach the world through listening. Based in London, it has been broadcasting "Réveil" since 2014, a 24-hour radio programme from 30 April to 1er May, which follows the sunrise around the globe, along each time zone. It relays live audio streams from commissioned artists, independent channels, and a variety of streaming media assembled for the event. In May 2022, Locus Sonus organised its Soundcamp at the Pont Riche barns in the Roya Valley in collaboration with IREMAM and the Ouistitis de Ponte Ricco association.

Aix-en-Provence Biennial of Art and Culture.<sup>9</sup> As there were no more than fifty of us, Tim suggested that each person with a pair of headphones he had provided, which had a mini-jack plug, let a second person plug their own headphones into the first. So, we all set off in pairs, connected by a wire (or wired together). Our steps, movements and perceptions were both matched to Tim's compositions and the movements of the person we were attached to. As the terrain was particularly rough and slippery, due to the rain that was falling, we were all the more vigilant in articulating our respective movements. The individuals of each couple had thus entered into correspondence with a new sound universe and an extended body; an extended body over which they did not have complete control. They were thus experiencing both an acoustic and a corporeal commonality. Once again, our corporealities had been reconfigured by Tim's device, the environmental conditions (topography, climate), and the relationships we had with the other members of the group (individually

9 <https://www.aixenprovencetourism.com/agenda-des-evenements/une-5eme-saison-biennale-dart-et-de-culture/>

on the first day, wired together in pairs on the second day) had to be reconfigured in order to progress through the garrigue.

The acuity we were able to develop towards our different couplings with the world was finally accentuated by a third ambulatory listening practice proposed by the three residents of Locus Sonus, Nuno Da Luz, Sena Karahan and Tim Shaw during the second day of the walk on October 6th. Our group set off on the afternoon of 6 that day after a silk-screening workshop proposed by Richard Martelle and David Poullard in preparation for the publication of a Fanzine for the morning of 8 October. The first objective of this walk was to offer a moment of greater freedom, but also of renewed attention and concentration. Listening was no longer mediated by technology, it became more active integrated as part of a guided *flanerie*. As Antoine added, this walk was also a way to evolve together in a different way and to pay attention to the proxemics, that is to say to the ways of approaching and positioning our bodies between each other, once we stopped talking or listening to the sound compositions of the artists or the interventions of our guides. He had invited us to pay more attention to the ecology of the sounds around us. Taking the

microphone, Tim asked everyone to stop talking for one minute, to listen to the environment and then start walking.

The effect was almost magical. The silence that fell over of the group opened up vibrations and sounds that we had previously missed. The small clearing where our group had stopped for a picnic, which seemed so remote from the world, was once again filled with an *ensemble* of sounds. In addition to the footsteps of the walkers, on the leaves and branches that littered the ground, one could already hear the barking of the dogs from the SPA shelter close by.<sup>10</sup> Then the birds started singing again. I first let the group pass, then I started to follow it at a certain distance. I wanted to be behind the group to better isolate myself. As I progressed, I noticed that the barking of the dogs became louder, and I could also hear the sound of water running down a drainage system. Then I noticed the sound of walkers' bags rubbing or hitting the iron fence that separated us from the road and that they were trying to climb. Then the sounds of two car engines, warning two approaching vehicles. Our footsteps no longer made the same noise on the tarmac, but I only noticed it when we were back on the dirt and

10 Society for the protection of animals.

gravel path that led us back into the scrubland. Listening was a reminder of how the landmarks we rely on to navigate the worlds we inhabit are not circumscribed elements, but transitions in continuous processes of diffraction. As Brian Massumi points out (Massumi 2002) it is also through these transitions and contrasts that we become aware of our existence and can make sense of the world around us

A few minutes later I saw a group of students silently working around a pile of rubbish. They were playing with the debris left by a building contractor by the side of the road: pieces of sheet metal, burnt plastic, decomposed by the sun, and tiles made up so many instruments with which they had started to play. Then we had to pick up the pace. Playing around on the rubble had made me temporarily forget the group that had taken the path along the canal carrying the waters of the river Durance to the city of Marseille. The barking of the dogs was becoming more and more audible. We were clearly getting closer to the SPA shelter. Once there, I saw several dogs in quite large pens. Carlos, one of the teachers, was quietly watching them. Some students were talking to volunteers who had come to walk some of the dogs.

Then I resumed my walk, moving away from the shelter. The barking of the dogs faded away without ever disappearing completely. On the other hand, the sound of the water flowing became more perceptible, but no obstacle was creating turbulence, except in a few places where grids had been put in place to retain branches, grass or rubbish that might have fallen in the canal. The current was observable.

In front of me Sena was walking along the bank, trailing a stick in the water. Some students were throwing small stones from time to time. On my side, I navigated between the gravel and the grassy areas playing with the different sounds of my steps. I even amused myself, climbing the small iron bridges that allowed us to cross the canal at certain points to play with the resonance of the steel tubes. Then we heard the passing of a TER (regional express train), not far from there. Curiously, the sound of the distancing train became confused with the sound of the water at a sluice system. We were nearing the end of our journey.

Hydro-installations, houses and sheds showed that the place was a strategic point of activity for the Marseille Canal Company. Approaching the small dam, I noticed a skip into which the rubbish that constantly accumulates on the

water gates was deposited. I then played with the different resonances of the metal sheet which I gently struck with my phalanges. I scratched at the objects around me, paying attention to both the sounds they might emit and the way they reverberated through the other materials around them. Then I walked over to the students and teachers who were sitting on the lawn, not far from the small dam, in silence. Everyone seemed absorbed, as if in a moment of contemplation, savouring the effects and discoveries of this attentive and active listening.

After a new train passed in the distance, Noémie Behr, BdesG's administrator, tested a microphone with Nuno. Playing on the feedback effect, they sounded the end of the reverie. Then Nuno invited some of the participants to come and talk. One student explained that her thoughts had become extremely prominent in her mind, superimposed on the sounds she had heard throughout the walk. Noémie said that it was difficult to not communicate as we walked past dogs who were eager to interact with us. Then Ludmila Postel, a member of Locus Sonus and coordinator of the event, expressed how relaxing it was for her to be alone, without being alone, listening to the environment and her thoughts. Another student noted how

much we were caught up in the sounds of our footsteps and how disciplined we remained in our walking, articulating to each other's rhythms. Finally, one student emphasised how her body had re-emerged in its different vibratory dimensions, a body she had tended to forget during the ambulation with Tim, when his sensors had directed her attention towards the external environment.

Just as these exchanges were beginning to become more dynamic and spontaneous, Antoine invited us to resume our journey. A guard from the Marseille Canal Company had just arrived in a car to ask us to leave, since the place was forbidden to the public. Our wandering had, without our realising it, led us towards a place where our guides had not planned to bring us. We left through a gate which, without the guard, would have remained closed. Then we continued on our way to regain the route that had been plotted by Locus Sonus and the BdesG. As we walked along the fence, I noticed an old concrete sign, probably from the 1950s or 1960s. It read:

Canal de Marseille: It is forbidden, under penalty of a fine, to walk on the banks, to swim, to fish, to throw rubbish, to draw

water, to damage the works.  
Prefectoral order of February 25th 1856  
and April 22nd 1867

## Soundscapes and Limits

I had been deeply struck by the intermingling of our sound spaces during this walk. The superimposition of sounds, the reverberations, the articulation of their frequencies, sometimes brought out dynamics that I found difficult to define. These were as much harmonies as counterpoints, multitudes of nodes and above all dynamics of emergence that my anthropological ignorance of acoustics prevented me from identifying and perceiving. As Salomé Voegelin (2018, 33) points out, by focusing on vibratory dynamics, rather than on the visual landscape, I realised my incapacity to create a critical distance from the world I was trying to perceive and identify.

The image pretends the possibility of distance and dissociation, to be apart as mute objects and subjects, and to be defined by its distance, which cuts the link to any cause and masks the relationship to any consequence. [...] By contrast, sound affords no distance and enables no view

from afar. Instead, the simultaneity of an inhabited listening creates the dis-illusions of plural possibilities, perception's true variants, which are the different slices of this world that cannot be resolved into one singular and actually real.

The second thing that became clear to me was that while these spaces did have volumes and boundaries, they could not be envisaged through the flatness of a cartography. Their dynamics were again too complex to be represented through diagrams, no matter how many dimensions they included (Voegelin 2018). Similarly, rather than being marked by stability, these sensitive boundaries were inscribed in the transience and evanescence of these constantly redefining flows. Finally, these limits were not apprehensible in terms of cuts or ruptures, which are implied by the multiple visual metaphors most often used by the human and social sciences when talking about borders. We were evolving and navigating in undulatory spaces, where transitions in rhythm, contrasts and thresholds were our only reference. The 'milieu' we co-produced, as defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) were only recognisable when we moved from one to the other. Once again,

it was this transitory dimension that allowed us to imagine the order of the world and the position we held in it (Massumi 2002).

This "silent" walk, or rather this active listening, led us to extract ourselves from this cosmology where the world is thought of as an absolute, as a container of elements apprehended as blocks, discrete from one another, circumscribed, stabilised and above all bearers of defined properties. The walk initiated two days earlier by Locus Sonus and the BdesG had already led us to deconstruct the idea of the *Great Divide* between nature and culture (Descola 2005), followed by that of the opposition between margin and periphery. It now led us to experience the indivisibility of the vibratory flows around us, as well as the interior and exterior of our bodies, because we could not help but feel the vibrations of our breath, our voices and the noises made by our footsteps, both inside and outside of us.

In fact, it was a very interesting play on the articulation of different sound spaces that Sena Karahan, a resident of the Locus Sonus program, and Irena Pivka and Brane Zorman, from the Cona Institute, proposed during the three days of the walk. The one proposed by Irena and Brane took place during the afternoon

of the second day of the students' walk. The guided audio walk, which they prepared with Peter, allowed us to make the transition between the Datacenter, installed in the former TDF buildings, and the Aix-en-Provence TGV station from which we were supposed to leave at the end of this first journey. It was organised a second time, on the morning of 8 October, but in the opposite direction: from the station to the Datacenter.

I mention the first implementation of this walk, as it was the one that made the greatest impression on me and during which I was most fully concentrated. This augmented walk was originally composed from recordings of the sounds around the main railway station in Ljubljana during the period of confinement decreed by the Slovenian authorities following the first COVID-19 pandemic: a time when all public life was at a standstill. Irena and Brane's original installation invited the audience to take a walk along the railway tracks of Ljubljana, using an audio player and headphones. It led the audience to wander and listen to a performative space. On the one hand, it mixed sound compositions based on the silence of humans, the sounds of fauna and flora and the isolated sounds of the few trains still in circulation, and on the other hand, a reflection on the world,

spoken by a female voice. The authors thus invited the walkers to ask themselves about the possible future of this railway hub.

I also decided to elaborate on this walk more than on the second, because the audio, visual and topophonic nodes in which it had immersed us (Thibaud 2015), created processes of systematic inversion between the visual and sound landscapes, between our rhythms, our modes of existence and those of the other living beings we encountered, as well as between the trajectories of the world evoked by this poetic composition and the trajectories of the world we were passing through (Biserna 2015). Equipped with our own smartphones, headphones and the URL provided by the artists, or for those who did not have one, with the devices (smartphone + wired headphones) prepared by Cona, we were invited to start walking, in single file, following Peter Sinclair. We were instructed to trigger the sound composition, not all at the same time, but at the point where Peter had taken his first steps and Brane and Irena were marking their presence. This permitted the synchronization of our progress with the landscape unfolding around us.

Keeping pace with Peter and following his route carefully, we were first immersed in the sound

of trains running through a station we couldn't see, as we left the Datacenter's pine forest and slowly moved through the *cruising* area that had developed nearby. We could see men in their cars, phones in hand, others moving around looking for a possible partner. Some were surprised to see this long line of people emerging from the pine forest in this remote area, reinvested as a space of freedom, because far from the eyes of the world.

A soft female voice, that repeated certain phrases, explained that we were walking along the railway tracks. The prosody, its rhythm and the beauty of the text, articulated with the sounds of the trains and the increasingly electronic vibrations, reinforced its poetic dimension. The inversions brought about by the audio, visual and topophonic nodes (Thibaud 2015) as we walked along, in a rhythm that was set to that of the voice, opened up an experience of radical dissonance between what we were hearing and the universe we were passing through. However, rather than disorienting me, this process had accentuated my visual and proprioceptive capacities. I noted every piece of rubbish that littered the ditches, the undergrowth, the grass, making the landscape look more and more like a dumping

ground. Once again, far from going through "nature", we were navigating through the traces and waste of a space shaped by humans.

The sounds of the trains had disappeared and were replaced by the sounds of footsteps on gravel, with here and there the sounds of Morse code, of distortion, but also the living: birds, insects and batrachians that we were listening to with increasing acuity. A few minutes later we were even carried away by the sound of sea waves, breaking on a beach. We had been making our way between the Datacenter and our goal for about ten minutes. Away from the *cruising* area, there was no longer any human presence apart from the long line of walkers with their devices. Its progress, its rhythm, the compositions that sounded in our ears, had a hypnotic character. Curiously, the more the noise of the birds grew, the more this woman's voice evoked the possibility of a future transformation of the spaces we were traversing: a return of the fauna, a return of the plants, and this even as we were getting closer to the TGV station. Curiously, I was wondering for the first time about the life span of such a building. Monumental as it is, this station in the middle of the Arbois plateau, this strategic railway junction, is perhaps as ephemeral as the American army camp, whose site we had

passed through the day before. Set up during the Second World War, it was just as strategic, since it was a base hosting more than 100,000 Marines, then part of the American forces stationed in Europe. Seventy years after the conflict, there is almost nothing left of it, just a few traces in the vegetation, difficult to identify for an uninformed walker.

Caught up in this rhythm, in these reflections on the evanescence and transience of our actions and constructions, this voice and this hypnotic walk led us progressively into the station area. Here, the contrast between my state of *flanerie*, the rhythm of my step and the state of contemplation in which I had comfortably settled, and that of the speed, the haste, the impatience, the stress of the drivers who had come to pick up a loved one, of the travellers who were waiting for a taxi, smoking a cigarette too quickly, gulping down their coffee in a hurry, or running to board another destination had become almost unbearable. This dissonance brought my proprioceptive memory to the surface, revealing to me the way of being that I usually deploy in these places, that same frenzy with which I had passed through this same space so many times on my way in or on my way out.

Finally, we climbed the stairs of the arrivals hall, to go and sit on the wooden deckchairs which furnished a balcony of the building. And it was opposite the landscape of the Arbois plateau, which we had crossed via its paths, its tracks, and its abandoned departmental roads, its forests, its clearings, the banks of the Marseille canal, those of the Etang de Berre and the Réaltor reservoir, that we ended the first two day walk. For the first time since I had settled in this region, 18 years ago, I took the time and the pleasure to contemplate this landscape over which the station extends.

Two days later, Sena Karahan also offered us an augmented walk of about twenty minutes, transposing an audio recording made in Aix-en-Provence which mixed sounds from the streets and a café and ended with a discussion between students from the Ecole supérieure d'art d'Aix-en-Provence. They expressed their experiences of the different sound walks they had done during the previous two days, and those they had done with Sena during the workshop she had organised the day before. The set-up was similar Irena's, we downloaded the sound file via an internet link and played the pre-recorded track while following Sena along the banks of the Réaltor reservoir to the outskirts of the Eclair district, not far from the

village of Calas. Here too there was a kind of inversion in the audio, visual and topo-phonics nodes in which we were immersed. While our walk had started along the banks of the Réaltor filtering reservoir, shifting to an, at times, muddy path that meandered between groves of reeds, we could hear people talking on a café terrace, the café owners opening and closing the drawers of the bar, scooters passing in the street, a garbage truck, cars. The disjunction was so great that I listened to this background noise as music, calm, almost concentrated. The quiet rhythm of the walk also lulled me, then the sound faded as we came out on a road. Then we saw three students moving two rubbish bins on wheels, as if in a dance. Then the sound started again, first to give way to the sound of a much quieter street, featuring voices in several languages. At this point, our group people ascended a bridge to cross a road, and then went back down into the suburban neighbourhood of l'Eclair. There a discussion between three or four students started in our headsets.

These fragmentary discussions testified to the different ways in which the sound walks had challenged, disturbed and confused them in their connections to the world. They also underlined how the different sound sources

were intertwined and made it difficult to distinguish and divide them on the basis of vision and our epistemes. Interestingly, they also evoked how visual cultures and the links we organise between our sensory, sound and visual devices are not quite the same in Europe and in Asia. Because these hierarchies between the senses can sometimes be very ethnocentric. One student was Chinese, the others were not. If they had indeed participated in the construction of a collective situation, during which they had interacted with each other, they had not lived the same experiences. They had made community through their differences. Discussions about the two walks that Irena and Brane had offered us on the way to and from the station on the 6th and the 8th of October have also shown how they were experienced in very different ways by each of us. They had put us all on the same trajectory for a time, while opening a multitude of experiences, memories and reactions.

And it was these extremely rich and different reactions that were pooled and discussed on 8 October during the lunch break, in the small clearing where we had had the picnic with the students two days earlier. They were also in direct resonance with Elena Biserna's presentation of her book *Walking from Scores*,

published this year by Presses du réel in Dijon (Biserna 2022). In it, she offers an unpublished anthology of verbal and graphic scores to be used while walking, from Fluxus to the critical works of current artists, via the experimental music tradition and performance art. In the words of Marie Baltazar and Laurent Legrain, this book is a reminder that listening is not about adopting another « perspective » on the world, but about adopting “another line of conduct” (Baltazar and Legrain 2020).

## Consubstantial yet singular

Finally, another genre of in situ artistic intervention was set up during these three days of walking: that adopted by the Finnish artist Hanna Tuulikki as well as Ida Hirsensfelder, of the Cona collective. Both of whom chose to perform on the banks of the Réaltor reservoir. Apart from the fact that they took place in the same area, their interventions seemed to me to address the same question as did the presence of the birds that had taken up permanent or temporary residence on the waters of this reservoir formerly used to remove silt, thus assigning it to a new function. By addressing this issue, they draw attention to the way in which our actions are often diverted or

instrumentalized by others, either simultaneously or a posteriori. What distinguishes us is therefore not what we are made of, but the way in which we set these elements that constitute us are set in motion. As Tim Morton says so well, we are all composed of elements that do not belong to us (Morton 2010), what makes us unique, and belongs to us, is the way we articulate and shape them.

The Réaltor was built in the 19<sup>ème</sup> century as a retention pool, to remove some of the silt from the Durance, before the water was redirected back to the canal for transport to Marseille. However, ever since the water from this canal has been drawn directly from the artificial canals of the EDF electricity supply company, it has no longer needed to be cleared of its silt. Still, the basin has not been closed, due to pressure from various associations and institutional actors in the region it has been saved. The latter argue that it has become an essential habitat and transit area for a wide range of birds; those native to the region, but also those making their seasonal migrations to and from more distant locations. The function of this pond has been « hijacked », in a manner of speaking, by the birds. A neglected human infrastructure has been reinvested, converted into a huge hub, right next to the

Aix-en-Provence TGV station, but this time by other living beings than humans. To use Anna Tzing's term, the reservoir has generated a feral effect.<sup>11</sup>

Hanna and Ida both played with these diversions and inter-species communications or consubstantialities that develop, without our noticing it, between our living spaces and those of other living beings. Hanna did this twice, once on the afternoon of 6 October, for students and staff of ESAAIX, and again on 8 October, for the public. She launched into vocal improvisations with the various birds that were placed on the pond. Standing on a rocky outcrop, she began her vocalizations by turning towards the forest and the cliff of marl not far from the shore. She thus explored the acoustics of this space with powerful cries that took the form of "*chirps*<sup>12</sup>", a kind of glissando that allows animals that use echolocation to better perceive space through the variations of reflected waves. She tested the space to better position herself. Then, moving slightly, she turned towards the artificial lake and improvised a song with

11 On this point see the Feral Atlas <https://www.feralatlas.org/>

12 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chirp>

the birds. As I listened, I wondered how the birds could possibly perceive this situation. My ignorance made it impossible for me to perceive any difference in their reactions, or even to distinguish the different species to which they belonged. In any case, as if to greet the end of the improvisation on the afternoon of 6 October, a flock of birds flew out at the end of the performance, greeted by the applause of the audience.

Ida had another proposal. She set up her installation beneath a cliff that formed a natural amphitheater facing the water. She was below us, we were sitting a little way off, around her, as if in a theatre. Armed with a cannon microphone, pointed at the artificial lake, and a computer, she composed a piece that played with the live sound of the birds, its amplification, retransmission and reverberation off the face of the cliff, under which we were sitting, returning it towards the water. We, but also the birds that were there, were caught as if in a cybernetic loop, within which we co-produced an ensemble of intelligible spaces. Ida also played with the frequencies of the sound waves, since she read a text that almost merged with her composition. So much so that in fact I was unable to understand the meaning of it that day. I had to ask her to send it to me

later. The text is by Salomé Voegelin, taken from her book published in 2018, page 75. Here is what it says:

A geography of sound has no maps; it produces no cartography. It is the geography of encounters, misses, happenstance and events: invisible trajectories and configurations between people and things, unfolding in the dimension of the actual while formlessly forming the dimensions of its possibility, and secretly performing the impossible territories of a poet on the night-time sea – on the ocean in the dark, she hears the rhythms and textures that are the material and content of an invisible terrain that leaves no trace and holds no certainty beyond its experience on the body as a material among things. These textures and rhythms can't be measured and drawn on a flat surface to make maps or a score. They can't be rendered visible but hold a knowledge of the world that lies in its invisible contingency: in its capacity as a timespace place not to refer back to the dialectic – the opposition between time and space, whose purpose and ideology furnish the visible and produce its bias for division, control and definition – but to perform its indivisibility in the voluminous

movement of a watery earth. Thus we have to enter into its undulations, to feel our bodies perform the geography of waves, the volume of water and the fragile connections between all that moves in its dark expanse

Through her composition, Ida opened an aesthetic experience of how frequencies articulate to cancel each other out or, on the contrary, to amplify. Her performance thus echoed one of the texts in the fanzines that had been distributed by the Art School and the Guides' office on the first day of our walk. It was chosen by Antoine, it was entitled "*Acoustic Ecology*". Our guide reminded us that through their daily activities, humans have reorganised the sound and living spaces of certain other living things. He quoted the ecologist Bernie Krause, who has shown that several species of animals have been forced to readapt their ways and places of life to fit into polyphonic niches in which their communication frequencies are not scrambled by ours (Pijanowski et al. 2011) which brings the idea of the soundscape—the collection of sounds that emanate from landscapes—into a research and application focus. Our conceptual framework of soundscape ecology is based on the causes and consequences of biological (biophony. Conversely, many animal

species, especially those that have become accustomed to urban spaces, have associated certain sounds produced by our societies as familiar indexes, comforting and, above all, synonymous with survival. They have opened up forms of co-evolution. This is what the foxes who have settled and thrived in London must have experienced, and which artist Charlie Fox followed on the streets of the British capital during the first confinement of spring 2020 along with other artists from the Acousticcommons project.

In short, these last proposals around the Réaltor offered us some interesting paths towards evoking the variety of relationships that organised the commons that we shared between us humans, but also between humans and other living beings. These relationships could be based on different forms of correspondence (Ingold 2017), involving more or less conventional modes of communication as well as forms of inter-species communication (Haraway 2003). They also involved forms of co-evolution (Deleuze et Guattari 1980). The feral effect of the delimiting reservoir transformed into a 'hub' for migratory birds showed that certain human infrastructures had been diverted from their original uses to serve the development of other species. Conversely, Ida's

play on frequencies was a sad reminder of how some animals had had to flee their niche to occupy others. However, both Ida's and Hanna's performances also showed that the attempts at inter-species communication, the connections between our living spaces and our trajectories opened up many other futures and many other possibilities than those defined by the great narratives of our contemporary societies (Voegelin 2018). Moreover, the interventions, performances and installations by artists and certain researchers addressed this question in particular.

## II

### MOVING THROUGH LISTENING

By attempting to test different listening architectures, whether during the walk or on the site of Aix en Provence School of Art and its surroundings, as well as by proposing real-time compositions based on random sound sources, the installations and interventions of the artists participating in the event offered us other types of movement. There was no longer question of moving from one site to another, nor of better distinguishing the elements of the landscape by listening to our guides, but rather of changing spatial and sensory conditions to navigate differently through world soundscapes. For, from its early beginnings, the Acousticcommons network has been using live audio streaming to co-create public art projects that form bridges between localities and bring isolated communities into interaction. Listening in common to soundworlds of Europe, Japan and other places does not merely lead us to engage with environmental flows – of air, water or migrating organisms – that cross borders and

imply a trans-national approach, but engaged by default a reorganization of the space and the virtual displacement we were enacting together.

### Mattering auditoriums

Most of the artistic proposals presented have effectively broken with classical spatial organization of the stage and the division of roles between composers and listeners. Conceived in situ, they exploit the acoustics of place as a principle to generate sound and music. They have therefore endeavoured to go beyond the classical auditorium apparatus (Joy 2015, 37).

The exploration of these listening spaces first focused on vibratory matter. On October 5th, on the periphery of the Arbois technopole – a cluster of young start-ups located on the edge of a forest, deployed on the former site of a Sanatorium built between the two World Wars – Nuno Da Luz proposed a *Rite of Dispersal of the Packs*. This performance consisted of a collective song based on a score specifying the way in which each person could appropriate and vocalise, with the tone, range and intensity of his or her choice, using words by the 17th century Japanese poet, Naitô Jôshô, and by the contemporary American writer Ben Marcus.



With each line, the participants were asked to move, then change their tone to vocalise the second line and so on. Lending themselves to the game, the students, faculty and staff of the School and invited artists began to sing, thus creating a vibratory space in motion.

Equipped with my Zoom H5 and headphones, I moved through the crowd to the increasingly dynamic and bewitching vibrations of the pack of singers. While most of them followed Nuno's recommendations to the letter, a few improvised their own (di)versions. A small group of students had chosen, while respecting the principles of the score, to replace the text provided by the artist with words taken from the page of the bus timetables for the shuttle service between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille. Further on, a more zealous group of teachers from the school tried to create harmonies between their vocalisations.

Whatever the orientations, and whatever the level of involvement for each of us, Nuno had indeed succeeded in making a common vibratory space emerge; caught in this field, configured by dissonant and out-of-phase voices and interpretations, we had entered another form of intercorporeality while maintaining our differences and distances.

Moreover, through our respective movements, we were constantly reconfiguring the forms of this relational auditorium, an auditorium where the inside and outside of our bodies was no longer even perceptible.

The exploration of the vibratory form and materials of auditoriums was also carried out through the installation of Public Works, a group of architects, designers and artists commissioned by Soundcamp. *PITCH* consisted of a collective listening space set up in the gardens of the ESAAIX in collaboration with Michael Speers, Art Assassins, Bizzie Bodies and students. This structure made of wood and fabric, to which transducers were connected, was the third materialisation of this long-term project which had begun on the eve of the first COVID pandemic and which had already taken several forms.<sup>13</sup>

The singularity of this auditorium was its permeability. The aim was not to isolate the participants in order to subject them to a chosen sound flow, but rather to play on the capacity of the materials (wood, white fabrics, printed fabrics, etc.) to create a vibratory space

13 <https://www.angharad-davies.com/PITCH-Aix-public-works>, consulted on January 7th, 2022.

articulating several sources: sounds of the open microphones located in several places in Europe and retransmitted by transducers applied to the cloth stretched over the heads of the participants; the sounds of the immediate environment; and, finally, those generated by the movements and discussions of the people who came to sit in this "tent" to participate in a different way to this collective listening experience.

The first evening I set up there, I found about ten people. Wanting to record the conversation I intended to have with Ida Hirsensfelder about her performance earlier in the day, I placed my Zoom H5 in the middle of the space. The result of the recording that I listened to a few days later was confusing but very interesting. The lack of selection by the stereo mic, caused a jumble of unintelligible conversations. I couldn't even hear myself, nor was I able to perceive Ida's valuable explanations. However, the articulation of tones, prosodies, and accents of the audience, sharing a few well-deserved glasses of wine at the end of a busy day, the songs of crickets, barking dogs, vehicle noise from the transducers playing the open mics, as well as the sounds of Tim Shaw's installation

(see below) in a room in the 'Villa' some fifteen metres away, generated a calm and soothing soundscape.

Listening back to the recording a few days later I was not able to discern the meaning of the sentences, but it did allow me to appreciate the shapes and volumes produced by these audio entanglements in the acoustic apparatus (*dispositif*) *PITCH*. Listening to it afterwards, this soundscape seemed so different from the one I had originally perceived, focused as I was on one or two conversations, the meaning of the words and the body language of my interlocutors. However, it was this vibratory commonality that had helped to organise the conditions of possibility for my exchanges and my ability to listen to my neighbours.

As Hester Buck and Angharad Davies underlined so clearly during their talk on October 9th, *PITCH*, like the experiment proposed by Nuno, allowed us to feel how much listening is a spatial condition. This spatial condition should not only be thought of in its topographic or topological dimensions, but also through its vibratory circulations.

Ester Salmona's and Ludmila Postel's projects pushed this logic to the limit by proposing

respectively an analogue and an analogue-digital intervention. Entitled *Thalweg*, Ester's work during the first two days of the walk on October 5th and 6th, experimented with sound map listening on a scale of 1:1. It was "reconstituted" during a workshop organised with student volunteers on October 7th, and "performed" on October 8th through vocal and vibratory modes, in the amphitheatre of the Ecole supérieure d'art d'Aix-en-Provence.

During the walk, four students volunteered to "take over" one or more streams (including those from the mobile streamboxes). They had to listen to them while remaining attentive to their articulation with the environment. They had to navigate between these sources, let themselves be guided by them as they moved around, and eventually take notes, written, drawn or audio, and even collect objects (leaves, pebbles, pieces of wood, etc.).

What was interesting in the rendition made to the public on October 8th, is not so much that of having "reconstituted" or "represented" soundscapes, but rather to have organised an ephemeral enchantment of the amphitheatre of the Art-School, inspired by the vibratory experiences they had come into contact with during the first two days of the walk and reconstituted

(thus transformed) during the workshop of October 7th. After inviting us to settle down and close our eyes, Ester and the student's performance began. In my role as an anthropologist, I cheated a little, closing my eyes and opening them regularly in order to, not only listen, but also observe the movements of the artists and understand how they produced the sounds that resounded in the amphitheatre. Ester had given me permission to record with my H5 zoom. The group of students, set themselves in motion, spinning and moving through the auditorium, setting the walls, the floor, the chairs, the benches, vibrating, playing with their breathing, whistling, and vocalizing. They thus transformed the auditorium into a musical instrument bringing the scrubland and the paths of the Arbois plateau back into our bodies, along with the sounds that we had heard there and that we had felt vibrating inside us during the walk. If the auditorium had become an instrument, our bodies had been transformed into as many singular auditoria. The artists did not reconstruct anything, they played on evocations of indices, which the habits we had developed during the walk interpreted as signs of what we had heard,

seen and experienced through our movements. Ester and her students established a form of infrasymbolic communication with us.<sup>14</sup>

Once I had understood the apparatus (*dispositif*), I ended up closing my eyes to imagine, to apprehend the sounds as indices that took me back in time a few days. I could hear the birds, the sound of the wind in the leaves, I could, once again, visualise the streams and drains that we had walked along during those two days. My proprioceptive, visual, and auditory memory had become the sounding board and the amplifier of this multiple instrument which plunged me into such a poetic aesthetic experience. The intensity of the audience's applause and the congratulations addressed to Ester and the students confirmed that I was not the only one to be transported by the enchantment of the amphitheatre.

Ludmila Postel proposed another form of inversion based on *New Atlantis*, a multi-faceted – pedagogical, technical and artistic – project led by Locus Sonus that focusses on online sound

14 On the different modes of symbolic and infrasymbolic representations and communications see Eduardo Kohn, *Comment pensent les forêts*, Zones sensibles, 2017.

and listening. One of the main objects of the project is the development of virtual online and multiplayer worlds, dedicated to experimenting with sound. Through this platform, participants have the opportunity to explore the relationship between sound, 3D image and interactivity. Originally intended for sound artists, musicians, researchers and students, the aim is to open the platform to non-specialist audiences. Designed for Ludmila Postel's PhD viva voce (Postel 2022), the installation proposed during this event was a virtual walk through sound streams of the open microphones from around the world.

It was thus by playing on the coupling between our sensory system and the *New Atlantis* interface that we were able to navigate a world of digitised and respatialised flux. Indeed, in terms of enaction (Varela, Thompson, and Rosch 2017), i.e. the coupling of our sensory and motor system with the environment, the *New Atlantis* interface did not bring any physical movement or displacement on our part in the analogue world, except for the movements we made with the joystick usually used for video game consoles. On the other hand, by connecting our sensory system (essentially listening and sight) and the motor system of our hand to the installation, we were able to

move in a 3D sound space, already organised, but which we could enrich with our own participation – a form of participatory composition. As the platform was multiplayer, we could also interact and connect with other people who were simultaneously navigating this 3D digital and sonic universe.

Thus, our perceptions of movement and vibratory space were not only linked to changes in our sensory frame of reference, but also to our changes of state, i.e. our constant (re)connection in this telematic network. Through this digital space, we experimented in a renewed way with Henri Lefebvre's concept of "spatial practice" (Lefebvre 2000). For the links that changed our corporeality and, by extension, the phenomenological experiences that we made through *New Atlantis*, were that which made us move. In other worlds, contrary to the Cartesian thought, a move cannot be reduced to a displacement within an absolute referential, but is it also a changing of state or connection in a relational scape.

During the period of the COVID confinements (2020-2021), Ludmila and her collective *La Pulpe* experimented extensively with this device to develop and explore forms of composition, displacement, and remote relationship

through these "telematic embraces" (Ascott et Shanken 2003). One of these experiments was conducted at the Friche entrepôt in Bourges from (November 15th – 22th). Also using the LocusCast application,<sup>15</sup> she invited some of the audience and the artists to engage in a collective improvisation by singing through their smartphones while listening to the echo of their voice transmitted with a slight time shift in the space of New Atlantis. This generated not only a set of loops, but also a complex entanglement between listeners and composers, as the singers could both listen and improvise with their own voices. The acoustics of this auditorium were here both produced by the spatialization of the sound in 3D, but also by the delays of the digital device.

Grégoire Lauvin's presentation of his artistic research, on 9 October in the Petit Duc theatre, just after Ludmila, addressed similar questions about the effects of form and the analog and digital modes of operation of new auditoriums. Since 2006, he has been working on projects that oscillate between high-tech and low-tech, analogue and digital, producing poetic devices

15 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.locusonus.locuscast&hl=In&gl=US> accessed on 05 December 2022.

(*dispositifs*) where the effects of the machine are articulated with living elements, plants or visitors, giving us the opportunity to see or hear the invisible processes unfolding at the heart of the circuits, and the materiality of the places and relational mechanics (Lauvin 2018).

Finally, Julian Weaver with his piece *Nearly Present*, installed in the parc of the Pavillon Vendôme close to a portal leading to the Art academy, focused on matter, substance and detection in scientific and historical fictions. Water is a regular component of his practice which ranges from the acoustics of bubbles and the extractive economies of algae to the mapping of hydrogen isotopes in nuclear fusion. *Nearly Present* presented a multi-channel streaming installation using Locus Stream's open mic streams in which loudspeakers were enclosed in Wardian boxes; a nineteenth-century metamaterial developed to facilitate the transport of living plants across the globe in closed environments. By drawing parallels between historical and contemporary transport of materials in microclimates and paying attention to them, *Nearly Present* interrogates the role played by exoticisation, commodification and ideas of invasiveness in remote transmission and listening.

## Partial Connections

However, the processes of communion offered by these different installations did not derive their power from the intensity and strength of the connections or the transparency of the modes of communication on which they relied. Their power was derived more from the 'partial' nature of the connections that were established between humans, sounds and images; but also from the fact that the modes of communication were more about forms of 'correspondence' (Ingold 2017), than interaction or exchange.

The anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (Strathern 2005) reminds us that our relationships with the people around us are always partial. We are never connected to their totality, but simply to some of their ways of being. Furthermore, these ways of being are often shaped by the relationship itself. We never know the other person completely. These connections are then partial because each person is involved in incommensurable trajectories: that is to say, singular stories, paths and temporalities. Although this is obvious, we rarely pay attention to it and we rarely take into consideration its effects.

Through the concept of correspondence, anthropologist Tim Ingold (Ingold 2017) refers to the ways in which people pay attention to, and deal with, their environment in order to better live with it. The epistolary metaphor takes into account the shifting and discontinuous nature of relationships over time. Unlike the immediacy of email, a response to a letter is always slow in coming back, thus opening up a period of uncertainty. This concept allows us to take into account the non-immediacy and non-reciprocity of certain relationships. Firstly, because when one person corresponds with another, the latter does not react immediately, nor systematically; just as the former is not always able to understand his or her response. Finally, the epistolary metaphor also evokes communication in the absence and ignorance of the other.

The concepts of correspondence and partial connection make it possible to consider the modes of relationship and communication between the different participants in Acousticcommons with more nuance and complexity than an analysis based on a binary and normative mode, i.e. a question that might oppose, the idea of a connection; on the one hand, mis-understanding on the other. For in order to create commonality, there must

be both connections and shifting phases, forms of understanding and uncertainty. Contrary to common belief, uncertainties, misunderstandings, and doubts often play a fundamental role in building links, interest and sharing with others. It is indeed thanks to these structural misunderstandings that autonomous, disjointed, divergent trajectories can connect through difference and develop forms of curiosity, attraction and even attachment to one another.

On 9 October 2022, Glenn Boulter and Sound-camp mobilised *PITCH* to invite Ukrainian artists to participate in the event. This built on a week-long workshop that took place in September 2022 where mobile stream boxes were built and used for artistic research on experiences of war by British artists and five artists from different regions of Ukraine: Ivan Skoryna, Kseniia Shcherbakova, Viktor Konstantinov, Kseniia Yanus, and Maxym Ivanov. In this project, the artists explored with their British counterparts how their sound environments and their perception of everyday sounds had been radically transformed and reconfigured by the Russian invasion.

The broadcasts were not accompanied by any discussion or direct communication with

the Ukrainian artists. The sounds of this war, which is so close to us, were mixed with the sounds produced by the participants and the artists associated with the event, without any noticeable upheaval. And for good reason, these sounds were those of everyday lives, disrupted, but not spectacularly so. Although they were not heard by a wide audience, those who did have the opportunity to take time to listen to them and identify them could not remain insensitive to the distance that these vibrations allowed us to perceive between what the images and videos, which circulated in the media and social networks, show us of the war in Ukraine, and the sonic spaces in which these Ukrainian artists immersed us for a short but unedited period of their lives.

There was nothing spectacular about the sounds we heard: no artillery fire, no automatic rifles, no movement of armoured vehicles, no troop movements, no staging through the rapid one- or two-minute montages of the televisual media to illustrate a journalist's discourse. No. This listening session retransmitted the sounds of the daily life of the civilian population. For long minutes, voices spoke a different language, spades scraped earth and stones from the ground to dig a trench, the sounds of vehicles whose size and function could not

be discerned because they were picked up by microphones placed deep down in shelters during the first hour of a curfew. Only a few sirens could be heard in the distance. These sounds and the temporality within which they unfolded rather suggested one of the most trying realities of war, that of waiting, the uncertainty and the anguish that it provokes. Mixing with the laughter or jokes of students or visitors to the event, the sounds transmitted by the stream-boxes of the Ukrainian artists reminded us of the uncomfortable proximity of this conflict, which so many of us would rather not think about.

There was also something fundamentally partial and evanescent about these connections. Limited in time, aural and not visual, interfered with by other sources, they were sometimes even masked by the bursts of voices or noise of other visitors entering *PITCH*. This incompleteness, this lack of control over our access to these places in Ukraine and the difficulty of visualising them, went against the panoptic illusion that our visual cultures have long maintained and a form of technological daze that our post-media societies foster; myths largely reinforced by the development of the internet. Despite this retransmission from the stream-boxes placed in Ukraine, we had neither

immediate access nor panoptic perception of the war which was ravaging the country. In the words of Bruno Latour, who died on the last day of the event, October 9th 2022: whatever socio-technical apparatus we mobilise, we only have 'oligoptic' access to the world around us, that is to say, framed, defined and biased by the relationship it organises with the objects on which our attention is focused (Latour 2006).

However, in a way, the partial and ephemeral nature of this retransmission of the archives captured by the Ukrainian streamboxes, in PITCH, and their interference with the ambient noise, gave strength to this composition: it raised questions about the political dimensions of attention as well as those concerning the sharing of listening, silence and sound. A few weeks later I went back to the Full of Noises website<sup>16</sup> to listen again to some of the sound archives<sup>17</sup> produced by these Ukrainian artists. With their collaboration, Full of Noises & Soundcamp had organised a new event around these broadcasts on November 5th 2022, thus extending the *Land to Return, Land to Care*

16 <https://fonfestival.org/> accessed on 29 November 2022.

17 <http://acousticcommons.net/listen/land-to-return/index#archive> accessed on 29 November 2022.

project.<sup>18</sup> The isolation and concentration of sound that my headphones offered me this time round, the remarkable quality of the sound recordings, the choices made by the artists, plunged me into a disturbing aesthetic experience that took me back a few years, to my fieldwork in Israel-Palestine, during the second Intifada (2000-2004). Although the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the experience I had developed from it had nothing to do with the Ukrainians' experience, listening to the sound recordings reminded me of how populations that are not directly affected by attacks and shootings can, through different forms of individual or collective management of their daily activities, and therefore of the sharing of the sensitive, create a distance with a conflict that nevertheless affects them. Were we not in the process of doing the same thing with regard to Ukraine?

A few days earlier, Brane Zorman had offered us another way of questioning our connections with other living beings through the performance he gave on the evening of October 5th, at the end of the first day of the walk. Entitled *Tree Spirit Touch*, it engaged us in a reflection

18 [https://fonfestival.org/fon\\_events/land\\_to\\_return/](https://fonfestival.org/fon_events/land_to_return/) accessed on 29 November 2022

concerning the life of a tree. By composing from the acoustic ecology generated by the vibrations of the plant in contact with the colony of organisms that live off it and with it, ensure its development, but also from the vibrations generated by the frictions of the tree with the rest of the biotic community of the forest, the artist first made me think of the figure of the holobiont:

“From the Greek holos, ‘all’, and bios, ‘life’, the term holobiont refers to a natural living entity consisting of a higher organism, i.e. a multicellular organism, called a host, such as you, me, an animal or a plant, and its microbiota, i.e. the cohort of microorganisms closely associated with it (bacteria, viruses, archaea, protists and microscopic fungi).<sup>19</sup>

But it also made me think of Karen Barad's reflections in her book, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press, 2007. For the only ontologies that were perceptible through this composition were no longer a supra-organism dissociated from

19 <https://www.inrae.fr/actualites/holobionte> accessed on 3 December 2022.

others that we could discern, circumscribe, or recognise with our hearing, but only the 'intra-actions' within the tangle of the forest, intra-actions perceptible through the sound diffractions produced by the frictions of the parts of the tree with other living beings and the elements (wind, water, fire). This very partial mode of perception thus opened us up to the density and complexity of the entanglement of the world within which this tree was deployed. Far from being a handicap, our partial connection with this tree opened us up to a multitude of dimensions other than those that its visual contemplation alone would have offered us.

Finally, on the evening of 8 October, through *Zome*, ErikM and Stéphane Cousot also led us to consider how the very partiality of connections and correspondences can immerse us in an intense aesthetic experience. However, this time the partiality of connections concerned both the performers, the sound and the images they articulated, as well as the link between the audience and their work. The performance followed that of Natalie Sharp in the No theatre of the Aix-en-Provence School of Art. While Natalie had placed herself between the audience and the wall on which she projected

images and videos, Stéphane and Erik had positioned themselves with their computers in the middle of the audience.

The performance offered a real-time audio and visual composition. Most of the sound sources came from Locus Stream's open mics. The images came from different platforms. Stéphane Cousot and ErikM have been working together periodically since 2007 exploring ways of articulating sound and image. This latest encounter extended their explorations into modes of sound production and the critical relationship between the mediums of image and of sound in a public context. ErikM has been arranging random or organised sounds, using matériel recorded on various supports: magnetic tape, vinyl, CD-r for a number of years, in a context of acousmatic, dynamic or performative composition. With Zome however, the memorized sounds were in minority and the visual sources totally random.

Besides their respective (studio and visual) setups, they shared an electromagnetic and light 'laboratory' based on LEDs and video optics. Sounds were generated by variations in electrical current of the LEDs. These light and sound alternations were integrated into the visual and audio data streams coming from

the web. The action was thus from here and from elsewhere, each source being potentially processed, analysed, and transformed, then coupled and re-encoded (or re-injected) forming in fine an abstract macro landscape composed from feedback of its own temporality. The visual space played out, inscribing and defining itself by the absence of a clear or precise images, its presence, its content, its nature, its vibration and its luminosity, were constantly redefined by the rhythm and the cadence of the projected contents.<sup>20</sup>

The improvisation in which the two artists embarked was thus inscribed in a partial correspondence, mediated by the fluctuating infrastructure<sup>21</sup> shaped by the operation of their electromagnetic workshop and the random processing of the materials that

20 For more details, see the Instants-Chavirés website <https://www.instantschavires.com/erikm-stephane-cousot-zome-%E3%82%BE%E3%83%A0/>

21 Following the infrastructure theory (Larkin 2013), I understand this terms not simply as referring to buildings and communication networks, but as including the complex networks articulating heterogeneous human and non-human elements that organise the conditions for mobility, circulation and communication of people, things and ideas.

circulated within it. The sonic and visual landscapes in which we were immersed often exceeded our comprehension, without completely escaping us. On the other hand, this removal of clarity of forms and expected vibrations opened up a qualitative expansion of the sensitive experience. As Marianne Massin suggests, it is this structural partiality of our perceptions that provokes a maximum aesthetic acuity: "aesthetic experience is not measured in terms of quantities (of excitations or sensory matter), but in terms of the quality of intensity to be deployed and vigilance to be exacerbated (Massin 2013, 15)". We were in a kind of anti-performance.

## An open infrastructure

The connections and partial correspondences developed by the interventions of the guest artists during the closing event of Acousticcommons unfolded through an open and complex infrastructure whose materiality was quite tangible. Based on audio and digital technologies, information networks, the convergence of exploratory projects within this streaming community (Locus Sonus, Soundcamp, Cona, Full of Noises, Cyber Forest), and partnerships with a wide variety of institutions, this

infrastructure gradually become established over the past 20 or so years to culminate, in 2018, with the launch of the Acousticcommons European project. At a time when the logic of project-based research was asserting itself more and more, this temporality was a mark of its originality and singularity.

In fact, it is thanks to this permanence and to the particularly solid links between the collectives that constitute it, that this infrastructure has made possible the pursuit of the Acoustic Commons project and the organization of such a high-quality event, especially in a particularly difficult context. The constraints linked to the COVID-19 pandemic have severely affected important members of the organization, limited and sometimes prevented the holding of a certain number of research activities and workshops. As for Brexit, that is, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union on January 31, 2021, it has compromised the implementation of the project. If this is not the place to write the history of the establishment of this process, it does seem necessary to mention certain aspects of this infrastructure in order to better understand the socio-technical dimension of the forms of communion that emerged during of the event.

This infrastructure is based on the implementation of several technologies. Firstly, there is the network of open microphones that was deployed from the mid-2000s by the Locus Stream project, launched by Locus Sonus (Jérôme Joy et Sinclair 2015). Static or mobile, these microphones are implemented using “streamboxes” – currently using Raspberry Pi nano computers designed by professors from the IT department of the University of Cambridge, software applications for iOS or Android (for mobile phones), and autonomous and free applications programmed with Pure Data for computers. In addition to an internet connection and a power supply (battery, solar panel, or mains) that they require, it is also necessary to take into account the considerable work needed to configure them.

I first witnessed this labour during the last Soundcamp that we organised in a farm opposite the town of Tende (Roya Valley) on the border between France and Italy from April 30th to May 1st, 2022. On the evening of 29 April, Grégoire Lauvin and Stéphane Cousot stayed up late setting up the two streamboxes that were to be installed the next day on two different sites. Unfortunately, they had to repeat this task at around midnight on the night of

October 5th 2022, after the day’s performances had been completed, in order to resolve a number of technical problems.

The manufacture of these streamboxes also involves the production of “artificial heads”. Several prototypes have been tested. The first, which I encountered, installed on the island of Frioul opposite Marseille, was made of sculpted stone – a form chosen for its integration into the landscape. Given the difficulties involved in fixing and wiring the binaural microphones in the stone, the artists returned to devices made of pvc, sculpted, or shaped in different ways, sometimes using 3D printers. These open microphones require constant maintenance, especially when they are placed in places where the elements (wind, salt, humidity) lead to corrosion of the cables, the soldering, the degradation of the fabrics added to filter the impact of the wind. At the end of the summer of 2022, with Peter and Grégoire, we dedicated a whole afternoon to repairing the open mic placed on the Frioul island’s semaphore.

A few days before the launch of the closing event of Acousticcommons, on Monday 3 October, Grégoire left with a new streambox to install it on the GIPREB’s buoy in the middle of the Etang de Berre. It was certainly the

most elaborate autonomous open mic device this project had ever produced. Powered by a marine battery, regularly fed by a charge controller connected to a solar panel, the microphone streams to the internet via a Raspberry Pi nanocomputer equipped with a SIM card connected to the SFR 4G network.

In addition to the heterogeneity of the material elements that allow this streambox to function, to capture and retransmit the soundscape around the buoy, it also counts on the different partnerships that allowed it to be set up in the first place. Introductions were made by BdesG and negotiations conducted by Locus Sonus with GIPREB in order to organise the installation of this microphone. GIPREB had not only given its permission, but had also twice provided a boat and a pilot to navigate to the buoy and help the Locus Sonus team. A first trip to check the location before preparing the equipment and then again to install the streambox on the buoy. On my side, I had filled in the various forms necessary to order a SIM card from SFR to connect the Raspberry Pi to the internet and ensure the streams. The card had been ordered from the budget allocated by the Ministry of Culture to my research laboratory, IREMAM, as part of the partnership set up between the CNRS and the ESAIIX : *Research*

*through listening*.<sup>22</sup> Finally, Peter Sinclair and Stéphane Cousot configured the Raspberry Pi so that it could retransmit the stream on the Soundmap. And it was by connecting a smartphone to the Bureau des guides’ mobile sound system on October 5th around noon, that all the students, teachers and artists taking part in the group-hike were able to listen to the soundscape around the buoy and inaugurate the opening of this new microphone.

Stéphane Cousot has also developed other broadcasting software. In particular, he created Locus Cast,<sup>23</sup> a mobile audio streaming application dedicated to the Locustream Soundmap project.<sup>24</sup> This application made it easy to broadcast a mono or stereo stream to the Locustream Soundmap from an Android or iPhone device. It automatically locates the stream on the map using the phones built-in GPS. It incorporates several

22 <https://www.iremam.cnrs.fr/fr/la-recherche-par-le-coute-2021-2022> accessed on 05 December 2022.

23 <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.locusonus.locuscast&hl=fr&gl=US> accessed on 05 December 2022.

24 <http://locusonus.org/soundmap/> accessed on 05 December 2022.

features: synchronization with the Locustream Soundmap user's account; creation of a high-quality mono/stereo stream; support for Ogg and MP3 audio formats; persistent localization using GPS; and persistent stream connection, thanks to an automatic reconnection mode. Finally, it works with WIFI, 3G and 4G networks.

It was using Locus Cast that Nathalie Maseglier's performance from the Roya Valley was broadcast on the day of the conference on October 9th 2022. However, there were other material conditions to consider. Firstly, it was necessary to ensure the quality of the recording made by the mono microphone, equipped with a small windscreen and connected to Géraldine Paoli's smartphone. Also a sound artist, Géraldine is a former student of ESAAIX who has been living in the Roya Valley for a few years. It was she who had hosted us with the Ouistitis de Ponte Ricco not for profit association, in the Pont-Riche farm, opposite the town of Tende, for the organisation of the Soundcamp and the Réveil 2022. On October 9th, she was in charge of the sound recording of Nathalie's audio performance along the river in Breil-sur-Roya.

However, to determine whether the route for the performance was viable, Stéphane Cousot with Géraldine's help, also had to

verify with the orientation and coverage of the relay antennas deployed by her 4G network provider along the route planned by Nathalie. He consulted the map of radio antennas in France and overseas (cartoradio -ANRF)<sup>25</sup> and that of ARCEP (the French regulatory authority for electronic communications, posts and press distribution).<sup>26</sup> What was striking was the fact that the distribution of relay antennas and their coverage areas perfectly matched the spaces of the road infrastructure and the local settlements. The mountains, on the other hand, showed vast blank zones. Therefore, we had had to deal with the same constraints when we chose the site where the Soundcamp was to be held a few months earlier, as well as the places where we were going to deploy the streamboxes for the event.

In other words, although Accoustic Commons opened up other sonic landscapes and commons, these were not located beyond the spaces within which we evolve habitually, but rather were consubstantial with them. For, Accoustic Commons relies on and hijacks

25 <https://www.cartoradio.fr/> accessed on 5 December 2022.

26 <https://monreseaumobile.arcep.fr/>, accessed on 5 December 2022.

(*détourne*) existing infrastructures and networks, to enable the project's participants to unfold other spatialities within the same entanglement and thus to actualise the world we lived in, as well as our ways of communing, differently. The terms folding and unfolding took on their full meaning here, as it was a matter of creating different spaces from the one same. What made the difference here was not the content, but the articulations, configurations and movements through which the same elements were arranged. In a certain way, Accoustic Commons enacted Gilles Deleuze's reflections on Leibniz's concept of the Fold in a very singular and stimulating way (Deleuze 1988).

These (re)configurations of spatialities, that is to say, ways of redeploying/diverting links and infrastructures, of readjusting our listening, of articulating and composing differently with other sound sources, have generated spaces, sometimes ephemeral and evanescent, sometimes long-lasting, but above all they have opened up other possibilities. I press these points to evoke the poetic and political scope of Accousticcommons.



## III

## SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SOUND PRACTICES AND CREATIONS

On the morning of October 9th, speakers participating in the first session, organised in the Petit Duc theatre, gave successive accounts of the development and activities organised by their respective collectives during the Accoustic Commons project. Going back a few years to better contextualise the conditions that led to the foundation of this European project, Peter Sinclair underlined the dynamic of constant expansion that was initiated as soon as the first open mics initiated by Locustream were installed and re-appropriated. This expansion, which has since taken on rhizomic dimensions and forms, had been crystallised and reinforced by the Accousticcommons project.

## Rhizomic commonings

Indeed, before the European project was submitted, the links that had been created between the different collectives had been deployed in very different directions. The connections and perspectives they offered gave this network a heterarchical functioning<sup>27</sup> and thus a real capacity and freedom of creation.

From the Locus Sonus' point of view, this dynamic was initiated in 2006, when the first open mic was installed in a semi-urban area in the north of Marseille. While this was not the first time in the history of sound art that such a device had been set up, what made it unique was the fact that it was "doubly open": firstly, because it remained permanently active (always on); secondly, because Locus Sonus invited the streamer community to invent different forms of artistic reappropriation of this flow and of those produced by the microphones, which were subsequently deployed in other places.

<sup>27</sup> In other words, its spatio-temporal complexity was not simply linked to its tensions and power relations, phase shifts or disjunctions, but also and above all made up of inventive modes of shared, negotiated, complementary habitabilities (Crumley 2015).

According to Peter, the open mics were not strictly speaking works of art, but rather a “*dispositif*” allowing different modes of creation. Projecting the Soundmap developed by Stéphane Cousot on the big screen, Peter showed that, since the creation of this interface, more than 2000 microphones had been opened. While some of them only worked for a short period, about forty microphones are active on an average day and more than a hundred were opened at each Réveil, the event conceived and run by Soundcamp from 30 April to 1er May every year since 2014.

In addition to its permanent fluidity, this streaming apparatus has been extended through many spaces across the planet: mainly in Europe, North America, South Korea and Japan. A few have also been opened in India, Central and South America and very few in Africa. According to Grégoire Lauvin, the annual launch of Réveil, every first of May, has led to an exponential increase in the number of microphones opened since 2014. If before the launch of this first event there only 200 microphones had been opened, the number increased the following year to more than 800. According to Stéphane Cousot, the Locus Cast application created in 2021 has also helped to increase these numbers as it has become easy,

even for people with no technical skills, to use their personal smartphone to stream their own sound capture.

However, as Peter reminded us, it was Full of Noises, coordinated by Glenn Boulter, and Soundcamp, directed by Grant Smith, that gave this artistic dynamic an institutional and European dimension by submitting the European project Accoustic Commons, within the framework of Creative Europe’s Small Cooperation Projects. In so doing they institutionalised a community of partners including : Full of Noises (UK), Soundcamp (UK), Locus Sonus (France), Cyberforest (Japan), Cona (Slovenia) and the Hellenic University of Crete (Greece). The rhizome has become a hub of artists and communities interested in sound, in the transmission and exploration of new sound practices and creations, and in the development of new audiences.

Each partner has been able to strengthen and diversify its activities. Brane Zorman recalled that the Cona Institute,<sup>28</sup> created in 2008, in Slovenia, had been part of this dynamic for almost 9 years by participating in Soundcamp. By joining Accousticcommons, Cona was able

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.cona.si/>, accessed on 6 January 2022

to consolidate its activities centered around the Gallery *Steklenik*,<sup>29</sup> and focusing on sound, bioacoustics and art. Up until 2022, Cona presented works linking artistic and scientific practices through sound research concerning natural environments; the institute has also developed new partnerships, residencies and productions based on acoustic ecology.<sup>30</sup>

Yasushi Suko, who represented the Japanese Cyberforest project,<sup>31</sup> launched by the University of Tokyo in 1995, gave a brief historical overview of their program, the aim of which was to monitor and record the sounds of the forest on a daily basis from fixed points using robot cameras and remote microphones. They also transmitted this visual and sound data via the Internet in real time and made the archive available to the public. The Cyberforest project has developed various offshoots. In 2021,

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.steklenik.si/en/home/>, accessed on 6 January 2022

<sup>30</sup> On these projects see the page of the Institute’s website dedicated to Accousticcommons <http://www.cona.si/akusticno-skupno/>, accessed on 6 January 2022

<sup>31</sup> <https://landscape.nenv.k.u-tokyo.ac.jp/cyberforest/Welcome.html>, accessed on 6 January 2022

it entered into a partnership with Spotify to disseminate this work more widely. Scientific research projects have also been implemented in the field of phenology to study the variations of periodic phenomena of animal and plant life, dependent on climate. Japanese ornithologists participated in the last edition of Réveil, while artists proposed compositions with birds to explore forms of inter-species communication in a similar spirit to Hanna Tuulikki. Finally, interdisciplinary experiments using forms of artistic therapy using ‘natural’ sounds were undertaken in an attempt to treat post operational stress in surgeons in certain Japanese hospitals.

Sam Baraitser Smith and Christine Bramwell spoke about the activities of Soundcamp. They recalled that their arts cooperative based in London, Crete and The Hague works on the ecology of transmissions through systems ranging from DIY broadcasting devices to public radio projects. It has five permanent members and regularly invites different partners and collaborators. Because of its particular interest in sound ecology, Soundcamp initiated

the Réveil project in 2014,<sup>32</sup> every 1st May. This event draws on Locus stream's open mics and Soundmap as well as other streaming projects. It also associates artist collectives that organise their own Soundcamps in different parts of the world. The mixing of the collected streams is done in London in the premises of the arts cooperative. The principle of this partnership with other that organise collective listening is to play with and explore the effects that can be generated by specific articulations between singular, situated auditions, while connected simultaneously to others around the world.

Christine Bramwell finally pointed out that the form of Réveil has evolved considerably due to COVID-related health restrictions. Given the various lockdowns, programs initiated and commissioned by Soundcamp have been increasingly digitised. This was the case with *PITCH*, which in its first year could not be materialized through a single structure, but instead took the form of multitude of structures

32 Starting on the morning of Saturday 30 April in South London near the Greenwich Meridian, the broadcast will pick up feeds one by one, tracking the sunrise west from microphone to microphone, following the wave of intensified sound that loops the earth every 24 hours at first light. For more information, see [https://soundtent.org/soundcamp\\_about.html](https://soundtent.org/soundcamp_about.html)

installed in the different houses and gardens of the participants of the project commissioned by Public works. It was this process that permitted the exploration of different forms of auditoria. In the words of Tim Ingold, architectural work is less about the constructions than about what they allow to happen (Ingold 2018, 40).

Christine's intervention echoed by that of Glenn Boulter, who insisted that these adaptations and circumventions of sanitary constraints had also opened up other possibilities and directed the Acoustic Commons project in unexpected directions. The remote workshop project with the Ukrainian artists, some of whose sound productions had been broadcast in *PITCH*, would not have been possible if the different collectives of the Acousticcommons project had not also explored a set of modes of communication and sharing of remote practices or technologies during the Soundcamp of 2020 and 2021. It was by drawing on the use of social platforms and networks that had been put to use (Discord, Youtube, etc.), as well as sessions organised remotely through IRC (Internet Relay Chat), such as those initiated by ornithologists working with bird streams in Japan, that Soundcamp & Full of Noises were able to set up a remote workshop lasting several days with the Ukrainian artists. They were able to build

streamboxes and organise a first day of broadcasting on 18 September 2022.<sup>33</sup> Although the event could not be publicised because it took place on the same day as the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, it did create a long-distance communion between the UK partners, the Ukrainian artists and the small audience that participated. According to Glenn, the collectives as a whole benefited indirectly from the tinkering and improvisations they had to make in order to cope with the health constraints. On the other hand, while this digitisation had indeed contributed to expansion, wider dissemination, and rich reorientations, all participants converged in reaffirming the importance and necessity of holding collective events and listening in each other's presence in order to truly commune through sound.

Maria Papadomanolaki, one of the founders of Soundcamp, who was unable to join us for the event, spoke via video conference. She presented the streambox that was sponsored by Soundcamp as part of the 'Acoustic Commons' project. This streambox is installed and maintained by herself in collaboration with Antonia Zacharouli (Flora and Fauna Conservation Park,

33 <https://20ftradio.net/archive/5-artists-5-cities-5-sound-experiences-20ft-radio-18092022>

Technical University of Crete). The microphone is located on the northwest coast of Crete, in the heart of the park, 5 km from the town of Chania. This protected area includes 30 hectares of native species and olive trees. The streambox is located next to a large Aleppo pine tree of 10m height and 10m span, 600m from the Aegean Sea which is home to a large variety of bird species.

She highlighted the way in which these birds repeatedly interacted with the open-mike by poking it with their beaks. As with the streambox on the GIPREB buoy, this kind of intervention is not reducible to a simple sound capture, it affects the environment, the reactions of humans and non-humans, and thus the soundscape. In this sense listening, like observation, (re)configures the parts of the world to which it directs its attention. And for good reason, it is a line of conduct (Baltazar and Legrain 2020) inscribed in socio-technical devices.

Maria's speech also addressed the administrative and political dimensions involved in placing open mics in the environment. The location and streaming is made possible by the synergy between the Flora and Fauna Conservation Park and the Technical University

of Crete in collaboration with the British arts organisations Octopus Collective and Sound-camp as part of the Acousticcommons project funded by Creative Europe. It took a long negotiation process to convince the members of the Technical University of Crete, to which the park belongs, of the interest of installing the microphone, to obtain the authorisations, as well as the means to install, maintain and repair the listening device on a recurring basis.

This project is the first step in a project that hopes to pursue by installing other microphones. In this way, she showed the synergy needed between the artists' collectives and the various authorities or actors in charge of the places where the open microphones are installed; a form of synergy that she had also noted during this type of operation in the United Kingdom, Slovenia and France. In this sense, the educational projects and activities with local schools that Maria had developed, as well as those mentioned by Christine Bramwell in Glasgow around an ecological radio, played a fundamental role, since they were able to encourage the participation and interest of a much wider audience. Finally, a number of research activities were initiated by Greek academics based on the streambox opened in Chania.

The next steps of the project will be to establish a streambox on the shores of the lake in the heart of the park, to develop new forms creative productions, and to set up a form of archiving of the recordings in collaboration with other local, regional and national institutions in Greece that have expressed interest in the project.

In this sense, the deployment of the open mics' apparatus not only opens up streamed listening spaces around the world, but also builds relationships well beyond the project to enable the emergence of more or less sustainable arrangements and collectives. They also (re)configure the human and non-human commons. One of the examples mentioned by Peter Sinclair and confirmed by Yasushi Suko referred to the agreements that had been signed for the first time in Japan between the University of Tokyo and the University of Kyoto as part of the Cyberforest project. The material ramifications of the Acousticcommons project thus extend far beyond the borders of Europe.

Yet, this rhizomic infrastructure, the spaces and the collectives that have allowed this dynamic to emerge, present a certain vulnerability. The Acoustic Commons device emerges from constant *bricolage*. It is not the result of the

systematic application of a precise and framed program, but rather of a process of effectuation or instauration that has allowed for the emergence of a living form, living in the sense that it has a beginning and will necessarily have an end. The infrastructure of Acoustic Commons is therefore not so different from any other form of infrastructure.<sup>34</sup> What are thought to be static frames or objects are in fact more or less stabilised sedimentations or stratifications of flux and living and inert components. The sustainability of this magnificent project therefore requires renewed human, material and financial support from the European Commission and the partners involved. This question is all the more crucial as it involves strong political issues.

34 On this point see Jérôme Denis, David Pontille (Denis et Pontille 2013)

## Enacting commons

Indeed, as partial and oligoptic<sup>35</sup> as they may be, the journeys through different soundscapes, both local and remote, offered by the infrastructure and the art projects of the Acousticcommons collectives, not only make it possible to imagine, but also to *enact*, even in an ephemeral way, other commonalities. They offer the possibility of physiologically experiencing other possibilities. As Salomé Voegelin (2018, 29) points out:

“A textual fiction [...] is able to represent and propose an alternative but not to enact it. Sonic fictions, by contrast, are political actions that generate a politics of possibility and transformations that outlines, with invisible lines and from a mobile depth, the condition of its narrative without sublimating the how, but illuminating its singularity and breaking

35 This term is first used by Bruno Latour to designate the incomplete and partial nature of our gaze, since it is conditioned by the very apparatuses that organise our modes of engagement with the world. It is the reverse of the panopticon.

dominant echo. Listening is thus a political practice that hears and generates alternatives.”

Jaka Berger’s performance allowed for an interesting proprioceptive sharing of collective memory around the sounds produced by the means of transport in our industrial societies. At the end of the first day of the march, on October 5th 2022, this artist affiliated with the Cona Institute proposed a performance from the central station of Ljubljana. It was a real time composition of sounds captured around him. His performance was transmitted through four speakers connected to a mixing desk, manipulated by Brane Zorman.

Sitting on plastic mats and blankets, we were enclosed by the speakers, as we faced the forest surrounding the Arbois technopole. Behind us, some had chosen to sit higher up on the steps of the technopole’s buildings, others remained on the car park. The sound invaded this interstitial space located between the pine forest and the cluster of start-ups recently built next to the old sanatorium. A place of retreat for the sick between the two wars, the construction of the technopole had made

this site a nerve center of the contemporary socio-technical networks that keep regional capitalism alive.

It is in this architectural and floral universe that Jaka Berger projected us into the railway confluence of Ljubljana. If he invited us into a universe of which we had no idea of the shapes, colours, movements and volumes, he did, on the other hand, resurrect images and familiar emotions, linked to each of our singular histories. The sounds of the trains had taken me back 46 years. I could see myself at my maternal grandmother’s house in Louveciennes, lying in bed, half asleep, lulled by the sound of the last suburban trains passing by 150 metres away, or in the various Parisian stations through which I had travelled. Although the Slovenians were on the edge of the block of capitalist countries during the Yugoslavian period, we shared many similar emotional intensities and proprioceptive memories related to the history and audio evolution of the transport infrastructure of our industrialised countries. Jaka Berger’s piece gave me the impression of communing in singular, yet closely related, time-spaces. The captivation and attention of the audience showed how much the aesthetic experience

affected a very dispersed assembly, through a delocalized auditorium distributed between analogue and digital spaces.

On October 9th, transmissions in the PITCH of sounds recorded by Ivan Skoryna, Kseniia Shcherbakova, Viktor Konstantinov, Kseniia Yanus, and Maxym Ivanov also questioned the political dimensions of our commons. Just as the project and workshops conducted remotely by Soundcamp and Full of Noises during the session at Le Petit Duc, questioned us on the bonds we had with the war, its place in our history, but also the way we position ourselves in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in our daily lives.

The four interventions in the first afternoon session on October 9th, as well as the performance of Natalie Sharp on October 8th, also challenged us on the political dimensions of our actions in a world undergoing profound transformation due to climate change. Raising these political issues was not about questioning our modes of public engagement or activism, but rather about the relationships and responsibility we have in this world on which we depend, and especially how to care for it.

Working from the Roya Valley, Nathalie Masegla chose to present herself as an “*artiste en circuit court*” (i.e artist, local product) insofar as she has mainly developed her artistic activities from and within the place where she lives and grew up. She went out of her way to underline the political dimension of this perimeter of artistic intervention. On the one hand, because she was attached to her valley, which is marginalized, on the border between France and Italy, and on the other hand, because she tries to participate in the life of this specific town. Finally, because she concerned about the carbon footprint of our motorised travel. Talking about the way in which the level of the river had dropped due to the drought caused by the summer heat wave, she recalled how much the inhabitants were dependent on this river and its fluctuations. They had been particularly hard hit in October 2020, when storm Alex, combined with an unprecedented Mediterranean episode (Carrega and Michelot 2021). The convergence of the two generated torrential rains causing a flood and a wave several metres high that had ravaged the valley over dozens of kilometres.

Nathalie recalled that over the last few decades, the inhabitants of the Roya had profoundly changed their relationship with the river and

water, as the urbanisation process, the transformation of irrigation methods on the terraces and the modes of water consumption have progressed. One of the recent changes was initiated by the public authorities in collaboration with private companies. For the first time, they had proposed that the inhabitants install water meters to avoid “wasting” this dwindling resource. Nathalie, as well as a group of residents, found this method of water management totally absurd. From their point of view, and in their relationships with the neighbouring river, the question was not so much to reduce water consumption, but rather to avoid soiling it in order to continue to benefit from the local and regional cycles of this element with which generations and generations of inhabitants had learned to live. In her words, she had asked the following question: would it not have been more appropriate to invite the inhabitants to develop dry toilets rather than install meters and continue to encourage them to defecate in litres of drinking water?

The talk by the artist duo Blanc Sceol (Stephen Shiell and Hannah White) allowed us to continue this reflection on the relationship with water and the environment. They regularly organise workshops, performances and sound walks to explore the possibilities of listening

and sound creation in public spaces. The challenge of these encounters was to reconnect materially and energetically with the environment. In 2018, they created Surge Cooperative, whose aim was to occupy the Channelsea River in London on a voluntary basis. Their research aimed to make people live, listen and act with this vital system, finding new ways to tackle issues of neglect and misuse while navigating and attempting to harness old legislation from the UK parliament and institutional backlogs to fight for the protection of this waterway. They have set up a series of activities, including those in relation to Souncamp 2021 around the river and Channelsea Island, to organise joint actions with local people on the riverbank and in the area. There they organised a silent streaming walk at low tide with a group of artists from Newham.<sup>36</sup> Their practice of Deep Listening<sup>37</sup> took on a particular meaning in

36 For more details see in particular River-Land-Listening <https://blancsceol.co.uk/River-land-Listening>, accessed on 6 January 2022.

37 Pauline Oliveros The Hum Blog. « Pauline Oliveros' sonic meditations (1974) the complete text and scores », 13 septembre 2016. <https://blogthehum.wordpress.com/2016/09/13/pauline-oliveros-sonic-meditations-1974-the-complete-text-and-scores/>.

the context of their activities, as it invited participants to question their relationship to the world.

The activities of the Bureau des Guides around the Aygalades/Caravelle river in Marseille<sup>38</sup> particularly echoed those of Blanc Sceol. Julie De Muer recalled that urbanisation, industrialisation and all the human activities around the catchment area of this small coastal river had not only led to its burial, and oblivion. This process had also disrupted the ecological balance of its environment. Les « Gammars », the local name of a small shrimp, has become the name of the collective that tries to take care of this stream and to ensure a better reconstitution and transmission of the history of this place. The objective is to encourage the emergence of a “watershed community” articulating different initiatives and actions of the actors of the territory to participate in the restoration of its ecosystem. If listening had been widely mobilised by the Guide Bureau, they systematically associate it with walking, which they consider an effective means of bringing into play the relationship between the intimate and the collective. In the case of

38 The 17-kilometre-long river ran from the Etoile massif to the Mediterranean Sea at the CGACGM tower.

the Aygalades/Caravelle river, Julie explained that it was not a so much a question of saving the modes of transmission or memory of this river, because everything has been buried, such an « object » no longer exists. And for good reason, the data and archives, the municipal institutions that managed the river, including the sewage workers of the city of Marseille, had de facto reclassified it as a “sewer”.

In order to revive the river and take care of it, it was necessary to look elsewhere than in archives and legal or administrative knowledge, because it is the absence of such knowledge that has played an important role in the disappearance of this coastal stream. With the Gammars association, the challenge has been to act through the sensitive, by equipping themselves with waders and waterproof bags walking the bed of this buried river and conducting explorations that aim to make people aware of a very damaged, but still living, being. Here the listening process moves from one sound space to other strongly contrasting ones: from the soundscapes of the edges of the motorway saturated by the noise of cars, to the inhabited silence of the buried riverbed. This awareness-raising process is a crucial part of the combat, undertaken by Gammars, to make people and local authorities feel concerned.

In this context, the collaboration with artists has been fundamental as it offers tools to develop modes of narration or interpellation that gradually contributed to the re-emergence of a shared imagination. *La Gazette du Ruisseau*, an annual journal created in 2020 by the association, is one way of doing this. This imagination is of course multiple. There is nothing unified about it. The Gammares are not looking for any form of authenticity or homogeneity, but a form of sharing in which everyone can find themselves through their singularities. The challenge is not to evoke a “counter-discourse”, but to draw attention to the multiple becomings of the world and the modes of existence that the great hegemonic narratives mask. The cultivation of this form of multiple imagination is fundamental to making people feel concerned and to motivating them to effectively take action and act politically. For it is a struggle based on conversation and negotiation to rethink the multiple ways of sharing our commons. Indeed, looking back on his own experiences, concerning buried and invisibilised rivers, artist Charlie Fox pointed out that the issues of the water and sound commons were not simply axis privileged by the group, but also interestingly convergent ways

of addressing the question of the commons and our relationship with the world on which we depend.

Finally, Robert Wilson presented the performances he organised at Ravenglass in Cumbria, on the edge of the estuary where three rivers meet: Irt, Esk and Mite. His work examines the evolution of this estuary and the space of the dunes within it. By inviting various artists and performers, Robert Wilson has initiated a series of fascinating investigations into the evolution of the ways in which humans and other living beings are linked to geological and maritime evolution contributing to, within their respective dimensions, the conditions of development of the estuary. These questions are all the more vital in that the creation of the Lake District National Park has attracted an ever-increasing number of tourists every year, affecting the life of the flora and fauna. Moreover, global warming threatens to submerge the area in the near future. In 2022, in collaboration with Full of Noises (including Natalie Sharp and Glenn Boulter), Robert invited different artists to the Soundcamp to explore different forms of connection with the environment, the elements and inter-species communication. In June he organised sound walks and listening sessions with Natalie Sharp and Tim Shaw at Drigg

Dunes. And finally, in August, he presented the film he had made in collaboration with Tom James Scott and Laurence Campbell *At The Fate Of The Tidal Mouth (2022)*, a sound, digital art and experimental collaboration. The work explores and examines themes of wildlife, memory and time, while evoking the special place of an old gamekeeper’s hut at Drigg Sand Dunes, the largest sand dune system in the Cumbria. The resulting installation is based on a series of research studies and field visits undertaken by artists and filmmakers R. L. Wilson and Laurence Campbell.

Robert’s words resonated perfectly with the performance SPUME presented the day before by Natalie Sharp in the No theatre of the Ecole supérieure d’art d’Aix en Provence. SPUME was a work in progress, which she had developed during her artist residency in 2022 in the Ravenglass Estuary. Drawing on her personal history with the sea, she explored different modes of response to the tide line, from dancing, trolling and loving, to emerging, drinking and transforming. The proposal took the form of a performance involving a range of interactive media, including moving images, sound sculptures and physiognomic improvisations with voice and audience interference and readings from Alexis Pauline Gumps’

*Undrown: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (Gumbs 2021). It also involved readings of her written works, accompanied by video projections. As well as exploring different modes of connection with the ecology she was immersing us in, she also offered a reflection on the question of place by working with the knots that were made and unmade in the liminal space of the estuary. In the manner of the geographer John Anderson, she considered place from the perspective of its contingent, ephemeral and eminently relational character (Anderson 2012).

As for Sacha Rey’s short film, presented on the evening of October 5, 2022, *Le vernis des pare-chocs compose des forêts d’eau*, it questioned the audience on the future of our common world through an eschatological approach. Produced between 2021 and 2023, Sacha introduced it as a work of science fiction or a lesbian apocalyptic joke. It was produced using mixed techniques including stop motion, animated photographs in After Effect, video, casting (bronze), moulding (plaster), and painting. In the synopsis on his website,<sup>39</sup> Sacha explains:

39 <https://fragil.fr/le-verniss-des-pare-chocs-compose-des-forets-deau/> accessed on 4 December 2022.

This film is about the near future, where desert landscapes bear witness to lives suffocated by the fear of contact. This land tells the story of a non-binary person, Gael, who has refused the use of speech in these places without a body. Tired of the speeches of men, only matter can still speak to him/her. Through a monologue, she/he praises, not without cynicism, relationships at a distance. Gael is one of those human beings who have the economic means to move constantly in order to escape various natural and pandemic disasters. But Martine, her/his companion, belongs to the other part of the population that cannot move to save its life. "At the announcement of the ecological deluge, many rush to a Noah's ark, caring little for those left behind in the dock or enslaved inside the ship itself." (Malcolm Ferdinand). This is followed by a bombastic and caustic declaration of love to his companion. But at the end of the film, we understand that Martine has committed suicide. Under her/his heart there were bruises. They have rubbed off on Gael's. They have tie & die arteries. A beautiful faded turquoise, like the last landscape of the film, which ends in a snowstorm. The narrator has not managed

to forget her companion, having been unable to bury his/her body because of the disastrous living conditions.

## Beyond Nature and Culture:<sup>40</sup> composing with other modes of existence or within other scapes ?

The Acoustic Commons project has developed within a resolutely post-humanist perspective. The productions of the artists' collectives, their reflections on the evolution of our relationship to the world, constantly reaffirming their distancing from modern humanist modes of thought, that encompasses the construction of the liberal subject, an anthropocentric vision of the world (Braidotti 2013), and is supported by the illusion of the Great divide between nature and culture (Descola 2005). It is along this same line of thought that some speakers questioned more directly how their sound composition

<sup>40</sup> I take this title from Philippe Descola's book *Par-delà nature et culture* (Descola 2005) in which he retraced the history and foundations of the Great Divide between nature and culture that has emerged in modern thought.

practices could be affected by the modes of existence that have increasingly become imposed on our post-digital universe, namely algorithms.

Tim Shaw addressed this question during his spring residency at ESAAIX. He had been working on a *Radio* Installation that drew on various radio streams from around the world to fragment, decompose and combine them in a random fashion. Extracts from commercial and community radio stations, live weather reports, cosmic radio waves and Locus Sonus' open microphones were captured by an SDR (software-defined radio), integrated into a USB key plugged into his computer, and then recomposed using a Pure Data generative patch. These recomposed streams were played by three speakers, in the centre of which was placed a light bulb that lit up according to the amplitude of the sound. A few metres away, an antenna, a router and a computer picked up and processed the analogue and digital radio streams. Visitors could see the Pure data patches, which Tim had made with their various components, come to life. Some of these components had been programmed by Grégoire Lauvin and Stéphane Cousot.

The system Tim created was not the materialisation of a preconceived program. Rather, it was the result of artistic research into progressive, iterative programming, exploring several possible modes of vibratory correspondence between the radio streams, the programs and the retransmission of sound through the baffles. This spring's residency thus allowed the finalisation of a work that had been in progress for several years. Through this research, Tim attempted to create a form of dialogue with these random radio streams, redistributed through a system also involving random dimensions, to produce sound compositions that satisfied his artistic tastes. It was within this framework that he tested different types of processing of the voices and sounds he captured to acquire a form of skill and dexterity in the dialogue mediated by the algorithms he was producing in Pure Data. The composer had not disappeared, but had rather become more deeply engaged in mastering those modes of existence that increasingly accompany our navigations and attention through the analog and digital worlds. Through this artistic research, Tim was in a way questioning how algorithms participate in the emergence of our common worlds.



This questioning was prolonged during the last talk on October 9th, that of Hugo Scurto entitled “Listening to the deepscape”. Evoking the research and technologies developed by the GAFAMs, Hugo reminded us of how we are surrounded by devices based on deep learning algorithms: the Google assistant, Apple’s Siri, as well as other intelligent personal assistants that companies like Amazon have democratized and widely distributed to the point of transforming many private homes into connected spaces. Hugo also gave a quick presentation on how some artists had already taken advantage of these technologies to produce music streams.

However, in contrast to current trends, he insisted on the need to avoid an anthropomorphic approach to artificial intelligence. In his view, artificial intelligence refers to ‘scapes’ rather than to beings or to modes of existence. These ‘scapes’ are, first and foremost, the materiality of datacenters, cables, relay antennas, computers and various machines, digital traces and datamining algorithms that made it possible to process, produce data, produce and propagate images, sounds, objects, connections, etc. The infrastructure that made it possible to do this is the infrastructure of the Internet and its extensions : humans,

institutions, regulation, but also that of practices and different cultural representations. The fact that Hugo’s talk closed the event was very relevant and timely because the questions he asked no longer concerned the beings that make up our commons, but the forms, and therefore the profoundly different spatialities, through which our worlds have been so rapidly redeployed in recent decades.

Through the walk, the artists’ proposals and performances, the researchers’ interventions, and the various actors who participated, the closing event of Accousticcommons varied our modes of engagement with our environment. As François Laplantine (Laplantine 2018) and Tim Ingold (Tim Ingold 2018) would say, this event awakened our senses introduced disturbance and forms of constructive perplexity making us more attentive and sharpening our correspondence with our worlds on which we depend and which are becoming increasingly complex in their happening.

Cédric Parizot, January 7, 2023

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