

Sons désirables et sons indésirables : Une dichotomie avec plusieurs extensions.

Wanted and Unwanted Sounds: a Dichotomy with Several Extentions

- Wanted and unwanted sounds

 - Esthetic and historical dimension

 - Noise in modern music

- Hi-Fi and Lo-Fi soundscape

 - Signal to noise ratio

 - Wanted and unwanted sound ensembles

- The Hi-Fi soundscape as an "ideal" to be sought

François Bernard Mâche (1979) on Schafer' book :

- "Curiously, the music is almost absent from the book"
- "What Murray Schafer proposes, it would be rather a sound urbanism"
- "The composer apparently has no other functions than pedagogical"
- Schafer' s book "[...] could become useful, if not to change the soundscape, at least to make finally appear its presence, which is printed more and more extremely on our musics, our sensitivity, our rhythm of life."

Barry Truax (2008) on Soundscape Compositions :

- "Thus, the real goal of the soundscape composition is the re-integration of the listener with the environment in a balanced ecological relationship."

Francisco Lopez (1998) on Schafer' book :

- "it is considered by many as a “bible”"
- "including suggestions on what should be done"

- "The “tuning” is basically a “silencing”, as if “noisy” were an evil condition in itself"
- "it is a misleading, simplistic view for our understanding and appreciation of soundscapes"

- "The problem is that health or communication aspects are merged and confounded with aesthetic judgement"

- S vs

- "I believe that what is under question here is the extent of artistic freedom with regards to other aspects of our understanding of reality."

Hi-Fi/Lo-Fi soundscape as a dipole

Ethical moralism: Hi-Fi = good, Lo-Fi = bad

Questions :

- From which moment does a soundscape become hi-fi or lo-fi ?
- How can we evaluate the intermediate situations between the two poles of the dipole?
- Yet, how can we classify a sound as being signal or noise?

Jacob Kreutzfeldt (2010) : "For example when listening to radio it is reasonably easy to distinguish between the signals transmitted and the extra noise received. But – a bit like with the concept of hi-fi – it may be difficult when listening to environmental sound to decide what is signal and what is noise."

Peter Cusack (2000) :

"Is the hi-fi/lo-fi duality really adequate? For me there are many problems here. I find it:

- a) too static — taking no account of the fluidity and ever changing nature of soundscapes. Even cityscapes, often cited as lo-fi, have plenty of hi-fi periods and even more varying ones somewhere in the middle.
- b) mechanistic — dealing only with amounts and types of sound not with what people actually like or dislike — a more important consideration.
- c) comes with the inbuilt moral assumption that lo-fi = bad and hi-fi = good. How many people agree with this assumption?"

Andra McCartney (2010) on ethical questions about working with soundscapes :

Prison reform in Pennsylvania by Quaker reformers, in 1829 :

"At the Eastern State Penitentiary in Pennsylvania in the mid-1800s, the building was designed to isolate prisoners, to encourage solitude and penitence. Each cell had a private exercise yard and a solitary work bench lit by a skylight designed to resemble the eye of God. The prisoners were also isolated sonically. Visitors and conversations between prisoners were not allowed. Food cart wheels were covered with leather to hide their noise, guards wore socks over their boots to quell their footsteps. The only sounds a prisoner would hear would be the iron grate opening in the door or the sounds of his own work, or occasionally the voice of a preacher walking the halls. This is truly a hifi soundscape, where sounds were completely isolated like the prisoners, where metallic echoes could pierce souls, arising out of profound silence. This approach to incarceration had to be stopped because of the large number of prisoners who went insane."

Andra McCartney (2010) on ethical questions about working with soundscapes :

"The solitude of the pasture and the wilderness is romanticized and desired in contrast to the familiarity and close quarters of daily, noisy urban life. By referring to the hifi soundscape as an example of an ecological soundscape, are we shaping soundscape studies through a particularly northern and isolationist framework? Is this what we want?"

Questions :

- Do we privilege (even unconsciously) certain familiar soundscapes and disadvantage others?
- Do we have a tendency to generalize and impose our own local cultural experience in an inappropriate context?

Individual consideration of soundscape

- Different stories from different individuals for the same soundscape
- Different stories from the same individual for the same soundscape
- Subjectivity and individual singularity are more promising than objectivity?
- Put into question even the scientificity of soundscape researches?

Guattari (1989) :

- "Ecosophical logic [...] similar to that of an artist"
- importance of "the question of subjective enunciation"
- "consideration of a "narrative element""

Walter Benjamin (1936) : "Story-telling [...] does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel."

Ecological consideration: Soundscape viewed through interaction and interdependence

- Human participation: Individual and social

Hildegard Westerkamp (1998) : "The word soundscape always implies interaction between environment and individual, and between environment and community."

- From a "better" soundscape to a "better" society?
or/and
- From a "better" society to a "better" soundscape?

Murray Bookchin (1971/86) : "For, in the final analysis, it is impossible to achieve a harmonization of man and nature without creating a human community that lives in a lasting balance with its natural environment."

Murray Bookchin (1993) : "What literally defines social ecology as "social" is its recognition of the often overlooked fact that nearly all our present ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems. Conversely, present ecological problems cannot be clearly understood, much less resolved, without resolutely dealing with problems within society."

Gregg Wagstaff (2004) :

- "We need to address more the processes and political apparatus (the instruments) which govern our soundscape, rather than the sounds in themselves."
- "a critical stance towards the 'phonocentric' approach of a Schaferian 'Acoustic Ecology' and the biocentric 'Deep Ecology' of Arne Naess."

For Wagstaff, "Sound ecology is implicitly linked with Deep ecology" (Andra McCartney, 2004)

Murray Bookchin (1987) : "Deep ecologists see this vague and undifferentiated humanity essentially as an ugly "anthropocentric" thing---presumably a malignant product of natural evolution---that is "overpopulating" the planet, "devouring" its resources, and destroying its wildlife and the biosphere."

- "in fact, the soundscape is in our ears but not in our hands."

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