

Atlantic Sound Cartographies

Leandra Lambert

Paper presented in the symposium *Music and ecologies of sound. Theoretical and practical projects for a listening of the world*, University Paris 8, May 2013.

The present work is a result of an artistic on-going process and the theoretical reflection that it produces. It starts with some of my experiences with attentive/deep listening (in the terms of Pauline Oliveros) and field recordings in urban and non-urban environments in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It's a free form of soundwalking, in some aspects related to the work of Hildegard Westerkamp. I've been conducting these intersensory drifts since 2009, soundwalks that induce to a state of "derangement of all senses", in the words of Arthur Rimbaud — and with a resemblance with the situationist *dérive/détournement*. This state directs and defines all the work that is produced in this project. Deleuze, in "Critique et Clinique", speaks of a cartography-art made not from static maps, but pathways, routes; the soundwalks that I execute are a kind of sound cartography of some specific environments.

These soundwalks are realized in three environments that I call "As Três Atlânticas" (The Three Atlantics): the Atlantic Ocean, vast liquid border between Brazil, Europe and Africa; the Atlantic Forest, a rich environment already largely devastated, which has been losing its original human populations, animals and plants since the beginning of the colonization of the country; and the Avenida Atlântica, in Copacabana, an urban area that is able to chaotically gather the most diverse relevant elements of our History. In these environments, updated issues from the ecosophy in "The Three Ecologies", by Guattari, stand out in an intense and multiple manner. The environment, the social relations, and the human subjectivity — all these entries are under great pressure, tension and conflict in this *Atlantic space*. There's exuberance, beauty and some solar lightness in these scenarios, but the fact is that heaviness, decay and destruction are also present.

Félix Guattari highlights the intricate interdependence between different strata of the planetary reality. There's a sense of urgency in seeking the necessary changes. Human subjectivity, social relations and the environment constitutes one another, in countless dynamic crossings: a collapse in one strata implies collapses in the other stratas; and if something is changed in one strata, the other stratas are also altered.

I have lived near these three Atlantic spaces all my life till now. They are familiar, they are the environments that have mostly contributed to the constitution of my subjectivity. I seek to listen, see, feel and think these places with a renewed astonishment. I also seek to act in these milieu, as a factor of micro-changings. Poetics and politics of otherness, difference and strangeness are present in these experiences of a living environment, in a complex and emergent ecosophy.

I try to experiment these places through art in many different ways, using mixed media, like sound and written poetry, field recordings, experimental music, performance, photography and drawing. All the process emphasizes the relationship between listening, intersensoriality, imagination and memory; the entwinement between what's physically listened and "non-cochlear" sounds; the resonances created by the mix of acoustic spaces and sonic reveries. I explore the connections between concept and concrete and between History, stories and myths, in a non-realistic account of events, trying to produce an art linked to everyday life and to fabulation in mingled ways, composing *experienced fictions*. Fragments of voices and spontaneous conversations can be mixed with narratives and ambient sounds to compose sonic fictions. I am specially interested in accents, in the musicalities of voices, objects and spaces, and in the stories and tales people tell about the places they live, work, imagine, and would like to know. Distances and proximities in sound and meaning also are a matter for work.

I investigate different kinds of walkings and activities around the shoreline, the portuary activity, the relation of people with the ocean, the exchanges with strangers. I like to experience these movements as a dance I take part in. I use

collections of sounds, images, substances, and objects from the streets; and I interfere with some sounds and leave in the streets some objects, images, and texts. I experiment with detours, semantic and material displacements, the trade of elements from diverse surroundings. Different people, places and times are gathered in layers of sound, meaning, experience.

I seek for unfathomable relations, composing short reports of impossibilities, experiencing and imagining the landscape-environment. These processes, that began as soundwalkings and became an *imaginative pansensorialism*, also instigates a questioning about what establishes our relation with the world. As said by Bill Viola: this relation determines the possibility of existence of our own conscience.

Still exists a tendency to separate and oppose the capacities of reflexion, imagination and conceptualization from the corporeal processes that sensorially link us to the environment, to other species. What seems to occur is just the opposite: it is through the pansensorial relations inside the environment that the different forms of intelligence are produced and transformed. Or: it is inside the world of sensations that the spirit is constructed — and the spirit produces sensations. The apparent oppositions are just layers that lie in the transformations of existence.

The environments, the milieus that surround us are also corporeal-conceptual shapes. They are ever changing, composed by human and non-human animals in movement, other organisms and remains. They are live spaces full of constructions, tools and inorganic debris, signs and marks. All these materialities participate in countless relationships, in an intricate and inextricable complexity. The environment is alive, a landscape-body-other. The surroundings are not around us: they make us. In all my artistic process I focus in the production of intense relations with the environment, composing a cartography that is ever changing, alive.

The act of listening, practising a free form of soundwalking — that expands towards this intersensorial, synaesthetic and imaginative walking — is the basis of the process. Listening, instead of being passively exercised, has an active force, as stated by Frances Dyson: "...when you listen, you enter in synergy with the world

and the senses, a listening/touch that is the essence of what is called visceral reaction — a response that is both physiological and psychological, mind and body."

Pascale Criton considers the act of listening a complex practice. She observes the entwinement between the psychic and the concrete aspects: listening "...as the acting of representations and sensations, at the same time real *and* in relation with fiction. I consider listening as a production — an elaboration, a subjective process." This concept of listening points to intricate relations with space, time and materialities. The auditory space is wider than the visual space: it is pluridimensional, it approximates and produces distances, blurs the frontiers, mixes the inside and the outside, creates a "transient sensorial territoriality", in the words of Criton. One can say that the auditory space creates a multiplicity of ways, trajectories and possibilities of movement. A *soundwalking* is transformed into a *pansensorial* and *synaestheticwalking*. It is a kind of *multidimensional labyrinthine stroll*, in which the superimposed routes of walking, listening, feeling, seeing, experiencing, remembering and imagining are in complex, emergent and sometimes chaotic relations. This space of complex relations is cartographic, in the terms of Deleuze; it establishes a net of inextricable connections and mergings:

The trajectory merges not only with the subjectivity of those who travel through a milieu, but also with the subjectivity of the milieu itself, insofar as it is reflected in those who travel through it. The map expresses the identity of the journey and what one journeys through. It merges with its object, when the object itself is movement.

This kind of map is not static or merely representational: it is a map in process, a map of movements and *in* movement. And these movements are not only kinaesthetic: they are experiences, intensities, fictions, memories and oblivions in motion. These cartographies are mingled to the creation of heterotopies. Art and music are made of itineraries and the construction of heterotopies. My artistic process occurs in the construction of transitory heterotopies in everyday routes and places. This process is continued through some artistic mediation, in cartographic traces of these "other spaces" that were transiently created in everyday places.

There is not a desire of representation, expression or synthesis in these experiences: I just seek for traces, remembrances and the construction of fabulations or, as I like to call, *experienced fictions*.

Gilles Tiberghien, in his hodological studies, observes the dialectical opposition between two kinds of routes: the pre-existing routes, streets, roads and surfaces built to facilitate and accelerate the access, all of them passages related to the habit; and the routes practiced and invented each time; procedural, time demanding, even implying the "waste of time"; ways that bump into the dangers of wandering. It's in this second kind of route that this work happens, and the act of listening guides the construction of these paths. Brandon LaBelle believes acoustic territories are not exactly places, but itineraries: "Sound creates a relational geography that is most often emotional, contentious, fluid, and which stimulates a form of knowledge that moves in *and* out of the body." It's this kind of knowledge that produces the Atlantic Sound Cartographies.

Bibliography:

Criton, P., 2012. O Ouvido Ubíquo: Escutar de Outro Modo. (The Ubiquitous Ear: Other Ways of Listening). Conference presented at USP São Paulo, September 6, 2011. Portuguese version by Silvio Ferraz published in: Cadernos de Subjetividade, PUC-SP, São Paulo, year 9, number 14, pp.53-61.

Deleuze, G., 1997. *Crítica e Clínica*. São Paulo: Editora 34.

Dyson, F., 2009. *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture*. Berkeley: UC Press.

Guattari, F., 1990. *As Três Ecologias*. Campinas: Papirus.

LaBelle, B., 2010. *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. Kindle version. New York: Continuum.

Oliveros, P., 2005. *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*. Lincoln: iUniverse.

Tiberghien, G.A., 2010. *Bill Viola: Na Natureza das Coisas*. Concinnitas, year 11, v. 2, n. 17, december 2010.

Tiberghien, G.A., 2012. *Hodológico*. Valise, Porto Alegre, v.2, n.3, y.3, July 2012.

Viola, B., 1988. Survey of a decade. Houston: Contemporary Art Museum

Viola, B., 1995. Reasons for knocking at an empty house. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Westerkamp, H. 2007. Soundwalking. Originally published in Sound Heritage, Volume III Number 4, Victoria B.C., 1974. Revised 2001. Published in: Autumn Leaves, Sound and the Environment in Artistic Practice, Ed. Angus Carlyle, Double Entendre, Paris, p. 49.