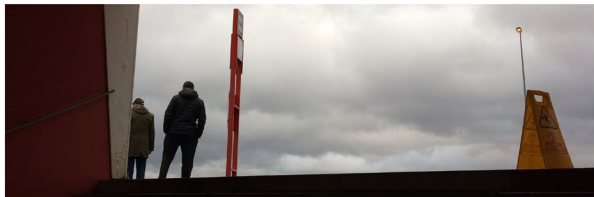


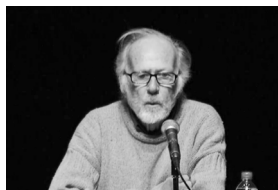
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CENTRAL
EUROPEAN
NETWORK
FOR SONIC
ECOLOGIES

CENSE ALMANAC





This publication
is dedicated to the memory of
Raymond Murray Schafer
18 July 1933 – 14 August 2021

Canadian composer, author, music educator, and “father of acoustic ecology” Raymond Murray Schafer died at his home in Southern Ontario on Saturday, August 14, 2021.

Schafer is known internationally as one of Canada’s most prolific and influential composers of contemporary art music, and founder of the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University.

Among his many articles and books, *The Tuning of the World*, published in 1977, later re-titled *Soundscape*, introduces the first non-technical vocabulary for describing our experience within the acoustic environment.

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From the Editors

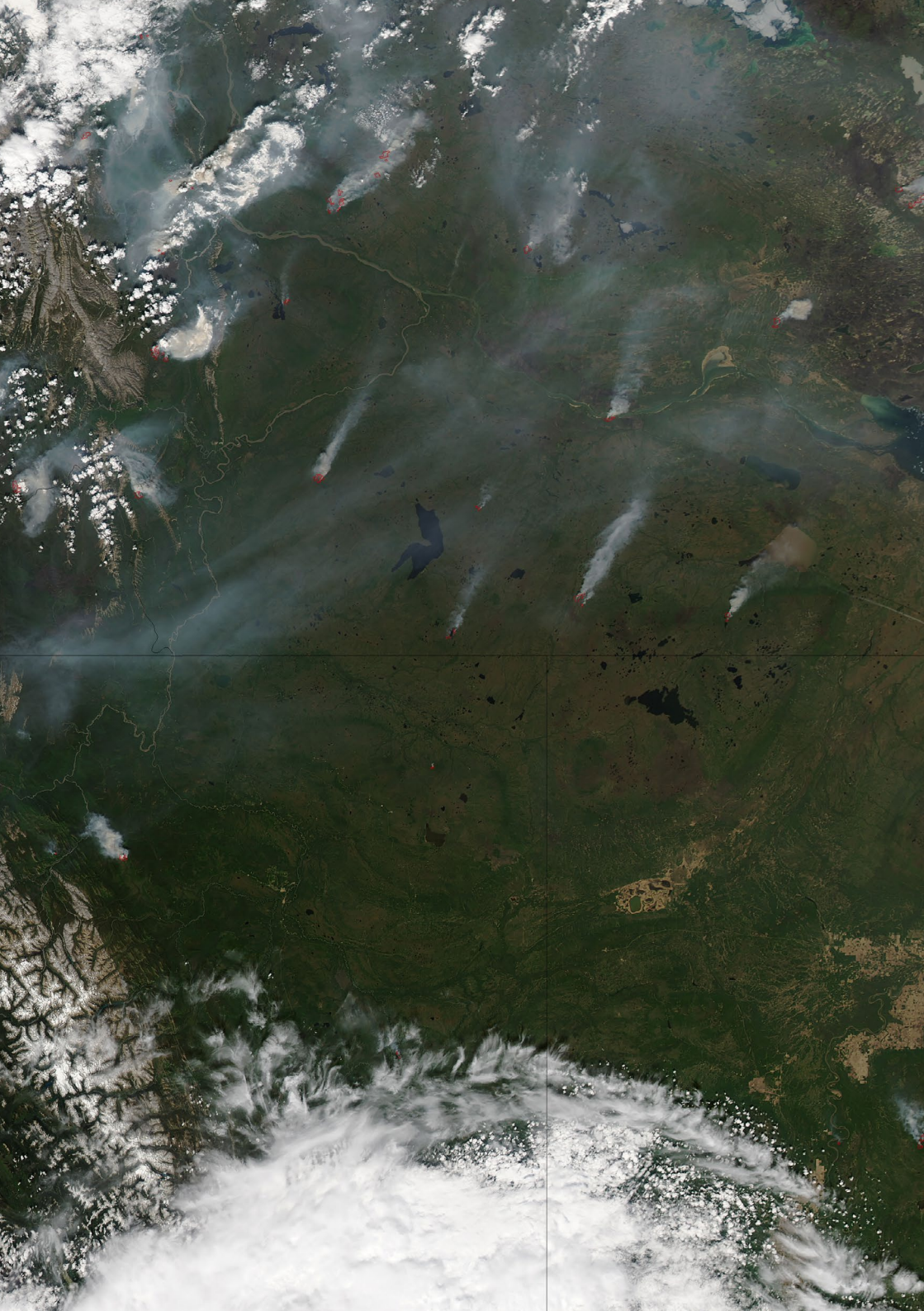
In Eastern and Central Europe, the hope for a healthier and eco-friendly environment was an important force behind the political and economic changes in 1989 and the early 90s to a consumer market economy. The ecological agenda in many post-Soviet countries gradually faded away from public discourse and the political agenda, often along with humanitarian and ethical issues. Although many green parties in Central Europe during the last decade have lost their electorates, an awareness of the importance of environmental thinking and behavior — especially among the younger generation — has lately become a subject in media, as well as in artistic and scientific agendas and projects. Ecology has relentlessly returned to the fore during the time of lockdowns, triggered by the sudden silencing of industry, clouds of ominous news about global and local climate and demographic changes. Taking the environment into consideration has become much more urgent than before. We have finally realized that it would be futile to try to return to “business as usual,” as it was before the Age of Covid. It is increasingly evident that profound change is needed and that this change is lurking around the corner.

CENSE is an emerging, small and loose network of people living mainly in the center of Europe. It strives to transcend the boundaries of the disciplines of art, science, and activism, and to foster environmental awareness among people. Its territory is the gray area between culture, economics, politics, advocacy for hearing and environmental science. CENSE argues that the acts of listening and thinking about what we hear provide an important channel of reality, for the audible is just as important as the visible, forming a feedback loop between people, as well as rural and urban landscapes.

As a term, “Sonic Ecology” was introduced about fifty years ago by Canadian composer and philosopher Raymond Murray Schafer, who recently left us. But even today, the term is rather enigmatic. The networks of artists and researchers across Western Europe, Scandinavia, the US and Australia involved in discussions around this concept have been active since at least the turn of the millennium. This has not been so much the case in Central and Eastern Europe, where mutual understanding and communication structures have been unstable and weak. That is why we have proposed a simple questionnaire about Acoustic Ecology, hoping that this will help us orient ourselves within the vast area of the “environmental acoustics of Central Europe.” In August 2021, we approached CENSE members and other interested people in Austria, former East Germany, Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, Slovenia, as well as Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia. Reactions, brief or at length, to five questions related to this emerging term of art offer a springboard for the formation of a framework; a mind map composed of the various ideas, statements, positions, and attitudes of around thirty people. In addition, three short overviews on the story of environmental sound in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary are included as an attempt to better understand local motivations and circumstances.

The answers have been reviewed and translated into English where necessary. The results of this effort have been collected into this **CENSE Almanac**, which is published as an open access, free download from cense.earth and elsewhere beginning in November 2021.

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Dark Sonambient

Notes on the Origins of Czechoslovak Environmentally-Tempered Soundscapes

If we were to presume that Acoustic Ecology (AE) or environmental sound art means a long-term engagement with non-human subjects, and is usually inspired by various disciplines such as the natural sciences, bioacoustics, field recording, medicine, music, visual anthropology, and sound and soundscape studies, we might conclude there are not many traces of such activities to find in Czechia or the former Czechoslovakia. But if we decide to not strictly follow the vocabulary and methods of AE, and instead dig into recent Czech cultural history, we may detect several trajectories that reveal a kinship and some parallels with its development in western Europe, the US, and Canada. Here are several brief examples and case studies.

Schwarzes Dreieck Symphony

Concern about ecological threats and environmental issues have been — at least since the 1950s — present in the political and social scenes of Czechoslovakia. The toll on the population's health and the destruction of the landscape over a period of years fueled the ideological and political changes in Czechoslovakia near the end of the communist era in 1989. One such huge geo-laboratory was the area straddling the borderland joining East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Because of the smoke from many factories and a dirty fog saturated with dust from the lignite mines, it was named the *Schwarzes Dreieck / Black Triangle* in the 1980s. The entire region suffered severely with one of the worst levels of chemical, physical, visual, and probably also sonic pollution in Europe at that time. The industrial complex of energy and steel with petrochemical factories, connected with large-scale strip-mining systems for lignite, became an engine that spewed tons of air polluting emissions, such as sulfur dioxide and particles of heavy metals, which caused severe air, soil, and groundwater pollution. Acid rain from the Central European lignite fields had widespread impacts, even on fish and forest habitats in faraway Scandinavia.

Forest fires
in central
Canada
(NASA Earth
Observatory)

The destiny of this sacrificial landscape attracted the attention of many artists, writers and filmmakers: between 1957 and 1962 the Czech photographer Josef Sudek traveled around the apocalyptic landscapes of the Most, Sokolovsko and Chomutov regions to bear witness to the level of destruction, and to reveal the darker side of the optimistic facade of the industrial utopia offered by socialist propaganda (*Smutná krajina / Sad Landscape*). In the 60s, the party-government signed a communique which resulted in the disappearance of one of the most valuable historic towns of Bohemia — Most / Brůx. The visual and performance artist Jiří Sozanský arrived in Most in 1981, and by means of interventions, pointed out the town's tragic fate, and later his environments were captured in photographs and films. The medieval part of Most was already deserted, as most of the historical buildings had been demolished to give way to the expanding mines. Sozanský, with his collectively created sculptures, drawings and installations, placed plaster figures with iron skeletons in the ruins of abandoned houses. The names of the installations were more than telling: *The Fall, The Demolition, The Panic, The Tying Down, The Escape*, etc. The Czech-born photographer Josef Koudelka (1938) visited his homeland in the early 1990s and, while here, continued his

long-term pan-European project *Vestiges* in the Mostecko area. In the preface of the book *Black Triangle*, published in Prague in 1993, were these words by Václav Havel: “[The series] shows a devastated countryside, a war zone of blasted trees and vegetation, a landscape as atrophied and as wrecked as anything in a Paul Nash painting of the Somme. Pulling out the accordion fold, one is faced with an enormous panorama of destruction. The gouged earth and felled trees make a powerful impression, and here and there in the images trails of smoke rising up on the horizon tell us that the power stations are still wreaking their environmental havoc. ... ” (Josef Koudelka, *The Black Triangle: The Foothills of the Ore Mountains. Photographs 1990-1994*. Foreword by Vaclav Havel. Essay by Josef Vavroušek. Vesmír, Prague 1994.)

At the same time that Koudelka was documenting the melancholic beauty of the desolate surroundings of the coal mines under the Ore Mountains, the American artists Helen and Newton Harrison, (Helen’s parents had immigrated to the US from Prague) having been invited by the Bauhaus Dessau, designed a vision of a utopian restoration of the industrial area of the Black Triangle in East Germany. Their project, partly realized in collaboration with teachers and students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague, sketched a generous, holistic model of the natural and cultural geography of the Elbe river basin, from the Krkonoše / Giant Mountains river springs to the Elbe delta on the North Sea coast. The project included a field survey and public discussion on the reclamation of the coal pits of Most and Sokolov and the mines in the vicinity of Bittersfeld in Anhalt Saxony. This large-scale project later became a part of the Harrisons’ plans for a holistic trans-European continental restoration concept — *Peninsula Europe I, 2000–2004*: “The work proposes the reforestation of the high grounds from the perspectives of conserving waters, purifying waters and generating biodiversity.”

Koudelka met the Harrisons during the project preparations in 1994 or 1995, and also later in 1997 at the exhibition *Aufriß: Künstlerische Positionen zur Industrielandschaft in der Mitte Europas* at the Gerissmuseum in Leipzig. The German visual artist and musician Ulf Langheinrich was born in Wolfen, Bittersfeld district in 1960, but left in 1984 for West Germany, having spent his childhood in this industrial landscape. His immersive sound environments, including works with the Granular Synthesis duo were, in his own words, inspired by his memories of Germany’s then most-polluted town, with Silbersee, a highly toxic lake, nearby. Since the 1970s and 80s, North Bohemia served as cradle and shelter for small radical communities of young people from the underground, punk and industrial music scenes, and Czech composer Jan Trojan, who published his dissertation theses on Acoustic Ecology and intermedia, was also born here.

Alas, not Sudek, Sozanský, Koudelka nor the Harrisons ever mentioned a word in their works or commentary about the toxic soundscape of the Black Triangle, probably because the visual impact of their experience was so overwhelming and their main tool and medium was the image. The brown, acidic, sulphur-saturated clouds from the chimneys of the North Bohemian and Silesian power stations began to fade away in the early 1990s thanks to EU funding, but the 24/7 deep drone of huge machine systems which emerged from the pits is still there and can be heard today.

In 2015, as part of the international Frontiers of Solitude project, there took place a workshop conducted by Peter Cusack, the initiator of the genre of sound journalism and the author of *Sounds from Endangered Places*. The

workshop documented the sonic pollution around the Most, Chomutov and Sokolov industrial sites. In 2019, the first international interdisciplinary conference [Murmurans Mundus: Sonic Ecology and Beyond](#) on Acoustic Ecology was organized in Ústí nad Labem by the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, and the project Hraničář, also in Ústí nad Labem, has become one of the most active initiatives in intersections among the environment, art and science.

Vocalizations and Autopoietic Patterns

Olga Karlíková (1923–2004) was a Czech visual artist and a signatory of the Charter 77 proclamation. In the 60s, in addition to her interest in visual structures and textures, she also became fascinated by sound and listening, not only in the field or by means of recordings of sounds of nature, but also in the poly-rhythmic patterns of animal movements and behavior. Although from 1968 on she worked in relative isolation, her body of work can be read in the broader context of international conceptual art, or compared to composers who merged musicality and sound with visual signs. Her drawings transcribe the vocalizations of various animal species and of natural phenomena, often birdsong and the movements of birds. Karlíková points to her 1965 discovery: *“I was walking through the park Chotkovy sady, I remember this distinctly, and I was listening to a thrush. Suddenly I also saw it. I made some very awkward notes in my pocket calendar.”* Apart from a voluminous series of systematically created drawings capturing the songs of birds, whales, croaking frogs, as well as bells and drums, over the next forty years the artist produced drawn records of various natural phenomena, such as the trajectory of a ray of sunlight during the equinox. In this context of environmental and phenomenological interests, we might also mention the works of other artists in Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia from the 1960s on. Karlíková’s approach of transmitting acoustic phenomena anticipated conceptual tendencies, and through its strong ties with the landscape and musicality, also shows affinity with the work of artists such as Dalibor Chatrný, Marian Palla, Miloš Šejn, Inge Kosková, Milan Maur, Vladimír Havlík, Vladimír Kokolia in the Czech Republic, and Peter Bartoš, Milan Adamčiak, et al., in Slovakia. The approach of Miloš Šejn especially towards the (sonic) environment and its morphology, and of the landscape experienced as an autopoietic self-organizing system, suggests a deep affinity with the ideas of the Acoustic Ecology group in Canada and elsewhere.

Speleophony and the Midsummer’s Night Band

In 1976, the composer Alois Piňos (1925–2008), by education a forester, finished a new musical piece, constructed exclusively from the recordings of stalactites dripping with running water. He captured those sounds in the Kateřinská cave in the Moravian Karst north of Brno. The sound material was post-produced in the Experimental Studio of Czechoslovak Radio in Bratislava. As an electro-acoustical piece under the title *Kateřinské hry / Catherine Games*, it was replayed repeatedly at the very location in which the material was recorded. This “soundscape composition” is somewhat exceptional in the Czechoslovak context at the time, but seen in the context of the European musical scene of the 1970s, it bears similarities with the “topophonic,” or site-specific works by, for example, Ladislav Kupkovič, Michael Fahres, Luc Ferrari, and others who explored the idea of site-specific, spatial and ambient music; or those who integrated samples or field recordings in their works. In his youth, Alois Piňos was inspired by the work of Janáček, Bartók and Messiaen, and later by Ives, Varese, the Second Viennese School,



Lawson '88

Lutosławski, Ligeti, Xenakis, Ferrari and Berio. Between 1984 and 1994, Piňos was a permanent lecturer at the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music and made several radio programs for Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln.

Olga
Karlíková,
Zpěv,
pencil on
paper, 1988

During the same time that the *Speleophony* was recorded in a cave in the Moravian Karst, there was another cultural phenomenon going on in the Czech underground community, arising from a rather different cultural and social background. In 1973 appeared the Musical Department of “Křižovnická škola čistého humoru bez vtípu / The Crusaders’ School of Pure Humor without Jokes” as “A Midsummer Night’s Dream Band.” The most famous events of this band (members included the visual artist Karel Nepraš, Miloslav Hájek, Vratislav Brabenec, Milan Čech, and Petr Lampl) were two journeys to site-specific happenings organized by the visual artist and performer Olaf Hanel: *Waking the Knights of Blaník (1974)* and *Vltava – Homage to B. Smetana (1974)*. The latter consisted of a bus tour to several locations along the river Vltava, where fragments from Smetana’s iconic “tone-poem” symphony, tracing the progress of a river from a small mountain stream to a broad waterway, were interpreted in an amateurish and Dada-istic style for a small group of friends who came along. Besides those “patriotic trips” organized for the unofficial dissent community, the *Crusader School* also conducted private site-specific events, exhibitions, concerts and other activities, some of which the painter Rudolf Němec (1936–2015) documented on 8mm film.

Assessment of Noise and the Promotion of Silence in Czechoslovakia

As in any other western industrial society, the Czech urban, metropolitan soundscape often runs at a high volume. Mechanical and reproduced sound have become tools for the state and corporate intrusion into everyday privacy, and thereby, the minds of citizens; whereas silence had the negative connotations of political and ideological suppression. This could be one of the reasons that the “sound mode” of most of the anti-establishment, radical and civil rights movements in Central Europe, at least in Czechoslovakia was to receive attention and to become recognizable in the omnipresent media noise — tuned up to a high volume.

*When the mode of music is changed
The walls of the city shake*

These song lyrics by The Fugs are mentioned in the famous samizdat text *Report on the III. Czech Musical Revival* written by Ivan Martin Jirous in 1975.

This polarity between noise and freedom on one side and silence and tranquility on the other finds its roots in history: Approximately from the end of the 19th century and until the 1930s, there was a shift in the understanding of noise in Western culture. Whereas before, noise had been perceived as a mistake or failure of a certain tonality which ought to cohabit with harmony, something merely intermittent; with the establishment of modernity, noise came to be considered more as a psychologically or socially unwelcome sound, and as something constant. Sounds becoming noise turned out even to be the essence of modernity, and appreciation of noise became a symptom of radical protest, or rejection of the bourgeois appeals for the social system’s demands of self-control, harmony and sublimity in arts.

The history of so called “music ecology” in Czechoslovakia is related often to the “Music-Ecological Association” or HUDEKOS, which has operated since

the 1990s. It is symptomatic that the group was mainly protesting against “musical pollution,” placing non-musical noise mostly outside their attention. Nevertheless, the origins of landscape and architecture acoustics, urban noise management, and the geography of noise run much deeper in the history of acoustics in Czechoslovakia. The physicist and professor Josef Bartoloměj Slavík (1900–1964) of the Czech Technical University played a crucial role, beginning in the 1930s, with such books as *O hlasitosti akustických zdrojů / On the Volume of Acoustic Sources (1939)*, *O chvění a hluku strojů / ON the Vibration and Noise of Machines*, *Akustika Kinematografu / Cinematic Acoustics*, and *Akustika hlediště / Auditorium Acoustics (1949)*, and other titles. Slavík argued that excessive noise is harmful to health, and his books on acoustics remind us in some aspects of the concepts of Acoustic Ecology. The group Acoustical Committee, operating under the auspices of the Czech Technical University, promoted and conducted noise monitoring in public spaces and inside buildings, particularly in order to: “... determine the acoustic properties of several Prague public halls, to improve their acoustics and to prepare a greater measurement of street noise as a prerequisite for the abatement of noise in Prague.” The first public event to combat “unnecessary sonic pollution” on a larger scale was organized in Prague on 19 November, 1937, under the name “Day of Silence”.

The limiting of sound intensity levels for medical or hygienic reasons in public and work places was enacted in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War: in 1952 and in 1967, hygienic regulations concerning the protection from noise were laid down in law by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. It was the culmination of work by technologists and physicists: The acoustician Jaroslav Němec (1923–1985) focused on aural issues and noise management in architecture, especially in factories and published books about noise in work situations: *Ochrana proti hluku v technické praxi: Určeno projektantům a konstruktérům techn. zařízení / Noise and its Reduction in Technical Practice* (Jaroslav Němec, Milan Šnědrle, Jiří Ransdorf, 1961). The subject of their research was the measurement and avoidance of the noise of various kinds of machines and apparatuses. For the promotion of noise management and abatement, the work of, among others, the physicist Mudr. Jiří Havránek (1928–2002) from the Center for Preventive Medicine at the Medical Faculty of Charles University was also important. A study on the influence of noise on human health is the subject of his *Noise and Health (1990)*, where he argued for the importance of implementing an “anti-noise agenda” and broad education programs on the subject.

An “official” Czech organization that combined music and environmental (ecological) issues was founded in 1993 in Prague, and in 1996 changed its name to HUDEKOS, or the Association for Music and Ecology. Its goals were to inform and to educate the public about the dangers of noise. Starting in 1996, HUDEKOS regularly organized the so-called “International Day of Noise Awareness,” which was inspired by the same campaign led by the American League for the Hearing Impaired. The activities of HUDEKOS officially terminated on the last Day of Noise Awareness in 2012, when the director Jiří Havránek in media expressed his frustration at the weak interest of the public and institutions toward the problem of sound pollution.

In 2007 (and continuing until 2022), the government launched the program zdravamesta.cz, which publishes noise maps of urban spaces online, but in recent years there has not been much improvement in education and policy with regard to either environmental sound issues, nor in the academic

research in this discipline. In 2015, in the wake of a government proposal to lift the limits for brown coal mining in North Bohemia, the grassroots community "[Limity jsme my / We are the limits](#)" was established. During the campaign for keeping the limits in place, organized with thousands of people around the country, they stood up against lifting the limits on coal mining at the Bílina and ČSA mines in Northern Bohemia.

By amending Act No. 114/92, the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic and the subsequent parliamentary activity in 1992 banned the use of fireworks in the national parks of the Czech Republic, and the disturbing of people and animals. There is no reason to permit the harmful effects of fireworks in the rest of the Republic. Some local governments have banned the fireworks, but the petition to apply this ban country-wide was rejected in 2021 by parliament, based on arguments that it would violate freedom and the "protection of civil rights."

Where Can One Find Out About Acoustic Ecology?

The discipline of Environmental Studies is currently offered only at two Czech universities: the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University in Prague, at the doctoral level only; and Masaryk University in Brno. The Department of Ecology was established in 2004 at the Faculty of Sciences of Charles University, dealing with ecology, i.e. the study of relationships between individuals, populations and communities, independently from the systematic division of disciplines. The Department of Ecosystem Biology at the Faculty of Science University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice offers a Bachelors degree in Environmental Management and a Masters in Ecosystem Biology (Ecology, Hydrobiology, Soil Biology, Applied Ecology and the Biology of Nature Conservation). The Fine Art and Design Academies still generally neglect actual environmental issues in their curriculum, although, due to student initiatives, there have occasionally been activities in this field since 2018. The already mentioned Faculty of Art and Design at Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem includes environmental and ecological issues in the curriculum, often related to sound. Sound studies, or Acoustic Ecology as an interdisciplinary science is not yet well established, and students who are interested in studying it have to go abroad to Berlin, Vienna, Amsterdam or London.

According to a recent poll, published September 2021, citizens of the Czech Republic consider the accumulation of waste, pollution of drinking water, air and oceans and the penetration of toxic substances into plants and animals from the environment to be among the most serious global problems. According to the responses, the most burning global problems for the public appear to be the accumulation of waste and the pollution of drinking water, which was indicated by the majority as "very serious" or "quite serious" (both 92%). So this indicates that awareness of the importance of environmental policy is growing. It is rather paradoxical then that, for example, the rate of emissions over the last years in the Czech Republic has increased. With the exception of the Green Party (which did not collect enough votes to take part in the parliament), current Czech political parties have not recognized the necessity of economic transformation in their programs, and they often refer to the Green Deal program of the EU mostly as "Green Madness." And neither noise nor sound pollution were mentioned in a questionnaire conducted by the Centre for Public Opinion Research by the Sociologický ústav AV ČR. Faced with the impacts of global warming, which are visible and

audible even in Central Europe, apart from the impacts of other processes caused by anthropogenic climate change, the concerns about lo-fi soundscapes and noise reduction are considered to be something rather non-essential and even insignificant. But if we understand sound as one of the symptoms of the global environmental crisis, then a better awareness and education about soundscapes must become part of the collective imagination, and part of effective political strategies that weave together resilient communities for a non-dystopian future.

Miloš Vojtěchovský
See bio page 34.

Online Resources

Geography of Sonic Pollution in Prague
app.ippraha.cz/apl/app/atlas-zp



99 Years of Sound Ecology in Poland

Research on the history of various practices and discourses, which we define today under the umbrella term of Sound Ecology, has not yet been conducted in Poland systematically. We are still doomed to fragmentary approaches and a certain arbitrariness in the selection of the discussed phenomena.

The sources of proto-ecological activities and ideas have been related to the pollution of public and private spaces with traffic noise and unwanted music. They have been formulated from various, most often disproportionate, perspectives — aesthetic, medical, acoustic, pedagogical, or reflection on technology. According to Sławomir Łotysz, in the 1930s, the issue of traffic noise (related mainly to the almost constant use of horns in road traffic) was the subject of press debates, institutional activities, acoustic research, and changes in legal regulations. At the end of the 1930s, Polish law also included a provision for a curfew after 11 PM. In 1922, the avant-garde poet and critic Tadeusz Peiper proposed the term *śluchokraż* to denote the sound space surrounding a human being. The concept was coined in reference to the visual term (*widnokraż* — *horizon*), and the exact English translation is soundscape. Peiper used *śluchokraż* to describe the process of broadening the soundscape of the people of that time thanks to the popularization of radio. However, this concept has not become entrenched in the Polish discourse on sound, although the very problem of changes in the soundscape due to technological progress has been a subject of reflection for many other authors. The playwright Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy), in his essay *Niemyte dusze / Unwashed Souls* (1936), condemned the omnipresence of unwanted music reproduced by radio and the gramophone, and his position can be described as aesthetic and elitist. The outstanding composer Witold Lutosławski has spoken out on numerous occasions since 1950 about the pollution of the sound environment by quasi-music from loudspeakers in public spaces and about the right to silence. In 1969 he initiated the following resolution of the UNESCO International Music Council: *“We denounce unanimously the intolerable infringement on individual freedom and of the right of everyone to silence, because of the abusive use, in private and public places, of recorded or broadcast music.”* R. Murray Schafer referred to this declaration in his writings. In 1967, a book by Maksymilian Siemieński was published on the relationship between culture and the acoustic environment. The issues of the non-anthropocentric Sound Ecology, practiced in zoology and botany in recent years, are still awaiting discussion. Significant in this regard was the research of Simona Kossak. In 1970 she defended her thesis on the sounds made by fish. In the 1990s, she was involved in the construction of a device that warns wild animals against oncoming trains by means of sound.

The reception of Schafer’s multidimensional ideas marks the next stage of interest in Sound Ecology in Poland. In 1978, an interview with him and a discussion of his publications appeared in popular magazines. In 1982, the essay *The Music of the Environment* — the first translation of his text in Polish — was published in the musicological journal *Res Facta*. After a few years, articles inspired by his ideas by Danuta Gwizdalanka, the translator of the essay, and subsequent translations (*A Sound Education: 100 Exercises in Listening and Soundmaking*, prepared by Rafał Augustyn) appeared. In the 1990s, the journal *Monochord*, co-run by the composer Lidia Zielińska,

Slavek Kwi
meets the
beetles

became a pivotal forum for the exchange of ideas around Sound Ecology. Thanks to Zielińska, in 1995, R. Murray Schafer came to Poznań. Wrocław, in turn, was visited by his associates from the World Soundscape Project: in 2005, Hildegard Westerkamp, and in 2014, Barry Truax. In 1999, at the Institute of Musicology of the University of Warsaw, under the supervision of Maciej Gołąb, Maksymilian Kapelański's thesis *The Concept of a Soundscape in the Writings of R. Murray Schafer* was defended, which for many years was the point of reference in Poland for those interested in Schafer's thought.

In 2008, the interdisciplinary scientific conference "Sound in the Landscape. The State and Perspectives of Research" on sound and Sound Ecology was organized by the geographer Sebastian Bernat. In 2009, thanks to the efforts of Robert Losiak, the Soundscape Research Studio was established at the University of Wrocław, inspired by the activities of the World Soundscape Project. Research conducted in the Studio resulted in a book on the soundscapes of contemporary Wrocław (*The Sounds of Wrocław*, 2014) and several educational, publishing, artistic, and workshop projects. The publications of Renata Tańczuk and Robert Losiak, members of the Soundscape, developed Schafer's ideas from the perspective of a value-oriented theory of culture and contemporary sound studies.

A turnaround in the last 15 years has resulted in numerous educational and workshop projects, museum exhibitions, publications with field recordings, publications of articles, essays, books, and an interest in the historical soundscape. A large part of them have referred directly to Sound Ecology, which in the context of the climate crisis has begun to be perceived as an ally in the fight against global threats to the planet.

Here is a list of key people and institutions dealing today with Sound Ecology in Poland in the sphere of curatorial activities, music, art, sound art, research, and its popularization: Marcin Barski, Sebastian Bernat, Dorota Błaszczak, Daniel Brożek, Dariusz Brzostek, Izabela Dłużyk, Marcin Dymiter, Konrad Gęca, Maksymilian Kapelański, Krzysztof Knittel, Patryk Lichota, Robert Losiak, Krzysztof Marciniak, Tomasz Mirt, Tomasz Misiak, Anna Nacher, Janusz Piechowicz, Martyna Poznańska, Jacek Smolicki, Agata Stanisław, Justyna Stasiowska, Filip Szałasek, Jacek Szczepanek, Renata Tańczuk, Krzysztof Topolski, and Michał Zygmont.

[Biuro Dźwięku](#) / Department of Sound Katowice, [Canti Illuminati](#), Scena Dźwiękowa Przeglądu Sztuki Survival / Sound Scene of Survival Art Review, [Glissando](#). Magazyn o muzyce współczesnej / Magazine of contemporary music, [Festiwal Sanatorium Dźwięku](#) / Sanatorium of Sounds Festival, [Katedra Mechaniki i Wibroakustyki AGH](#) / Department of Mechanics and Vibroacoustics, [Instytut Pejzażu Dźwiękowego](#) / Institute of Soundscape, Pracownia Badań Pejzażu Dźwiękowego / Soundscape Research Studio.

Sławomir Wieczorek

Sławomir Wieczorek graduated in cultural studies and musicology and is a lecturer at the Institute of Musicology at the University of Wrocław. He is a member of the Soundscape Research Studio, on the editorial staff of the journals *Res Facta Nova* and *Polish Soundscape Journal*. He is also the author of the book *On the musical front: Socialist Realist Discourse on Music in Poland 1948–1955*

(Wrocław University Press, 2014), and co-editor of the book *Sounds of War and Peace: Soundscapes of European Cities in 1945* (Peter Lang Verlag 2018). He focuses on the history of 20th-century music and soundscapes. *Wieczorek* was the main organizer of the third CENSE conference *The Second Life of Recorded Sounds in Wrocław, October 2020*.

Online Resources:

Sławomir Łotysz, Walka z hałasem ulicznym w międzywojennej Warszawie. Moda czy konieczność / Combatting Street Noise in Interwar Warsaw. Trend or Necessity? online: „Teksty Drugie” 2020, nr 2
rcin.org.pl/Content/204272/WA248_240118_P-I-2524_lotysz-walka_o.pdf.

Krzysztof Marciniak, 30 lat ekologii akustycznej w Polsce (1982–2012) / Thirty Years of Acoustic Ecology in Poland (1982–2012), „Ruch Muzyczny” 2012, nr 18, online:
kadebeem.wordpress.com/2012/10/26/30-lat-ekologii-akustycznej-w-polsce-1982-2012.

Tomasz Misiak, Wprowadzenie do tradycji badań dźwiękowych w Polsce / The Introduction To the Tradition of Sound Studies in Poland, „Przegląd Kulturoznawczy” 2017, nr 1, online:
ejournals.eu/pliki/art/9802/pl.

Jacek Smolicki, Pejzaż dźwiękowy jako granica. O akustycznych barierach, teatrze dla zwierząt i Simonie Kossak / The soundscape As a Border. About Acoustic Barriers, Theater for Animals and Simon Kossak, „Glissando” 2021, audiopapers #B, „Ekologia dźwiękowa” / Sound Ecology:
audiopapers.glissando.pl/pejzaz-dzwiekowy-jako-granica.



John Grzinich presents his work Resonant Geometry at the Architecture and the Senses seminar, October 2018, Plasy, Czechia

Acoustic Ecology and Related Activities in Hungary circa 1970–2021

Acoustic ecology is not a lonesome territory. It is richly surrounded by acoustemology, bioacoustics, deep listening, field recording, ecoacoustics, ecological sound art, soundscape ecology, urban sound design, and even psychoacoustics. I agree with Leah Barclay: it is probably the biggest common ground among all of these.

Although the strict mission of CENSE is to concentrate on ecological meanings, and the importance and context of aural phenomena, we must not neglect the rest. The complexity of the discipline comes from composers; the presence of musicians and musical thought cannot be separated from it.

Beginnings in Music

A sensitivity to ambient sounds, similarly as in many other places in the world, first appeared in Hungary among artists of the avant-garde of contemporary music. The work of John Cage, Pierre Schaeffer and others was not part of the canonized mainstream in communist Hungary during the 1970s and 80s. The musical concepts represented here by these names are reflected in the output of Új Zenei Stúdió (New Music Studio) and its circles, including a few outstanding pieces based on or connected to recording. (Zoltán Jeney: *Üvegekre és fémekre – zene magnószalagra / For Glass and Metals – music for tape*, 1979; and István Mártha: *Támad a szél / The Wind Rises*, 1987).

The Hungarian Soundscapes project of 1996 was a kind of breakthrough. It was initiated by the composer János Decsényi (1927–), of the post-war generation, who created a rather eclectic repertoire, branching out from mainstream folk music based instrumental and vocal pieces to electroacoustics. Aside from his work as a composer, he had been working for decades at Hungarian Radio as a program editor, and was later the leader of the electroacoustic studio. In his words: *“When my idea came, to present Hungarian soundscapes in the framework of a radio series, my intention was to inspire musically designed pieces. However, in these compositions the sounds of nature and the human environment play the same decisive role, like musical notes. The latter, due to the genre, are mostly electronic.”*

The first call of the Hungarian Radio resulted in six works. The 1996 call was repeated a few years later, with another five pieces. Both collections were released as CDs. Most of the composers created one-offs in answer to the call. With a few exceptions (Decsényi himself, and Béla Faragó) they had never heard of the Vancouver-based Canadians, nor even Luc Ferrari’s pertinent works. Their main inspiration regarding environmental sound was John Cage. Still, the invitation resulted in some masterpieces, such as László Sárty’s *Studies of Steam Engines* (1996). It was created at the Electroacoustic studio of Hungarian Radio by sound engineer István Horváth, who did all the other pieces in the series as well, due to the lack of training in electronic music typical for most of composers. (Two more of the participants were László Vidovszky and Tibor Szemző.)

The main question regarding a soundscape piece is this: Does the composition extend the meaning of the original field recordings so that we can derive a deeper context from it? The context is not necessarily a narrative one. Reducing listening to field recording elements, as suggested by the works of Francisco López, Jez Riley French and others, is also a source of extending reality. László Sály's *Locomotive* is a superimposition — the *Studies* and the subsequent *Locomotive Symphony* — in my interpretation, these synthesize the listening concepts of John Cage, Pierre Schaeffer and Murray Schafer.

Field recording in the early days of soundscape composition was not cheap fun, especially in Hungary. No wonder then, that during the 80s and 90s, when the worldwide interest grew for the genre, institutional background was more significant than grassroots initiatives here.

Birdland — Mihály Ország's recordings of 1960–2010

Attention to birdsong has been present in Hungary for a long time. The 8000-member Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Association (Magyar Madártani és Természetvédelmi Egyesület), founded in 1974, is one of the biggest of its type in the region.

Péter Szőke, a central figure in ornitho-musicology, has pointed out the common foundations of musicality in humans and songbirds by analyzing tape recorded and slowed down bird songs in the 1960s.

Mihály Ország (1930–2010) created an outstanding collection of animal sounds over the decades from late 1950s, first and foremost, of bird songs. Though several CDs were released from the material of his vast archive, it is still a partly raw and unpublished sound bank with strong referential potential with regard to the last half century.

Recent Personalities

The sometimes hidden presence of the concept of sonic ecology has manifested itself over the past decade, mostly as part of the complex activities of a few personalities.

Andrea Szigetvári is Docent of the Composition Faculty at Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music, Budapest. She leads the Electronic Music Media Art department, and is founder of the Hungarian Computer Music Foundation. She uses field recordings both in her electroacoustic works and in her teaching. Her motivation is frequently social/political (*Beef Kohlrabi Cantata, 2017; Computers on Shutters; Lament mix 1*). She is a supporting member of CENSE.

Zsolt Sörös is a sound improviser, performance artist, theoretical writer, curator, and tutor. His versatile activity is related to environmental sounds in the forms of sound art, conducting sound walks, and writings.

Balázs Kovács is a philosopher-aesthetian, experimental artist and researcher of eco-friendly sound art practices. He teaches at the University of Pécs Faculty of Arts. He is the founder of Sound Farm ("Hangfarm") in the small village of Ellend in southwestern Hungary. He participated in CENSE conferences in 2018 and 2019.



Institutions

More recently, examples of institutional participation and support for sonic ecology can be seen, from the perspectives of research and education.

[Institute of Advanced Studies Kőszeg](#) (iASK) is probably best known for “Creative City — Sustainable Countryside,” an innovative regional development concept. It starts from the premise that the key to the success of developments and investments is that the economic, municipal and academic actors of a given region come together and cooperate effectively. The concept, aside from many other aspects of sustainability, makes room for the sound-based fields. Its “Sounding City” subtopic, led by Zoltán Mizsei, which has mostly resulted in musical projects over the last few years, has recently been opened up to the phenomena and effects of environmental sound and related sound art.

The upcoming “Insula Magna” project, which targets the Szigetköz region of northwestern Hungary and neighboring territories in Slovakia along the Danube, considers the resources of acoustic ecology as efficient methods to research necessities in relation to the wildlife of the area, to mitigate the effects caused by human sonic interventions, to discover the ecological needs of local communities, and to research possibilities for counteracting ecosystem changes caused by the climate crisis.

[Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest](#) offered space for organizing the founding conference of the Central European Network for Sonic Ecologies in 2018. It is the only university in Hungary where environmental sound related courses take place (beginning in the Spring semester of 2020). The courses are open to all institutions, and students from various backgrounds — media design, animation, the Theoretical Institute, architecture, photography, etc. — are in attendance. Collaborations started with iASK, both within curricular frames: a joint course, and free form: as a Soundscape workshop within the Sounding City festival.

*The Curonian
split on the
Baltic Sea
(NASA Earth
Observatory)*

The Sound Garden project grew out from the “Action for a Happier City” course at the Institute of Architecture. It was based on a specific location in Budapest, a vacant lot between houses. The aim was to develop it, to map possible activities related to it within the framework of community planning. Part of the idea was to involve residents of the area, to address the local people. A group of students suggested expanding the concept through sound and auditory perception. A plan for a specific community event has emerged, which is scheduled for September 25. The program includes soundwalks, listening, talks, a workshop, a streamed soundwalk from Porto, Portugal, and a live sound art act.

Last but not least, environmental sound design has found its way into the rich adult education catalogue of MOME. The first group received theoretical and practical training from April to June 2021, despite COVID-induced online-only requirements, and concluded the process with a memorable installation concert.

Csaba Hajnóczy
See bio page 42.

We asked the CENSE membership, in addition to others, these open-ended questions as a way of taking the pulse of our still-forming community:

- ❶ What is your personal attitude or interest in the concept of Acoustic or Sonic Ecologies?
- ❷ Can you comment on the relationship between electroacoustic music, Sonic Ecologies, Bioacoustics and environmental activism in your area?
- ❸ What is your opinion about using and decontextualising field recordings or captured sounds in contemporary music production?
- ❹ Can you describe the situation in the area where you are active concerning transdisciplinary collaboration and how do you see the feedback between your work and public?
- ❺ What could improve the involvement of the broader public and policymakers to push for or impose changes in environmental consciousness in the country where you live?

The answers that follow appear in the order in which they were received.

Tomáš Šenkyřík

❶ In my field recordings, I try to document how the nature that surrounds me sounds: how specifically South Moravia sounds. I'm interested in how soundscapes differ in different parts of the region where I live. Among soundscapes, I'm most attracted to biophony. I am fascinated by how sound is part of nature, by the morning chorus, the vocalization of animals in general, because they enrich the world. When we listen carefully and with love to the natural orchestra of the animal kingdom, in my experience we will quite naturally come to the issues that acoustic ecology deals with. It is important to draw attention to human noise pollution and the negative effects of noise on organisms. Including the negative impact of noise on our health. Using field recordings for this is good material for further reflection. Sound is very urgent and affects emotions. It is possible to work with sound artistically, or exactly, scientifically. It opens many variants and possible approaches.

❷ All the styles mentioned have a common ground, and that is sound. They are connected by an admiration and awareness of the power and potential of sound as an invisible medium. I know from personal experience that there is no fixed line between those directions. They intertwine. For example, electroacoustic music can work with recordings for scientific purposes, and can, on the basis of artistic style, touch an ecologically urgent message. In general, I think that there is freedom in the domain of field recording and it depends on the approach and concept from the start, how we continue to work with recordings in post-production. That freedom is important to me. The listener "sets his own understanding" for the author in a sometimes unexpected direction.

I try to be active and observe what I want to wash away in the places where I move every day. On the [soundscape.cz](https://www.soundscape.cz) portal, I observe that the wilderness and sound adventures actually begin right outside our front doors. Sound landscapes tell us about the state of the place and actually

the whole planet. I often talk about those topics in lectures and discussions for adults and children. With the help of sound, I draw attention to the beauty of sound worlds, because they tell us about our environment. Sometimes we learn more with sound than through images.

❸ Music is part of art, a field that is inherently free and open to various influences. In the history of music we find various approaches and sources of inspiration. In that sense, I cannot answer in general. Some authors work creatively with field recordings and move them into unexpected contexts, some of which are uninteresting, boring, using them externally, because field recordings are currently cool.

❹ I am surprised at the growing interest in the sound environment and field recordings, in debates and thinking together, an interest in how to learn to listen actively. I am glad that my activities fall within the framework of current environmental debates. In the events where I talk about recording and listening, I get feedback. I am glad to be part of a community that is immersed in the field. The cooperation takes place on several levels. People exchange links to professional articles, help solve technical problems, present and comment on recordings, and work on joint projects.

❺ From what we find in the media today on environmental issues or at the level of the European Commission or parliament, it seems that the public is beginning to understand that it is high time to commit to saving our environment. The European Commission has created the Green Deal project, which is not just about carbon neutrality. It is also about protecting biodiversity and retaining water in the landscape. These are areas that quite concretely and tangibly affect the environment where we live our daily lives. Showing the public that we have to treat nature differently should be based on self-government. The clever and close-to-nature steps of self-governing units to people in municipalities will clearly show how beneficial the community's joint care for the environment

is. Projects such as planting trees, alleys, building or restoring wetlands are examples of how to change the environment of the immediate area for the better. Abstract plans become concrete. For me as a municipal politician and sound hunter, it is a pleasure to be able to initiate environmental projects and document how sound landscapes provide clever actions which are mostly cheap and close to nature.

Tomáš Šenkyřík (1972) is a musicologist with an interest in field recordings, acoustic ecology and discovering musical structures in nature. He likes listening to nature without noise pollution, especially fragile and quiet sounds. From 1999–2008 he worked in the Museum of Romani culture as an ethnomusicologist. He is a member of association Skupina, an artist group interested in field recordings, soundscape, oral and aural history, and acoustic ecology. Šenkyřík lives and works in Židlochovice, a town south of Brno, in Czechia. He is the founder of soundscape.cz.

soundscape.cz

Jonáš Gruska

① As a person interested in sound in general, I have naturally gravitated towards ideas of sonic pollution. Especially once an artists dives into a field recording practice, it becomes quite clear that our environment is being deeply submerged in anthropogenic sounds. Often disturbing, sometimes even harmful, verifiably affecting the natural world and our health. I would like to shift the attention towards these problems through my work, lectures, and workshops.

② I do see a significant connection between the practice of field recording and sonic ecologies. Basically, every field recordist I know quickly learns how difficult it is to record natural sounds in the current sonic ecology. Microphone-like hearing removes our natural filtering of unwanted sounds and reveals the full spectrum of the surrounding sound. Currently, I am curating a series of raw field recording works on the LOM label named "Fields," featuring diverse works of Eastern European recordists. I also occasionally do lectures and workshops on the topic of listening and field recording for the public, at universities and high schools.

③ Sound is free, music is free, I don't see or hear a problem with this acousmatic

approach. I personally release raw, documentary-style field recording works as well as music that uses recorded sounds decontextualized from their origin. Any recording outdoors will ultimately bring attention to sonic ecology as well.

④ I would love to meet bioacoustic researchers from my country (Slovakia). So far I have met only few people recording birds. But how about frogs or insects? There is also a lack of field recordists who are concerned about the fidelity of their recordings. Generally I am quite satisfied with the attention my recordings are getting. I understand it is a very minor area of interest for most. Generally, my field recording practice seems to be more palatable for the mainstream listener than my music.

⑤ I really like the approach of fellow activist and recordist Tomáš Šenkyřík. He does an excellent job of shifting attention towards listening and sonic worlds through the local political involvement, via streaming from his garden and interviews. Getting into local politics seems like a good way to trigger some change.

Jonáš Gruska was born in Czechoslovakia and studied at the Institute of Sonology in the Hague and at the Music Academy in Krakow. His main focus is on chaotic and polymetric rhythms, unconventional tunings, and explorations of the psychoacoustic properties of sound and field recording. He has created several site-specific sound installations, based on the resonant properties of spaces and materials. Gruska has led workshops on sonification, field recording, electromagnetic listening, and programming for artists, and is the creator of *Elektroschluch*, a device for listening to the electromagnetic spectrum.

jonasgru.sk

John Grzinich

① I guess there is a lot I take for granted. Not all of the ideas of Acoustic Ecology resonate with me, but as R. Murray Schafer recently died, I tried to think hard about how much of his work and ideas (along with numerous others from that time period) have filtered not only into sound-related artistic culture but also mainstream culture. I first met some "acoustic ecologists" in the late 90s. At first it was difficult to grasp what they were talking about as I was fully immersed into more technical ways of

making “experimental music,” but over the years (as I age?), I find myself coming back to more fundamental aspects of auditory culture rooted in perception and listening to everyday environments. Certainly the work of “acoustic ecologists” and organizations like the WFAE have helped bring these ideas and practices to wider audiences. So if anything, there was a fairly solid ground on which I could pursue interests and build my own practices.

② This question deserves a book-length response but I’ll try to keep it short. While I see these as very different fields with their respective historical trajectories, the common ground between them is of course our relationship to technology. While these fields have traditionally operated in separate domains (within science/art/activism) we have seen their gradual convergence over the past 20 years or so. For me this is primarily due to the evolution of hi-fi, low power portable digital recording devices and information consumption shared digitally via the internet. One common story I hear is about a person from one field (say geographer, biologist, visual artist, etc.) gaining access to a recording device and going out to record for the first time, where they proceed to have a strong awakening of sorts through (auditory) sensory experience. Quite suddenly they cross over to start engaging with a different field (sound art, ecology, film sound) and perceiving the world in a different way. Think of musician Bernie Krause going out to record birds for his album, discovering a “whole world of sound” and subsequently dedicating his life to exploring that “world.” It’s not altogether different with countless kids (like myself) who played with portable tape recorders and discovered a new sense of agency in the world through playing with sound. There is something almost cosmological about it. For me, this is partly where the ecological aspect comes in. That “other world” we perceive with our ears, the biosphere or the geosphere, is not really “out there” separate from us, if anything that sensory experience helps us emerge from our constructed anthropocentric ambitions and we allow ourselves to be reacquainted with the greater non-human

world. By listening to it we once again acknowledge its existence and redefine the contexts which we are immersed in. Yet the strange irony here is that this process is more often than not facilitated (and also validated) by technology, regardless of the fields in which we operate these days. One of the main distinctions seems to be our relationship to the subject matter we “mediate,” whether it has qualitative perceptual or cultural relevance or if it is “just data” to be subjected to quantitative analysis. Either way, this technical mediation can also have some detrimental side effects (see my next answer).

③ On the one hand it is great to see more artists and musicians using “field recordings” and “decontextualized sounds.” It is generally a good thing as long as credit is given where credit is due and people get paid (which is not always the case). But as these methods and materials become popularized and standardized I also see some problematic patterns. As has been highlighted by a number of people, within the practice of field recording and using recorded material for creative purposes, the whole notion of recording “found sound” does have overtones of “resource extraction” not unlike our extractive and exploitive mainstream industrial practices. By simply recording sounds for personal benefit we possibly take advantage of “natural resources” often without giving credit or giving anything back to that which we took from (generally the commons of the auditory world). Should this dynamic grow unbalanced, recorded materials may be subjected to unspoken scales of value similar to other extractive resources. Think about how everyday urban sounds are seen as “boring” and “generic” (because of their unlimited supply) and exotic sounds of so-called “pure,” “unspoiled” nature acquire higher value rarity status (because they are endangered or under threat of being lost). One could also transpose this scale to the practitioner, the “sound recordist” who might take on the role of brave and bold explorer who ventures to the ends of the earth (usually the Arctic or Antarctic), thereby gaining esteemed status in their respective artistic

or academic circles as opposed to the humble hobbyist who dabbles in his backyard and struggles for years to find ears for his/her creations in the turbulent attention economy (not to mention the gear fetishism surrounding all our practices). Of course these examples may be oversimplifications or stereotypes but this is precisely my point, as the practices and methods of field recordings are "democratized" and "popularized," their effects become amplified and subjected to commodification and the whims of capitalist desire. This is also reflected in how "sound art" or "field recording" is framed in journalistic terms, where exoticism in concept or subject matter determines what get covered in the press or not. (Much of this story is nothing new however. The very foundations of field recording, rooted in the earliest practices of collecting ethnographic materials which were fraught colonialist forms of exploitation, power relations, misrepresentation, etc., much of it forming the basis for the modern music industry.) All this is to say I feel there should be more explicit discussions surrounding what it means to hit record, who or what is involved and what happens with that material.

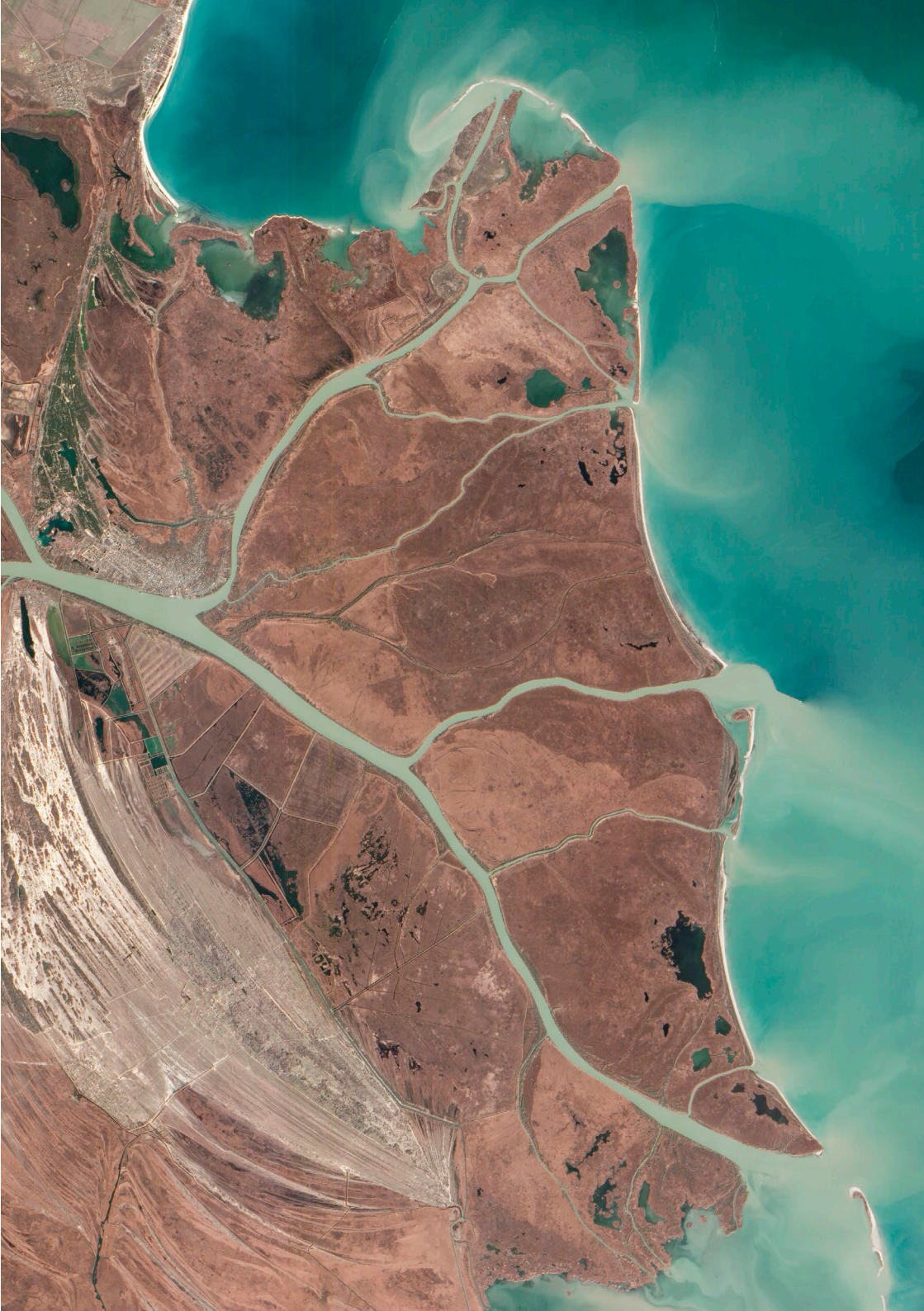
④ First of all it is hard to really assess the current situation, in trying to decipher what is actually happening in contrast to what is being reported. As always, it is great to see new forms of interdisciplinary collaboration among artists, researchers, scientists and the public, but I also remain skeptical (maybe it's just me). When I read about the 1960s and how much support from both the government and corporate sector was given to "pure research" (with examples like E.A.T: Experiments in Art and Technology), it is hard to imagine anything on that scale is happening today. Sure, there are special cases here and there, but

in general artists (along with scientists and everyone else) are now completely tied up in bureaucratic procedure, where all ideas and activities must be completely justified through a quagmire of formal applications, reports, communications schemes and accounting to receive even the most humble forms of financial support. How are any significant artworks, let alone new art movements, supposed to emerge with such a prohibition on open creativity? Needless to say, much of what happens today under the guise of interdisciplinary collaboration seems highly constrained, if not suffocated, under the weight of expectations and accountability under the conditions which they occur.

I'm not sure if I have an audience so much as a network of like-minded and supportive artists. This is an invaluable resource and source of inspiration. Due to the network effect, it has fostered expanded interest in recent decades in "sound art" and "auditory cultures" which have developed into a truly global phenomenon. This has allowed sound based events, festivals and residencies to sprout up in the most unlikely places with audience numbers that rival and often surpass venues in the usual major urban centers (Berlin, New York, London, Tokyo). Unfortunately, activating and formalizing networks are subject to the same kind of procedural bureaucracy I mentioned above for individuals and institutions, which tends to inhibit their functioning and effectiveness.

⑤ This is kind of the golden question of the age, which everyone seems to have an opinion on but no clear answer. To unravel even some of the current public outlook and attitudes toward "environmental consciousness" (or lack of), one has go back tens or even hundreds of years to understand how we got here. Of course, as the crises mount,

The Danube Delta: an interzone between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (NASA Earth Observatory)



nobody wants to be held accountable for what is happening, especially those who represent the dominant power structures and are therefore actively resisting any structural change (through denial, propaganda or what have you). Ultimately structural change is a question of political will. For me, this “deadlock” is a big part of what contributes to what some have called the “crisis of imagination,” that given the current social-political climate, we cannot see any other way of existing in relation to the planetary biosphere that supports us and all life on earth. So, while I am equipped with a range of creative methods to instigate adaptation and change, I feel relatively powerless to contribute to greater societal change. My cynical side says that we will have to endure ever greater environmental calamity and stare human extinction in the face before we begin to respond accordingly. After all, the history of societal collapse is almost non-existent and is most certainly without heroes. With that said, if we look back at the last 50 years (my lifetime), many attitudes and policies have changed significantly and we shouldn’t forget that. I even go so far as to remind myself that “modern” humans survived the last ice age, to give myself some hope. In practical terms, the “culture war” needs to end because it is culture which suffers the most (and the art that goes with it). Hence we see corporate and science sectors dominating the climate debate (but no artists or spiritual leaders anywhere), with governments refusing to take any position at all. So we remain stuck in a mire of overtly rational technical “solutions” that are indistinguishable from which ever side they come (think human transportation which has boiled down to electric cars or not, without questioning whether cars are really necessary at all). Getting back to acoustic ecology, I do wonder how an environment-based culture of listening could ever be taken seriously and used on a practical level in a post-modern, post-natural world. The current trend of “meditative listening” now rooted in lifestyle and personal wellness feels largely symbolic and often helps reinforce the prevailing forms of escapism, injustice and structural

inequality more than it functions a means of addressing them.

John Grzinich (1970, US/Estonia) has worked since the early 1990s as an artist and cultural coordinator with various practices combining sound, moving image, site-specificity, and collaborative social structures. He has performed and exhibited in North/South America, Europe and Japan and his compositions have been published on a host of international labels. The focus of his work in recent years has been to combine sound and listening practices with various media to challenge age-old anthropocentric perceptions of the world we inhabit. He lives in Estonia and apart from his personal artistic practice, coordinates activities for the artist-run organization MoKS. He is currently a visiting Associate Professor of New Media in the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Estonian Academy of Arts and a visiting professor of Sound Design at RISEBA University in Riga.

maaheli.ee
moks.ee

Carina Pesch

① Like all of us I live in an environment that includes visual, tactile, olfactory, and acoustic stimuli. However, most discourses focus on the visual. The other senses lead an existence that impacts most people much more subconsciously and covertly but with very clear, strong, and immediate emotional and physical affect. Very often researchers focus on what can be seen, either with their eyes on location or when taking a look at the data they measured. But true insights might become immediately clear when listening closely to the place. Birds that look exactly the same might sing in a different dialect causing them not to mate anymore. A place might look the same after logging but the number of species audible in the soundscape is still reduced. A person who is not trained to listen consciously in a wood at night might suddenly experience an eerie feeling without being able to explain where it comes from. A person who listens consciously might be able to link that feeling to the sudden silence of all beings in the wood. This divergence between importance and impact on the one hand and the quite frequent lack of awareness and discourse on the other fascinates me. It fascinates me how the perception of the daily environment changes by becoming aware of the other senses and sound in particular. It fascinates me how many rhythms, melodies, and musicalities accompany our

lives. It fascinates me how many insights are missed without paying attention to sound and the other senses. It fascinates me how many new and conscious choices I can make when learning to listen. It fascinates me how many dimensions, pieces of information, ambiguities, interpretations, and clarity hide in sound. It fascinates me to use the full power of sound for research, composition, and storytelling.

② In our *Geräuschkulisse* sound walks we invite people to consciously listen to their daily environment and to interact with the space, its resonances, and acoustic qualities. The experience combines musical elements by the performative interaction with listening to the soundscape that already exists. It aims to make people aware of their sonic environment and how it impacts them, often without further notice, to experience their embeddedness in that environment, to then choose a playful approach towards these experiences, to interact and to take responsibility to create change that makes their sonic environment more pleasant for themselves and other beings. The guided, no-talking, sound walk leads participants towards characteristic sounds of a neighborhood and in the end offers an open discussion of the experiences, perceptions, new ideas and wishes that were triggered. Then we try to hand on these findings to other initiatives who engage in the future development of the respective neighborhood.

③ I find it pleasant and/or interesting to listen to field recordings, whether or not the creations match my mood and taste. I am not interested in joining any fundamental debate on authenticity or whether people should only use sounds within a concept of the place that those sounds were recorded in. To me that debate is like questioning whether or not it is okay to use a violin outside the workshop that it was created in. Some contextualized field recording works really get to me, others do not. Some de-contextualized field recording works really touch me and others do not. Of course, this is my personal opinion and experience. It might be completely different for someone else. Let's agree to accept diversity.

④ I prefer small audiences during a presentation, not more than 60 people, and an open-minded talk about different perceptions and imaginings after listening. I find participatory formats that engage the audience on the eye and ear levels to be the most promising for an art form that still is underrepresented, as well as for personal growth and expansion, and for the fruitful mutual exchange with other professionals and interested laypeople. Since I am working a lot for the radio that is listened to by many in private kitchens, workspaces, and cars, but has few broadcasts in collective public spaces and few reviews, I wish for more gathered listening events with audible and visible audience reactions. I believe that such a forum is very productive for the quality of the works because it provides feedback outside of the professional loop. It is also helpful to establish the art form in the collective memory and consciousness and to make more experimental approaches accessible and understood in conversation with the makers. *Geräuschkulisse* wants to be such a forum with its gathered listening events, and all the feedback we have so far was that our audience wants more and wonders why it does not exist in every city. Trans- or interdisciplinary collaboration can be both inspiring and tiring if one works in sound. From colleagues working in sound for movies I frequently hear that their work is undervalued and mostly only noticed if something is wrong. So, I am happy to work in a field that is sound-based foremost (radio, installation, performance, walking art). My bubble treats me well and entering other disciplines like science from this starting point mostly leads to fascination and inspiration on my collaborators' side. I have the impression that the interest in sound, podcasts, radio, and field recordings has increased during lockdown. But of course there can always be more awareness, knowledge, presence, and collaboration when it comes to sound.

⑤ I would love to engage the public and decision makers in active listening and to get them to experience the impacts of their daily behavior and then support architects,

urban developers, politicians, other decision makers, and simply all civilians, to act accordingly. Because I firmly believe that immediate experience is a much stronger motivation for change than rational data knowledge.

Carina Pesch aka La Pesch, (1983) studied *Social Anthropology, Political Sciences, and Philosophy in Leipzig and Beirut*. Today she lives in Leipzig as author, director, sound and voice artist. She co-curates the gathered listening event *Geräuschkulisse*, a forum for good audio stories and immersive sound worlds. In her works she explores the fields of radio, composition, installation, performance, and the walking arts for public broadcasters, museums, international festivals, and cultural institutions. Her works show a strong sense for the specific characteristics of phenomena, people, and places. They oscillate between narrative and purely sound-based with a strong fascination for the thin borderline between fiction and reality. For representation she relies on high-quality field recordings, improvisation, interviews, cut-up techniques, rhythm, and a structure that reflects the core message. Her special interests are personal and social boundaries as well as transcending and blurring them, the confrontation and meeting of different horizons of experience. Her sound works have been honored with awards, nominations, scholarships, and residencies (e.g. *Phonurgia Nova, Prix Europa*). She has taught at universities and cultural institutions on podcasting, radio, and sound art.

www.textbote.de/en

Guy Van Belle

I am not very keen on Q&A. It forces us to focus too much on the personal/individual, while most of the real issues around us are shared and common. I guess there is a whole creative and scientific literature out there that is trying to prove the opposite, but maybe we have less to say from the subjective point of view than when we are talking together. So here a monolithic text from my side, trying to escape the pitfalls of interviews in general.

What else can be expected from someone being raised half in the big city and half on the countryside back then cities were robust, gray and dusty, noisy with cars, people moving about in trams and buses remembering walking or biking to school remembering in the bedroom upstairs the lights of the traffic reflecting on the ceiling the rattling sound of tires on cobblestones heavy traffic and the turmoil from the café next door from the pump-station and van selling frites across the street in summer, the sound of horses and carts (sitting on



a fence remember one could recognize the approaching farmer on the sound of the bells the horse was decorated with there was only 1 tractor around a green one) cows and pigs chicken and wild birds incessantly barking dogs my great-grandmother shouting something about a hole in the ground for sure, both city and rural people did not fit in hardly in their own nor in each other's world and the ones in between always belonged elsewhere now all this is beside the point probably but ok recording at that time with a small and cheap cassette thing later on a DAT and so on it is maybe of importance or not but cannot remember much maybe no memory is intact and correct or intended to be like that.

And then half a century later the Belgian spanish portuguese north african restaurants and bars shops around Saint-Gilles (Brussels) — my then 6-year old son at once remarked that they were talking all languages possible including Czech since he heard a woman saying prosim in the streets — but also in the blank suburb where my 87-year-old mother is living and at the same time thinking about the seasonal changes in Vysočina with the sound of different agricultural machines was it mentioned already that the migrant birds have left now and it is getting silent because fall and winter are coming maybe told someone else instead of writing it here but looking at the cheap Tascam multichannel recorder and the microphones from Jonáš but sometimes it's easier to pull out the phone (then feeling like a spy) and by now recognizing 50 different birds and only recording music just outside when the weather allows because writing is done when it is raining

Recordings also record the space where the recording was made also buildings machines animals and trees plants air light and from our

side it's only about manipulations but is it of any importance?

Still cannot remember much about recent things it seems but maybe no memory is needed here yet

Writer's block now always at the end of summer listening to fall approaching but maybe it's panic for winter coming when the birds have left and there is less commotion around (or was this mentioned before?) thinking about sound in the first place and isn't it much more than an atmospherical disturbance right? a simple natural phenomenon air compressions while height and heath make a small difference and reflections by any solid materials around a change suddenly all this takes my breath away because there is not much more to say about it about sound and to say more would simply be an act of sublimation fabrication and decontextualization

Today it's hard to come to terms with art in a time when everything needs a meaning, a function and good deed, an educational and social valuable background so maybe it is better to start from creativity, expressivity, or presence, ecological involvement (and leave art out of it)

Formalizations: interdisciplinary, social, natural sciences, musicology, arts, engineering, etc, all manipulations of our senses and perceptions to hide the fact that we never could and can make a better world and that artists, curators and organizers can persevere in ignoring the pressing issues of climate change, global warming and sustainable development, or in reality would not like an ecological existence at all, though they will be the first to contradict this (and usually blame others for it) thus the former century idea of art which equals pragmatism — pardon: there are exceptions but never heroes — continues within galleries, festivals, the selling and bargaining that typifies all art manifestations in

Carina Pesch.
Photo:
Constanze
Flamme

media, the pyramid like in pop music going from below (alternative) to hromosvod (stardom), cashing in through competition and selection, is this the only reason why the need for a 'wide audience' becomes important, but are they ever of any value to the act of creativity?

Media could be a critique on the existing conventions of expressivity, but now that we are all busy elsewhere: within information as trivial and fake as it is important, is there still a way to make a future without turning back to what we did before? In general, today people seem satisfied and will call everything art and so, sticking up a microphone and turning on recording gear with an automatically guaranteed good quality, proves no skills nor an unique presence on the right spot because don't we expect more maybe something like: maybe something that tells us anything new about where we are and what surrounds us and not just a registration of an actual situation to prove in the future that the world will be worse off (less bird songs and more noise, predictions of disasters to warn humanity) it's rather a prerogative for not making music, don't we want to experiment with novel means and principles to encourage people to have new dreams and thoughts, enhance imagination? and make a better living that way? Presumably together

Why make recordings? This is already a cruel manipulation of reality: a microphone is not an ear, is never a body

The creation of music and images, language, in any form or format or structure, are nothing but a human imaginary act, a play on relationships and is as much a trap as it is a confinement in which to operate in real life — but still it's better to believe in this virtual reality, and it's hard to go a little beyond — oh yes and you can edit, mix and change, as long as it does not become a fake mishmash to prove something important

Sorry, there are no questions to be answered, just additional questions to be formulated in response: acoustic (or Sonic) Ecologies, do they exist? sound art

came about 30 years ago, to build bridges between visual art and music so what is the use of promoting field recordings as artworks or what is the difference between electroacoustic music, bioacoustics, environmental activism, other than the constant renaming of essentially the same activities, as well as ghettolike categorizations to separate acts of creativity: tape music, computer music, digital and media art, etc, science art lately — a sign of an unfulfilled wish to be taken seriously by an ever-shrinking audience? while there are just the instruments (bought and DIY, does not matter), ideas for a need to be expressive and act upon our surroundings or tell me what other messages can we formulate?

(No need for technological fetishism, the metaphysics of silence as well as of nature, which seem to be mere bouillon of abstract manipulations of reality, nostalgia and permutations of a past aesthetics. Add functionality and morality and you get the Esoteric Puritanism of a generally reproductive culture today, world wide and massive, but rather uniformly superficial.)

We can only be disruptive, for good and for bad, we want to be disruptive, it's hard to be disruptive, we have to be disruptive, there is no other way out of this catatonic world, the dogmatic listening to recordings while we adore migrant birds singing here we don't allow migrants to enter our Fortress Europe (is the country where we were born really home? an obsessive century restricting mobility, multiculturalism and multilingualism still fires back today) and was just listening to the sounds of each of the 52 disharmonic belfry bells, that were recorded 20 years ago and no one ever took offence of their disharmonic nature, the bells are 700 years old so why preserve recordings without a political and aesthetic agenda? are artists activist or just riding on a wave (and then comes a next wave, and a next) wouldn't it be too arrogant to preserve any recordings? maybe it's better to imagine music made with devices that don't exist yet, in new times maybe it's better to remember music made with other inventions, in new times maybe it's better to try to make new ideas

real maybe it's better to imagine a sound or maybe it isn't but then no one can tell the difference

Guy van Belle is a Belgian media artist and curator living in the Czech Republic. Kravín Rural Arts is situated in the Vysočina region of the Czech Republic, a hilly area of Železná hory, in the small village Hranice u Malče. KRA establishes long-term programs with artists and other organizations in the countryside who are interested in an ecological reconversion of the (media) arts.

[kra.land](#)

Miloš Vojtěchovský

● I am still exploring different concepts and aspects of AE to find out how to relate to them. The semantic connection of the acoustic and ecology appeared in 1977 with the publication of *The Tuning of the World* and was introduced as:

an interdisciplinary framework for documenting, analyzing, and transforming sonic environments: an early model of the cross-boundary thinking and multi-modal practice now common across the digital humanities. (Milena Droumeva and Randolph Jordan, 2019).

To interpret AE today just as an invention and frameworks of R.M. Schafer and the WSP group could be reductive, because the historical roots of it are much older. There are interesting links going back to the attempts by J.W. Goethe to unite the rational and the sensual experience of reality, thus a new holistic epistemology. And his follower Rudolf Steiner, who claims that noise distracts man from the spiritual, and the art of hearing and listening is as substantial as vision or the haptic sense. In a series of lectures called "The World as Product of the Working of Balance" delivered in 1914 in Dornach, Steiner described the three models of relationships of the human body in space: the dimensions of right/left, up/down and front/back. The eyes are located on the front of our faces, and orient the visual space in front of us. Our ears, located at the sides of our head allow us to take in something of what is in the unseen, invisible space behind us. Similar ideas are to be found in the books of Thoreau, and others. I think we should scrutinize, deconstruct and update Schafer's terminology, such as "the tuning

of the world," "schizophonia," "the soundscape design," "low and high fidelity sonic environments," "ear cleaning," "deep listening," and "soundmark," and compare them with today's situation and place them in historical perspective. It could turn out that those ideas are embedded in the ideologies of 60s, such as Marshall McLuhan's poetic visions and conceptual view of the role of visuality, sound and technical images. It is clear that what Schafer and the WSP group did liberated ecology as a scientific discipline from the academic milieu and by applying it to the aural, opened it for the arts, artists, everyday life, and the humanities. But doesn't "tuning the world soundscape" actually remain in the temporally-tinted projection of subjectification, of human paradigms into the non-human world? Isn't it rather intertwined with the modernist notion of human superiority, protectionism and conservatism? "Earth is a musical planet, spinning in silent space," Gordon Hempton says, and it sounds great, but I am not even sure it is correct, definitely not from the scientific point of view.

There are many parallels and links to be explored in AE: from the bioacoustical experiments of Janez Regen in first half of the 20th century, to Rachel Carson and Frank Edwin Egler's book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, which brought ecology as a word and concept to the public and included aurality as an important symptom of damaged and toxic cultural landscapes. Or the "patterns that connect" of the bio-cyberneticist Gregory Bateson; John Cage's program to rehabilitate background sounds, ambiance and silence and include it in music; the work of Max Neuhaus with sirens designed to improve the aesthetic and functionality of alarm systems, and Marianne Amacher's experiments of the sensations in the "mind's ear." These are just some examples of how it is possible to expand the standards of AE's academic reductive limitations.

Acoustic Ecology for sure exceeds the realms of health and well-being, and it is not only a tool for the regulation for noise abatement, since its origins are connected with concepts of (musical and sonic)



creation, aesthetic experience and perception in general.

Until recently we were engaged mostly with nonmusical, external or internal ambient sounds, prior to the musical orchestration of sounds. To participate in music making or noise making was usually bound with ritual, with ceremony, with something exceptional. Only with the invention, development and distribution of available reproduction technology and media did amplified music turn into noise and potentially into Muzak and become one of the sources of planetary aural pollution. This was in fact one of the motivations of Schafer in kicking off the concept of an Acoustic Ecology program: aside from the increasing industrial noise from Vancouver harbor, he also suffered from the loud music of omnipresent loudspeakers in the public space.

For me personally, my curiosity about Acoustic Ecology is beyond

only an ethical and environmental agenda, but also deeply political: it includes the concept of sovereignty, of immersion, of an omni-perceptual totality of perception and social or political implementation of acoustic space and acoustic commons. Further, AE is still in a position of a dissent, a revolt against technocratic, industrial and market-driven society. The contamination by noise can be as harmful and painful as to be exposed, for example, to chemical or olfactory pollution. Concerning the ecology of sight: One can always close one's eyes to protect oneself from the unbearable, from horror. It is much harder to escape sonic pollution, unless you plug your ears or install sound proofing. Loud noises will penetrate your body anyway, and even more, your mind, and they will become a perpetual plague in the public space. Perhaps not so directly deadly as for example radioactivity, but for the majority of

living organisms the consequences of sonic pollution are damaging. On the other side of the AE spectrum is an engagement with the pathology or aberrations of aurality: deafness, mental and physiological; noise as a symptom of sociopathic behavior, etc.

② I think that there are few people in the fields of music and art who bridge the vocabularies and methodologies of, for example, field recording, music and bioacoustics. It may be because of different schooling or economies. There are certainly people and initiatives which are synergistic.

③ This is a rather complex issue and it is not easy to summarize it in a few sentences. Within the framework of ecology and psychology: Usually we listen unintentionally, perhaps we just hear what is going on around us, filtering the sounds and reacting to those signals, which for us are important. When I go intentionally to a place to listen to something — a bird, the wind, somebody speaking, singing or a general soundscape, there is gradually an emotional (or rational) bond, an awareness established, from me — as the listener — toward (some elements) of the Place, the Site. Let's say I become familiar with it, or close to it. After this experience I can perceive and understand it better, deeper, I can recognize some patterns, some utterances which I didn't notice before, because I didn't pay attention or it wasn't apparent. It is difficult to confirm empirically, but there could also be an emerging agency, a bio-feedback, a conscious reaction from the Site towards me, or those who are listening. Frogs, birds, crickets or wolves certainly vocalize and behave differently when they know that somebody is there to observe, listening to them. Perhaps even trees and plants could be aware that we are nearby? (Perhaps the

one who has come to listen carefully, came there with the intention of hunting, to kill the bird or wolf, or to cut the tree, but we don't include this eventuality for now).

To learn careful listening is particularly relevant when we want to approach and understand the lives of other animals. Most wild birds, mammals and fish instinctively avoid human presence. So to concentrate solely on sight is a much less effective method of establishing a communication channel than relying on listening. If the listener gains a better understanding by perceiving, looking and listening, they may change their attitude towards the location, its morphology, including its aural behavior, its appearance. The place has lost its uniformity and becomes an integral part of my own, extended environment, an interpersonal eco-habitat, a social body — (since *oikos* in Greek means house, household, dwelling place and family). It seems like an exaggeration, but let us say: when I listen carefully to a place, or even when I capture a sonic semblance of it, or draw it or photograph it, by such an active and attentive mode of perception I am becoming a witness — somebody who is partly, or entirely emotionally responsible for the well-being of the place. Here comes the moral dilemma or the aspect of anybody engaged in field recordings, be they a scientist, artist, anthropologist, tourist, geologist, or detective: By capturing the image or the sound of a place or a landscape, a soundscape, what is my purpose, and what are the benefits of it for me, and what are the benefits to the subject? If I approach it from the ethical point of view of both the artist and the ecologist: How can I care for or contribute to better conditions, to make sure that the place — by appropriating the images or the sounds for my own purposes — will not be damaged by this act, or

Pierrot
in Praha
Holešovice,
zvukac, 2021

endangered, but rather enriched, made healthier, more sustainable, more diverse?

It seems many artists engaged in field recordings have appropriated this method because they were entangled with the ideas of ecology, environmentalism, conservationism, or protection of the wilderness and urban soundscapes. Some of them were even biologists or environmental activists originally. But as David Dunn claims, to record something and use it as a music composition, one does not protect anything. It may even be the contrary. Some professional sound designers are obsessed with technicalities, the superior quality of their recordings and their devices. Heavily funded travel for the purpose of field recording enthusiasts who visit exotic places such as Amazonia or Antarctica, too, can easily become a slippery business and an exploitative hobby.

I believe the act of listening is subjectively even more enriching, rewarding and, at the same time, less environmentally harmful than the technology of capturing sounds. On the other hand, the recordings are similar to technical pictures: a potential witness, proof, a *punctum* (as in phenomenology). Roland Barthes called it:

... a sensorial, intensely subjective effect of a photograph on the viewer [listener]: that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).

It is similar to the sounds of a place: the making and sharing of sound recordings of ecologically degraded areas, "endangered places," the ambiance of injured landscapes, may create an emotional state in listeners, and transform them into witnesses as well. They may feel more responsible for those places or creatures, and can start to act. This is a means of redemption for any field recording.

Practicing field recording within a program of acoustic ecology may be another form of sonic journalism, and good journalism not only reports but also appeals.

Miloš Vojtěchovský (1955) is a curator, art historian, and audiovisual artist. In 1992 he founded the Hermit Foundation, later the Center for Metamedia in Plasy Monastery. Together with Peter Cusack, he started the ongoing project *Sounds of Prague*. He curated the Czech section in the international

networking project *Soundexchange* and co-curated the symposium and festival vs. Interpretation held in Prague, 2016, by the Agosto Foundation, and the *Frontiers of Solitude* project 2015–2017. Other project include: *Deep Space Gateway*, *Soundworms Ecology Gathering*, 2017, and *Architecture and the senses*, 2018.

sonicity.cz

frontiers-of-solitude.org

Julius Fujak

① The existentially semantic dimension of sounds plays a crucial role in our lives anywhere and anytime we happen to be. So no wonder that the philosophy of the ecological approach to our acoustic semiosphere is something highly needed, especially in a contemporary world full of various devastations to our natural and urban environments. The ecological effort to save and to rehumanize the spaces we live in — sonic ones included — can be considered as one of the most important issues today, more than ever before.

To be more personal: The older I am, the more important it is to me to focus my attention on *kairos* (the right, opportune moment of our being); the trace of *kairos* hidden in certain, unique special experiences of sonic events. They are able to project in a certain ecological way the existential essence of our lived moments enacted in the concrete and unrepeatable spatial and temporal context, related to barely verbalized meaning or beauty. Sometimes I feel the need to record them and use them in my artistic works, sometimes I just enjoy them in my private endeavor to enrich an inner homeostasis without any need to record them at all.

② I think that one of the very interesting common aspects of them is the ability to develop a special, creative sensitivity and new ways of perception of sonic elements, their meanings, and important significance of them in our daily being. If we are more sensitive, and open to accepting and understanding the (sometime implicit, sometimes radical) otherness of sonic "suchness" then we become able to accept the "Faces of Others" (E. Lévinas). I am not involved in environmental

activism directly, I just occasionally organize or create site-specific artistic events connected with mutually overlapping acousmatic/electroacoustic music, performance, and happenings focused on the themes of sonic ecology at various levels.

③ I am a big fan of not de- but re-cross-contextualizing field recordings in contemporary music, if we consider the large universe of audio arts as music, which I do. I appropriated this approach in my acousmatic musical pieces *Pentrophony* (2010, using sounds recorded under the roof of my grandparents' house in the village of Podvysoká), *Nitrian Atlantises* (2013, field recordings of a silent environment by the river Nitra, the place of pre-ancient location), and *Melancholy* (2018, live performance with the sonic environment of an empty cow-stable in Levoča), and others.

④ Trans- or inter- disciplinary collaboration in the scientific research of sonic ecology is the basic prerequisite to achieve relevant results. I see a big potential for interdisciplinary relations among different sciences (cultural studies, sociology, philosophy, aesthetics, acoustics, mathematics, etc.) on the level of contemporary existential semiotics. And the feedback? It depends ... but here in Slovakia, the field of Acoustic (or Sonic) Ecologies and research is not so advanced, and the artistic scene is also quiet ... and limited. Satisfaction with the level of audience is about the same.

⑤ Environmental consciousness among the policymakers here is terrible, pretty superficial and hypocritical. The covid crisis, which amplifies and accumulates all crises we have experienced in recent decades (ecological, moral, economic, cultural, social, etc.), shows a total misunderstanding of the sources of the current ecological disaster. I do not know what can stop this madness of self-destruction. A change of outlook and behavior by us is perhaps directly conditioned on ending this mutated global digitalized hypercapitalism, which is based on the supremacy of marketing for unscrupulous financial profit.

Július Fujak (1966) is a scholar, a semiotician of music, experimental composer and multi-instrumentalist. Currently he lectures at Department of Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher in Nitra (since 2007). His compositions and intermedia projects have been performed and broadcast in many countries. For twenty years, he has organized the international series and festivals of contemporary, unconventional music and intermedia art *Hermes' Ear* in Nitra.

Krzysztof Topolski

① I discovered this idea, and artistic and ecological movement, a long time ago. It opened my ears to a new approach to sound as a whole. The concept of acoustic ecology is still very important for me in every aspect of my work, whatever it is: drumming, electronic music, mixing, producing, installations, workshops.

② I think all of those areas are closely connected in my practice and interact with each other. There are a few examples of previous works following these remarks.

③ In my practice, usually field recordings are contextualized and connected with place and time. But I'm not against a decontextualized use of field recordings as abstract or concrete musical or sound material.

④ I have possibilities to work in an interdisciplinary context from time to time. The question about the public is rather more difficult to answer. Sometimes I have a lot of feedback, sometimes not.

⑤ I think education is basic. We have to completely and constantly transform the educational system.

Krzysztof Topolski is a drummer, electroacoustic improviser, author of sound art projects, and field recordist. The key concepts in his work are noise and soundscape. He explores the area of percussion and live electronic, improvised and electroacoustic music. He composes with the use of computer, creates interactive and sound installations, organizes presentations and lectures on contemporary music and sound art and also runs workshops. He is curator of Soundplay project in CCA Łaźnia in Gdańsk, and has published his music and sounds on the labels *Post_Post*, *Nefryt*, *Monotype*, *Audiotong*, *Sqrt*, *Lado Abc*, *Plg*, *Konkretourist*, *Sangoplasma*, and *Boft*.

fundacjachmura.pl
content-analysis-of-urban-sounds.arszyn.bandcamp.com
krzysztoftopolski.wordpress.com

Boris Klepal

Sound Activism and Delight: Acoustic Ecology In The Throes of Recording Technology

Dealing with the sound environment in which we live is quite a natural thing. But when it comes to acoustic ecology, it is necessary to say when it is still activism and when it is just a hunt for exclusive sounds.

Acoustic ecology lost its spiritual father this summer — on August 14, 2021, the Canadian composer and environmentalist R. Murray Schafer died. Thanks to him, a lot of people learned what a soundscape is. Schafer did not invent the concept of the sound environment in which we move, but he gets a great deal of credit for its expansion. But he also added the less frequent term *schizophonia*, denoting the separation of the sound source from its reproduction.

In fact, it could be applied to listening to any recording of live music, and this discrepancy increases with the reproduction of the sound of acoustic instruments. When it comes to field recordings of a sound landscape — whether in the city, the countryside, a tourist area or the almost untouched nature — the division starts to be almost unacceptable. The paradox is that people dealing with acoustic ecology and field recordings are heavily dependent on this technological schism, and if they want to say something about their work, they cannot do without it at all.

The sounds of a specific place captured by a recording device and then transferred to speakers or headphones resemble an exotic bird trapped and kept in an aviary. Field recordings usually receive care they will never experience in their natural environment: They are captured in high definition, find the peace of safe storage and probably backups, sometimes they can fly through space, and maybe someone plucks a little feather from it when it is suitable as a decoration in other audio productions. The question is not whether to do such things or not — listening to recordings of specific sounds and using them as

material for composition is a completely normal procedure. However, it is important to look for the lines where acoustic ecology begins and ends in this process.

It is probably not possible to set a sharp line — it depends not only on the definition of concepts, but also on the personal setting of each person, on his social background and position, his sensitivity and sensitivity to the topic. Applied again to animals: for someone to sympathize with them, it is enough to eat the meat of free-range cows — let's say it's a zero point, at a distant point of warmth is then militant veganism. For simplicity, people who don't care are left out, and the attitudes of others are placed on a linear scale. In fact, it is more of a somewhat chaotic set of interacting points in multidimensional space.

In the field of acoustic ecology, everyone should ask themselves whether what they do is really environmental activism, or just satisfying the desire for sound adventure by other means. Whether there is a difference between the need to record and reproduce the sounds of melting glaciers or declining rain forests, or to make more and more recordings — whether Brahms, Feldman or Lady Gaga.

When one listens to the recording of the singing of the last individuals of an extinct species of bird or the last album by U2, there is a large amount of necessary technology behind the creation of both. The creation and reproduction of a field recording probably consumes an order of magnitude smaller amount of resources, but there are still not enough of them to be left out of the game without thinking — at least if there is still talk of acoustic ecology.

To know where the mere collecting of sound material ends and acoustic ecology begins, the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1912-2009) may help. The creator of the term "deep ecology" formulated the principles of the movement as early as 1973, his later *Lifestyle Trends Within the Deep Ecology Movement* presents a brief summary of the issue toward feasible initiatives. Their application to acoustic

ecology represent an attempt to formulate its principles and at the same time serve as topics for discussion.

1. *Use simple means; avoid unnecessary, complicated instruments or other means.* Edit your field recordings only minimally. Do not layer, mix, use complex effects or a battery of synthesizers. The sounds of the surroundings are not there for you to have something from which to create the atmosphere for a non-existent film. If you do, you will find yourself in a completely different genre, which has little to do with acoustic or other ecology.

2. *Choose activities most directly serving values in themselves and having intrinsic value. Avoid activities that are merely auxiliary, have no intrinsic value, or are many states away from fundamental goals.* Those who have ears to hear, listen. Don't procrastinate, don't listen to silliness, don't play music just so that it is not silent. Don't waste time going to lousy concerts. And don't waste your time listening to music from headphones while walking — listen to what's happening around you.

3. *Practice anticonsumerism. This negative attitude follows from trends 1 and 2.* If you don't hear anything, nothing bad will happen — but someone else will hear it. When you miss the last record of your favorite band, the world won't fall apart. You don't have to be at every concert or festival.

4. *Try to maintain and increase the sensitivity and appreciation of goods on sufficient supply for all to enjoy.* What you hear around you on the way to work, to the store or through an open window is the most affordable music in the world. You can even enhance and refine it by not using a motorcycle or lawnmower, playing recorded music in a public space, standing with a guitar on the corner, or holding an open-air festival in the city or in the countryside.

5. *Eliminate or reduce neophilia — the love of what is new merely because it is new.* That new sound is most likely an illusion, try to listen to the murmur of a real city and you will find everything in it. Place a sensitive microphone against an anthill and the result will be similar. Develop your ability

to pick out several significant frequencies from the confusion of noise.

6. *Try to dwell in situations of intrinsic value and to act rather than being busy.* Don't pretend you don't have time to listen — you're probably just forgetting to.

7. *Appreciate ethnic and cultural differences among people; do not view the differences as threats.* Likewise, appreciate the differences between sounds and look for them where they really are. Water dripping from the last glacier sounds just like a leaking water tap. The birds in the bushes behind the house sing differently every second. Be careful when someone mixes listening with a desire for exotic experiences. You don't have to travel across half the globe for remarkable sounds.

8. *Maintain concern about the situation in developing nations, and attempt to avoid a standard of living too much higher than that of the needy (maintain a global solidarity of lifestyle). Appreciate lifestyles that can be maintained universally — lifestyles that are not blatantly impossible to sustain without injustice toward fellow humans or other species.* Don't buy more and more equipment just because it is cool. Try to think from time to time who and under what conditions your headphones or recorder were manufactured.

9. *Seek depth and richness of experience rather than intensity.* Don't listen to baroque music amplified like a metal concert, try to penetrate the essence of its effects, torn between heavenly scents and earthly manure. Try to take the sounds as they really are. Even the anthill recorded by an ultra-sensitive microphone is, in a way, a scam.

10. *Appreciate and choose, when possible, meaningful work rather than just making a living.* Do not abandon a job in sound or music that does not give immediate results or earnings. Give at least part of your time to it. Listen for the sake of listening, create audio recordings and browse instead of photos.

11. *Lead a complex, not complicated, life, trying to realize as many aspects of*



Poland,
patterns
of the
agricultural
landscape
(NASA Earth
Observatory)

positive experiences as possible within each time interval. Listen carefully to what surrounds you in everyday life. Richard Wagner longed for invisible theater — try to look less outside, and listen more, and through listening better understand your surroundings.

12. *Cultivate life in community rather than in society. Don't make noise when you don't have to. Don't be the source of sound when it's not necessary. Let the silent warrior of the Mohicans be your role model. You will do more for the world than by signing a petition for cafes that don't play recorded music.*

13. *Appreciate, or participate in, primary production — small-scale agriculture, forestry, fishing. Leave at least some space to listen to pure, unedited sounds. Don't get bogged down in the sound-deadening walls of professional studios, don't get lost in the ultra-pure world of hi-fi and high definition.*

14. *Try to satisfy vital needs rather than desires. In fact, and in most cases, you don't need to listen to anything. You only miss the noise of the city or the soundscape as an embarrassing habit.*

15. *Try to live in nature rather than just visiting beautiful places; avoid tourism (but occasionally make use of tourist facilities). If you want to hear something remarkable, you don't have to drive even 10 km outside the city. If sounds can be closely perceived, all you have to do is open the window, to be quiet and concentrate.*

16. *When in vulnerable nature, tread lightly and don't leave a trace. Above all, when in nature, listen — this is doubly true for fragile and uncommon habitats. Do not create unnecessary material for others to listen to. Don't leave unnecessary traces behind.*

17. *Appreciate all life-forms rather than merely those considered beautiful, remarkable, or narrowly useful. Don't judge sounds, they are not guilty. Try to analyze them before evaluating them. And at least sometimes simply try to avoid any evaluation.*

18. *Never use life-forms merely as means. Remain conscious of their intrinsic value and dignity, even when using them as resources. Do not provoke or scare animals just to make a sound. Do not make them unnecessarily nervous and do not try to drive them out of hiding. It is not your job to catch up with anyone. You are not a hunter, you're a human being.*

19. *When there is a conflict between the interests of dogs or cats (or other pet animals) and wild species, try to protect the wild creatures. If you are at a concert in the castle hall and the birds are singing in the garden, listen to the birds.*

20. *Try to protect local ecosystems, not only individual life-forms, and think of your own community as part of the ecosystem. For each sound, try to figure out why it sounded at all and what it means. Pay special attention to sounds that you find annoying. If you are neurotic and you clearly hear the steps of a cat on the opposite sidewalk, try to withstand your suffering from the ubiquitous noise heroically.*

21. *Instead of deploring excessive interference with nature as unnecessary, unreasonable, and disrespectful, condemn it as insolent, atrocious, outrageous, and criminal — without condemning the people responsible for the interference. Stand up against the noise, the roar and sound smog, but don't try to attack the noise, the roaring or street musicians.*

22. *Try to act resolutely and without cowardice in conflicts, but remain*

non-violent in words and deeds. Try not to shout at those who are shouting — you only add to the noise. Try to be firm, calm and quiet — it works more often than it might seem. And if it doesn't work, shouting and vulgar words probably won't help.

23. *Take part in or support non-violent direct action when other actions fail.* Participate in the good actions, ignore the bad ones. Contribute to the elimination of all unnecessary sources of noise on the earth, in the air and under the water. Don't put the piano on the street, at the train station or at the airport and you will never play them.

24. *Practice vegetarianism.* Practice sound austerities — consciously consume only sounds that do not harm you or others.

Boris Klepal is a music journalist and critic interested in music and sound for its own sake. He is a regular correspondent to the music journal HIS Voice, Hospodářské noviny, and the website aktualne.cz. Since January, 2020, he has worked as editor-in-chief for the music revue Opus musicum.

Daniel Kordik

❶ I believe that music and sound can play a vital role in the transformation of how we perceive the environments we live in. It can help to set up a new balance between human and non-human actors and therefore heal our planet.

❷ In the last 100 years, very quiet sounds have become audible through sonic amplification. These sounds have suddenly become equal and therefore usable in music making. Field recordings and their use in electroacoustic music has changed our attitude towards what is considered to be noise and music. What was perceived as noise and alien has shifted, allowing these new and unheard sounds to enter our sonic universe and archive. I believe that music helps to create and sustain communities. It can generate actions with impact on human and non-human environments.

Silence is often considered to be a metaphor for being dead. What if all fishermen were able to hear the world beneath their boats? Would that notion change the way we fish? I am aware that fishing won't disappear, but perhaps it could be made more

sustainable, without silencing our waters and seas. In order to do so, it would be great if we could listen to that underwater communication. What would happen if listening to underwater sounds became an essential part of becoming a fisherman, like any other safety training? I am sure it would change the way we use our seas.

In my work [*Sy*][*Ria*] I portrayed the country right on the brink of a civil war. I used my field recordings from Syria, recorded in 2011, which I cut up into fragments and silences to act as a metaphor for the death of communication, an extinction.

❸ Personally I like using decontextualized field recordings in contemporary music making as it broadens our sonic archive and our "we."

Previously, I was very interested in music which carried a message in its lyrics, often politically charged. Over time I have become more interested in more abstract music, mostly electronic and free improvisation. These types of music don't carry any direct messages, which has been liberating on one hand, while on the other, something felt absent, too.

Perhaps field recordings brought back to me some of what has been missing. They are perhaps not as direct as when someone is singing through a microphone, but often they can have a similar impact. At least I hope so.

I remember being on a cable car in Malaysia and all around was this crazy and very loud drone. It was coming from the outside, but from where? Then I realized that the entire forest beneath the cable car was super loud, bursting in life, and that life manifested itself in that loud and huge-sounding drone. It was stunning how much energy there was. Another time I was driving a motorbike alongside the forest and the high pitched droning sound coming from that forest was so loud that it made me to stop and listen. These loud sounding drones were all created by insects. For me this was a big awakening, similar to when you hear very powerful lyrics. Some of those sounds ended up on my album *Snoring Mountains*.

As mentioned earlier, I believe that through amplification one can become aware that there is a communication in places where we thought there was just a silence. Communication means life and therefore a potential for mutual cooperation and understanding. I believe that humans prefer cooperation before competition or annihilation. In this respect I hope that field recordings can be seen as a very useful tool for uncovering those hidden and alienated communications, therefore preserving our natural environment. The same would go for field recordings from urban areas or potential conflict zones.

Artistically this is very interesting and challenging as a new language based on those field recordings is being created in order to communicate those messages further. I am aware that I am simplifying here, but this is what I believe.

As mentioned earlier, for me music helps to create and sustain communities and, when enriched with field recordings, these communities may become wider and more open toward others, and also more sensitive toward injustice and environmental issues. This is why I believe that electroacoustic and field recording practices can make us better, less violent and broadens our “we” and therefore make the world better place.

⑤ I hope that making field recordings and electroacoustic practices part of our ever-changing sonic archive will help to broaden our environmental consciousness and thus change our relationship to our human and non-human environments. In order to do so, better production and communication is needed, so these practices can penetrate throughout the dominant sonic narratives.

Daniel Kordik (1976) is a musician, improviser and field recordist. He is a member of the duo Jamka, a founding member of Urbsounds Collective and participates in many other musical and cultural initiatives in London and Bratislava. With Edward Lucas, he runs the London-based label Earshots Recordings, focused on free improvisation and field recording.

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Csaba Hajnóczy

① a. Sounds of the world in general. I've been a listening enthusiast, and strange and unusual sounds have always been important for me, within or without a musical context.

b. Sustainability in general. I have a strong attraction towards frugal, ecological systems, not only regarding the climate crisis.

c. The possibilities of acoustic ecology. How can it be of practical benefit? How can it enhance the protection and creation of sonically healthy and balanced environments?

② In theory they could be complementary and mutually linked. These possibilities appear mostly separate from each other, as I see it.

The common ground is meaningful listening, from different points for different aims.

My teaching praxis, in the form of “Ecological sound design” courses, is dedicated to creating sound art works regarding environmental sound focused on ecological issues. I'm part of the Sound Garden project in Hungary, which is designed to foster urban outdoor spaces to promote the culture of balanced sound via listening, soundwalks, community planning, sound art events and education.

I will deal with bioacoustics, from January 2022, with the Insula Magna project of iASK Kőszeg, developing a plan to monitor the wildlife of the Szigetköz region in north-west Hungary.

③ The notion of soundscape composition begun by Barry Truax clearly declares contextualization: The composition unfolds the inherent, creatively discoverable qualities of a certain soundscape. Jonathan Gilmurray goes further by defining ecological sound art: sound art whose content or subject matter displays an engagement with ecological issues. (Gilmurray, Jonathan: *Ecology and Environmentalism in Contemporary Sound Art*, 43.)

Meanwhile, according to Francisco López, field recordings are always decontextualized:

Much against a widespread current trend in sound art and the customary standard in nature recordings, I believe in the possibility of a profound, pure, 'blind' listening of sounds, freed (as much as possible) of procedural, contextual or intentional levels of reference. What is more important, I conceive this as an ideal form of transcendental listening that doesn't deny all what is outside the sounds but explores and affirms all what is inside them. This purist, absolute conception is an attempt at fighting against the dissipation of this inner world. (From the liner notes of the CD *La Selva*. Sound environments from a Neotropical rain forest. V2, Netherlands, 1998.)

This view can be seen rooted in Pierre Schaeffer's theory of reduced listening and sound objects.

Last but not least: field recording-based works are often not connected with ecology, but with sociological/political issues (e.g., Bob Ostertag, Andrea Szigetvári, and many others).

From the ecological point of CENSE there is a lot of activity in field recording-based sound art which is outside the circle. Making use of recordings that do not necessarily have clear audible ecological meanings is possible by putting them into complexity by visual, oral, written methods. As Richard Wagner refused the idea of traditional, music-dominated opera for the sake of *musical drama*, in which all elements — music, libretto, stage design — work in a joint service for dramatic expression, we can set a genuine ecological sound piece as a work, in which the sound part is subordinated to an ecological issue.

④ I'm looking forward the [Insula Magna](#) project, which also concerns the left bank wetlands of the Danube in Slovakia. I will attempt to work together with biologists in 2022.

As a teacher, I find there is a lot of interest both from regular students of MOME, (my courses are optional, and draw basically enough participants), and also from applicants to the MOME Open adult education program.

⑤ Structured activities. Meetings, programs, courses, community planning, podcasts, networking.

Csaba Hajnóczy (1957) is a musician, composer, musicologist, and teacher at Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest, living and working in Budapest. He is the main initiator and organizer of the first CENSE Conference. His recent artistic interest is field recording based composition and the use of spatial sound systems. Since 2013 he has given numerous talks and workshops in the field of acoustic ecology, including soundwalks, in Hungary, Poland, Belgium, Turkey.

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Anna Kvičalová

① As a historian of science, I'm interested in exploring sonic ways of knowing in Western modernity. The project of acoustic ecology sparked both academic and non-academic interest in sound and listening as it was able to show very clearly what, in terms of new insights and understanding, can be gained by paying attention to acoustic aspects of your surroundings and, by extension, sound cultures of the past and present. To me, acoustic ecology is the subject of study, a laboratory that effectively explores sonic ways of knowing by combining approaches from arts and sciences. Also, I believe that the acoustically defined relationship between humans and their environment very well captures something important about the uncertainty and fragility of the nature-culture relations in the Anthropocene era.

② Yes, the areas have been interconnected historically and they all helped to fashion the field of "sound studies" in which music practice and insights coming from electroacoustic music have played an important role.

③ In my experience, field recordings are most powerful when their context is known, that is, when they are accompanied by knowledge on the part of the listener of what exactly they represent. Otherwise, what was originally a communication signal, or a sign of environmental change too often turns into a mere sonic ornament, whose power is diminished. At the same time, the opportunity to hear sounds outside of their original context is

something that has accompanied sound reproduction technologies from their very beginning, and in this respect contemporary music is no different from early radio broadcasts and the entertainment industry in which music and animal sounds were mixed together. When field recordings are listened to in people's living rooms, music venues, or in the street, their new contexts can add layers of significance and meaning by juxtaposing the original sounds with different acoustic (but also other-than-acoustic) surroundings. The way the nature recordings are experienced depends both on the listeners' knowledge and the economy of attention which pertains to specific listening contexts. I am skeptical of the notion of "pure" decontextualized listening when recorded, and therefore already mediated, uprooted, and "translated", sounds are concerned.

④ I am a historian who works in an interdisciplinary center (CTS, Prague), where the level of interdisciplinary communication and collaboration is exceptionally high. Inter- and trans-disciplinary discussion, however, is a hard and sometimes exhausting job, and it requires much time, motivation, and respect to be meaningful; it is a *skill* that can only be acquired by regular practice. In the past five years, the most fruitful work in this respect was that concerning the topic of the Anthropocene, which also impacted my research in sound history.

Sound studies, which is my general field of expertise, is transdisciplinary by definition. Similarly to acoustic ecology, though, the actual *inter*-disciplinary collaboration between experts and practitioners from various fields is much harder to find.

⑤ In the Czech Republic, more than 80% of people perceive climate change as a real problem, and they are concerned (see data from STEM/MARK). Environmental consciousness itself is thus not the only issue; although we are aware that something is wrong, most of us cannot fully appreciate the consequences of our daily actions and consumer decisions. It is hard to translate beliefs into habits, and it usually takes much time and effort. The key to this kind

of change is not only knowledge of the problem, but also examples of good practice the public can follow. For this, education, media and the arts can be helpful not only in alarming people, but especially in setting up new standards of responsible and ethical consumer behavior.

Anna Kvíčalová (1986) is a historian of science, religion and the senses. She studied in Brno, Amsterdam and Berlin; from 2013–2017 she was a member of the research group *Epistemes of Modern Acoustics* at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. She is the author of *Listening and Knowledge in Reformation Europe* (Palgrave, 2019) and other texts on sound, hearing and acoustics. Currently she is the leader of the research project *The Second Sense: Sound, Hearing and Nature in Czech Modernity at the Centre for Theoretical Study* (Charles University and the Czech Academy of Sciences) in Prague.

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Darko Fritz

① Sound ecologies connect all the agents of the Anthropocene through sound. As a programmer and curator of the grey (area I support this idea. The grey) (area program offers both a production and podium to selected artworks and initiatives of sound ecologies and sound art. Manja Ristić published the Sound Map of the Island of Korčula. Together with Anamaria Pravicencu, Ristić carried out a participative performance on the nearby islet whereby the act of listening served as a methodology in the process of composing. Robertina Šebjanič recorded the sounds in the sea around the town of Korčula and, together with the curator Annick Bureau, performed *Underwater: Escaping (Sound) Pollution*. We presented in the gallery work and performance by Leah Barclay who recorded sounds of significant rivers, in collaboration with indigenous communities living near these rivers. Her performance *Shifting Nature* is constituted by fieldwork that took place during the project Sound Mirrors in Australia, India, Korea, China, and Brazil.

② Composer Luc Ferarri used his field recording sessions from Korčula in 1968 for the composition *Presque rien, ou le lever du jour au bord de la mer* ("Almost nothing, or daybreak at the seashore"). On one hand, he expanded the idea of *musique*

concrète, and on the other, he offered a methodology for the democratization of art (in general) by using personal sound recording equipment for field recordings.

Unlike the famous *Presque rien*, another historic example passed under the radar. A 1979 project by Michael Fahres succeeded in merging a sociopolitical critique with digital arts: *Mobilodrom* — “a vehicle producing sounds in reaction to its environment” was performed first at the Music Biennale on the streets of Zagreb. An electric car drove through the city and collected information like the volume and pitch of environmental sounds, movement, wind, air pressure and others. Those data from sensors were translated in real time into sounds by a computer. The software for translation of environmental input was written by the physicist Desmond Darby (New Zealand, now at Utrecht University). The computer program for output and the computer controls for the analog STEIM synthesizer were written by Johan den Biggelaar, using a Heathkit h11 computer. Biggelaar built some parts of the synthesizer. Work was produced at STEIM in Amsterdam. STEIM’s analogue Blackbox system produced sounds. Volume, pitch and filtering was controlled by the computer. The work was performed in 1979 in Monchengladbach at the multimedia festival *Ensemblia 79*, as well as six days at the Holland festival in Amsterdam. The Amsterdam performance was a collaboration with newly founded (two months previously) Dutch department of Greenpeace. The connection was the sounds of the whales (as an extinct species), which were used in the work. The other sound was that of a bell, recalling alarm and immediate attention. All the equipment was carried by authors, only electric cars were used in the respective cities where the performance took place. We may well see such analogue-digital hybrid urban mobile machinery operating real-time interactively and with socially engaged content, using the same or similar kind of inputs and outputs in both media-art and contemporary art festivals and exhibitions around the world, as at this very contemporary post-digital moment of the 2010s. I researched this

work and published something about it, as well exhibited the documentation at the exhibition I curated in Istanbul, 2014, at the exhibition *Histories of post-digital*.

Some artworks include system theory and cybernetics. In the 1960s, cybernetics, as the science of the general principles of systems observed independently of their nature, initiated among other things the awareness of the importance of global ecology, as a positive example of the real synergy of apparently opposing social discourses. For the grey) (area program, I curated several artworks that may make contributions to this field.

In his interactive sound installation for public space *Brickets* (2014), Pierre Proske reflected on his cybernetic research on the dynamics of natural synchronizations via the simulation of communication among crickets.

Radioastronomy (Adam Hyde and Honnor Hager) is an art and science project which broadcasts sounds intercepted from space live on the internet and on the airwaves. The project is a collaboration between Radioqualia and radio telescopes located throughout the world. On any given occasion, listeners may hear the planet Jupiter and its interaction with its moons, radiation from the Sun, activity from far-off pulsars or other astronomical phenomena. The sound installation *Radioastronomy* was set for one week under the stars in front of the gallery space grey) (area in 2007. This project links radio as a broadcast medium for sound with radio astronomy. The signals received by radio telescopes in Hawaii, Latvia, and other locations throughout the world are converted to sound in real time and transmitted on line and on the airwaves, thereby casting into high relief the nature of the cosmos as a dynamic information site in which the planets and stars are ceaselessly generating sound. Many of the sounds emitted by these objects are fascinating from both an aesthetic and conceptual perspective.

Sonolevitation, a sound performance by Dmitry Gelfand and Evelina Domnitch, was performed at grey) (area 2010. The work features a 15 kHz standing wave generated

between a transducer and a reflective surface. The sound creates focused pressure fields strong enough to enable levitation. Slivers of gold leaf are suspended in the air, and their disturbance of the standing wave creates the performance. A close-range microphone monitors the slivers' modulation of the standing wave: the slightest disturbance or change in spin has highly audible repercussions. The slivers also interact with each other, modifying one another's spin patterns.

Songs for the Anthropocene by Tin Dožić is an interactive installation I curated for the Sounding DIY exhibition in 2018. The work is based on methods of media archeology and the reappropriation of obsolete technologies. The project explores the technological artifacts of the past. The sounds of rejected items, the specific quality of obsolete information records, electronic circuits, and resonance materials become testimonies of the past and are used as raw material for audio compositions. Through the technique of contemplation, all of these materials create a new sound world — a hauntological landscape filled with chimeras and ghosts of the near past. Objects taken from e-waste have been revived in the form of zombie media and brought into relation with digital samples.

③ In contrast to the methodology opened by Luc Ferarri by the layering of field recordings as the only element of his musical compositions, some other composers and sound artists have taken other approaches. As a positive example, Francisco López makes his musical compositions using field recordings as the only material, but fully processed in post production. In his live performances, he spatializes the sound using the acoustics of the space among other elements, thus creating a unique spatial experience, which is in the end a new sound environment.

④ *Resonance* ("The Bell") by Hrvoje Hiršl (2016) is a sound installation that problematizes the relationship between an object, a space and the audience. The resonant frequency of a pipe placed in the middle of the room is 140 Hz. A loudspeaker in the middle of the steel pipe continually

produces a 140 Hz tone that stimulates the pipe to vibrate and produce its own tone. The vibrations of the pipe interact with the space, causing the sound to reflect and change in tone, depending on the visitor's position in space. This interactive spatial and sound installation was installed for two months in a small church on the main square of Korčula. It was seen by more than 20,000 people, mostly tourists wandering around, and as such is the most visited event by grey) (area. Most of our programs in Korčula are visited by 20 to 50 people, which I find okay, specially in the context of the town of Korčula having only 3000 citizens. I find that this is satisfactory even if only one person gets something from the presentation, that little movement will work well on a micro scale, effecting the global scale.

⑤ I find that for "audience development," a broad public outreach is not a necessary quality, but rather the development of a critical mind and tracing new aesthetics. Therefore I do not find that the broader art public affects policymakers. In 2021 in Croatia we experienced positive changes in politics: former activists turned into green-left politicians and won the Zagreb elections. This gives hope for environmental consciousness and real action.

Darko Fritz / gray (area (1966) is artist, curator and researcher living and working in Zagreb and Korčula. His work bridges the gap between contemporary art, media art and network culture, taking up topics such as the glitch, error, and surveillance and using various media as graphic art, photography, video, internet, etc. He is a critical observer of technology that changes society, but he has also worked on a series of projects in which he used atypical media. His curatorial work and research on New Tendencies and early digital art has earned international acclaim with exhibitions at HDLU Zagreb, Neue Galerie Graz, ZKM Karlsruhe and Akbank Istanbul. He started the research project "The beginning of digital arts in the Netherlands (1955–1980)". Fritz is founder and programmer of the Grey Area – a space for contemporary and media art, and a member of the professional organizations HDLU (visual arts), ULUPUH (design), and AICA (art criticism). He is author of the book *Digitalna umjetnost u Hrvatskoj 1968 – 1984*. (Digital Art in Croatia 1968 – 1984), published 2021 by Museum of Technology Nikola Tesla, Zagreb. Fritz is founding member of CENSE.

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Lloyd Dunn

My interest in Acoustic Ecology is somewhat indirect, since I don't really consider myself to be primarily a field recordist, but rather someone who, as a sound composer, makes audio and visual digital artifacts. To me, a recording of a kitchen faucet is materially the same as one of crows in a forest or sheep in a meadow. Any of those things can be used as source material to make something new, or enjoyed on its own as an acousmatic experience.

Wherever I am, I am in an environment, in the sense that I am always surrounded by something, I exist in any number of milieux, dynamically shifting from one to the next, each of which is entirely dependent on the context that surrounds it. For me, context is the central determinant of meaning.

Terms like "ecology" and "ecosystems" are at their base terms from the empirical sciences, from biology, and deal with the "relations of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings," according to at least one dictionary I found. I am broadly in support of preserving the existing state, audible and otherwise, of various long-standing and endangered ecosystems on the earth, just as I support the preservation of anything of cultural value from being lost.

The common ground for those who have written for this *Almanac* is sound, the primacy of listening; perhaps that amounts to an appreciation for it, an expertise in working with it, an ability for creating new listening experiences by manipulating its instantiation, or for representing various environments in documentary form to others.

I think nature, and the man-made world, too, are both rich sources of interesting sounds, and so naturally

I want to inspect and understand them and use them in a meaningful and respectful way. Lately, I often find myself in a place with a rich sound environment and find myself not recording it; feeling rather that the recording would be an impoverished thing, superfluous in the end. In such cases, it is better simply to take in the experience and process it as a memory. I find that I will very often be informed by that experience some time later. If the point of Acoustic Ecology is to be attentive and patient and respectful to what nature and our non-natural milieux are trying to tell us, then count me in as an active participant. In addition to our personal connections to each other as human beings, I think we also have a personal connection with the Earth, which is really just as profound.

I am not a journalist. When I present a field recording, I do sometimes subjectivize it, which includes its framing in the form of accompanying material, in such way that it gives a better (by that, I mean clearer or more precise) impression of what I remember having heard and what interested me at the moment when I stopped to record it. The best I can do is to try to create facsimiles which take their place alongside real sounds as new experiences in their own right. But they should not be understood as substitutes for really listening out in the real world.

Lloyd Dunn or (**nula.cc**) is a founding member of the *intermedia* and experimental group the *Tapebeats*, and editor and publisher of several small-press zines, such as *PhotoStatic* and *Retrofuturism*. Beginning in the 1980s, he has worked in a range of media, including 16mm film, video, audio, press, and works for the web. Dunn is the author of the filecast project (**nula.cc**), comprising hours of sound works, and hundreds of photographs, as well as texts, which often reflect his frequent travels. Individual "filecasts" consist of assemblages of sound, images and words which are freely available for download. Since 2001, Dunn has lived and worked in Prague.

nula.cc
nulacc.bandcamp.com

Pits and pools of the brown coal landscape near Leipzig in Saxony (NASA Earth Observatory)



Slavek Kwi

① The perception of a sound environment, including an awareness of human generated sounds, have certainly been neglected, if not ignored completely. Raising the issue of acoustic ecology as an equal participant in the global multi-dimensional ecology seems important. Assembling together as many minds, as many diverse ways of interpretations and relationships with the subject of observation (= sonic ecologies) is paramount. (I am referring to the idea of sound ecology in general, regardless of any claimed or established ideology).

② There are many brilliant minds with outstanding ideas. However, regarding today's state of global crisis — which is not only climate connected, but also "spiritual" (in the sense of "how we relate to the world and each other"), the majority of the discussions seem to me rather irrelevant.

RESET.

We are all looking at the same "object of interest", however we are in division with often petty "taxonomies" and split into our personal "bubbles". We are standing separate and oblivious of each other — ignorant of our complicity. How can we CONNECT and yet, keep feeling unique and yourself? Safety ... trust ... how can we design situations that help us to overcome these obstacles? Can "listening" as an exercise — as practice — help? Sounds, and music, affect us greatly.

Connecting together is paramount ...

RESET.

... the composite vision of an insect seems an interesting metaphor ... (what does it have to do with anything???)

RESET.

I am involved as an active part of the "United Artists for Well-Being of Solar System & Everything Else" initiative, which explores alternative ways of communication based on inclusivity. Mission statement:

The uni.Sol_initiative aspires to be an all-inclusive and ever-evolving project exploring the potential of extrasensory communication for the purpose of facilitating a deeper connection between all entities. The intention of exploring and implementing the idea of freedom, to enhance an awareness of the human relationship with the surrounding environment through the practice of listening. The hope of creating, stimulating a sensual, spiritual and aesthetic experience. The vision of an all-encompassing universe welcoming unconditionally all Sounds — regardless of origin, system of thinking, or beliefs.

I will be not describing here all the details. [You can look at the site](#), there is enough information there.

RESET.

When I stumbled in my mind across a string of words: "united artists for well-being of ...," I had a personal epiphany! Yes, just a few words together and the clarity of the purpose! Artists are true gatekeepers between the dream world and this, real world! The land of imagination has infinite possibilities! Whatever you imagine can happen! The potential of artists united — as individuals — not under some ideology, but within a framework which conserves each other's freedom — seems dizzying to me! Imagine what we could achieve! Human creativity is incredible — it seems to have no boundaries. So, I printed a few thousand business cards with only the words "United Artists for Well-Being of Ireland", and started to leave them in various places and giving them to colleagues. In my mind, the "message" was so clear that anybody could contribute in any way s/he wishes. However, a "revolution" didn't happen ... Then I realized, artists are indeed open minded, creative and imaginative people, but they are also often self-centered and absorbed in their own individual projects, visions and activities, much too often ego-driven. I am not saying everybody is like that, of course, there are many, many exceptions.

Re: every drop counts ...

(As this original idea failed, it took a different life as the uni.Sol_ project described above).

RESET.

I have the impression that the idea of being “united” is automatically rejected as it has also many negative associations with losing independence and freedom, the sameness of single ideology ... not being accepted as an individual, as a unique being. How about being united as free individuals? Is this a paradox? Why not? Existence itself is based on paradox. How can we “design” the prototype of a balanced organism composed of freely-participating individual cells? Science fiction?

RESET.

Again: I feel the urgency of finding a way to unite, but regarding the prevalent emphasis on individualism these days, it seems impossible. If we consider our personal and highly subjective “ideologies” as elements of the “global ecology”, how can these “ideologies” co-exist, connected in interrelationships, in collaboration and harmony?

RESET.

[alfa00](#) is a project dedicated to the practice as a transient ever-evolving end product that serves for me as a sort of “sound diary”. This is more personal, about my own way of dealing with the conundrum of “how to tune into my sound environment as an equal participant.” It also documents climate fluctuations — the weather (including wildlife, as sounds of bats, birds, domestic animals, insects, etc.) patterns over recent years here in Western Ireland. I am interested in the relationship between the individual (= me, as a human representative) and the sound-environment (= the other, as sound ecology), how sounds impact behavior, how they can act as a catalyst for the creative process, how they can open a window into the unknown.

③ RESET. REPEAT.

Every drop in the ocean of “how to change our perception” is valid and very much needed. Listening, as a practice, seems to have an amazing effect on our general awareness. Intensive listening practices, in all their diversity, seem to raise our sensitivity to the surrounding environment.

Therefore it also has a consequential impact on our behavior. However, I have the impression that the drops at this stage are not enough. I have strong feeling inside me — bursting out — we need a WATERFALL, an outpouring of drops! I wish ...

④ Again, there are myriads of amazing artists and scientists. The gap between the rather abstract artistic process of creation and the reflective nature of the scientific, simply stated, is still there. I have the impression that, in the majority of collaborations we are still negotiating the terms of the collaboration, instead of truly using our fields of expertise for complementary — united — collaborations. The idea of interdisciplinary crossovers might be more about balanced ways of co-existential perceptions, looking for ways to use our individual potential freely and effectively in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

Re: Trust needs to be established.

And feedback, audiences, my own work? Satisfaction? I honestly do not know what to say. That someone “likes” or “dislikes” my concepts, performances or releases seems somehow irrelevant. I am more concerned about “connection” (once again!)

The quality of connection between “me” and “the other,” regardless of the entity (human or non-human, sentient or not) is important. How we experience our connection through specifically designed or spontaneously arisen art situations is difficult to explain. The words often bring us from a state of “togetherness” (as in sharing the same experience) to singleness, and therefore an again “segregated” situation, usually manifested by the forming of “opinion.”

PARADOX.

Although I wish there would be more connection with audiences, I have the impression, regarding the state of things as they are these days, that it is better for me to concentrate on my own path, to learn to trust my intuition and hope I will meet the “right” people along the way... I must say, I am grateful for those whom I have met already ...

6 In general, people are either too dazzled and confused by media and/or paralyzed by fear, feeling powerless. And yes, there are certainly many opinions about “what we should do,” though nobody really knows where to start, so we are looking at each other with various expectations. HELP! It is overwhelming. Again, I know it has been said many times: but we MUST find a way to be together, to collaborate effectively, and for that we need to be able to CONNECT, truly connect. Ego aside, please.

RESET.

I am certainly not a “policymaker” or anything similar, I am “only” a sound artist — I “express” myself through art — I do not have any practical answers, and yes, I am desperately seeking how I may contribute, too. Should I stop traveling? Flying? Should I concentrate more on the place “where I live”? Grow food. Buy local...

It is really hard, feeling helpless and actually recognizing that, as one individual, it is (almost) impossible to believe we can influence things or make it better. I have the impression that I do not possess any useful talents or expertise in science, which would be something truly useful to help save our world. And, believe me, there is almost never a time when I do not think “What can I do? What can we do together?” But all the ideas coming to mind always seem so far-fetched, naive and utopian: See the “united artists for well-being” section, please. Yet, the utopian — impossible — thinking about it, living “it” in my imagination, gives me hope: I sense the possibilities and it alters my way of seeing the things around me. It changes my behavior a tiny bit. I am becoming one of those drops in the ocean (again and again!) ... and art gives us a chance to share these feelings ... brings us together — as we are — equal, to experience the same situation.

RESET (REPEAT).

RESET.

I feel like an alien, one who doesn't actually understand anything in this world: ABSTRACT (POETRY?) ... all that potential sitting under our own noses. Like the

heart enclosed in a precious chest, wanting to open and connect, but it is scared. And then I stop thinking, it fades ... and I am listening for joy — looking for laughter and the happy chatter of birds and children — it doesn't matter whether I am generating sounds or not (the other — the environment) singing in unison: “We are FREE sounds!” — do not hold your breath searching for names. Please, let it be — let sounds be free, please, roaming the plains of the imagination — a land equally welcoming to anybody who enters it aware ...

soundctuary.bandcamp.com

RESET.

I am back in my imaginary — parallel world — where things are rather different: Humans are connecting to each other ... We are together “as we are”, “respected as we are”, FREE ... Humanity is attempting to communicate with insects and with all the other creatures sharing this world ... and we contribute equally to the global well-being of the world, as important as any other organism, we are all interconnected. We are connected in a macro-consensus ... We are listening to each other across oceans and continents; we are in an omni-field of extrasensory communication — as once demonstrated by the internet to us via technological means, we have now mastered our telepathic potential ... Or is that wishful thinking for the future? It is our choice which path we take, where evolution brings us ...

Or is this “only” sci-fi? ... Will we dismiss this with a wave of the hand and a patronizing grin as “fantasy”?

It matters not.

Rewind. RESET.

I am in a world facing global extinction; people are unable to connect — everything humans have created is designed — unwittingly — to create a rather unfriendly world. We are shifting responsibilities from one to another ... Well, you know, THIS is the world we are living in ...

It drives me crazy. So, I have become a mad storm whisperer, playing lullabies to



Slavek Kwi: Aeolian harp

hurricanes coming to my home from the Atlantic, trying to placate the forces of nature by recognizing weather as an entity to be befriended. I play with the weather, seeking for an irrational — hard to explain — sense of balance, a situation where I feel connected to everything that surrounds me — as an equal participant in creating more harmonious relationships between all creatures, humans and entities alike. The environment seems like the interface between the sense of "I", the membrane-like two-sided portal between here and here: a connection between you and me. This is now. Today. Here. Am I dreamer? There are others. We are connecting across oceans and continents, despite distances and whatever we believe in.

"The house is on fire!" the courageous child Greta is telling us. She is frightened and looking for a hand with a bucket of water! We are all together trapped inside this house, can't you feel the heat? There is no escape. We have to change our minds. There is no other way. Please, help!

RESET. REPEAT.

"Yes," said the United Entities for Well-Being of Earth. "We will certainly help ..."

There are also an abstract versions available in a music-like meta-language:

[alfa00.bandcamp.com/
album/last-cricket-on-earth](https://alfa00.bandcamp.com/album/last-cricket-on-earth)
[...album/radio-cricket-persistence](https://alfa00.bandcamp.com/album/radio-cricket-persistence)
[...album/springboard-p-review](https://alfa00.bandcamp.com/album/springboard-p-review)

Slavek Kwi (born in Czechoslovakia, lives in Ireland) is a sound artist, composer and researcher interested in the phenomena of perception. He has a longstanding fascination with sound environments that oscillate between sound and interdisciplinarity. His audio-based situations are created mainly from site-specific recordings, resulting in subjective reports for radio broadcast, "cinema for the ears" for multi-channel playback, sound installations integrated into the environment and performances. From the early 90s he has been operating under the alias Artificial Memory Trace. He facilitates experimental sound workshops with autistic children and those with learning disabilities. He emphasizes extensive listening and the stimulation of creativity through observation and the support of natural tendencies.

[artificialmemorytrace.
bandcamp.com](https://artificialmemorytrace.bandcamp.com)

Šárka Zahálková

I got to acoustic ecology through field recordings. First, it was just a hobby, but thanks to it, I began to understand and perceive urban and other environments from a different perspective. For me, it has been primarily a tool of artistic research. However, conscious listening has taught me a certain sensitivity. I understand it as a never-ending learning process, though. Although I am based in an urban environment, the ecological aspect of the whole thing is important to me.

I act mainly in the context of contemporary visual arts, but as we all know, there are overlaps between contemporary art and music. There's no strict boundary between them. Usually, I take any reflection on environmental topics in the arts (not only sound art or music) to be a good signal. Important topics can be thus opened to a broader discourse. To some extent, we can say that some principles of acoustic ecology and environmental sustainability are now becoming a trend within the arts. Some things are cliché, some things are amazing, some things look or sound amazing, but are far from reality. However, all of this can sharpen our sensitivity to details.

I think the common field is to know, or at least to try to understand what I do and why I do it. Getting into such a subset might lead to something promising.

I am a member of several formal or informal groups. Among them is the Offcity collective of which I'm a long-time member. We are a group of artists, architects, and theorists with an interest in the public space. Actually, it was one of our past projects that got me to field recordings. Now, I also curate a city gallery in my hometown of Pardubice. I do my best to reflect on and include topics of acoustic ecology or environmental issues into our programming. At some point, it's an important issue for all institutions.

Despite it being sometimes challenging and exhausting, I really enjoy connecting different groups of people who wouldn't meet otherwise. After all, I consider sensitive mediation and interconnecting to be a cornerstone of contemporary art curating.

Both my artistic and curatorial work is based on building up a relationship with the public. Rather than focusing on quantity, I see the importance in supporting mutual understanding over time. I always wonder whom I am addressing and why, and I also think what each encounter should bring in return. An instant public interest can be heady as well as a bootstrap to other things. I prefer step-by-step outreach.

I consider communication with the public sphere — politicians and officials — to be a part of building mutual relations and understanding. It is certainly easier at the local or regional level than at the national or international level. But it certainly makes sense to lead a dialogue with the public. I don't think it's possible to achieve any reasonable outcome without it. How can it be done — that's another question. Some prefer a strong, revolutionary approach, but I'd rather direct the goals through open dialogue and continuous education.

Šárka Zahálková (1982) is a curator, cultural manager and artist, living and working in Pardubice. She is interested in art in relation to the public space, whether in physical or figurative terms. Her range of artistic practices includes drawing, time-based media, installation, sound art and community-oriented participative projects. She is a co-founder and member of the Offcity Association and since 2018 she has been the Program Director of the Pardubice City Gallery. She studies in the Ph.D. program in Visual Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and is a Fulbright–Masaryk alumna (New York, USA). Zahálková participated in the Mundus Murmurans conference in Ústí nad Labem.

160cm.me

Luděk Čertík

❶ If one sees — or hears! — the world as inherently rhythmic in nature (even our brains produce different electric waves that have rhythmic quality), it is inescapable to think that acoustic or sonic ecology is onto something important in its various pursuits. But even if one does not perceive the world in this way, it still remains revelatory (if not revolutionary). My personal encounter with acoustic ecology has helped me — and still does — to seriously deepen my relationship with the world, with the real. Acoustic ecology confronts

us with the realization of how painfully bad we (or at least some of us) are as listeners; how much remains to be heard and studied out there; how much has been irretrievably lost — and what is at stake when it comes to the near future of the resounding richness of life on this planet. Seeing can be very deceptive, it can lead us astray; it reveals only part of this intricate web of relationships that binds us together; among ourselves and also with other living beings. Acoustic ecology has managed to widen this picture a bit — and for that, I am incredibly grateful; its many incredible findings continue to inspire me in my own work and thinking — be it poetry or music. I only wish it was taken more seriously here in the Czech Republic, and more widely known.

② I am very fond of this idea — I'm actually doing (or trying to do) this myself in many of my musical compositions. Field recordings are sonic pictures or imprints of reality; each recording represents a truly unique, one-of-a-kind imprint of a certain moment in time, an imprint of a certain space, its mood, its atmosphere, its sonic configurations; its *music* so to speak. When one uses such recordings in his or her music, one adds a precious layer of reality (or tactility, because the sound is — or at least can be — incredibly tactile, palpable, apparent, even *alive* at times) that would otherwise be missing from the work. This cannot be simulated or generated through artificial means. It's close to the presence of a detailed description of a certain delicate situation, a delicate (experienced, lived-through) moment in poetry — like the description of a beautiful ornament on the back of a certain lizard or beetle whom the poet saw from up close in the summer grass. It works in the same way. Field recordings invite the world (or reality; and with it authenticity and *aliveness*) into the musical queue. And they do such magic even out of their original context. And that's what I love about it so much. Not to mention that it also helps us to somehow think and feel (and therefore *listen*) beyond the boundaries of the purely human realm (though such realm is to a great extent illusory).

③ At this point? Only more tornadoes, it seems. Or maybe less noise pollution, less traffic of any kind. So we can hear ourselves better and also the world and all its non-human inhabitants; their cries or the absence of their everyday voices. I really do not feel entitled to answer such complicated and multi-layered questions.

Luděk Čertík is a Czech poet, publicist, translator, and musician, originally from České Budějovice. He graduated in Film Studies at the Faculty of Arts Charles University, and Environmental Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences Masaryk University. He is an active member of [Pilgrim: The Wandering University of Nature](#). He regularly publishes on the pages of the ecology magazine [Seventh Generation](#), mainly translations of various eco-philosophical essays from English writers (Andreas Weber, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Barry Lopez, David Haskell, et al.), but also is own original texts. His main interest is the critical reflection of our relationship to living nature, mostly in the arts. Human interactions with non-human creatures and searching for a more sensitive and gentle coexistence with them is also one of the key features of his environmentally-oriented poetry (in 2021 he released his first poetry book *Many Rivers*). His interests also encompass acoustic ecology, bioacoustics, and field recording. He occasionally organizes listening walks with a focus on listening to bird voices. He currently lives in Prague.

zamilovaniven.wordpress.com

Petra Kapš (OR poiesis)

① For long as I can remember I craved more silence, which means, in the most superficial layer of the complex concept of silence — absence, or at least reduction of human generated sound. I understand acoustic ecology is most connected with the revival of listening practices and bringing awareness from the visual to the other senses, especially to hearing. Our society wants us to wear earplugs and headphones, but this is just one of the shrouds that blindfold our ears and numb our bodies. It seems one of basic characteristics we attribute to life itself, to be able to feel the environment, and is becoming more and more disturbing. Japan was very inspiring for me regarding nourishing one's personal sonic space. The procedure is simple — one must shift awareness to the other and respect their intimate sonic area — immediately sound pollution is reduced. My efforts are inclined towards a sophistication of the senses, as I want to believe that subsequently less harsh constantly present stimuli would levitate around our planet.

③ When I describe my sonic-performative practice I like to say my sound works are located solitudes. To work with sound for me is first to be able to affectively and intently listen, not just with the ears, but with the whole body, with the skin and down to the cells and sonic molecules where our memories reside. It is interesting that the outer and inner part of the ear are primarily folds of skin on the inside and outside. Listening is a dynamic process, it triggers an enormous interconnected field and it requires the ability to shift between inner fluid experiential flows and the expanded outside. Listening is in a way always a solitary practice, although it deeply connects us with all that is.

For me personally the amount of sound that our society produces is unimaginable and beyond acceptable, our beloved planet is totally drowned in sonic waste. Apart from all the other waste, this one affects me the most intimately, as our ears just need to be open to the surroundings in order to survive. Along with my artistic practice, my approach on an everyday basis is to communicate with people on this topic and advocate listening awareness. People are not at all aware how sound affects them constantly. For years now, I have been part of the Radio Aporee community, contributing field recordings, doing what I call "intimate radio practice" and developing works using the Radio Aporee platform. Even though my artistic work needs solitude, I also enjoy working with others, and sharing and learning in an ongoing modality. Recently I became part of the JATA C / FLOCK C group, together with beepblip, Bojana Šaljić Podešva, Brane Zorman and Boštjan Perovšek. As a group we are very different artistic individuals with diverse approaches, but we inspiringly share our sensitivity regarding sound and non-human sonority. We grow our work around electroacoustic music, sonic ecologies, and bioacoustics, among others; environmental activism evolves in a subtle way, through our work itself, and the results are inspiring and motivating.

③ Field recording is the basis of my sound work, it is the core substance of my

practice, and a never-ending inspiration and motivation.

④ I understand the audience in a somewhat broader sense. The ongoing work in an open pit stone quarry, which was my entry phase into working with stones and minerals, taught me profoundly that not only humans have the ability to listen. Everything that exists also listens in a myriad of interesting and diverse ways. Executing performances for what or whomever is present, for the grass or the night butterflies or for human ears, puts me into a position of being very conscious of the audience. For me, the audience is an inclusive concept, it is part of how to actively loose "anthropo" dominance. There is always an audience.

Petra Kapš *alias OR poiesis* (1975) weaves her work among the arts of sound, radio, chrono-spatial poetry, poetic performance, books and reflection. Aside from the ethereal features of sound, she focuses on the physical presence of the body. She extends the word, her core medium, with sonic spheres of sonorous poetry. Kapš is interested in aural memory and the deep time of the body. Incorporating an (a)syntemporal presence through the digital sphere, she researches the possibilities of intimate radio and is concerned with the void ear of the internet listener. Her sound/radio/book works are located solitudes.

orpoiesis.blogspot.com

Brane Zorman

① There is a lot of interest but the activities in this very broad field, which are defined by these two terms, are even greater.

② If I wanted to comment or elaborate on this, I would need quite a few pages to answer, so I can only say that in recent decades I have followed with interest the development and divisions of different musical directions and their interactions. In my composing work, I have been using and synthesizing various methods, procedures, technologies for a long time, and I combine them on the canvas of frequency slots with great pleasure. As the first concrete example, I can mention the Steklenik gallery, which we at CONA institute launched in 2018. Steklenik is a gallery for sound, bioacoustics and art, a program in the space of Tivoli Greenhouse. It addresses works that connect art and

science practices through sonic research of nature and the environment. The artworks presented range from bioacoustics, sound ecology, soundscapes, sound art, etc. They are intended for the curious public interested in a joint experience of botanical observation and listening to the current artwork of the Steklenik program. Steklenik is a cross-pollinating space for creation, research, and presentation of artworks, exhibitions, performances and accompanying events. It offers insight in creative and research processes. It addresses the public, and is interested in the cohabitation of space, the environment, nature and its entities in holistic ecosystems. Through our activities, we research the perception and understanding of these phenomena and the way they form via sound and listening. Listening to such artworks in such a space, intended for the study of botanical biodiversity, enriches the experience and enables the connection of nature and art. As another example, let me mention the Acoustic Commons project in which CONA is a partner with organizations: Full of Noises, Locus Sonus, Soundcamp, HMU and Cyberforest.

③ Any intertwining, or coexistence of sounds of different sources, content, as well as the use methods of recording, conceiving, and composing can establish auditory landscapes that open the mental and emotional flows of the one who listens or learns to listen. Much of the music I follow contains the sounds of nature or the objects in it. As the level of biodiversity shrinks, the number of sound directions expands.

Brane Zorman (1962) is a composer, intermedia artist, sound manipulator, and producer living in Ljubljana. He has composed music for theatre, dance, multimedia and new media sound pieces, as well as released several soundtrack CDs and EPs for various labels. He composes music for film, TV and radio commercials. His achievements include the first DTS surround encoded soundtrack for a theatre performance in Slovenia, the first DTS surround CD release in Slovenia. He has an interest in special sound design, effects and sound sculptures-soundscapes, as well as live surround sound projects and events in various public spaces. He collaborates with different intermedia artists such as Irena Pivka. With her he founded the CONA Institute for contemporary art processing.

steklenik.si
cona.si

Michal Kindernay

① I started to be interested in acoustic ecology on a pretty common "aimless" walk. Although not quite. The everyday conflict with city sound pollution taught me to walk in the city in different way, through calm and silent places. I've started to see a different hidden layer of the city, one which is very fragile and transient. When I found that I wanted to work on sound extensively, I found out that the first step is to learn to listen even more attentively. And because I have a music background, at least because I encountered music and voice in my childhood at home, in gardens and in the mountains near my grandma or later in the choir. I felt very safe and meditative in listening. Listening to me became an addiction, a kind of enjoyment or even suffering. When listening you have to sharpen your perceptions; by seeing through the layers of sound you can separate individual sound notes, weigh silence, shield the noise. Sound is fluid. Sound is like water, you need it, you have to believe in it, you have to worry about it and you mustn't be scared of it.

② That the mutual interrelations between these fields are natural goes without saying. This is not due to the trends of interdisciplinary cooperative projects, but from a non-artificial necessity to work with topics and issues in contexts and in logical links that are always part of its relationships. In this respect, it should be considered how active involvement and access engage institutions, and also the artist. Indeed, the role of the artist is transforming on the edge of ecological collapse, as also the social and cultural climate gradually changes. Previous approaches and formulas are not self-sustainable and stop functioning. Mutual / interdisciplinary / cooperation is a prerequisite for the understanding of perception and ecology, gaining new sensitivity, lost capabilities and new experiences. I hope that my activities, whether artistic or non-profit institutional, are such an attempt.

One of the most recent projects I'm involved in is "Cartography of Ecosystems" initiated through a long-term rural

mapping project that explores mainly regional artistic and cultural initiatives, but with overlap into ecological and social issues. The aim is not to map only local situations, but also initiate new programs, forms of cooperation, and to gather new experiences and identify local problems. Another project in planning is the mapping of silent areas in regions of Central Europe — again in the context of active eco-cultural institutions, artists and environmentalists, their work and experience.

③ Field recordings are an absolutely natural and relevant medium, which is basically a very specific contextual musical instrument. The use of field recordings allows me to work with time layers and defining different spaces. It also allows me to get closer to auditory memory. Humans had the ability to perceive sounds in the past much more sensitively than today. However, there are still listening formulas that work and stimulate our memory in a way that is completely different from visual stimuli. Working with field recordings and their modifications allows me to see me more through the sound.

④ I could introduce a new project here on which I work with artist Magdalene Manderlová. It is a longer term project that also includes an exhibition, music compositions, sound walks and small publications within two years. It focuses on the sounds of the Opava and Hlučínsko regions in the Moravian-Silesian Region and is initially kept interdisciplinary. Field research takes place along the Opava River, which is also a natural cultural, national and language boundary. In the Hlučínsko region, we process the very specific “Frajština” dialect as it survives today, as well as preserved in folk songs. The project cooperates with an ecologist, hydrologist, historian, linguist and a number of local people from the cultural organization community. It’s a joy of a project to work on, and see the enthusiasm and openness of the invited experts. Although such interdisciplinary projects can be difficult to deal with. When the initiative comes directly from the community, cooperation works very well with enthusiasm and mutual understanding.

⑤ This is a very complicated question and one of the answers is certainly in education that must be much more radical in the concepts of environmental topics. I encountered this in Denmark, which is ecologically very active and self-sufficient and with high environmental awareness across different ages and groups. Environmental responsibility is placed first, and you can see it there everywhere. This is related to the listening culture as well, which you also need to grow (educate) and cultivate (practice).

Michal Kindernay (1978) is an intermedia artist, curator and performer living and working in Prague. His audiovisual installations interconnect visual art, cinema, technology and science, reflecting ecological issues through various technological approaches in relation to the natural environment. His works include audiovisual performances, interactive installations and experimental documentary and music compositions. He is one of the founders of non-profit organization yo-yo and the initiator of RurArtMap project. He was one of the curators of Školská28 gallery in Prague. He works for the Agosto Foundation, teaches at Prague College and also taught at the Centre of Audiovisual Studies in Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts.

yo-yo-yo.org
rurartmap.net

Patrick Tubin McGinley

Framework, in its pursuit of aural discovery and exploration, has never been blatantly about politics or conservation. But if acoustic ecology is the examination of our environment from a sonic perspective, then, as in the classic rallying cry “the personal is political,” a bending of the ear towards the forgotten or ignored sounds of our surroundings is precisely that: a focus of necessary attention; a spotlight on the details, changes, positives and negatives of our global soundscape; a “frame” through which to view (hear) the “work” that we have collectively created as a community. If *Framework* hopes to help ears discover new sounds, to attune listeners’ attention to a greater, deeper exploration of personal and shared sonic surroundings, then it *ipso facto* questions the state of those surroundings, without judgment, and the human race’s affect on them. So *Framework*’s relationship to acoustic ecology is automatic, built-in, unavoidable, and maybe invisible, in the same way that any

ear in any space is as well. It is only about awareness.

I think the same way about my own work as a sound artist. It is about looking inwards as much as it is about listening outwards, but through the concentration, perhaps meditation, that comes through active listening, losing yourself in sound, in time, or in space. My mantra has long been something the great artist Jeph Jerman said to me when I interviewed him years ago for *Framework*: "If someone asked me what it is I'm trying to do, I would probably say I'm trying to forget myself." To forget oneself, not in a sense of erasure, but of dissolution into an environment, abandonment of ego, towards an experience of self and place.

Patrick Tubin McGinley (1975, USA/Estonia), a.k.a. **murmer**, is a composer and artist working with sound, site, radio, film, and performance. Since the mid-1990s he has built a collection of found sounds and found objects that have become the basis of his work, along with techniques of site-specific sonic intervention and interaction. In 2002, he founded Framework Radio, and since then has produced a weekly field recording-focused radio show heard around the world. He gives presentations, workshops, and performances based on the exploration of site-specific sound with his ongoing *Echo Surveys* project, while in performance his interest in field recording has expanded into an attempt to integrate and resonate found sounds, found objects, specific spaces, and moments in time, in order to create a direct and visceral link with an audience and location.

murmerings.com
frameworkradio.net

Alëna Korolëva

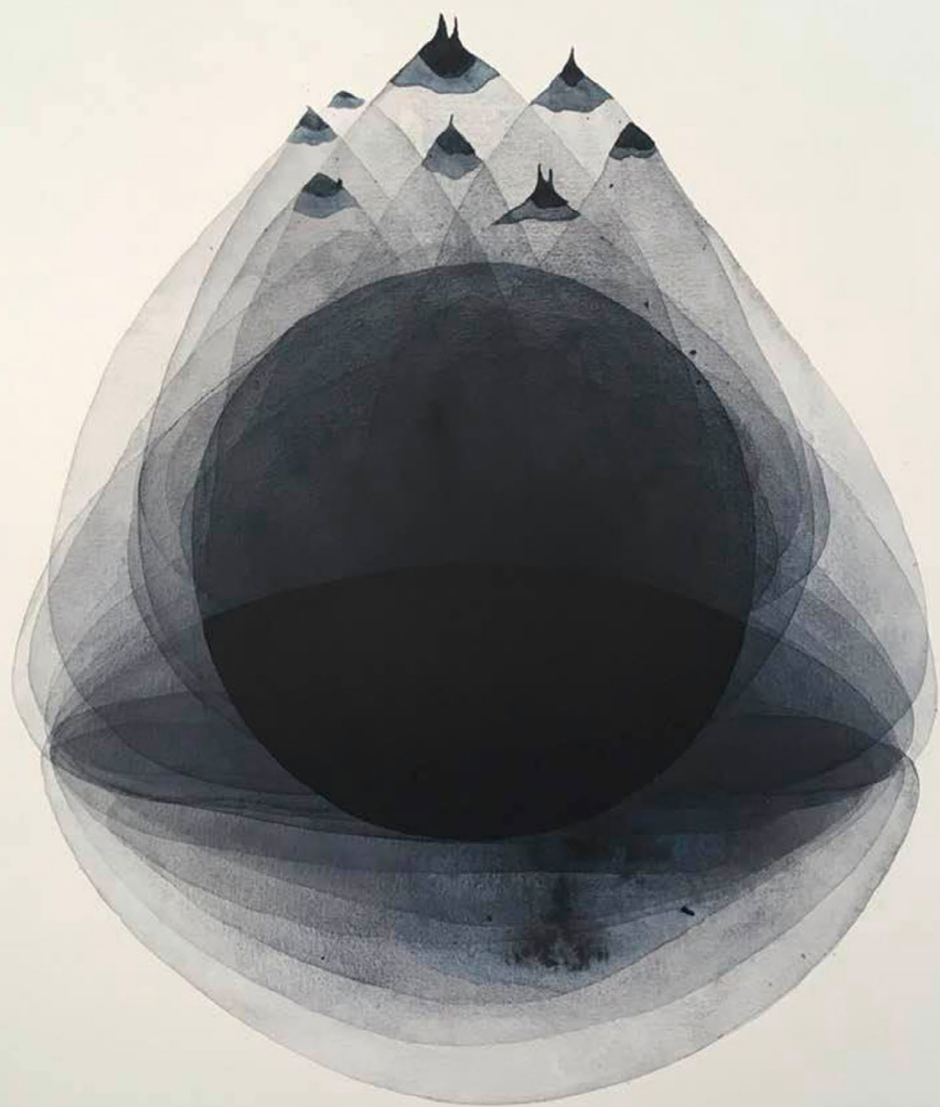
❶ For me, acoustic ecology means learning a language of nature (including the modified urban nature of machines) without dividing sounds between useful and useless, being here and now and documenting my experience in different ways – whether that be a raw recording or as a processed composition. It's an attempt to rebuild relationships and communicate with a place instead of just using it mindlessly. It's a resistance to colonial norms of occupation and extraction. It's about witnessing change and taking some responsibility to take care of, or at least acknowledge the state of balance or imbalance between newly built environments and the ecosystems already in place.

❷ I'm working on a project about the sounds of the ever changing waterfront of Toronto, at the border between the city and Lake Ontario, recording sounds of wildlife affected by urban expansion. I also do clean-ups around the lake regularly. Usually these two activities don't cross, though I still pay attention to sounds while I'm picking up garbage. But recently during a clean-up I heard a crumbling sound from the bushes, it sounded like a piece of hard plastic being destroyed. Searching after this sound, I found a squirrel eating a plastic cup. I've never seen an animal eating plastic with my own eyes, it was terrifying. I didn't record this sound, but it reminded me why I'm doing these clean-ups and why I want to document sounds of wildlife while it's still here.

Another example is my participation in keeping a garden friendly to pollinators and birds. Together with my neighbors, we plant and take care of native plants around our building and this garden is both food source and shelter for many urban wildlife species: bees, butterflies, birds, raccoons and squirrels. I live downtown, so when I hear the sounds of different birds, or even the screams of raccoons fighting at night in our garden, despite the omnipresent traffic din and offensive airport noises, I feel that it's worth trying.

Sonic ecologies, bioacoustics and environmental activism definitely have common ground in their attitudes towards the Earth. Only by listening and observing complex webs of life can we learn how to repair the ongoing damage of human domination over other species.

❸ I don't think there is any real division between music and the sounds of nature. Music and songs came from mimicking natural sounds. I love when field recording are used in compositions, improvisations or just published as they are. It can educate people about faraway places, train ears to find harmonies in everyday noises, enrich music with familiar or unusual textures and provide new documentary dimensions to abstract sound work.



Karolína
Rossí,
untitled,
acrylic on
linen,
2021

④ I recently moved to Canada, but in the country where I spent most of my life, Russia, changes in environmental consciousness are happening too slowly due to the autocratic regime. Policymakers in power are interested in sustaining an extraction economy and that's why precious forests and ecosystems are not protected enough. Volunteers and grass-root organizations are trying hard to change these policies, but the only hope is to fight for democracy. In recent years more and more sound artists in Russia are turning to field recordings, remapping cities and secluded places with sound. There is almost zero support for artists in Russia, so it's always done by enthusiasts who can find time after their day-jobs. Artists can't even get funds from abroad due to recent "foreign agency" laws. In order to involve broader publics, it would be helpful to fund artist projects which focus on sustainability, as well as to allow freedom of speech. Currently activists can be detained by police for any attempts at organizing peaceful protests, including activists in the climate movement.

Another factor which affects environmental consciousness is access to information. Despite globalization, a large part of Russian society lives in an information bubble which is defined by language. Only recently have I started to hear phrases in the Russian language like "climate justice" or "feedback loops" and independent publishing houses have started to translate literature about environmental and intersectional activism. Many great books still need to be translated, but again it's a non-profit endeavor that only a few dedicate their time to.

Alëna Korolëva is a multi-disciplinary artist from Russia who makes sound collages with field recordings. She also works in photo and video art and curates programs for film festivals. She has a degree in documentary film making and has made a few short films, but since 2018 she's reinvented her practice with sound art.

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Eric Leonardson

① Out of a basic desire to help others, I became personally involved in acoustic ecology. Murray Schafer's "Ear Cleaning" exercises, Hildegard Westerkamp's soundwalks, along with her and Barry Truax's soundscape compositions, are core to my understanding and teaching of acoustic ecology, all to engage students and colleagues as sound makers and listeners. In this practice, I include both children and adults, people outside of the professional worlds of art, science, and academia. With careful planning, applied in an open and mutually respectful way, this practice enables me to transfer knowledge experientially. This is especially important. In simple terms acoustic ecology may be an equation of sound making and listening, part of a holistic view of the communication processes underlying all life.

Beyond its transdisciplinary nature, as a field of study, and a social movement, the strongest attraction of acoustic ecology lies in its potential to challenge me and others, offering emergent information and learning on how sound actually functions as a medium and an actor in everyday life and art. When based in scientific study in conjunction with creative interpretation, this broad field of activity informs me of methods, how the reception and perception of sound functions within aesthetic and social relationships. I think of it as a well or spring that I can dip into to refresh my own practice.

People are very important to me — both the originators of acoustic ecology and its new students. Their efforts inspire and guide me as a teaching artist and citizen. They produce dialog between people inside and outside the field. As a framework, acoustic ecology may offer the key to answering some of

the most challenging for humanity. I find this both challenging and rewarding.

Cohering a shared and refreshing sense of place and community, solidifying a base for the people involved in acoustic ecology should be our mission and our new relationship with local actors and global partners. This base may help us begin to grow and learn from contemporary community leaders. Our effort is deeply involved with identifying inequalities and coercion by imbalances in wealth distribution, mistreatment of land and people in the American continents. The disparities within Chicago are pronounced, audible and deadly. As many are enduring great anxiety and despair over climate change with the trauma of racism and communal strife, programs and support for therapy and healing are urgently needed.

Since the beginning of European colonization, a host of ethical and environmental problems have plagued residents of Chicago and communities across the United States. These problems extend outward to the whole Earth. It manifests in colonialism and imperialism. A profound shift is necessary, to re-imagine humanity in relationship with our Earth. As we heard from the IPCC and UN that “we failed to listen,” and now face a “code red for humanity,” the ideas and practices of acoustic ecology may be the key to realizing this critical effort.

② Because of my interest and activity in visual arts and music, and the field of acoustic ecology, I have been, at various times, in close communication with researchers and scientists in some of these other areas (bioacoustics, landscape ecology, soundscape ecology, eco-acoustics). I learned that we all have an affinity for music and often are both scientists and musicians. Bernie Krause would be the best-known example of the latter.

Barry Truax and Hildegard Westerkamp are exemplary electroacoustic composers who defined the genre of soundscape composition. Before he joined the World Soundscape Project, as I recall him saying, Barry began his college degree in physics

before switching to music. Had I not pursued degrees in fine art I may have pursued a science degree instead. Jana Winderen, Andrea Polli, and Leah Barclay epitomize this relationship through their collaborations with scientists. Andrea’s work with sonification of weather data exemplifies this. Leah’s and Jana’s work involves collaborations with marine biologists, while Leah also works with indigenous people around Australia.

Some of the initiatives I have been involved in over many years I’ve been leading soundwalks in cities and national parks. This year (2021) I completed a resource document in acoustic ecology for national parks interpreters in the USA. Locally, I’ve organized an annual series of neighborhood soundwalks started in 2016 with the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology (MSAE) and Chicago Park District. One of the soundwalks was designed to attract and engage non-scientists in listening and collecting acoustic data about “singing insects,” a citizen science initiative. On two occasions MSAE partnered with Chicago Park District and Experimental Sound Studio, another nonprofit arts organization, to conduct free field recording workshops.

Soundwalks and soundscape field stations are catching on. Alex Braidwood teaches in the Master of Arts program for sustainable design at Iowa State University, and produces his own music with field recordings based on natural soundscapes. Alex directs a residency program offering opportunities for artists to work alongside scientists.

At the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida, Eve Payor and Nathan Wolek are leading soundwalks, organizing residencies, and making sound studies of the natural habitats in connection with the National Park Service. They also participate in the annual World Listening Day events initiated internationally by the World Listening Project. These are mostly artistic, creative events but they also include soundscape ecologists, bioacousticians, anti-noise activists and others engaged in the policy and science side of environmental sound concerns and studies.

③ Sound recording sparked my interest in the arts of electroacoustic music, field recording, and phonography. Acoustic Ecology propelled this interest, and also offered a subversive critique of media and technology.

The question of decontextualized and “captured sound” suggests that we can commodify and exploit places, situations, and their inhabitants. Absent the visual, I find it too easy to ignore their context and listen as if they are music, aesthetic objects independent of their former context. R. Murray Schafer was critical of this approach. In 2008 he wrote to us:

The World Listening Project needs to go farther than just holding a microphone in front of the soundscape. The recordist has an obligation to know what is being recorded and to index it carefully. We [The World Soundscape Project] did this with the recordings we made to accompany the Vancouver Soundscape and I am glad we did because locating specific sounds on those recordings and knowing something of their history makes them much more valuable than a lot of the recordings made since then. ...

Sometimes students will come to me with recordings and want me to listen to the remarkable fidelity. “What kind of frogs are on that recording?” I ask. They don’t know. But they should know, otherwise their document, which may have some aesthetic value, has no social value or historical value. Technology has made it easy to record. Any idiot can do it and produce an interesting document. But to produce a historical recording of value takes time and patience. Many recordists are merely tourists in the soundscape—unfortunately.

Murray invited us to the meeting of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE), in Mexico City, in 2009. I would argue about some distinctions but also appreciate his point about recording technology. We discussed the World Listening Project and I quickly became more deeply involved in the WFAE from that point on.

④ I feel somewhat fortunate to have studied and later to be teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) for over 20 years where there is a department of Sound, the first such department

established at any art school in the United States. SAIC promotes itself as interdisciplinary within the visual arts. American experimental art and music have been crossing disciplinary boundaries for well over the past half century.

This level of recognition does not translate into support for acoustic ecology within SAIC. However, Chicago is a very large and diverse American city. Boosting the level of support and the clarity of feedback between researchers and artists and their stakeholders (audience) is achievable in a tangible way. Knowing that I can co-teach with faculty in the departments of Architecture and Art Education is a positive sign bolstered by the past six years of programming support received from the Chicago Park District to lead free public soundwalks in parks across the city.

Acting collectively and being organized give power to the people. Collaboration consists of sharing interests, skills and resources, I believe, so that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts. In a capitalist society there is intense material and ideological pressure to withdraw, to believe misinformation, and act as if one can do better alone or in isolated cells. There are plenty of examples to find demonstrating how small groups, be they in academic institutions or governmental ones, can become entrenched, territorial, and blocks against collaboration.

Regarding the question of my satisfaction with the level of audience for my work, this is difficult to answer in a thorough way. Because my work manifests in so many forms, my response will be for better or worse general and brief. The answer is no. Satisfaction is a matter of balancing false hopes against real outcomes. Since it is difficult or impossible to have certainty about who, how, what and when others are engaged or “listening,” the norm is to be dissatisfied to the point of despair. Facing the abyss, one can either quit or adjust their expectations. I have navigated through these emotions and realities and reconciled them as best I can. Experience is a good teacher, though sometimes a harsh one.

6 Clearly the pandemic is one negative stimulus for broader involvement of the public and policymakers. Reports in the news media on changes in our soundscape or “pandemic silence” were frequent and may have made more of a difference than all the global/local annual World Listening Day events since 2008, combined with the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology’s newsletters and scholarly journal publications since the early 1990s.

The power of networks, people organized and working collectively, will be a stimulus. Of course, this is not easily achieved. Also, as we have in the USA, networks can foster actions against productive changes. However, I believe it is important to note, these do not spontaneously form and act without immense infusions of money from nonprofit organizations that receive corporate and philanthropic support from donors. The legal system here “in the belly of the beast” involves two economic sectors, the for-profit sector and non-profit sector. Understanding how these networks and legal system function, their limits, and how to use them is essential.

Technology has a role to play, but considering the experience of recent years, it tends to be a tool of power for exploitation and social control rather than one for open discourse and democracy. Understanding the role of technology in theoretical and practical terms, is essential. There is a vast quantity of literature on this topic, perhaps more than what any single activist can process and programmatically implement.

Bruno Latour addressed the social and political development of science and society. He synthesizes a broad range of scientific and philosophical histories, tracking recent political and social developments that define the mythos and ethos of Western Civilization: our present state.

In both of his books, *Facing Gaia* and *Down to Earth* Latour cites Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway’s book, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*. It tells how power, money, and misplaced trust can be weaponized by a few to dupe the many. I recommend reading this book to understand how we have arrived at the current state we are in as the IPCC’s “Code Red for humanity” demands immediate, emergency action.

The power of narrative may be another way to stimulate action through art and imagination. Combined with a thorough appreciation for science, telling the stories, whether it is through games and other forms of entertainment, may be a way to move consciousness toward care and environmental stewardship.

Eric Leonardson is an accomplished Chicago-based composer, radio artist, sound designer, instrument inventor, improviser, visual artist, and teacher. He is President of the World Listening Project (founded in 2008), founder (in 2009) of the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology, and President of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (founded in 1993). He is currently an Associate Professor Adjunct in the Department of Sound at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

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Jacek Smolicki

① My personal interest builds on my gradual shift, many years ago, from making organized music/sound to recognizing music and sonic qualities in what surrounds us. Consequently, I have become interested in how our attempts to organize time and space influence multiple ways through which life around us expresses itself through sound. To me, sonic environments never emerge in a vacuum but are always reflections of multiple, entangled processes that connect and weave through the past, present, and future. A given sonic environment, as we hear it now, does not merely communicate what's taking place presently but also speaks of the past that enabled that very configuration of events, actors, and elements of the environment. Similarly, this configuration enables specific types of (sonic) futures to come and hence disable other (sonic) potentialities. In other words, the soundscapes we hear today are conducive to certain and not other futures. This is why, I believe, when studying, talking about, or simply listening to acoustic ecologies — or sonic environments, the term I personally prefer — we need to take into account the fact that while doing so, we operate on a long time axis, longer than the one that directly concerns us and our life spans. We need to take into account the fact that the way that spaces are organized sonically has its roots in deep time; it includes realms and temporalities of other species and, by implication, stretches onward into the deep future (if such is possible, considering dramatic changes to climate on a planetary scale). The way we organize (or disorganize) soundscapes today will echo within the realms and bodies of species yet to be evolved.

② Those terms are quite vast. Much depends on how one defines them within her own work. It is often that one works on something without considering it activism, and then, at the end of the process, the activist potential emerges unexpectedly. Sometimes, it might be through the act of listening (and not composing) that the piece becomes one of the mentioned

types. In other words, the listener might recognize an activist potential in a piece that was not intended to be read like that. This is why I personally lean towards art that does not explicitly aspire to be this or that. This is also why I am allergic to art and artists who preemptively call themselves “political,” “ecological” artists, etc. The work, I believe, acquires political/ecological significance or lack thereof, not through the act of naming it that way, but through its resonance (or dissonance) with circumstances and ecologies it is to encounter and which often change and cannot be that easily anticipated. Returning to the question, there are attempts to define each of these terms and clearly differentiate between them. Bioacoustics is often perceived as a more scientifically rigorous activity involving technological monitoring systems that allegedly exclude human agency from capturing and examining soundscapes. Acoustic ecology, in some explanations of this tradition, emerged precisely to magnify the human dimension, agency, and subjectivity. I see the two as not necessarily competing with but rather complementing each other. These two perspectives can even be put into a productive alliance, and this is what I have also been trying in my practice where along with very subjective, situated types of sonic sensitivity, I use automated sensors and monitoring devices. None of this, obviously, gives us a perfect insight into the environment, as the environment as such is not containable. The multiplicity of ways through which our planet can be listened to, with or without technology — to me being nothing alien or auxiliary to human nature but rather its intrinsic component — can teach us that there is no single position from which we can understand, experience or connect with the world, and I think this is the biggest and most important task of acoustic ecology (or whatever we call it). In other words, it's not about using one over the other mode of listening to reach some correct assertion that can then be transposed into an easily, universally applicable solution — a hearing remedy of sorts — but rather creating a dialog (or polemics)

between those various modalities of sonically being in the world and finding, perhaps, hybrid paths that can be, if one wishes so, implemented as to change one's own perceptual patterns. Acoustic ecology's goal, in yet other words, should not be set out to seek solutions for "improving" the world in any direct manner, but instead changing it indirectly by first transforming the very perceptual biases of the world within us, its listeners.

Electroacoustic music is often critiqued for being too apolitical, abstracted and non-engaged in burning issues while instrumentally approaching environmental sounds. Ecological activism can be seen to be located somewhere towards the opposite end of this axis: It is heavily politicized, pro-active, revolution-leaning. But instead of seeing those two in such a polarized way, they should be set in a dialog, even dispute. Not necessarily a reconcilable one. Not in order to forcefully marry and heal each other, but to, perhaps, reconfigure means through which they come to be and are set to operate. For example, electroacoustic music does not have to be about ecological issues in order to be "activist." In other words, it does not have to sonify the effects of global warming to be ecologically conscious. It can just as well be environmental if, for example, a composer of electroacoustic music uses fair technologies, renewable energy, second-hand gear, etc. A conscious approach to one's backend for making electroacoustic music can be much closer to being "environmentally activist" than doing work about environmental concerns without paying attention to the means through which it is generated.

③ I think it depends on several things. While working with field recordings, it's important to ask oneself about the connection with

the site. What brings me here? What legitimizes my being here and my process of recording? I think we tend to overly generalize the term field recording, using it to embrace all kinds of sound recording practices in the field. Instead, there are numerous kinds of field recording practices. Some are exploitative (short term, directed towards extraction of sound from its context in order to use them as merely an aesthetic effect; a colonialist approach). Others are ignorant (focusing on only one layer of a given soundscape while forgetting an array of other, troubling layers and sonic vantage points from which the given sound might mean something completely different. In a way, also a very colonial act). But besides those, I believe that there are also practices of field recording that are generously conducted by the sense of care, belonging and profound connection to the place, its actors and energies. I am very fond of indigenous epistemologies and their approach to land, such as the one I got to experience in Canada while talking to the members of Coast Salish communities. I think there is much that field recordists could learn from those epistemologies in their approach to recording soundscapes. This, however, has to be done carefully. The act of learning might also be unjust and exploitative, easily slipping into cultural appropriation. If it is determined merely by one's will to benefit from the acquired knowledge without acknowledging where it comes from, learning and then adopting what is learned can be harmful and violent to that knowledge. I think that one should care about one's field recordings, their distribution, circulation — sharing thereof in general — keeping in mind that throughout their lifespan these recordings remain connected to places, people, events, species, energies and, by

Lignite pits of Jänschwalde in the former East Germany (NASA Earth Observatory)



implication, that they have their history and dignity. Clearly, context is important. Necessary. Irreducible. However, I will venture to say that in some circumstances decontextualization can also be approached as a critical and reflective method of working with sound. For example, in a way, anonymizing can be seen as a particular way of simultaneously protecting the context and decontextualizing its recorded emanation. Moving away from decontextualization, recontextualization can be seen as another gesture worth exploring within the field recording tradition. Given new or regenerated context to the material that for some reason has lost its original relationality (archival material, found footage, etc.) Recontextualization, in this sense, can be seen as a way of taking care of a displaced sound by carefully and mindfully veiling it in a new contextual robe that gives it a new or renewed meaning.

④ In terms of the audience, there is always interest and various, diverse feedback. However, as is the case among many other cultural workers, it is almost always artists who constitute the biggest part of the audience. Something framed as art (environmental, political, whatever) will always in the first place attract artists. Perhaps one important function that networks such as WFAE or CENSE could play might be the diversification of audiences by communicating more intensely with institutions, actors, and organizations that do not directly engage with the arts.

In terms of my interdisciplinary collaboration, I am privileged. Besides being an artist, I also hold an academic position. This certainly helps in establishing contacts with representatives from other disciplines and institutions. Compared to me presenting myself as an artist (or previously a design and art student), so-called experts, scientists, or communication officers in various institutions seem to be more willing to talk to me. But there is also the flipside to the interdisciplinary collaboration. It has become a norm, something that one, as an artist, feels obliged to engage in order to make

her work relevant, get grants, etc. I do not think interdisciplinary one's practice should be seen as always already positive. While certainly having its value, it has simultaneously become an empty token, especially in situations where artists work with scientists or other experts think they do groundbreaking work but in fact, simply illustrate or "aestheticize" the hard sciences to make them more experiential and pleasurable for the audience. Many data sonification projects are, unfortunately, of that nature, and I myself have worked on some sonification pieces that merely articulated numeric data by means of sound. Is that interdisciplinary collaboration? No, it is not, I am afraid. Truly interdisciplinary work, I believe, is where both or however many disciplines are involved (their best practices, methods, biases, ethics, etc.) are open to being reshaped, contested, reconfigured, and challenged during the process of collaboration. This is, of course, an ideal scenario. I like to think of interdisciplinary or perhaps multidisciplinary as something that can be accomplished within the very scope of one's own work, production, piece or research. If one wants to expand one's knowledge and include perspectives from other fields, there is usually an abundance of literature, online sources, and courses out there. When working on the piece about intertidal zones in Vancouver, sound and soundscape studies were obviously my guiding vectors. But that vector quite quickly diffracted in other directions, fields, disciplines and debates, including marine biology, mineralogy, environmental science, history/ethnography, and astrophysics, to name just a few. Quite soon, the sound was only one layer I was exploring. Literature, conversations, and participation in lectures were some ways of achieving this multidisciplinary dimension.

⑤ There is obviously a wide gap between how we define, relate to and work with the broader public and policymakers. To be honest, I think there are other forms of action that can effectively influence policymaking than art. Again, in line with what I said earlier, I do not think that art should be directly and in its entirety invested in the idea of changing policy. As said, there

are better instruments to do that than synthesizers and audio recorders. I think that if, all in all, art needs to change something, it should seek that something where it has the most capacity to be transformative, namely the terrain of everyday life. This is why I find the most sense, nourishment and motivation in working with the general public, at times tiny groups or even individuals. If one's art, like a nourishing seed, hits the proper ground, the resonance might be unexpectedly fruitful. Perhaps through mobilizing members of the general public — even if individually — one's work can subsequently begin to ripple further and eventually affect policymakers. One should, however, not hold on to this vision too tightly, but rather leave it as a potentiality, I believe.

Jacek Smolicki (1982) is an interdisciplinary artist, designer, and soundwalker. Besides working with existing documents, archives and heritage, Smolicki develops alternative modes of sensing, recording, para-archiving, and mediating stories and signals from various sites, scales, and temporalities. His work is manifested through soundwalks, soundscape compositions, expanded forms of writing, site-responsive performances, experimental archives, and audio-visual installations. He has performed and exhibited internationally. He is currently a post-doctorate researcher at Linköping University exploring the history and prospects of soundwalking and field recording practices from the perspective of media arts, environmental humanities, and philosophy of technology. He is also an associate scholar at the Informatics and Media Hub for Digital Existence at Uppsala University. Smolicki recently co-founded the Walking Festival of Sound, a transdisciplinary event focusing on the creative and critical potential of walking through and listening to our everyday surroundings. Currently, Smolicki works to establish the Baltic Forum for Sonic Environments, a network of artists, scientists and activists concerned with various aspects of the Baltic Sea soundscapes.

smolicki.com

Peter Simon

① I grew up in Poland and spent a lot of time alone in the forests of the Carpathians as a child. In these forests I learned to listen. Back then, the sound was different than today. Today, I live in Cologne and listen to the city. I listen to the changes over the years and try to analyze and understand them. The connections are much more complicated than it looks. And that is my field of research.

② Cologne is known for its electronic music, but also for the WDR's Studio Akustische Kunst. The sound art scene is diverse. But it is not very political.

③ If this happens on the abstract and musical level, then I have no problem with it. It becomes difficult when it foregrounds the attributes of nature without the context.

④ It's like being on tour. New places for a certain time, new cooperation partners, new sounds. Sometimes also known and familiar. And sometimes it's like a big family. But most exciting are the people who don't know sound art and are surprised and amazed by my work. These encounters are the most exciting, because something happens with the people and I can share my thoughts. We then have deep philosophical conversations about the world.

⑤ More humility and respect towards the other. Less capitalism, more serenity. Trust in science and art. Courageous decisions that are formulated in an understandable way. Simply the truth.

Peter Simon was born in Poland, and lives and works in Cologne. He has a sense for sounds and silence. He studied at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, obtained a master's degree with a focus on sound art/installation. He also studied physics at the Ruhr University Bochum. His work now focuses on sound ecology, psycho-acoustics, bio-acoustics and their influence on individuals and society. His work has been presented at numerous festivals, museums and galleries. Simon also produces radio plays as well as audio documentaries, such as essays and features. As a curator, Simon has organized the sound art program *Lautsprecher* at the Museum Ostwall Dortmund from 2010–2015. His sound installations are part of the permanent collection of ZKM – Zentrum für Medienkunst Karlsruhe. His video works are distributed by IMAI – inter media art institute Düsseldorf.

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Barbara Benish

❶ I'm interested in expanding the experience of the body when engaging in an environment that we may call "art." Since my graduate studies in art school in California (1986–1988), under the influence of Professor Michael Brewster, I've explored installations and site-specific works that bring more than just visual interactions with the space/place.

❷ As I am bi-cultural, I spend half my time at a small, rural Bohemian farm (ArtMill), and the other at a seaside university town in northern California. So these are very different cultures/areas, obviously. And yet, both regions are forested, semi-rural, and have artists working in sound, with very strong environmental engagements connected to that. San Francisco and Santa Cruz (USA) have long been hotbeds for environmental activism, progressive ideas at the university (UCSC: T.J. Demos, A. Tsing, D. Harraway, A. Davis, A. Fritz, et al.), and "radical" politics. And yet the openness of Central European ideas seems less constrained vis-a-vis sound, and less "representational," if one can use that in the context of Sound Ecology. There is an openness to experiment here in Central Europe that I do not find elsewhere.

❸ If so, ... why not?

❹ Our public in the rural southwest Bohemian countryside is very conservative. Most are pro-Babiš/anti-EU/anti-immigration. Because they are mostly farmers and factory workers, they see ArtMill (our eco-art center here) as bizarre and sometimes threatening. It is difficult. We exhibit art that challenges their concepts of identity, aesthetics, culture, food, everything. For over two decades we've been a sort of an outpost in this wilderness, bringing in foreign artists, making strange sound recordings, creating exhibitions and openings to the public. Recently, with the backlash of political conservatism, it has become more difficult. NGOs like ours have more problems to keep functioning, due to increased legal pressures and requirements. As an individual artist, this does not effect me. But as director of an NGO that

shows other artists, it does. Of course after all this time in the countryside, raising a family here and being now "the older generation," we have some respect and a local audience. I would hope that after twenty years we have made some difference here. As a foreigner myself in Czech Republic, this makes me immediately an outsider. Even with a 30-year history here. But in that space I have found great freedom as an artist.

❺ That is the question. ArtMill was showing films about plastic pollution to the kids at our summer camps 15 years ago. We made art about it and talked about individual responsibility for the environment. Amazing Czech and Slovak and international artists came to teach and share with those children each summer, for many years. Those kids are now grown up and some of them have become activists, artists, environmentalists ... all over the world. I really believe that the future lies with our younger generation, and they are the ones to focus on. Policy does not come just with the UN or governments; Civil Society starts in each village, with each voice learning to speak up. This takes confidence building, especially in this country — for the women, of whom so many are patronized by their husbands in a very traditional situation. I would include the story of Dr. Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement in every K–8 curriculum both in the Czech Republic and the US: community building through strength and knowledge sharing via the arts.

Barbara Benish is an artist, curator, writer and farmer with Czech roots. She moved from California to Prague in 1992 as a Fulbright scholar. Benish is Founding Director of ArtMill (est. 2004) in rural Bohemia, an eco-art center hosting Study Abroad programs and artist residencies. She served as Advisor for the United Nations in Arts and Outreach, focusing on an international campaign on environmental issues, and is a Fellow at the Social Practice Arts Research Center (University of California). Her work engages the social, environmental and political justice themes of our time, critiquing historical tropes that have kept unsustainable systems operating. Benish divides her time between California and her studio at ArtMill in the Czech Republic.

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art-dialogue.org

Ján Solčáni

① I think the whole discipline of exploring the relationship between my ears, my body and the environment that surrounds them is very important. It has definitely the power to open new perspectives and ways of understanding. However, the ways and methods we use to gain knowledge about this relationship must be taken into account. It was Murray Schafer who, in his study of the limits of nationalism in Canadian music, wrote that the Eskimos are an astonishingly unmusical race and their way of singing sounds like Churchill clearing his throat. Yes, that's what it sounds like when you use the Western tradition in music and tonality as a universal tool of assessment. Let's start questioning the questions. When you use your perspective and the tradition it represents as the only possible way to understand the world around you, you are not far from being a colonialist. What I mean by that is this: You've probably come across the term "sound hunters" when talking about the practice of field recording. I think it's quite present in the discussion within the Czech-Slovak cultural context. What does it say about the whole discipline? Who is it for and who is excluded? As in other disciplines, we need to incorporate minority perspectives into the methodologies of acoustic ecology, to make it more open, safe and solidarity-based.

② It depends on the form of presentation itself. I think that the problem of decontextualization starts when the form that is being presented, like sound or installation, claims itself as a record of reality or some kind of authentic representation. Capturing the sonic world around you is always artificial. You are waiting for the traffic to die down, for an airplane to pass, you are choosing specific technology, place, method of recording, editing and later the form of presentation. This is a design process. And there is also the problem of exotification of recorded material when you make content available that is normally inaccessible or culturally foreign. I think this should be always taken into account.

④ I can address this through my experience with the [unseen.help](#) project, an online web archive for different approaches to listening and cultivating the relationship between our bodies, space and sound. I have always had the feeling that when it comes to the listening, the whole discipline is somehow phenomenologically reduced into sound and music related-fields. Especially when it comes to the forms of presentation. I've always found that to be a bit limiting. Out of this inner deficiency this project was shaped. The aim was (and still is) to present the processes of listening in the widest possible scope, as a discipline that flows seamlessly through disciplines, communicates across them and can link them. Presented here are works that connect movement art and dance, performance practice, anthropology, singing, sound studies, media theories, recovery coaching and feminist theories. Of course, it draws on the tradition of listening as shaped by Pauline Oliveros. This is especially evident in the form of the presentations. The individual works are performed through video and text tutorials and guides, giving access to the background and motivations that led to the creation of each artwork. The way in which the individual pieces are made available is designed to enable the viewers and listeners to apply each practice in their own way, or to develop them further through the provided secondary literature or directly with the artist, via feedback of his/her/their work. To present the artistic practice not as something limited to the gallery or cultural venue presentation, where you often passively consume what is happening in front of you, but as a way of thinking about the world and its specific phenomena. As something that you can directly experience on your body, that can be part of your flesh. For this reason, the form of manuals and exercises was chosen to allow the audience to directly experience new perspectives. When we begin to see the world from different perspectives, we might start to think about it and perceive it differently.

⑤ The question itself is problematic. There is no time to stimulate anyone anymore, we are trying to jump off a runaway train. The first action that we need to take, not even to save our environment anymore, but to ensure that in the near future we will be able to walk outside during the daytime on the planet at all, is to smash the patriarchy and its models of thinking and acting. How should I stimulate a policymaker that has an elementary problem with reading comprehension or critical thinking? A person whose only commitment is to an endless accumulation of capital? We need to start thinking from the surplus and not from scarcity. We all have voices, but who is listening?

Ján Solčáni, on behalf of Skupina.

Ján Solčáni moves in his practice between the positions of curator, sound artist and theoretician. His fields of interest lie in the phenomena of culture that are perceivable and expressible with sound. He organizes Videogram, a lecture series on contemporary art practice and theory; is a co-founder and curator of the music label Skupina; curator of the listening archive Unseen and he organizes the activities of the Roman Radkovič Collective. He is currently completing his PhD studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Brno. He works in Brno and Berlin.

skupinaaaaa.com

unseen.help

videogram.favu.vut.cz

Soundscape Research Studio **University of Wrocław (Poland)**

Robert Losiak

① For over 15 years I have been dealing with acoustic ecology in the fields of research and education. It is now the basic area of my professional practice related to academic work. As a musicologist, I belong to a generation that has not had any contact with the idea of acoustic ecology during their university education. It was only many years after my studies that I came across the figure of R. Murray Schafer and his thoughts. It was a great and rather unexpected discovery for me that influenced my further choices. From today's perspective, I can describe the situation in Poland at that time (20 years ago) as pioneering. The topic of the soundscape did not function in public discussion or

research, there was no access to literature. What attracted me then to acoustic ecology, I would describe, firstly as the possibility of going beyond the area of traditional musicology, which seemed to me detached from real social problems and closed in its discourse, and secondly a certain potential for changing reality, the real action for the environment and quality of life. Of course, behind all this, there was an interest, and in time even fascination, with the sounds of the environment. If, however, I were to define what is most important to me today, it would be the same listening experience and the related mindfulness, which shapes our existence in a much wider dimension than just ecological or soundscape issues.

Daniel Brożek

② The history of electroacoustic music is directly connected with the history of listening practices. The concepts of deep listening, acousmatic listening, sound installations, or immersive listening wouldn't exist without electroacoustic music experiments by Pauline Oliveros, Pierre Schaeffer, Eliane Radigue, Edgard Varèse, Annea Lockwood. The experimental forms of electroacoustic music enable creators, performers, and listeners to challenge their listening habits. New sounds, spatial enhancements, and acoustic structures help to understand the sound world around us, and train our ears to listen with a deeper understanding of the processes behind them. For example, within the Canti Spazializzati Sound Lab workshops we are using ambisonics tools to shape virtual acoustic spaces for natural environments with endangered species. In sound compositions, we do not use field recordings, but synthesized sound layers. Deep listening sessions in sound environments created by us in an art gallery using multi-channel sound systems which help listeners to understand how these environments would sound without the sounds of a given species, what specific sound events are related to a species. In such projects, we also stress the problem of noise pollution, where again synthesized sound helps people to understand for example the impact of traffic noise on natural ecosystems.

Kamila Staško-Mazur

③ Publishing de-contextualized field recordings, or field recordings without detailed information about their source, has a number of implications. The positive ones may sometimes include the creative functions, which involve bringing out new sonic qualities and creation of new contexts. In fact, presentation of any live recordings stimulates reflection, activates sonic memory and imagination, and engages one in thinking about different sonic spaces. It can spur curiosity and encourage involvement, as well as triggering unexpected interpretations and surprising coincidences. The inclusion of unaltered field recordings in a live music performance emphasizes life and our experience, introducing environmental sounds and their concomitant meanings to the traditional sonic palette of live music. It allows them to be noticed, appreciated and creatively developed. However, if recordings are published without any information about their original context, their sonic aura can be lost and their primal meanings devaluated. This practice can be deceptive and destructive, even if it can be liberating by revealing a new communicative potential and not the obvious features. When de-contextualized, the status of source recordings changes. Therefore, one should not underestimate the importance of indicating the intentions, and rights of the sound makers/sound-making agents, and of ensuring the transparence of the recordist's perspective and purposes, as well as the significance of interrogating the listener's habits and awareness.

Daniel Brożek

④ My curatorial practice is based on the concept coming from John Cage and Wandelweiser Group cosmos which say that the sound event happens between composer, performer, and listener. And each part of this triangle is equal. During our concerts, performances, sound walks, and sound installation exhibitions each listener has a very creative and active role. Due to this we always put a lot of effort into audience-building activities. We run

our monthly radio show in Radio Kapital, publish articles in magazines about art ideas we are working on and organize workshops for people who are interested in sound creation and experimental music techniques. Some people are our audience at the beginning, then they participate in our workshops and later on they become artists who present their compositions or sound installations. For our events, we always choose venues and spaces which are not usual for sound events. We have organized our events in art galleries, cinema production studios, an academic planetarium, theatre halls, a pumping station, as well outdoors in parks and forests. For each event we organize, we have our regular audience and our host audience. Thanks to this we can extend our audience constantly and get new people interested in our activities. For many sound art based projects, we invite visual artists, researchers, and engineers who do not have music education. Many times this is an advantage because they do not follow beaten path and are open to experimentation.

Robert Losiak

⑤ In my opinion, the motivation to act for acoustic ecology in the social dimension is a very difficult problem, because the modern world is faced with much more serious ecological challenges, of which acoustic issues seem less important. And because, realistically speaking, all kinds of changes involve financial commitment, it can be assumed that it will be directed more to other areas, such as, above all, preventing climate change. However, if the interest and commitment of decision makers and the public in the matter of sound ecology are as expected, it can be justified by caring for the quality of life, not only for the comfort and well-being of citizens but above all by concern for their physical and mental health. It can be easily demonstrated that the lack of care for the sound environment, increasing noise, increases susceptibility to diseases, especially mental disorders, promotes social conflicts, reduces work efficiency, and therefore in the overall balance of social life, is simply unprofitable.

Such arguments, unfortunately, appeal much more to the imagination of politicians and economists than pure ideas, such as Schafer's "tuning of the world." However, if any changes in this area are to have a chance of success, they must be rooted in education and upbringing. I mean upbringing included in the educational system (pre-school and school). Education promoting silence, listening hygiene, conscious contact with sounds and sound environments — from an early age, and in the family from the first days of a child's life. This is the basis for any further action, and was, of course, already predicted by R. Murray Schafer many years ago.

Daniel Brożek is a Wrocław-based sound art curator (*Survival Art Review*, *Canti Spazializzati*, *Sanatorium of Sound*) and modern music critic (*Glissando magazine*, *Canti Illuminati* blog). In the project *Czarny Latawiec*, he works as a sound artist, produces music albums, sound installations and soundtracks for theatre plays.

Robert Losiak is a musicologist and sound ecologist. He holds a PhD and is affiliated with the University of Wrocław. His research focuses on the soundscape. In 2009, he founded the Soundscape Research Studio at the University of Wrocław. He has designed a research project on the soundscape of Wrocław and co-edited *Audiosfera miasta* (2012), *Audiosfera Wrocławia* (2014), *Audiosfera Szkice* vols. I and II (2016, 2018), and is editor of the journal *Audiosfera: Koncepcje-Badania-Praktyki*.

Kamila Staško-Mazur is a researcher and member of the Soundscape Research Studio of the University of Wrocław where she currently teaches Sound and Soundscape at the Institute of Musicology. Her interests include environmental sound awareness and the intersection of sound, music, nature and perception. She graduated in musicology and composition, she has conducted research in the Polish Radio Archives and field recordings in Poland, France and Finland, and did acoustic ecology projects resulting in texts and sound works.

soundscape.uni.wroc.pl



Andres Bosshard

❶ I am one of the co-founders of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology in 1993. It was an outstanding moment of opening and widening my horizons.

❷ The relationship is not easy. From the activist perspective, it's imperative to focus and accelerate collective behavior and transform these moments into action. For site-specific artwork, we need to slow down to experience our connectedness towards our environment. I teach myself to be a sound-gardener and a sound-forester. My artistic vision is to create time and space.

❸ Media-based work strongly seduces us to believe the promises of technology. Field recordings are played back as cinematic reconstructions. We are listening to something else, as when we are outdoors, exposed to unexpected presences. To play with field recordings in a concert is everybody's free choice and it is always surprising, but it is not realistic at all. To work with sounds outdoors and interplay with the aural environment is another method to create awareness and understanding, which I prefer for myself.

❹ I recommend strongly bottom up pre-disciplinary settings. Professional inter-disciplinarity is a tragic failure. The cross-disciplinary translation is very exhausting and leads to a minimization of knowledge which builds the ground for fake news and is very painful for all people involved. As soon as I began to understand that interventions in public space cause very different reactions at the very same time (everybody perceives from a different point of view), only then was I able to develop a fresh approach towards what I call creative misunderstanding. I have not much to say, but I am enthusiastic about talking and playing together. Together we

create surprising situations, where we are crossing the line of what we can imagine by ourselves. This needs to be non-disciplinary, free of any function or important aim.

❺ Just be together with a lot of unknown and different people. We are strangers and don't know each other. Sometimes we are very tiny, sometimes we are astonishingly big, so let's oscillate! I live in my country, whatever that means, on a suburban street, in an urban mountain forest or an abandoned riverbed. How can we create a continuous connectedness of one single day? I have developed a variety of sound walks. Bringing people together to symphonize our perceptions and sharing this in our concrete environment seems very empowering and a way to go. Today I was invited to do a city sound walk in a seminar for landscape engineers. The method of promenadology offers a wide range of environmental teaching and artistic creation.

Andres Bosshard is a recently retired radio sound pioneer, now working as sound gardener and sound admiral. He is a former sound artist, musician and lecturer: 2005–2020 at the Zurich University of the Arts in the Department of Art and Media; 2017 at sonicArk, the sound of Aarhus, for the European Capital of Culture; 2011 Klanghimmel for the 10th anniversary of the Museumsquartier in Vienna; Klangturm Expo 02 Biel; 1980–2000 Performances with Nachtluft and tours as experimental musician in Europe, America, Japan, India, at international music and sound art festivals; 2012 Lecturer ETH D-ARCH. 2003 Visiting professor at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne; 2017 Swiss Music Prize for Sound Architecture. Bosshard is involved in the Swiss KTI research project Stadtklang-Klangstadt, and since 2010, research assignments for the Federal Office for the Environment Bern.

soundcity.ws

Počerady, 2015, for *Frontiers of Solitude*.
Photo: Dominik Žižka

Jan Krτίčka

❶ As an artist, I started to work with sound more than ten years ago. My first projects were based on human voice and narration. Working on sound projects brought me gradually towards more carefully listening to the acoustic environment. I gradually started to record various acoustic environments and to use these recordings for my projects. I became more sensitive to what is happening soundwise around me. I understand the concept of Acoustic Ecology as a structure of sonic relationships in continuous process. I am trying to understand what happens in these structures and what it means. I am aware that the whole concept is quite complex and has its social and environmental aspects, where we can actively try to change the discourse, but I perceive myself in this context just as an intuitive observer.

❷ Although all these approaches to sound differ in focus, they are interconnected. I think the term Acoustic Ecology could be understood as an umbrella covering the other disciplines. People involved in electroacoustic music, in bioacoustics and environmental activists engaged with the sonic environment are more or less interconnected or at least aware of each other's activities, at least in my region and within the cultural field. Where I think there is a lack of communication and cooperation is in the connection between culture and sciences.

❸ I don't have any problem with decontextualizing or recontextualizing of anything. Any recorded sound acquires its meaning through context. If somebody wants to use field recordings as a material for a music composition, I think it's fine, just the listener should have related information about the context to understand the framework.

❹ I think the collaboration within visual art and music concerning sound and acoustic ecology is quite vivid. This also determines the mode of communication with the public that is mainly through exhibition or music performance. Cross-disciplinary communication and collaboration is more

problematic. There are not many projects and platforms where individuals or organization can share results of their work in the area of sound or acoustic ecology. When I organized the conference [Murmurans Mundus: Sonic Ecology and Beyond](#) in 2019 at the Faculty of Art and Design, University in Ústí nad Labem, I invited my colleagues from the Faculty of Environment to participate in the conference, but I didn't find anybody who would accept this invitation. However, I think transdisciplinary collaboration is essential and we must keep trying to establish it.

❺ I don't think it's realistic to involve policymakers through art. We would have to be paradoxically very loud to make the world more quiet, and I am not sure if it is the right decision. There might be a way through education, to start at the universities and to create projects for schools focused on acoustic ecology. But I think that we are still at the very beginning.

Jan Krτίčka (1979) is an audiovisual artist and teacher. In his work, he often makes use of elements of aurality, concepts and topography. Krτίčka graduated in sculpture at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Technical University in Brno. His doctoral thesis (from the Faculty of Art and Design at the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem) focused on theories and critical aspects of documentation in art. Krτίčka is interested in the context of landscape and often engages with the contingency of nature and the determinacy of the human. Together with Pavel Mrkus, he was the main initiator and organizer of the conference *Murmurans Mundus*, dedicated to Acoustic Ecology in Ústí nad Labem in 2019.

jankrticka.com

Hajdúböszörmény,
Hungary (NASA
Earth Observatory)



Jan Trojan

❶ I was born in Duchcov, a small town close to the North Bohemian Most basin. When I was a young boy, it was a one-kilometer walk to a lost space into a grey landscape, hillocks of flying ash. We called this area no man's land. Since my childhood, I have been fascinated by contrasts in the soundscape that we found in that area: The natural and beautiful sounds of the Czech Central Mountains, the Ore Mountains, the small urban ambiance of Duchcov and the industrial sounds of the Most basin. The contrast of these sounds can still be found today in a place called Liptická vyhlídka (Liptice Overlook).

I graduated from a fairly traditional composition school where there was no place for sounds from the soundscape. Within this traditional way of composition and environmental soundscape interest was my hobby — the electronic world of soldering and DIY structures. That's where I find my personal attitude and interest in the idea and concept of Acoustic Ecologies and Electroacoustic Music.

❷ In general — from my experience as a composer and performer interested in an electroacoustic music, as a teacher at the Music Faculty of AMU Prague and as a sound designer at Czech Radio — I definitely find overlap in terms of music composition, sound design, the sonic environment and the ecology of sounds in the relationships between individuals and communities and their environment; and a common path and interest of young artists in interdisciplinary collaboration in particular.

❸ I always distinguish between the use of field recordings in musical composition — where we have to ask questions about the purity of the musical form especially in the context of timbre and harmony — and the use of the form of soundscape composition, live performances with field recordings or the creation of the design of sounds in the context of radio art. It always depends on the context in relation to the purity of the form we create. In terms of acoustic ecology, I believe that creating

sound archives is important due to the fact that the soundscape is rapidly changing. Anytime we find a way to draw attention to this fact, it's important and worthy.

❹ Personally, I feel comfortable in the context I'm in. At the Academy of Performing Arts, across faculties, I find a small handful of young artists interested in spreading their interests and work among the public. I believe this handful is active and alive. The situation is not so confident at Czech Radio because of its institutional and complex environment, but still we have the great [Radiocustica](#) project thanks to the producers Michal Rataj and Ladislav Železný and we can celebrate the 200th edition of PremEdice Radioatelier!

❺ This is a fairly broad question about which I would like to mention one particular situation that has taken place in the Czech academic world. The AMU Environmental Panel was established in 2020. Its initiative was strongly supported by the students of all faculties. As we can find in the statement, the chief role of the panel is to recommend solutions aimed at sustainability and open topics to discuss. The Academy of Performing Arts in Prague is a public tertiary school. Its mission is not only to educate students and conduct research in the field, but also to develop and cultivate public debate and actively participate in seeking solutions to societal problems.

Jan Trojan (1982) graduated in music composition from the Teplice Conservatory and later the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague where he finished his PhD studies, focusing on acoustic ecology and soundscape. He participated in a study program at the Universität der Künste in Berlin (2011-12). In 2015-16, he was a Fulbright-Masaryk visiting scholar at the Centre For New Music and Technology, University of California, Berkeley. He works as a music editor and sound designer at Czech Radio, and as a tutor at the Faculty of Composition at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, specializing in electronic music. Trojan is interested in sounds, silence and the space in between them.

jantrojan.cz

Appendix

Peter Cusack

The Sounds from a Wind Farm in Early Spring — nr Berlin-Bernau, March 23/25 2021

On listening to an audio stream placed beside a rotating humming wind generator in an agricultural environment, cycles of bird song, weather and distance.

This wind generator — one in a group of around 25 towers — is situated in the flat Brandenburg countryside north of Berlin. A surprising amount of wildlife seems to be able to coexist with the humming physical presence of these huge towers, especially a good variety of small birds, whose habitat is open fields and patchy woodland, such as song thrushes, sky and wood larks. There are also many deer. The stream was set up for 3 days, with microphones

hidden in a low bush near an unused hunting hide at the edge of the trees, to listen to the combination of green technology, agriculture and nature at this location. Udo Noll has termed microphones set up in such places as “anthropophones,” that enable us to hear the audible interactions between the human and the natural worlds both problematic and positive. Given the ever increasing demands for clean energy, this swishing, rotating and humming is likely to dominate the sonic future in rural areas.

The generators follow the rise and fall of wind speeds and the changes of its direction. Sometimes they are becalmed. The mechanism emits unpredictable sharp metallic twangs every now and again that reverberate through the towers and out into the surrounding landscape. The ever changing winds gives these machines a seemingly organic

*Peter Cusack
at Počerady,
2015, for
Frontiers
of Solitude.*

*Photo:
Dominik Žižka*



character of their own and sometimes quirky musicality.

This audio stream ran continuously and recordings were made often during the period. Selections can be heard on the radio.aporee sound map by using the urls that follow each item.

1) Pure rotating air

March 23, 4.28am

Pure swishing rotating air during the dark night. There are no other sounds.

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60341

2) Strong airy rotation, loud hums and the first bird of dawn

March 23, 6.33am

The first bird to sing this morning was a distant skylark. Strong rotation with crows, thrushes and larks.

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60349

3) Strong rotation with crows, thrushes, larks

March 23, 7.11am

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60351

4) Wind farm dawn, ravens, song thrush, slow generator speeding up

March 24, 5.29am

Around 4 minutes into the recording the generator speeds up and its hum rises in pitch, but the wind is very light and it soon drops again. Birds singing include song thrush, chaffinch, skylark, ravens, crows. Very distant cranes can be heard towards the end.

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60361

5) Early morning, song thrush and woodlark, generator twangs

March 24, 7.40am

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60362

6) Morning, becalmed generator hum, passing helicopter, beautiful bird song

March 24, 8.50am

The generator sounds almost stationary there is so little wind. Its hum is quiet and gives space for the lovely bird song. The song thrush at this spot is a virtuoso and the woodlark so melodic.

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60363

7) Varying rotation in the late morning, a chaffinch sings

March 24, 11.40am

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60364

8) Late afternoon rising drone, song thrush, chaffinch

March 24, 16.32pm

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60365

9) Dusk, becalmed generator, the virtuoso song thrush falls silent

March 24, 18.56pm

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60366

10) Nighttime: a monster machine appears from nowhere, becalmed generator

March 24, 19.15pm

Between 6 and 8pm on this evening a group of people listened to this stream and chatted about it on Telegram. We were all extremely surprised (alarmed even) when this huge fossil fuel machine moved nearer and nearer to the mics and then receded. Nobody knows what it is, but there was plenty of speculation in the chat — someone suggested a military tank. Most likely it is a large tractor that, without visual information, probably sounds bigger and closer than it actually was. Other sounds are audible in the far distance — also unknown. There is no wind, the generator is not rotating, but still hums continuously and twangs occasionally.

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60367



11) The becalmed drone continues with twangs and owls

March 24, 19.59pm

There is light rustling in the leaves very close to the mics. Again unknown — maybe mice.

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60368

12) Stronger wind the next day, fast rotation and a very close sparrow

March 25, 10.05am

One advantage of an audio stream is the mics are left alone — no humans are present. This means that wildlife sometimes comes very close and maybe even investigates. One hears this happening without really knowing who is there. It could be a falling leaf, a hungry mouse, a breath of wind or a fluttering bird.

aporee.org/maps/?loc=52821&snd=60369

Peter Cusack, December 2021

Peter Cusack is a field recordist, musician and sound artist with a long interest in the sound environment. He initiated the "Favourite Sounds Project" to discover what people find positive about their everyday sound environment and 'Sounds from Dangerous Places' (sonic journalism) that investigates sites of major environmental damage such as the Caspian Sea oil fields and the Chernobyl exclusion zone. He produced 'Vermillion Sounds' — the environmental sound program — for ResonanceFM Radio, is a research fellow at the University of the arts, London and was DAAD artist-in-residence in Berlin 2011/12, initiating 'Berlin Sonic Places' that examines relationships between soundscape and urban development. Musical collaborators include David Toop, Steve Beresford, Terry Day, Clive Bell, Martyna Poznanska, Max Eastley, Nic Collins and Viv Corringham. He is based in Berlin and London.

favouritesounds.org
sounds-from-dangerous-places.org



Photos: Peter Cusack

Live Trojmezí: live stream 24/7 from the canopy of the trees at the floodplain forest South Moravia. The device can serve as civil aural monitoring, a long-duration live internet broadcast from the environmentally exceptional biotope on the border of Czech Republic, Austria and Slovakia. The mobile box is powered by solar energy. It will be realized in collaboration with radio aporee.org as part of Radio Earth. Schedule: 2022. *Tomáš Šenkyřík*

Baltic Forum for Sonic Environments. A regional, interdisciplinary network of professionals interested in the history, present condition, and future of acoustic environments and sonic heritage in the Baltic Sea region. The overarching aim of this forum is to collectively work towards building awareness of the importance of sound regarding many domains of life that pertain to both human and other-than-human species. As many studies demonstrate, the increase in sound pollution affects our well-being. Moreover, underwater noise

has been proven to cause devastating effects on multiple ecosystems and marine species. Simultaneously, conscious use of sound and its various expressions have been crucial to local identities, regional cultural conducts, and practices in the coastal areas of the Baltic Sea. The aim of our network will be to bring attention to those intended and unintended sonic realms. We will work through coordinating cultural and research activities inclusive of artists, scholars, environmentalists, scientists, activists, and youth. These activities will include soundscape studies, cultural and environmental soundwalks, sound mapping among other actions. We plan to organize a series of workshops engaging wider audiences in collective listening to diverse environments that constitute the richness of the Baltic Sea region. The inaugural workshop of the forum took place on September 30, 2021, within the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Annual Forum. *Jacek Smolicki*



Skupina. Independent music label and publishing platform focused on field recording.

skupinaaaaa.com
skupina.bandcamp.com
[instagram.com/skupinalabel](https://www.instagram.com/skupinalabel)

Unseen. Online platform and web archive that presents different approaches to listening and cultivating the relationship between our bodies, space and sound.

unseen.help

Videogram. Series of lectures on contemporary art practice, theory and curatorship.

videogram.favu.vut.cz

Ján Solčáni

radio.earth is a participatory radio project concerning the ecological crisis, its effects on our environment and ways of life and on the possibilities for action. The project aims to establish a network of collaboration between individuals and organizations interested and engaged in these subjects, with all their respective practices from art and science to activism.

Its aim is to establish a radio that listens and responds to the heartbeat of the planet. If you want to join or contribute, please send an email!

radio.earth

Udo Noll

Offcity is an independent platform based in Pardubice, Czech Republic. It works with the theme of the city as a structure and a living organism, it explores different views of the city, it introduces to public various forms of artistic and architectural expression, and it shows them how to perceive art and culture as an integral part of our natural and social environment. Offcity organizes lectures, walks, workshops, residencies, art events in public space, etc. It opens up and keeps a public dialogue on issues concerning arts in public space, architecture, urban space etc. Off-city likes to work collaboratively, so new impulses and partners are always welcome! offcity.cz

Acoustic Commons (2020-22) is a collaboration between the arts organizations Full of Noises, Locus Sonus, CONA, Soundcamp, HMU and Cyberforest, and a range of associate partners, each with close links to a specific site of cultural and/or natural heritage value. Our work to date has included developing an interactive map of live environmental sounds, radio broadcasts following the dawn chorus around the globe, sound art residencies and sound and ecology festivals. AIR is a collaborative radio space created in response to the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), Glasgow, 31 Oct. – 12 Nov., 2021. acousticcommons.net

Agosto Foundation, Prague, supports a wide range of projects focusing on the development of innovative social and cultural programs that promote interdisciplinary sharing. agosto-foundation.org

Locus Sonus is a research group, integrated in the Ecole Supérieur d'Art d'Aix, whose main aim is to explore the ever-evolving relationship between sound, place and usage. Our methodology places artistic experimentation at the center of our research, which centers on sound in its relationship to space place and usage. We are particularly concerned with the transformation of sound space that is occurring as audio transmission, distribution and generation evolves and the artistic possibilities that these changes offer. locusonus.org

Sounding Linz is a project of the Co.Lab Acoustic Ecology of the Art University in Linz. Soundinglinz.at considers the city as a body of sound made up of countless instruments. It is a continuously renewing and writing composition. The ongoing changes in the city are documented, commented on and recorded on a map of Linz. Field recordings, videos, photos, texts, sound walks

*Winter Creek,
Miloš
Vojtěchovský*

and podcasts can be assigned to every possible location in the city. At the same time, soundinglinz.at serves as a permanent research platform with a participatory agenda for the newly founded Co.Lab Acoustic Ecology at the Linz University of the Arts. This ensures the continuous development of the project. soundinglinz.at is a 21st century work of art: ecological — participatory — sustainable.

soundinglinz.at

Silent Crickets Consensus hosted by uni.Sol_. The actual state of the global situation needs much faster solutions if humans are considering saving humanity itself; the world will recover regardless. A radical shift of human consciousness is paramount. For that, a true connection between all entities is required, a capacity to believe in the impossible reinstated and trust between humans reestablished. Acceleration of this process is critical.

"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." T.S. Eliot

uni.Sol_ (United For Well-Being of Solar System & Everything Else) steps forward with a proposal for an experiment: "Silent Crickets Consensus" framework. At a specific time, regardless of physical location, all participants simultaneously stay still and listen to their respective sound environments. If someone is compelled to generate sounds or music, feel free, please. Recording of this event for study purposes is welcome, but not necessary. The coordinates — the exact time and date — are regularly communicated.

Next uni.Sol_57 will take place on Friday, 5 November, 2021. The window opens for 2 hours from 9 to 11 PM in the time zone of Ireland. Everyone is welcome! The entirety of all ideas is in its potential is manifested automatically; each individual participant contributes as an equal. The purpose of this consensus is to visualize an optimal unified framework for a (r)evolutionary leap based on a diversity of free participants. Repeating this exercise regularly — as art practice — is of course of the utmost importance for evolving our connecting abilities.

[alfa00.bandcamp.com/
album/silentcrickets-consensus](http://alfa00.bandcamp.com/album/silentcrickets-consensus)

Multiplace is a network connecting people and organizations focused on the overlap of media and technology with art, culture and the wider society. The server offers free web hosting, internet services and guidance, and today is home to more than a hundred web sites for artists, activists, cultural and social workers and their organizations based in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and other places around the world. In addition, the server supports dozens of email addresses, databases, mailing lists and specialized software applications.

multiplace.org

Hörstadt is a laboratory for acoustics, space and society. Located in Linz, but internationally active, we develop concepts, and projects in order to realize our main concern: a conscious and humanitarian composition of our acoustic surroundings. Our main areas of activity are: Art, science, teaching, and consulting.

hoerstadt.at

CENSE is a rhizomatic network, a widespread constellation of people, and is always seeking to add new nodes encompassing a broad range of professions and locations. We welcome (not an exclusive list): *ecologists, anthropologists, documentary filmmakers and sound makers, biologists, botanists, farmers and gardeners, environmental activists*, and others similar; from Central Europe, loosely defined, including countries such as (not an exclusive list): *Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine*, and beyond. Please signal your interest in joining us by writing to:

info@cense.earth

Colophon

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soundinglinz.at/programm3

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CENSE is an informal network of individual voices coming from various backgrounds, an emerging network to fill the need of fostering more perceptive and conscious thinking and solutions, addressing developments in the social and cultural fields of Central Europe and beyond, related to sound art, ecomusicology, and sound *per se*, in addition to other subjects, while keeping a central focus on deep environmental and social changes.

CENSE was founded during the conference of the Central European Society for Sound Ecology (CESSE) in Budapest in 2018.



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