A critical History and Geography of Sonic Cartographies

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Introduction & Rationale
Before we are born, we map the world almost exclusively by sound. As a program of European commerce and high culture, however, cartography has been primarily visual (and occasionally tactile, as with topographic globes). What would happen if we would use sound to map our bodies, our neighborhoods, our nations, our very universe?

At the historical juncture, then, it would seem at once intellectually rewarding and socioculturally vital to study the means, methods, merit, and resonance of sound-mapping at every turn – from our bodies to our communities, from our provinces to the rivers and mountains that cross our radar, galaxies, from the jet streams and ice flows of global ecosystems to the dark matter and darker energy of the galaxies. As we have not forsaken the art of listening in the process of learning, we may learn even more by laying out what we hear when we listen in each and every direction.

SOUND-MAPPING WORKSHOP Schema
The first part of the workshop was an introduction to the concept of sound, with a focus on its spatiality and geotemporal scope, impact and relevance. We then investigated modes, means, and consequences of mapping via sound, starting at the scale of the human body and moving on to broader dimensions: the community, the polis, the planet, and the cosmos itself. This diagonal vision allows us to always refer back to intimate and local sonic experience even if we expand cartographic horizons exploring the contrasts between sound-mapping and more conventional mapmaking.

How does a cartography driven by sound affect one’s notions about usual cartographic concerns – land masses and bodies of water, curvature and topography, borders and boundaries? What newly provocative elements or quandaries come to the fore? How might soundmaps be profitably integrated with other map forms? With these questions in mind, the researchers, in the second part of the workshop, conceived and designed their own soundmaps, focused on a distinctive space or place particularly meaningful to them. Afterward, they presented their soundmaps to the group that was asked to discuss the philosophical, political, aesthetic, and pedagogical implications of each work, with specific attention to the application of the projects in classrooms and teaching laboratories.

After a soundwalk around Bigorio, a concluding session was devoted to the broadest of acoustic scales: the cosmos. We explored its relationship with sound and soundmapping in myth and science fiction, in music composition (Music of the Spheres) and more concretely in radioastronomy – the background “noise” of the cosmos did not prevent us to explore its relationship with sound.

Whose time is it? Whose time is it?/by Hillel Schwartz has been proposed to the citizen of Locarno and to DFA students to disseminate the reflections aroused during the workshop on March 23.

The Winter School Educating to Silence in the River Soundscape took place in 2016 in CA Bonelli – Scardovari – Po Delta, April 23-27. It involved 35 participants coming from more than 10 nations. They were asked to sonically and philosophically explore the dimensions of silence in the context of the Po Delta.

From 19 to 21 April Xabier Erkizia and Lorena Rocca, in view of continuing the activities developed during the workshop, involved the students of the course of sciences in the primary school in the workshop Silence as a learning environment, as level zero of the educational relationship. At the end of the workshop the students planned an investigation of the zones of silence in the city of Padua and they structured activities addressed to the children of the primary school with the aim of enhancing the sound-silence dimension of places.

Another outcome of the workshop was the lab “La linea es el engaño. Mapear con y a través del sonido” by H. Schwartz and X. Erkizia. It took place from the 19th to the 23rd of June in Huarte (Navarra) Pamplona, Centro Huarte (E).

Figure 1. Isola dei Conigli, marzo 2018.

Spinoff
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Figure 2. Sound mapping, Bigorio, marzo 2018.

Bibliografia

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