A critical History and Geography of Sonic Cartographies

Lorena Rocca (DFA-SUPSI), Xabier Erkizia (AUDIOLAB – ES), Hillel Schwartz (University of California, San Diego)

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 universe? At some 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 national territories, 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 act 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 cartography of sound, with a focus on its spatiality and geostemporal 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 mapping.

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 Big Bang – and in the recent discoveries and sonic representations of gravitational waves. How might we map out our futures by “listening into the beyond” that is also our deepest past?

Results
The workshop was attended by 15 people from all SUPSI departments creating a transversal path across disciplines. This brought an important added value in terms of cooperation between researchers of different disciplines. The sound mapping exercise led to the creation of 15 original cartographic representations. The results will be included in a forthcoming book. The final works of the participants produced 9 different projects with a direct impact on research or training:
1. Elisa Artetta (E) developed a system for evaluation process and product mapping through body presence and movement. This was already used as an evaluation tool for training courses of DFA and at the University of Padua;
2. Anna Businatto (IT) (Supervisor Lorena Rocca) wrote a master degree thesis on the topic of sound mapping with Primary children;
3. Michele Piccolo (University of Padua - IT) developed a laboratory of Sound mapping for blind people that will be part of his phd thesis;
4. DFA in collaboration with theater academy Dimetri is developing a formative project for future teachers. The project Factory: SILEO silence as a zero degree of listening geographies by Sara Benini, Francesca Crotta, Andrea Plato, Dennis Quadri, Alice Ambrosetti –CH-3 will occur during next academic year;
5. Giovanni Donadelli (IT), curator of the Museum of Geography of the University of Padua is creating a video promoting the experience of the sonic dimension of the museum itself;
6. Carlotta Sillano (University in Genoa – IT) developed a playable map and soundtrack system of the cells on the first floor of the Convento del Bigorio. The project will be part of her doctoral thesis in digital humanities.
7. Alex Mendizabal (IT- E) and Luca Rullo (E) developed a sonic narrative project based on the map of “Isola dei conigli” (Brissago-TI). The project has involved 10 special boys and girls of age between 14 and 17 years. The recording of the audio story will be published soon.
8. Leandro Pisano (IT) developed a methodology of participative mapping that was adopted and tested in Guardia Sanframondi (Basilicata – Italy), from 16 to 22 July 2018.
9. Lorenzo Sonognini (TI) developed a storytelling of the museum itself. Another outcome of the workshop was the lab “La linea est e il cavo. Mappe con r.a. attraverso il sonoro” by H. Schwartz and X. Erkizia. It took place from the 19th to the 27th of June in Huarte (Navarra) Pamplona, Centro Huarte (E).

Spinoff
- Whose time is it? by Hillel Schwartz has been proposed to the citizen of Locarno and to DFA students to disseminate the reflections arisen during the workshop on March 21;
- 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.
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Bibliografia

Contatti
Lorena Rocca
lorena.rocca@supsi.ch
T +41 (0)58 666 68 55
http://paesaggionatori.ww2.dfa.supsi.ch/soundmap- ping/