

Panel on Sonology: sonifying the conflict

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Abstract

The experimental sound practices extend the acoustic referent of the conflict and produce cultural objects related to experiences of violence, displacement and social disparity. The Panel on Sonology will gather five artists-researchers whose works allow us to reflect on the role of music, sound art and sound design on communities disturbed by social inequality and violence. From different perspectives, the panelists will show personal modes of sonifying the conflict, discussing artistic experiences where experimental sound practices have been introduced in communities traced by social disruption: (1) Musical instrument building in the periphery, by Tomas Laurenzo (2) Acoustemology of the Armed Conflict in San Juan Nepomuceno, by Luz Eneida Ramirez (3) Mestizo Machines by Jorge Barco, (4) Sound: expression of the conflict and pedagogical tool, by Joaquín Llorca and (5) In the interstices of a memorial: A Review on Triangulation Gender/Sound/Technology, by Ana María Romano G.

Keywords

Sonology, Sound Studies, Soundscape, sound and conflict, experimental sound practices

Introduction

The tensions and imbalances among human groups that occur in different scales eventually result in social conflicts. Under these conditions, experimental sound practices propose an arena to consider the particularities and different views in negotiation. Since the plurality of voices that participate in social processes outlines a more complex picture of the conflict, sound media practices extend the acoustic referent and produce cultural objects related to experiences of violence, displacement and social disparity. The awareness of listening plays an important role in the recognition of sound as a place to pose stories and memories about the conflict, allowing us to take into account oralities, testimonials, interviews, soundscapes and sound field recordings as artistic raw material.

In this regard, the sonic arts have been the medium to embark practices of activism, memory, gender, citizenship empowerment, resistance and insubordination. Through practices such as soundscape composition (Schafer, 1977), acoustic ecology (Truax, 2000), radio art and activism (Westerkamp 1991), (Kogawa, 2006), sound Art (Kahn,

2001), (LaBelle, 2006) urban phonography and field recording (Demmers, 2009), (Lane and Carlyle, 2013) and sound ethnography (Feld and Basso, 1996), (Born, 1995) a handful of artists, designers and theorists have created alternative stories about the conflicts by restituting listening as a transcendental activity. These practices and theories reflect a critical counterpart of the official versions and amplify unheard voices.

Samuels et al have pointed out the relevance of sound on disturbed communities. While claiming for a sounding anthropology, the authors warn about “the coming of age of a generation for whom global consumption of media products is not necessarily seen as oppositional to their local appropriation in certain parts of the world, which decenters place as the arbiter of authenticity or signification” (Samuels et al 2010, 338). Accordingly, the Panel on Sonology will discuss artistic experiences where experimental sound practices have been introduced in communities traced by social disruption.

The Sonology Network

The sonology network brings together Colombian and abroad academic works produced in diverse fields, discussing sound theory and practice from a creative and critical perspective. Two encounters have been held, in 2015 and 2016, under the Festival de la Imagen umbrella whose memories are being made available for online consultation (Sonology Network, 2015). In 2017 the Panel on Sonology will gather five speakers: artists-researchers whose works allow us to reflect on the role of music, sound art and sound design on communities disturbed by social inequality and violence. From different perspectives the panelists will show personal modes of sonifying the conflict, shortly presenting their work and then discussing the topic around four fundamental questions:

- How can sound media display untold stories about the conflict?
- In which ways sound media can convey the experience of the conflict?
- What is the impact of sound arts in communities affected by social disturbances?
- How can sound arts contribute in the processes of post-conflict, reconciliation and conviviality?

The host proposer of the Panel on Sonology will moderate the debate and the speakers' interventions, which will be shortly described in the next paragraphs.

Musical instrument building in the periphery, by Tomas Laurenzo

The field of computer based musical instruments, while very active and vital, has produced several instruments that somehow lack playability or expressiveness in traditional musical terms. While the creation of new instruments can provide with tools for new musics, the instruments produced are often too simplistic (like the rather naïve new incarnations of traditional step sequencers and drum machines), lack of playability (often due to the delegation of too many performative decisions to the instrument, not providing an effective fly-by-wire alternative), or are too different from traditional instruments. While the eclecticism of new musical instrument production is easy to note, it's clear that in an ever-more technologically imbued world, the mere fact of using new technologies does not turn an instrument into something interesting. This is particularly relevant in peripheral artistic contexts. In effect, by reproducing the center-periphery model, peripheral art is reduced to a dichotomy proper of the modernizing discourse and to the arduous task of developing a replacement of the stories that constitute "the other". Nevertheless, we argue that a parallel construction of artistic and musical languages is needed, transcending the usual re-reading of international tendencies from a local or "localist" perspective.

Acoustemology of the Armed Conflict in San Juan Nepomuceno, by Eneida Luz Ramirez Centeno

It will be presented an epistemological reflection about the sound and the Colombian armed conflict, generating the possibility to make an adjacent reading from the symmetrical anthropology and the acoustemology by Steven Feld as the foundations for the realization of critical soundscapes of a resilient rural territory. The case of study will be the massacre that took place in 2002 at the Guaímaros farm in the municipality of San Juan Nepomuceno, in the Department of Bolívar in Colombia. The intention is to achieve that the sound reader and, in general, everyone could be involved in the magic of listening and could be transported to the San Juanian daily life through the sensorial experience that the ear can offer in order to create a nonlinear representation of a past event called into the present and to shed a light to the understanding of possible dynamics towards the future of a territory that is forged in the construction of Peace.

Mestizo machines, by Jorge Bejarano Barco

Over the last decade The Museum of Contemporary Art (MAMM) has been leading a series of electronic art projects that have nourished Medellín's creative ecosystem, as

it proposes a mixture among art, science, technology and society, methodologies from experimental laboratories, cooperation and networking. As a result, since the end of 2015 we have set up The Room for Experimental Sounds (Lab3), as a space for research and creation of artistic projects that incorporates sound as a primordial element, therefore concentrating the actions on the fields of sound art, to foster hearing and experimentations with sound. The presentation gathers a variety of experiences that have developed within Lab3, a space characterized for its research on surrounding areas and the approach of social and environmental problems, among others. We will go over the design processes of different projects such as: Territorio Táctil, Jagüey, Micro-Ritmos y Darién, together as part of El Paisaje Sonoro como Estrategia de Educación Patrimonial (Soundscapes as a Strategic for Heritage Education), with the aim of looking for cross points among the notions of hearing, mediation, otherness and mestizo technologies.

Sound: expression of the conflict and pedagogical tool, by Joaquín Llorca

The sound phenomenon embodies both conflict and harmony, is tritone and third major. Its communicative nature expresses emotions and at the same time leaves marks on societies. The shock of guerrilla commander Timochenko at the peace signing ceremony when hearing a dreaded family sound (a KFIR aircraft used for bombing the FARC flew overhead) is a reflection of how certain sounds are signs of the conflict. In Colombia, the sounds of war and violence have left undesirable sound marks in the collective memory and there is a need to construct new symbols to replace the previous ones. This work of resignification is a task in which art can play an important role. Following this idea, an interdisciplinary group of artists and sociologists have developed laboratories in the Colombian Coffee Growing Area where the work with the soundscape offers diverse tools to establish new aesthetic relations with the environment.

In the interstices of a memorial: A Review on Triangulation Gender/Sound/Technology, by Ana María Romano G.

Intersticios sonoros was an open call to create employing elements ranging from voices and memories, to sound recordings, via the use of electronics, collaboration and networking. Our call invited all sorts of participants to create electroacoustic miniatures from materials pertaining to a sound bank composed by Christine Renaudat's personal archive, which she obtained after 11 years of traversing different areas of Colombia as a conflict reporter (interviews, radio, television, environmental recordings). We assumed these materials as creative triggers, as a means to think / rethink war and conflict through the sound creation. The result was: 81 Artworks received, 66 Participating Artists and 16 Countries (4 Colombian cities). *Memorial*

de voces was a sound installation by Renaudat, who uses her sonorous memories of the Colombian conflict, which employs almost raw materials in order to emphasize their testimonial character.

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Panelists and moderator biographies

Julián Jaramillo Arango (moderator) is composer and researcher working in the field of new media design and focusing on experimental sound practices, multimodal communication and in the development of interactive applications and services. Jaramillo Arango's works bridge the gap among science, arts, technology, creativity, society, community and sustainability through works that explore different modes of sonic interaction. He holds a Ph.D. in Sonology advised by Dr Fernando Iazzetta,

São Paulo University. Currently Julián conducts a postdoctoral research in the Caldas University Design and Creation program where he develops novel interfaces for the local urban space. Julián lives and works in Manizales, Colombia.

Tomás Laurenzo (Panelist) is an artist and academic who works with both physical and digital media exploring the artistic construction of meaning and its relation with power and politics. Laurenzo's production spans across different practices, including installation, interactive art, music, live cinema, and digital lutherie. His artworks and performances have been shown in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. He is Assistant Professor at the School of Creative Media of the City University of Hong Kong. He has several publications, mainly in the areas of New Media Art, and HCI. He holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science, advised by Dr. Alvaro Cassinelli, University of Tokyo, and Dr. Franco Robledo, University of the Republic of Uruguay.

Eneida Luz Ramirez Centeno (panelist). Eneida Luz Ramirez Centeno is Master in Music by the Institution of Fine Arts and Sciences at the Bolívar University, and Master in Development and Culture by the Technological Bolívar University. She has been granted by the Ministry of Culture in 2015 as part as the Stimulus Fellow Program to conduct an artistic residency in the Javeriana University in Cali. Eneida founded the National Network of Thought and Cultural Action MORE CULTURE and has been advisor on public policies issues on NGOs dedicated to cultural and social endeavors. Currently Eneida participates in the National Network of Music Networks leading workshops on Public Policy and Cultural Management as a member of the Artistic Organization UNO-A and the Artistic Guild Board Bogotá.

Joaquín Llorca is architect and musician. He is a professor and researcher at Icesi University where he is in charge of courses on sound design, art and acoustic ecology. He is part of the Seminar of Esthetics that deals with theoretical reflections and research on urban topics. The latest project about the soundscape of a traditional Cali's neighborhood can be consulted www.cartofonias.org. Since 2013, he coordinates the annual Laboratory of Visual Arts of the Ministry of Culture about the soundscape of Colombian Coffee Growing Area.

Ana María Romano G. Her creative interests have allowed her to work acoustic and electroacoustic media, as well as in interdisciplinary projects (contemporary dance, performance, video-dance). Her music has been performed in different festivals and theatres in America, Europe and Asia; have been published in Colombia, Ecuador, England, Mexico and Russia. And has received national and international distinctions. She has taught widely and be very active in the dissemination of contemporary and experimental music through concerts, magazines, CDs, digital platforms. She has been invited as a teacher, lecturer and curator for different academic and cultural institutions, national and international. Her actual work is focused on triangulation Gender / Sound / Technology. She leads the *Festival En tiempo real*, *Microcircuitos Digital Platform* and teaches at El Bosque University.