

Things being what sound is!

Soundwalking, PAS - Sensitive Audio Path



Aural pedagogy via listening walk, for an ecosophy of listening

Abstract

The Pedagogy of Listening through soundwalk offers an immersive approach to education, integrating attentive listening as a main tool. This method, anchored in the history of sound art and sound ecology, aims to raise participants' awareness of their sound environment and to develop their critical and creative listening skills. Through concrete examples such as sensitive audio tours and projects around water or the forest, this approach explores sound territories in a contextualized way. Tools such as the digital recorder and interactive maps enrich the experience, while action research promotes interdisciplinarity and social innovation. Despite the challenges related to the coordination of actors and resources, this approach promises to adapt to new territories explored thanks to technological advances and a return to authentic sensory connection. In conclusion, the pedagogy of listening offers stimulating perspectives for rethinking our relationship with soundscapes and promoting better living together in a constantly evolving world.

Biographical note

Gilles Malatray is an artist and sound landscaper. He combines aesthetic, cultural and ecosophical approaches. The writing of soundscapes is strongly linked to the territories invested, city, peri-urban, rural environment, natural space, architectural site... These issues take shape through curation, transmedial writing, training and in situ artistic interventions. Environmental listening thus remains, whatever the form of intervention called for, at the center of any investigation and sound creation.

Tags

Soundscape, soundwalk, acoustic ecology, listening, pedagogy, sound arts

Introduction and context

For decades, education has evolved beyond traditional methods to integrate more interactive and immersive approaches. Among these, the pedagogy of listening through sound walks emerges as a unique approach, engaging the ear and beyond the whole body, in a kind of (re)negotiation with inhabited territories. A posture allowing listening walkers to explore the world around them within earshot. We will discuss here the history of the soundwalking, the objectives, some examples from the field, tools, devices and listening situations with educational aims, a form of undisciplined action research, and the perspectives of this approach which is ultimately still relatively little explored.

A brief history

The history of listening through the prism of sound walks, sometimes called silent walks, goes back mainly to the artistic movements of the 20th century, in the movements of sound art, concrete music, or acousmatics, if not performance art and forms of creation in public space. Artists such as Pierre Schaeffer, John Cage, Max Neuhaus, began to explore artistic approaches. Murray Schafer, developed not only the notion of soundscape, in his famous work "The Tuning of the Word", but also research around sound ecology (Acoustic Ecology). These explorations, between conceptual theories and field actions, have given rise to numerous artistic creations, notably via field recording (field recording or phonography), but also to interesting educational approaches today touching on a sound ecosophy (or listening), to use the terminology and research developed by Roberto Barbanti.

Objectives

The main objective of listening pedagogy through listening walks, which I (Desartsonnants¹) also call PAS - Parcours Audio Sensible, is to raise awareness among potential listeners about their sound environment and to develop their ability to listen more attentively, if not more engaged. By focusing on the sounds that surround us, in an immersion that gives increased awareness to living environments. This approach aims to stimulate creativity, by encouraging personal interpretation of sounds, imagination, in situ storytelling, while promoting critical thinking. And with your city, your countryside, your stream, how do you hear yourself? one might ask. What are the livable, sustainable spaces in which we can and want to live, even if it means reorganizing them by taking into account the fragility of ambient sound spaces, between impoverishment, desertification, and saturation. Field examples Concrete examples where listening is established through sound walks can be observed in various educational settings. Desartsonnants, notably via routes, mainly with the naked ear, explores the notion of hearing points, a situation where listening postures are proposed during silent walks. It is a way of exploring different contextual and situated themes. The project

"Bassins versant, l'oreille fluante - Voix d'eau" for example, tends to reveal the acoustic presence of water as a revealer, a constituent element of a sound landscape, under aesthetic, heritage, memorial, and ecological aspects, showing the strength and fragility of irrigating and nourishing liquid territories. The surveying of banks, riverbanks, coastal paths, towpaths, lake outskirts, ponds, takes the listening walker along the waves, in a very wide variety of hydrological basins, revealing truly unique sound signatures. Other projects, aimed at children around ten years old, carried out in collaboration with writers, have developed around the tree, the forest. Let us mention in particular the "Fictions of the forest", where surveys gave rise to plural, sound, textual writings, as well as in situ installations where the audio stories were suspended in trees, sound paths punctuated by random sequences that gave a hearing to sylvan landscapes.

Educational tools

Let's talk about educational tools themselves. The digital recorder, which has become light, portable, efficient and financially accessible, the smartphone, digital audio editing and processing software, signal analysis software, etc. are valuable allies in collecting sound materials, the trace (project memory), the (re)composition of unique audio landscapes. The maps, interactive or not, digital or paper, games created for the occasion, complement listening and writing devices, promoting a fertile imagination. The cross-approaches combining visual, sound captures, multimedia writing, will give educational approaches a flexibility of very reactive writing, not to say reflexive. Without forgetting the walk itself, as a tool for landscape audio reading, but also as a process of writing, of composition, the journey itself becoming a work, between outdoor stage space, bodily performance inducing gestures inscribed in rituals calling upon slowness...

Action research, artistic and sciences, interdisciplinarity in place

Action research can play a crucial role in the development of a listening pedagogy via the sound walk. In addition to the implementation of associated technologies, the intersection between researchers, developers, artists, residents, the hybridization of arts-sciences, arts action, or even interdisciplinarity as advocated by Myriam Suchet, open doors to open and interactive pedagogies. At the crossroads of popular education, social innovation, the collaboration of artists and developers, but also of political decision-makers, teachers, activists in social sciences, acoustics, solidarity economy... should offer us fields of action considering plural, decompartmentalized and sometimes "dechapelled" soundscapes. For years, the fields of environmental listening have crossed those of ornithologists and audio-naturalists, such as Fernand Deroussen. These tireless trackers of animal sounds have so much to teach us about the ways of communicating of birds and other species that we encounter every day without sometimes taking the time to hear what they tell us. Today, the research fields of biophony (Bernie Krause), bio-acoustics (Biophonia) and eco-acoustics (Jérôme Sueur), offer us new research spaces towards stimulating unheard-of, we do not miss these invitations to territories where action research still has so much to explore and share. It is on these mixed, hybridized listening grounds that crossed corpora can be considered, so that everyone can assimilate the specific approaches deployed. It is also on these same spaces that evolving tools can be collectively forged, written and experimented, or even experienced as devices and processes where the sound world is thought of as a common that can be shared at will. Nevertheless, in view of the constraints of each field, structure, with their specific temporalities of actions, their financial and administrative frameworks, and their own objectives, the harmonization of creative, collective listening actions, tending to establish listening learning, is not a simple thing, even if devices advocate inter-, or transdisciplinarity, if not the interdisciplinarity evoked and summoned here.

Perspectives

Listening through sound walks still has, in my opinion, a bright future ahead of it, and is set to develop in different forms adapted to the territories being examined. With the development of new nomadic, lightweight, portable technologies, sound spatialization, new avenues have emerged for several years now. The need to reconnect with the senses with water, the forest, the city, the school outside, are all situations, invitations that, I hope, will tend to develop and materialize wandering actions where pedagogy through experience (John Dewey), with a certain pragmatism, Between new technologies and a return to a sensitive world, without "virtual augmentation" without artifice, towards a soothing slowdown, we can imagine flexible, energy-efficient devices at different levels. These returns to forms of terrain where listening has something to grind, engaging the whole body to revisit sensitive spaces within earshot, offer a field of action which, let us not doubt it, will need to question unavoidable environmental, climatic, societal issues. Approaches where (better) living together will have to be rethought, including through the prism of auricular environments.

In conclusion

The pedagogy of listening through sound walks presents an approach that, while not totally innovative, offers stimulating openings in the field of education in the sound environment, of field pedagogy. By encouraging attentive listening, creativity and a critical approach, these proposals allow listening pedagogues to explore the world around them in a sensitive, concerted, even if sometimes disconcerting way, promoting sharing and collective action. "Marchécoute" is a gesture that never ceases to question fragile, complex environments, in perpetual mutation, for better and for worse. This pedagogical auricular aim decenters the soundscape object towards a holistic conception that allows us to consider a form of ecosophy of listening, of increased, benevolent attention, to tend to hear ourselves on bearable listenings, protecting us, as best we can, from a world that is too painfully cacophonous.

Bibliography

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Sitography

Desartsonnants Points of Hearing and Shared Soundscapes <https://desartsonnantsbis.com/> Acoustic Ecology rewies <https://journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/aer/index>