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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE ETHNOGRAPHIC EAR

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Ethnography has never been undertaken in a world of complete silence.[1] Despite this, ethnographers have barely acknowledged that the world they study is also layered with sounds. It was only in the eighties, when publications forming the foundations of the anthropology of sound emerged, that the incorporation of the sonic in ethnographic work began.

However, despite wide admiration for the works of Paul Stoller (1989), Tim Ingold (2016) or Steven Feld (1982), sound for many ethnographers remains something of an exotic field, involving a research methodology that by some is perceived as almost esoteric. Yet, sound is not a separate world, or a distinct sphere of fieldwork. The way in which we experience sound in the environment is integrated with our other senses, and indeed with our entire bodily constitution. Moreover, even if we are dealing with a recorded sound, the materiality of the medium and the location of the listener's body in space are crucial. The spaces throughout which sound reverberates are built by physical (recently also virtual) infrastructures, material surfaces and elements of the landscape. Or, to put it in the terms of an example from an essential study, the ethnographic description of rainforest sounds integrates trees, animals and, finally, people living in the forest, and concerns their perceptions of sounds as intertwined with their other senses (Feld 1982).

Yet, writing an ethnographic description centred on sound is challenging. How to address something that is "deafeningly obvious" to paraphrase the words of Daniel Miller and Sophie Woodward (2007, 341)? The task is puzzling because, as Mbembe argues, "there is nothing more complex than verbalizing that which involves the non-verbal, or describing sound, which in essence is neither linguistic nor involves the purely spontaneous practice of language" (Mbembe 2005, 74). Moreover, the

1 The only exception is when ethnographers study the social worlds of deafness (Friedner and Helmreich 2012).

sound experience presents ethnographers with difficulties because it is embodied and pre-discursive. In fact, sound anthropologists assume that sound constitutes a phenomenon that is never "fully crystal clear" (Helmreich 2016, 18). Nevertheless, if any discipline can undertake an engagement with sound, it is surely ethnography, with its ability to uncover knowledge in places where other methodologies render zero data.

That is why it is our aim in this special issue of *Ethnologia Polona* to disenchant the anthropology of sound and to introduce its methodology to those who have not previously practised it. A concomitant aim is also to act as an urge to start using one's own ethnographic ear. When we begin to listen attentively – sound starts to meaningfully emanate everywhere.

Where to start? Probably, as usual, from ethnography and from fieldwork. A common assumption locates participant observation at the centre of ethnographic research (notwithstanding an obvious need to problematise this method). Angrosino explains participant observation as a process of attentive experience using all the senses (Angrosino 2007, 53). Hearing as one of these five senses is, therefore, at the essence of this process. What are we then able to hear? Sounds of the environment and everyday life; human speech, particularly in correlation with the second favourite method of ethnographers – the interview; and finally, music, as a specific form of sound organization. At the same time, when we begin to listen as part of ethnographic being--in-the-field, we access new, emerging layers of ethnographic knowledge. Sound transmits that which evaporates when the research experience turns into data. Sound provides a mode of ethnographic knowledge that surpasses the coding sometimes used in the analysis of interviews or field notes. This knowledge may throw light on, for example, what is to be found in-between designated symbols, actors or objects. For instance, the tone of voice and manner of speaking redefine or enhance the meaning of a sum of words. To give another example, Louise Meintjes argues that elusive in its social nature sound reveals the "indefinable, provisional and deeply felt" (2003, 112). At the same time, this approach requires practice in attentive listening, which is equally attuned to both social and acoustic qualities.

Attentive listening also opens up a type of ethnographic (or more broadly scientific) imagination different from an occulocentric one, with its notions of perspective, distance and control. An ethnographic imagination founded on sound, on the other hand, empowers varied modes of understanding and explanation.[2] Instead of *a priori*

2 An important aspect of this change of focus is also that of representation, often leading to the questioning of the inflexible requirements of textual form (e.g. Cichocki 2019, Groth and Samson 2016). The limited capacity of this introduction does not provide space for a thorough discussion of this question. Luckily, some of the texts in this issue (by Cichocki, Gugolati and Ramirez, and Tiragallo) discuss experimental sonic representations of ethnographic knowledge.

utilizing epistemological hierarchies, these modes might foreground the relationship between sounding actors.

Sound ethnography can concern relationships between people, objects and landscape elements that constitute distinct environments. The ethnographic description of such local and direct relations may inspire the decolonization of research methods and anthropological theory. To give only one example from general anthropology, the critique of the occulocentric figure of structure favours instead the figure of the voice (Marcus 1998, 65–66). As a result, research interests may concern the voice in its various associations with varied subjectivities – such as political, gendered, aesthetic or religious, to identify just a few (Weidman 2015, 232–246) – or may even relate to voices of inhuman actors. However, voice is just one instance. In fact, we should equally pre-consider any conceptualizations of sound – whether these be academic, such as wave, power, music, object or light, and also a myriad of non-academic, local notions of what sound is or might be.

The papers gathered in this thematic issue of *Ethnologia Polona* propose diverse strategies of researching and describing connected to the question of how to use one's own sonic-being-in-the-field to acquire unique, subtle knowledge. To ease the navigation for readers, we have organised the issue into three parts concerning SPACES, MUSICS and NETWORKS, respectively.

Starting the SPACES part, Felice Tiragallo discusses two types of sound experience. Firstly, he listens attentively to human speech, by focusing not only on *what is* said, but also on *how it is* said. Secondly, the tones of voices reveal specific accounts of the relation between Sardinian miners and mines. Therefore, the article examines how sensory data can be interpreted beyond their quality of simply functioning as "messages".

Nick Wees describes the important role of sound in the spaces of metro corridors. For buskers, metro passengers and the ethnographer, the shared environment is determined by sonic reverberation. The ethnographic description of this context refers to all the subtleties of the sonic properties of space. The effect is a resonating ethnography of an environment consisting of objects, surfaces, textures and people moving between them.

Maica Gugolati and Jose Ramirez discuss their research and artistic project in which sound subtly evokes an ethereal notion of Caribbeanness. Method-wise, the authors describe how ethnographic knowledge is represented by an exhibition which performatively engages meaningful material and sonic objects (shells). As the authors argue, "sound has the ability to transform and the capacity of connecting". In this case, fieldwork is connected with its medium of representation.

The MUSICS section concerns a specific type of sound organization and its social context. Marzanna Popławska explains how shared music performance enables the researcher to understand music's cosmological and ethical roles. The sense of joy and

togetherness that characterised performances of gamelan music allowed the author to understand the cultural contexts of the sound. The article discusses the concept of bi-musicality as a way to confront the complexities of music experience and meaning in music.

The article by Maria Małanicz-Przybylska is a result of the author's immersion in the audiosphere of "the most musical place in Poland" – Podhale. It starts with an ethnographic description of Krupówki Street, stirring with divergent music styles – from classic *Górale* tunes to local disco polo. This description helps to refine a research question about the discrepancy between elite acoustic music and omnipresent disco-polo music.

In the NETWORKS part, Piotr Cichocki addresses how sound recording can be incorporated into ethnographic research methods. The proposition is a method based on a reflective practice of shared listening, interaction and situational activity. Through this, ethnography is understood as a method based not only on the description of reality, but also on its collective provocation.

Agata Stanisz, in her turn, writes about how a shared interest in field recording generates a virtual community. The ethnographic description of the community concerns the distribution of knowledge based on field recordings. At the same time, the author is interested in how specific cultural practices related to sound have emerged in a modern cultural context.

Finally, a few words about how this thematic issue of Ethnologia Polona has been produced. The initial idea was based on a panel, "Socio-technologic Configurations of Sound", submitted by myself with Ayda Melika and Anton Nikolotov for the IUAES 2017 congress in Ottawa. Even though the panel became more of a seed for, rather than directly yielding this volume, I want to thank Anton and Ayda for their initial input. Thereafter, the idea evolved and finally achieved realisation thanks to the invaluable editorial input of Agnieszka Halemba, Helena Patzer, Agata Ładykowska and Benjamin Cope, and the work of Dang Thuy Duong who designed the front cover. We are delighted to bring the final effect of these endeavours to readers and listeners.

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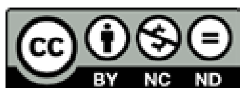

S P A C E S

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TUNNELS OF VOICES. MINING SOUNDSCAPES AND MEMORIES IN SOUTH WEST SARDINIA

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For the anthropologist, the work of mining seems to be characterised by a specific set of spatial, material, corporeal and sensorial relations. On-going debates in anthropology emphasize the prominence of a direct approach to this range of features of experience, in correlation with a need to understand how they are connected with social meanings. This article uses such an approach to investigate how the sensory experiences of mining are shared by miners as a community of practice. At the same time, the historical decline of mining activity is inexorably restricting mining landscapes and cultures to the heritage of the past.

In European mining districts, such as South West Sardinia (Italy), a rich heritage of the memory of an abandoned mining world coexists with a number of advanced, government subsidised mining plants that are just ceasing to be active. In this context, a particular form-of-life seems to appear that links miners, witnesses of a recent mining past, with local communities that are still entangled in mining activity. The existence of a rich aural sensitivity underground, recorded by the research project's filmmaking, is closely related to the way in which former miners "give voice to" and "feel" what they are saying.

Sensory landscapes of mining life are linked to the subjective voices which express their history and memory. Starting from an ethnographic research, I shall discuss the relationship between performative aspects of oral memory, and the aural and visual dimensions of modern-day mining work.

KEYWORDS: mining soundscapes, miner voices, sensorial agency, memory.

In this article*, I discuss and evaluate some aspects of the sound environment of the Sardinian mining world, which enable us to grasp peculiar and indicative elements of mining culture in an anthropological sense. The research is based on fieldwork carried out by the author with Paola Atzeni between the autumn of 2006 and the summer of 2007 in the Sardinian sub-region of Sulcis-Iglesiente. The research consisted of creating extensive digital video documentation of mining activity and conducting

* I am very grateful for the attention, with which the editors and reviewers read and commented on the text and for the suggestions they gave me.

twenty biographical interviews, both with former miners and with miners who were still working. We were able to obtain around thirty hours of recordings, designed and created with the aim of setting up an audiovisual archive of the Serbariu Great Mine, an important museum that at the time was still under construction. This ethnographic material was therefore created to answer more general questions about the material culture and living memory of the miners and to become an archival source, and only later was it questioned for the purposes set out in this article. In any case, it is material that is evidence of the writer's direct involvement as producer and filmmaker of that film footage, and is therefore the main, if not the only, trace of his fieldwork.

In the first section of this text, I will give a brief picture of the historical penetration of mining production into Sardinia, and try to highlight its role in the historical experience of modernity on the island. In the second part, I will indicate the theoretical framework to which I intend to refer in constructing a specific discourse on the anthropology of local sounds. In the third section, in an interpretative perspective, I will try to justify my intention to connect the mineral sound landscape perceived in the subsoil with the vocal and performative dimension of the miners' words. In the fourth section I analyze, using some parts of the recordings, my experience of immersion in the soundscape of the subsoil and discuss some applicable theoretical approaches. I will also analyze some passages from the interviews with the miners with the aim of illustrating their connection with the soundscape.

THE SOUNDS AND VOICES OF A DISPUTED ACTIVITY

Nowadays, mineral processing can seem an extremely under-developed industry, constituting a stark contrast to a de-materialized and digitized economy. Secluded in ecologically de-regulated areas, mining activity involves millions of people in contexts where conflict between multinational groups and local stakeholders occurs, and indeed is ineluctable, leading to environmental crises and social emergencies. This activity is concentrated in places like China, South America, Oceania and other areas (Godoy 1985, Pandey 2015, D'Angelo and Pijpers 2018, Ballard and Banks 2003).

Despite being highly specialized, even compared to the world situation, mining industries retain considerable importance in Europe, even if nowadays they play a minor role in the energy production sector when compared to other sources, such as gas, oil, nuclear and renewable sources.[1] The history of coal production in particular

1 In 2017, the energy mix in the EU, meaning the range of energy sources available, was mainly composed of: petroleum products (including crude oil) (36 %), natural gas (23 %), solid fossil fuels (including coal) (15 %), renewable energy (14 %) and nuclear energy (12 %). https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/infographs/energy/bloc-2a.html (accessed 16.01.2020).

countries, such as Italy for example, has been determined by the political circumstances of the 20th century. The strategic needs of redevelopment after World War II caused coal regions to flourish, whereas thereafter their relevance has progressively decreased as a result of their lessening economic efficiency and the increasing value of other energy sources (Rakowski 2016, Sapelli 2008, Ruju 2008). Nevertheless, in a period covering the 19th and 20th centuries that lasted for around 150 years, these areas in many cases constituted the earliest experience of the industrial mode of production experienced by human groups and territories which, up to that point, had been marked by a traditional agro-pastoral life.[2]

The mining region of South-West Sardinia, made up of the Iglesiente Region specializing in metals (lead and zinc) and the Sulcis coal-mining area, is still today an example of this type of radical juxtaposition. Unlike the Italian Alpine regions where mining activity has often been of a temporary, intermittent and seasonal nature, sometimes compatible with a regime of rural activities strongly concentrated in the spring-early autumn period (see Sanga and Viazzo 2016), mines on the island have always embodied a radical alternative to traditional rural models (Manconi 1986, Accardo 1998). In this situation, being miners meant, in most though not all cases, acquiring, incorporating and strengthening an entirely new personal and collective identity. In Sardinia, the farmers who became miners abandoned a way of working based on the use of human and animal force, and a mode of social relationships based on individualism and limited forms of cooperation, to become part of a complex production organism based on artificial energy and on hierarchical and class relations (Atzeni 2007).

SOUND IN THE MINE AS A CULTURAL FIELD

This paper aims to study, through local ethnography, some sensorial aspects of this cultural condition. For the anthropologist, mining work seems to be characterised by a specific set of spatial, material, corporeal and sensorial relations. An ongoing debate in anthropology (e.g. Pink 2009, Ingold 2001a, 2011a, 2011b, Miller 2005) emphasizes a need to give prominence to a direct approach to these aspects of experience, along with a need to understand how they are connected with the social meanings. I use this approach as a basis to investigate how miners share the sensory experiences of mining as a community of practice (Atzeni 2012a, 2012b). In South-West Sardinia, an

2 This was a backward mode of production when compared to other continental models of the early 1900s focused on: dry cereal-growing, use of human and animal energy, customary forms of fund management, a sharp social distinction between producers and the owners of the funds, and finally the existence of a complex hierarchy of owners, sharecroppers, tenants and day labourers (see Angioni 1974).

unusual situation has come about in which a rich heritage of the memory of an abandoned mining world coexists with some advanced, government-subsidised mining plants that are still active. In this context, a particular form-of-life seems to emerge that links the miners, witnesses of a recent mining past, with local communities that are still involved in mining activity. The presence in the subsoil of a dense auditory sensoriality, documented during the realization of the research project and analyzed in line with a series of fundamental contributions in the anthropology of sound (Schafer 1994, Feld 1991a, 1991b, etc.), is in particular linked to an ethnopragmatic dimension (Duranti 2007) of the mining narrative: that is to say, to the way in which ex-miners "take the floor" to give voice to their experiences and "feel" what they are saying. In other words, it is the connection between the auditory world of the miners and their words that this paper will try to explore.

Among the range of possible approaches to the study of sounds, I intend to focus on auditory anthropology, a recently born field that combines an "archival" interest in sounds as cultural products with an expansion and articulation of the purposes of the documentation of music, orality and storytelling, including the active participation of interlocutors in shared performance (Samuels et al. 2010, 335).

The recordings of a certain sound environment or social situation made by the ethnographer can be interpretative, creative, empirical, hermeneutical or analytical, and can be rendered in an acoustic form. Even in a very different study tradition, such as that of oral history, Alessandro Portelli has written enlightening pages on the shared and collaborative nature of the interviewee-interviewer performance, and on the often-neglected problem of oral form. Pauses, rhythms and the speed of emission of the voice within the same narration are determining factors for its understanding, and thus a constitutive part of the cultural phenomenon (Portelli 2017, 9).

Schafer defined the soundscape as "a circulating public entity that is a produced effect of social practices, politics and ideologies, while also being implicated in the shaping of those practices, politics and ideologies" (in Samuels et al. 2010, 330). The concept of soundscape proposed by Schafer arises therefore from the need to establish "a total appreciation of the acoustic environment" (Schafer 1994, 205). In some ways – he notes – the soundscape is the analogue of the landscape, because it includes everything to which the ear is exposed in a specific phonic setting. Like a landscape, it contains the contradictory forces of the natural and the cultural, the fleeting and the repetitive, the improvised and the deliberately produced. Moreover, just as the landscape is made up of cultural histories, of ideologies and practices of vision, so too does the soundscape involve listening as a cultural practice (Samuels et al. 2010, 330). Schafer proposes three categories for the analysis and classification of soundscapes: a) keynote sounds; b) signals; and c) soundmarks together with archetypal sounds. The first group of sounds are the contextual sounds in a given environment: wind, water, forests, plains, birds, insects, animals, etc. The second kind are the

"consciously listened to" sounds in the foreground (Schafer 1994, 9–10), while the third is a communitarian sound, which acquires value and importance uniquely in a given community. I will try to use this classification grid to describe the results of my fieldwork.

While these are the points of reference chosen to investigate the sound environment of the mine, I have also tried to identify a similar key of interpretation in relation to the second auditory dimension studied: that of the miners' voices. Alessandro Duranti's ethnopragmatic perspective helps us to gain a deeper understanding of the orality of our miners, moving from a strictly denotative level to a sense of a connotative richness of the word as performance: a dimension which needs to be incorporated in constructing social facts. Ethnopragmatics deals with speaking as a form of social organization and deepens the study of activities in which language plays a primary role for social construction (Duranti 2007, 14). This approach argues that it is a performative power combined with the power of representation that together express the quality of agency which is represented and realized in language. It was John Austin who, as Duranti notes, first spoke of language in terms of force, "strength, effectiveness", rather than "meaning" (Duranti 2007, 41).

On the one hand, therefore, the spaces, the times, the technical actions and the interactions between man and nature, between man and machine and – often – through these machines with nature, qualify the mines as a soundscape with peculiar characteristics. It is a soundscape in which the propagation of the sound of underground activities is the main, but not the only, means by which humans generate the particular ecological niche of the mining gallery.

A great number of the miners interviewed by Paola Atzeni in the many years of ethnographic work that preceded our collaboration in 2006–2007 clarified how acquiring specific perceptive skills was important for their safety. For example, in the language of the miners, *tenni ogu* [lit. "having an eye", i.e. watching closely] and *tenni origa* [lit. "having an ear", i.e. listening carefully][3] meant having technically trained eyes and ears. These expressions signify that their sight and hearing had been culturally enhanced so as to be able to perceive *is avvisus* [the warnings], the visual and auditory signals of the dangers that marked the mining tradition (Atzeni 2007, 139).

On the other hand, in my opinion, the historical singularity of Sardinia's mining history as an industrial experience, and therefore as a direct experience of modernity, has led to a second level of auditory value. These are the voices of the miners, expressing the deep awareness our interlocutors have of the public relevance (in the sense of rarity, preciousness, exemplariness and social utility) of their individual and collective experience.

3 Lit. "Always keep your eyes and ears open".

SENSORY TRACES OF MINING

Our ethnographic research began in 2006–2007 with the aim of building a sensory testimony of mining memories and mining work in Sardinia, in order to establish an ethno-anthropological section in the Museum of the Great Serbariu Mine, the most important ethnographic mining museum in the region. The subjects of the ethnographic audiovisual interviews that Paola Atzeni and I conducted included the miners' biographies and the ways in which they maintain social relationships, their perceptions of their workspace, production processes, operational chains, a historical and political dimension and the roles of the unions that had existed during their lifetimes. We further set ourselves a non-textual and non-conceptual goal: that of returning the sensoriality of a modern mine by means of an audiovisual depiction, produced through repeated recording sessions made in the subsoil during ordinary coal mining activity in the Nuraxi-Figus Monte Sinni. In a subsequent analytical part of the process, I decided to investigate the complete corpus of approximately thirty hours of recordings, placing its sensory-auditory dimension in the foreground.

My hypothesis is that a perspective of aural anthropology can be used to interpret not only the auditory aspects of mining life as a productive action, but also the voices of previous generations of former miners as they remember through a performative act. Such an approach allows sensory data ("sounds" and "voices", but not only) to be compared and interpreted "beyond" their quality as "messages". In doing so, I shall firstly make reference to David MacDougall's reflections on the subject of the perceivable through filming and writing, which I believe in some aspects can be extended to auditory perception and recording (MacDougall 1998, 265). Secondly, I refer to recent contributions calling for a cognitive reconsideration of the senses in ethnographic experience (Pink 2009). Thirdly, I intend to highlight some of Tim Ingold's reflections on the dynamics of "expert environments", pertinent in my opinion to the understanding of the sensorial world of mining gallery work, as a site of a multi-subject expert practice (Ingold 2011b).

AUDIOVISUAL METHODS AND SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Following the Lamps is a film project with two narrative threads, which stemmed from the above-mentioned research program. The first thread concerns the memories of older generations who have lived and worked in the Serbariu carboniferous districts; the second documents modern-day life (2006–2007) in the Nuraxi Figus – Monte Sinni Mine[4]. In my analysis, I intend to extract visual and sound elements from the

4 F. Tiragallo, *Following the Lamps. Visual Traces of Mining Life*, ethnographic research: Paola Atzeni, Felice Tiragallo; images: Felice Tiragallo, Andrea Mura; editing: Andrea Mura, Annalisa Porru;

part of the film that documents the sensorial landscape on the basis of the typology elaborated by Schafer (keynote sounds; signals; community sounds)[5].

Following the Lamps

The methods of video film documentation of mining activities, that we used, were inspired by the approach of "observational cinema" as described by Young (1975), Grimshaw and Ravetz (2016) and MacDougall (1998). In MacDougall's spirit of the use of an "unprivileged camera style", we adopted, with respect to the actions that took place in the subsoil, a rigorous policy of unobtrusive observation of the activity in the mining plant, a total abstention from staging, retakes or visual and sound alterations of the environment, and a broad preference for long takes. This was important since it permitted us to adapt the sound flow to the flow of visual observation, thus obtaining long sequences that allowed easy access to both the complexity of the documented technical actions and to the detail, and to the depth and three-dimensionality of the sound environment in which they took place. The next operation was to re-view and re-listen to the parts of the film that concerned the subsoil, by removing the visual plane from perception and focusing attention on the auditory dimension. The audio materials were obtained through the use of a cardioid microphone coupled to the video camera, which reproduced the soundscape in a partially selective way with respect to the researcher's hearing.

Now, in seeking to move towards a "total appreciation" of the acoustic mining environment, let us start by identifying Schafer's three categories that allow a progressive "purification" of sound, or in other words that enable an isolation of particular aspects of the continuum of a given sound environment. In this regard, we could say that the "keynote sounds" and "signals" appear in this specific audio context as closely connected, almost intertwined, dimensions. In fact, in the mining gallery the contextual sounds

production: University of Cagliari, Laboratory of Visual Ethnography – Italian Centre of Charcoal Culture; duration: 1: 41'35"; year: 2008; filming locations: Carbonia, Nuraxi Figus Mine – Monte Sinni. The film is structured as follows: 1) *Going to the mine* (arrival at the mine, 3'30"; the decision to go to the mine – memory, 7'40"; descent into the pit 3'30"). 2) *Advancements* (the first days in the mine – memory, 8'02"; progress inside the tunnel, 3'10"; reinforcement of the tunnel roof, 3'29"). 3) *Movements and knowledge* (movements within the gallery, 5'10"; technical knowledge and working conditions – memory, 11'). 4) *Production and safety* (coal extraction, 3'30"; perception of danger – memory, 5'40"; the pit scaffolding and the winch, 2'30"). 5) *Organization levels* (the coal's journey through the wash plant, 5'22"; official hierarchies and de facto hierarchies – memory, 9'15"). 6) *Conflicts and parties* (political and trade union struggles – memory, 15'32"; the Feast of Santa Barbara in the mine, December 4, 2006, 4'04").

5 Selection from *Following the Lamps. Visual Traces of Mining Life* https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122005/Audio/WA308_152196_P366_Tunnels-of-Voices.mp4.

that determine a seemingly bottomless flow of meaning are the rumblings of the various service systems, especially ventilation devices and flowing water. These elements indicate the total artificiality, but also the total humanization of the landscape. The sound "signals", in this case, are simply those of the contextual sounds that are intentionally listened to: they are thus comprised of a mix of human and non-human sounds.

The "electrical revolution" might be expected to produce a sound that is less and less tuned to a human scale. In this soundscape, however, it forms the basis of a complex network of meaningful sounds that weave together noises and perceptions of machinery with contact between machine and matter, which in turn is fused with a complex network of human voices, warnings, indications, rapid dialogues and references to the gigantic "continuous miner" and other devices in action. Human control is here tightly intertwined with the action of machines. Man is bodily present, and his body and the sound of his voice dialogues with the machinery, with the gallery and with the space. It is this mixture that determines the third category, that of archetypal sounds, which we can identify in the variations, pauses, rhythms and briefness of oral communication in the gallery.

Coal cultivation, in the Monte Sinni Nuraxi Figus coal mine, 2007

SOUNDS

The arrival of the workers. In October 2006, before dawn, a bus arrives at the entrance to the Monte Sinni – Nuraxi Figus Mine. In the silence broken only by the noise of the diesel engine, the 7.00 am shift workers come down. Many voices are heard indoors, the miners are in their locker room, open taps, waiting voices. Sparse and muted noises as the lamps are taken from the lamp room, upon receiving their identification tags.

"Giancarlo, hurry up!". Straps laced, greetings, whistles, laughter. Descent into the pit: noises of footsteps on metal, of sliding gates set in motion and of mechanisms that lock and engage. An acoustic signal, almost a vibration, indicates the beginning of the descent of the cage; voices emerge, passages of conversation between miners. Arguments that are futile, or mildly playful. Sliding of structures inside metal runners, with cyclical sound peaks. Arrival. Opening the gates, voices that move away into space and propagate in wider and more echo-rich environments than the circumscribed and rounded sounds of the elevator cage. Heading forward. Descent noise. Removing of the reinforcement, falling of stones and crushed rock. Rotating machine, its moving teeth produce a digging noise, noises of electric voltages, combined with noises of materials crushed and transported on a conveyor belt. Cyclical noises. "Thirty-six, eight": Transmission of data, readings from sensors placed in the reinforcement. "Go past the hole … no … wait … come on, Salvatore … anyway, I'll tell you that we were better before …" Electric motors on. "Preparation, here …". Noise of a live electrical apparatus, a continuous, prolonged note. Assembly of the reinforcement dowel. Metal that hits and scrapes against other metal. Pneumatic hammers in action, in the background. Lots of miners talking. Mining noises. Noise of air pressure equipment, operating, gears, engine transmission chains and coal mining. Noise of metal against the coal seam. Ascent. The Toyota 4x4 that goes up along the shaft and finally reaches the open air, the roaring noise of the engine and of its progress forward grows louder and becomes more free and more linear.

Tunnel reinforcement, in the Monte Sinni Nuraxi Figus coal mine, 2007

What does the soundscape of the mine presented here convey? At first glance, we see men, processes, devices and artefacts at work in an underground environment. But if we take the Monte Sinni production environment as a whole, the materiality

of the cultural product it contains seems to express itself best of all in the sound dimension; in a complex and multi-layered interweaving of noises produced by the movement of the miners' bodies; in voices that exchange information and reveal positions in space to each other; in tones of voice the modulations of which either speed up or slow down actions, both in the bodies that emitted these signals and in the bodies that receive them; rhythmic sounds emitted by machinery and devices powered by electricity (hence the monotonous and linear tonality of these sound waves), which in turn are modulated in an extremely precise way by operators, through manual pressure on commands like joy-sticks, buttons, levers and switches.

This dense and multidimensional sound indicates the presence of a complex artefact in which people do not work from above that world, but rather from within it. In this sense, every technical activity is comparable to a weaving or intertwining: acting in the world is a process of continuously intertwining our lives with others, and with the other elements of the environment. It is within this intertwining that our production projects come into being, not in a disembodied "world of ideas" (see Ingold 2001a, 189–196).

The skills in this environment are not individual: they are not those of each particular actor. "They are properties of the entire system of relationships constituted by the presence of the agent (human and non-human) in a richly structured environment" (Ingold 2001a, 150). Ingold's study calls for an ecological approach to an active intertwining of relationships, because an operator "looks and listens while at work" (ibid.).

Mining activity would thus consist of a set of "tasks". Each of these tasks takes its meaning from the position it occupies within the set of other tasks, performed one after the other, or in parallel, and usually in synergy, by many people. In the Ingoldian taskscape,

> the apprentice looks, hears and listens to the movement of the expert and tries – through repeated attempts to bring his bodily movements in line with those of his attention, so as to obtain a rhythmic adjustment of the perception of the action that is the basis of the skillful performance. (Ingold 2001b, 194)

In Ingold's hypothesis, several critical points emerge with regard to the commonly understood notion of soundscape. In the first place, the author argues that the idea of being able to conceive the soundscape in analogy with the visual landscape, as a spatially delimited environment in which levels of auditory experiences coexist in a constant relationship with each other, is groundless. Instead, the sensorial registers function as an inextricable clump, and we should not count too much on the utility of separating, isolating or purifying visual registers from sound registers. If we attempt in both cases (and in other sensory directions) to try to "reproduce" each stimulus in an environment deprived of all the others, we risk breaking down something that would be better interpreted as a unitary phenomenon.

The second mistake is to allow the metaphorical influence of the landscape as a visual experience to force us to implicitly construct an analogy that connects sound to vision. Sound is a phenomenon of experience, of our bodily immersion in the world. Thus sound is not what we hear, but the medium of our auditory perception; just as light is not what we see, but the means that allows us to experience what is apparent. This is the crux of the argument. We need to distance ourselves from the notion of sound emplacement:

Miners lead the continuous miner in the Monte Sinni Nuraxi Figus coal mine, 2007

> … Finally, if sound is like the wind, then it will not stay put, not does it put persons or things in their place. Sound flows, as wind blows, along irregular, winding paths, and the places it describes are like eddies, formed by a circular movement around rather than a fixed location within. To follow sound, that is to listen, is to wander the same paths. Attentive listening, as opposed to passive hearing, surely entails the very opposite of emplacement. We may, in practice, be anchored to the ground, but it is not sound that provides the anchor. Again the analogy with flying a kite is apposite. (Ingold 2007, 13)

In terms of Ingold's hypothesis, the miners are not mere receptors of sound waves in the subsoil that they select, interpret and react to. Underground sound agency requires that we "resist" sound streams, that they are reacted to by the miners in an oppositional capacity, like the kite that "opposes" the force of the wind and its changing direction. The sound experience of the subsoil produces a habitus (in the Bourdieian sense) of an extension of subjectivity: you perceive your corporeality in terms intertwined with that of others, and with the subterranean strata and the machinery. In the subsoil, the individual conscience seems to be compressed and re-emerges only above ground. Thus, separation from the workplace seems to be the necessary condition for "taking back the word", which is an equivalent for fully "taking back identity".

VOICES

The subject of my interest in this section is not only the discursive content of the individual spoken contributions, but also the complex of phonic, rhythmic and tonal qualities of the documented voices. I allude to what MacDougall has defined as the value of the subjective voice in ethnographic documentaries, but also recall his warning that his use of the word "voice" has an ambivalent sense:

> Voices are even more completely embodied than faces, for the voice *belongs* to the body. Visual images of people, by contrast, result only from a reflection of light from their bodies. In a corporeal sense, then, these images are passive and secondary, whereas a voice emanates actively from within the body itself: it is a product *of* the body. (MacDougall 1998, 263)

In the pieces of film presented here, the voices of the miners seem to be linked by an internal rhythm, a common mode of sound emission and a calmness full of lucidity and critical control over what they say. They appear to be physically linked to the material qualities of the environment that generated their memories. Here, we are dealing with the presence of the "mine in the body", to quote Paola Atzeni who, during her long ethnographic work with the miners, realized that, in each of the voices she listened to, she could make a detailed evaluation of the degree of physical degeneration of their lungs, due to silicosis and other serious diseases of the airways caused by their job (Atzeni 2015, 75). It seems that the slow pace of the voices of the miners is to some extent a result of the particular conditions in which air is breathed underground, and thus that the preciousness of the words that come out of their mouths is increased by this rarefying of the breath available.

Furthermore, a sense of intimacy between the ethnographer and the miner helps to evoke, in the tone, in the rhythm and in the meditated articulation of words, a separateness of the auditory space in which the meeting takes place. The miners' silences are an integral part of their bodily presence and of their emotional involvement (Bachis 2017). Here, speaking as a form of social organization and language as a social constraint play primary roles (Duranti 2007, 14). Speaking then as "being-with" has a collaborative nature and entails affective involvement; speaking as "being-for" is also, always, a presentation of one's Self, which lends itself to aesthetic and moral judgment (Duranti 2007, 16).

As I mentioned previously, in dealing with this part of the discussion dedicated to the voices of the miners, I started from the following assumption: in the particular historical situation of south-western Sardinia, the mining industry came into being in the mid-nineteenth century and developed onwards in a rural and pastoral environment, and thus constituted a new and traumatically inserted mode of production. This brought with it an ability to produce material and technical cultures of an algorithmic type (on the notion of embodied and algorithmic knowledge in pre-industrial

societies see Angioni 1986). In addition to the phonic setting of life in the subsoil, the life of the miners in the topsoil is determined by the forms of a continuous "taking the floor", of speaking publicly, in interventions in union, party and administrative headquarters about issues related to work, struggles, living conditions, and administrative and political life. For this reason, I consider the voices of the miners to be a soundscape complementary to and inseparable from the soundscape of the organic life of the mine.

In order to work on this particular soundscape, it was decided to fully enhance the voices of our interlocutors: in other words, to make clearly audible what MacDougall refers to as the product of the body *par excellence*. I hereby evaluate some of the choices that were made in carrying out the interviews in order to achieve this effect:

A) The construction of a phonic setting based on domestic environments, free of interference from keynote sounds and other elements extraneous to the voice and the body of the miners. In this setting, the voice functioned both as a "signal" and as a "sound footprint", to use Schafer's terminology, encouraging it to be interpreted as a recurring, peculiar and recognizable element of the social life of the miners under ground.

B) The production of visual documentation that could complete the auditory sensoriality, by placing the body, or at least the parts directly connected to oral communication, at the centre of the recording.

C) I made use of a small radio microphone to bring the device as close as possible to the miners' voices, while the recording of the surrounding sound environment was entrusted to a second panoramic microphone: this captured a background signal, in which the voices of the ethnographers sometimes emerged. I used solar or mixed lighting settings, without producing a sense of detachment through framing and without including the ethnographers in the frame. I believe that in this way a presence of the spectator was inscribed in the sound setting of the interview, making it possible to listen to the words of the miners, with their tones of voice, their pauses and their eloquent silences at the most critical moments, such as in the description of fatal accidents.

A) The Choice to Go to the Mine

Pietro Cocco:

> *... My grandfather was a worker, we were a family of workers, so ... I also became a worker. When I first entered the mine I, at fifteen, already had some mining experience, because I lived in the mine ... Iglesias, with its search for ore around, was a mining site. As a boy, I saw the fruit of the miners' work, the jute bags full of galena ore that came from San Benedetto, carts, horse-drawn carts full of galena sacks that went to the Monteponi foundry.*

Delfino Zara:

... On the last day of the year, I moved to Cagliari and I was discharged from the military. And then I came directly to Carbonia. Because everyone knew that they had reopened the mines and that they were hiring ... I already had a daughter ... and I needed to work.

Vincenzo Cutaia:

... We left at the end of October (from Tripolitania) and returned to Italy. Some time before, my brother phoned me to say that he was in Sardinia, in Montevecchio, and he was working in the mine. He told me: "Look maybe you want to come and work here and not go back to Riesi (in Sicily), because here you do your eight hours and then nobody asks you for anything more"... we were farmers and we were always busy ... and then I said to myself: "I have half a mind to go there".

Giorgio Borghesi

From the age of ten I always thought of going to work in the mine ... the mines of Campiglia (Tuscany) were closed then... but there were still all the abandoned structures, there was the chimney of the copper foundry ... so for us it was a hoot, there were all the piles of minerals, there was chalcopyrite, pyrite, hematite, my idea was to take a mining engineering degree and then go to work in the mine.

B) Technical Skills and Knowledge[6]

Giorgio Borghesi:

[He holds his head in his hands, he is about to explain a complicated matter] *They were mostly sloping roads, flanked by the removal and the destruction of the props* [He uses his two index fingers to indicate two parallel trajectories from bottom to top], *leaving filled parts, three meters void, four meters filled, three meters void* [his hands separate the spaces]. *You went on with these two sloping roads and two swinging boards. Then the panels were joined by isolating the pillars four meters by four meters. How many? It depends on how long the panel was* [he stops, hesitates, chooses his words carefully]. *From the base gallery to the head gallery. Each pillar, however, had to be four meters. When you got there, you began to ...* [stops] *to shore up the stack pillars, sleepers ...* [he stops again, gives us an almost resigned look that seems to say: "I know it's complicated, I'm trying to explain it as clearly as possible"] *Holm oak sleepers, not railroad ones... two, two, two were put* [he uses his hands to show the way the pairs of sleepers are laid transversally one on top of each other at 90°] *until you get to the roof. They were called "Castelle (stacks)". They were wedged into the roof and* [he makes a square with his hands] *one, one, one were placed,* [he draws a square] *in the voids. Then we took away the coal in the centre, with the help of some wooden posts. Because generally, in the slant where the pillars had been taken away, there was no iron reinforcement. (...) At that point, however, there was the dismantler who, once he had taken away the pillar, then with the roof up*

6 The mining technologies used in coal-mining regions in the period when our ethnographic research witnesses were working are well described in Ottelli 2005.

[he looks up as if you could see the sky in the tunnel, waving his hands to indicate instability], *staying up thanks to the sleepers and he has to recover as many sleepers as possible; there, I used to say, there were the dismantlers who were generally the doyens. Those who had the most experience of all ... they were the untouchables ... the dismantler was a "doyen", he was an "untouchable"*[7].
I often used to take a stand when the chief overseer was being a pain in the neck, but he [the dismantler] *on the contrary was someone that had to be left alone and that's all* [he waves his arms to indicate absoluteness and peremptoriness] *I never took the liberty of telling him, "No, take that one off before the other one". Because HE* [emphasis] *went down there to risk his life ... apart from the fact that he could have run rings around me, he was much older and I had never experienced anything similar (even though I had been an assistant foreman).*

C) The Perception of Danger

Pietro Cocco:

There are signs. Unmistakable. See the roof that's shattered ... you're in danger and it's there. You learn to recognize it. The mountain makes itself known. Because among other things, in places where a landslide could happen, sometimes material rains down. Every so often you hear "Crack, Crack, Crack". It is a warning. Those who do not obey come to a sticky end. The mountain always warns you. Because there is always something before ... the collapse. A collapse is never just "tac" and that's it. No! Something precedes it. Something falls on you. A small rock. More rocks. That is, it warns you. And then you mustn't be unprepared. The gallery, intact, the rock intact, is one thing. A shattered gallery, no. That's another. You have to watch out. It says: "I am shattered here. Here I might collapse. Because it's not intact". And you learn. You learn these things immediately. A man, if he fears for his life, learns instantly.

Delfino Zara:

In mid-June 1955 ... [long break] *eehhh ... An accident in the mine happens, by chance, at the site where I was working. Together with the foreman. Because they organized the work. There was ... the criterion of demanding over-production rather than safety comes back into play.* [Here too the basic message is stated in a subdued and somewhat hesitant way, spoken without the emphasis used by some of the other ex-miners interviewed].
So, we find ourselves one morning in a place without reinforcement with imminent danger [language from his political and trade union education] *of a landslide on the roof. And the foreman said to the miner: "You prepare the ground. Take out the coal. That under ... be careful. There was a "priest's hat", a particular block of coal. (...), watch out for the "priest's hat", (...). This worker, a Sicilian, you could see that he wasn't careful, he wasn't looking up. The block gave way and fell on him. [*He shakes his head briefly, then falls silent, looking down at the ground]. *He died the next day at the hospital.*

7 As regards the connections between technical knowledge and social status in the mines, Atzeni talks about a solidarity work ethic and notes that the refinement of body and sense techniques underground is socially built and therefore "the techniques of humanization of space, of the body and of work are continually linked to practices of friendship" (Atzeni 2007, 139).

VOICES AS SOCIAL ACTIONS

Pietro Cocco is 90 years old. These passages are taken from a long biographical interview that took place in his home in the countryside around Iglesias, in the context of a final re-enactment of his entire life as an opponent of fascism, as a militant and communist leader, a union leader and, finally, as mayor of Carbonia in the 50s and 80s. He is an eminent figure in the Sulcis-Iglesiente area, used to taking the floor, and with a very precise and narratively structured vision of his life. The construction of a model "identity" of a miner is presented here, at the highest possible level of awareness and coherence between the aspects of technical culture, birth and modern political culture. The sound context is a domestic one, free from any interference from external fields. The sound context is therefore in some ways also public, because Cocco's testimony does not animate or distinguish an intimate place, but rather constructs a narrative that was born and conceived to become a legacy for posterity.

The almost 90-year-old Delfino Zara was a miner in Carbonia from 1946 to the mid-1960s. Unlike Cocco, he comes from a family of farmers from eastern Sardinia. His arrival at the mine determines a clear jump in material and cultural status. His career as a miner is quite regular, as is his militancy in the Communist Party as a basic activist. The sound space of the interview does not take on the form of a public context as happens with Cocco. Zara's narrative is an account that leaves the interlocutor the task of deciding on the ultimate meanings to be attributed to his words. Zara speaks almost "*in camera caritatis*", as if he were making a confession, in an auditory space of moderate openness. In this case, this *confession* was overseen by the presence of his eldest son, visible in many shots of the film, who is also a miner and who somehow "controls" this communication space.

Vincenzo Cutaia comes from Sicily, and just like Zara, he too abandoned his roots as a farmer but, unlike the latter, he is the bearer of a story that sounds almost like an odyssey. A story that is determined not so much by material necessity, but by chance and adventure. It is a story that emphasizes change and emancipation, aspects that are completely unknown to Zara. The sound context is not subdued. His voice is almost epic. It tells of a series of values, such as work skills, class solidarity, the choice to "be with the poor", all signs of a fully accomplished path. In this sense, a finality emerges that we found in Cocco but far less in Zara. Even Cutaia's voice has a public dimension which, as he himself states in a part of the interview, is a voice consciously produced for collective memory, but also for pedagogical purposes. For Cutaia, the cultural values of the miners will survive the productive life of the mines.

Giorgio Borghesi spent his entire mining career as "assistant head of service" and then as plant manager. In the mining hierarchy, he therefore occupied a position closer to the leadership than to the class of miners. His testimony is not characterized by

traumatic or conflicting elements. The mine was a complex world, in which one needed technical skills and an ability to adapt to the highly specialized environment. The goal was to maximize production, and overcome workplace hazards and accidents. Borghesi's whole narrative tends to "rationalize" the work in the subsoil, constantly avoiding dramatic tones, even in the narration of accidents, always trying to bring the discussion back to the level of the complexity and gigantism of the organization of the mine and the professional ability of those who worked there (Carbonia had 12 thousand employees in the early 1950s). Borghesi is not making a grand statement for posterity. The overall tone of the interview is an active testimony, without the implicit elements we found in Zara: it is closer to that of someone with professional "expertise", in which the speaker masterfully describes a technical environment in relation to the "human resources" engaged in it.

FROM SOUNDSCAPES TO GALLERIES OF VOICES

The miners produce sounds (noises of footsteps, breathing, voices emitted through their lungs and vocal cords). These sound emissions are contemporary and contextual; they expand along tubular paths, they are enhanced more in a linear distance than in an omnidirectional one, and this involves phenomena of refraction and rumbling. The space of sound vibrations therefore favours a selection of distances along the same axis, and phenomena of going beyond rather than perceptual circularity.

In turn, the continuous miner (with the miners who run it), in the Ingoldian perspective, is a kind of kite, which flies governed by the mobile command-based cable module with all its displays and joystick. The continuous miner has sensors (or is a sensorial link) that produce sounds independently, but above all it produces new sounds, external to its body, in contact with the mountain, with the mineral material that constitutes the interior of the mountain. We are not in the presence of a predominately scopic regime. Instead, this is a dynamic, multi-sensory mapping. "*Tenni ogu, tenni origa*" is not an ancient precept for the separation of sensory regimes, but rather an invitation to a perceptual integration with the environment of the underground and an invitation to move on, bearing in mind the multiple constraints on this form of life.

In Ingoldian terms, the miners oppose the sound: they resist its flow. They connect it to other inputs and move within the inextricable results of this movement. The words they speak in the interviews can then be interpreted as serving the purpose of returning order and hierarchy to this multi-sensorial regime. To affirm one's ability to dominate, at least *a posteriori*, an environment in which they appear as craftsmen, but in which innumerable encounters and contrasts with other entities force them into a crowded agency.

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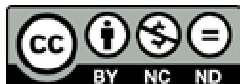

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REVERBERATION AS MIMETIC REPLICATION: URBAN SPACE, METRO BUSKERS AND ACOUSTIC EXPERIENCE

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This article examines the essential role of reverberation in everyday spatial experience and argues that the perception and production of reverberation – along with the related concept of resonance – is an example of an innate mimetic capacity residing in both living beings and seemingly inert matter. Reverberation, and acoustic experience more generally, are explored in relation to urban space, with attention paid to the transformation of sense experience in modernity. Drawing on a range of authors, with reference to the work of Walter Benjamin in particular, this article proceeds from a primarily theoretical level to that of concrete human experience, with the example of buskers (street musicians) who perform in the highly reverberant spaces of Montreal's underground metro system. Drawing on the author's ethnographic research among metro musicians, this article demonstrates that reverberation is a vital element in busker practices and experience, and argues that, in their practices and in their effects on space and passersby, metro buskers make evident – make perceptible – the mimetically reverberant relations between body and space, and between self and other.

KEYWORDS: reverberation; resonance; mimesis; acoustic perception; busker; metro musician; architectural acoustics; urban space.

In these pages, I examine the production and effects of reverberation, as a theoretical concept and a component of acoustic experience, and connect this aspect of the urban sonic environment to the concept of mimesis. I argue that reverberation, a key acoustic element of everyday experience, is a perceptible instantiation of mimetic activity that underscores the inter-relationality of sensing bodies, social and technological practices, and urban architecture. It is my contention that reverberation – and the related concept of resonance – is an expression of a mimetic capacity residing in human actors and seemingly inert materials. That is, in our everyday activities and relations with things and each other, there lies a generative capacity that is reproductive of those activities and relations, but always subject to the singular material-historical conditions under which they unfold. As I will argue, the essential role of reverberation in acoustic experience can be understood as a mimetic propensity by which we both integrate

and distinguish ourselves relative to our environment. To bridge the territory between the largely theoretical concepts of mimesis and mimetic reverberance, on the one hand, and the lived experience of human actors, on the other, I turn to the example of "buskers" (street musicians) as active participants in the acoustic fabric of urban life who may alter the sensorial trajectories of passersby. While not delving into the science of acoustics, I do discuss the nature of acoustic perception, specifically within reverberant urban spaces. In exploring the concept of mimesis, I have been particularly inspired by the writings of Walter Benjamin. Although my focus is primarily at the theoretical level, I bring the discussion back to the concrete – to the materiality of space and perception – by examining how buskers negotiate and alter the sonically challenging spaces of public transit systems. I make reference to a few other studies of buskers in such settings but draw primarily on my own research among musicians who perform in the stations and underground passageways of the metro system in Montreal, Canada[1]. The mimetically reproductive effects of reverberation in these spaces – varying in intensity and tonal qualities, from place to place – constitute a vital element in busker practices and experience, in how they perform and how they are perceived. In their practices and their effects on the surrounding space and on passersby, metro buskers make evident – perceptible – the mimetically reverberant relations between body and space, and between self and other.

SENSE RELATIONS, ACOUSTIC EXPERIENCE, REVERBERATION

Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (1999) details the transition into mature capitalism and the spatial and architectural transformations accompanying and contributing to rapidly changing social and sensorial relations. He describes the increased emphasis on visuality in the new urban centres of commerce, epitomized by specialized fashion stores catering to nascent bourgeois consumerism and, especially, the department store: a new commercial institution where, as Howes notes, "goods were largely out in the open and anyone could enter simply with the purpose of having a look" (2005, 284). Linking the modern sensorium to the economic relations of mature capitalism, Benjamin writes that "with the increase in displays of merchandise… the physiognomy of the commodity emerged more and more distinctly" (1999, 368), suggesting an incipient affinity between the commodity and the visual image as object. Like the fetishized commodity form, which severs its ties to the means and moment of its production,

1 From May to September 2016, I carried out research among Montreal metro buskers, including extensive observation; multiple interviews and casual conversations; audio and video recordings (for the finished videos see https://vimeo.com/wees); and elements of participant observation, including busking on multiple occasions.

the reified image assumes an independence and mobility, exerting a power of fascination yet lacking any rootedness in lived experience. Much has been made of this preoccupation with the visual image in Benjamin's work; though this provides fruitful avenues of inquiry, too often it is at the neglect of other sensory modes. Indeed, ocularcentric models are common in much of the literature on sense perception, especially in more theoretical or philosophical writings. For example, Merleau-Ponty's influential phenomenology (2012) works toward an understanding of perception and consciousness that encompasses a full range of bodily sensations, yet tends to rely on and perpetuate visual models and language. However, numerous anthropologists have engaged with and adapted phenomenological approaches, broadening our understanding of sensation, perceptual modes and the role of the emotions in our relations with our environment and each other (e.g. Jackson 2017, Howes and Classen 2014, Stoller 1989). The point is not to invert a hierarchy of the senses or to deny the crucial role of vision in the human sensorium. Rather, focussing on other modes of perception allows for a richer understanding of a range of social phenomena and of the co-constitution of body and space. A critical analysis of sensory modes also helps expose how the senses are ordered and perception structured in a given society. Indeed, as Le Breton argues, "the interrelatedness between human beings and the world depends on the symbolic systems that mediate between them," and that consequently, "the senses… channel [socio-cultural] meaning, creating a particular order and organizing a multitude of information" (2017, 17). As a component of the intersubjective relations by which we locate ourselves within the world, acoustic perception involves processes that help organize sensation and enable us to react in accordance with our environment. Attending closely to sonic experience both blurs the boundaries between subject and object and destabilizes sharp distinctions between sensory modes and pathways. Rather than treating sound as a separate domain or assuming the existence of a "soundscape" distinguishable from a (primarily visual) landscape, I concur with Ingold (2007) that our experience of the world "is not sliced up along the lines of the sensory pathways by which we enter into it" (10) and that sound is neither strictly "mental [or] material, but a phenomenon of experience… of our immersion in, and commingling with, the world in which we find ourselves" (11).

Although we tend to think of sounds as things, as objects, they "are" objects merely in the sense of "that which is perceived – that which is available for attention, thought, and demonstrative reference" (O'Callaghan 2007, 13). Perceived sound results from a transfer of energy that sets in motion vibrations in various elements of our perceptual apparatuses (primarily in the inner ear). These vibrations are "translated" into electrical charges and relayed to the brain, which orders the whole into "hearing sound." A vibrational force has characteristics specific to the physical make-up of its source; these manifest themselves as particular frequencies which produce vibrations in the parts of the body that are "tuned" to those frequencies. Thus, the perceiving apparatus must

be structured in such a way that it can resonate "in sympathy" with the particular wave frequencies that constitute the perceived sound. This relation of mutual attunement extends into the space in which the sound source and perceptor are located: we are not always aware of it, but what we hear involves more than the "event" we associate with a particular sound. When we hear some*thing*, we perceive both the sound-event – a voice, a trumpet blast, a passing car – as a vibrational force emanating from the sound source *and* as a series of reflected energy frequencies that extend from the sound source and bounce off surrounding surfaces before finally reaching us. These secondary sound signals add specific qualities to the perceived sound and "are merged by perception into a single sonic effect: reverberation" (Augoyard and Torgue 2005, 111). Though all spaces impart some degree of reverberation, we usually only notice this in certain situations (e.g. the sound inside a cathedral or concrete stairwell, footsteps receding down a long corridor, or hammering echoing off neighbouring houses). The size, shape, and physical make-up of any space impart particular acoustic qualities: reverberation is, thus, central to how we locate ourselves in space (Young 2017). Moreover, even in wide-open outdoor spaces, sound reflects off the ground and other nearby surfaces, though this effect is often below the threshold of conscious perception (Truax 2001, 69). Frequencies that are too weak or beyond the normal range of our hearing (too high- or too low-pitched) can nonetheless be sensed as vibrations, especially in the chest cavity, diaphragm and certain bones in our bodies (Augoyard and Torgue 2005).

While for the blind, reverberation and sound in general are critical for self-location, and for the deaf sound perceived as haptic vibration transmits vital information about the surroundings, most of us only consciously perceive the frequency range to which our ears are accustomed and attuned. Furthermore, music may be felt as resonance – literally, as sound waves that are transduced through our nervous-sensory system, and affectively, as movement and force – and can be played by deaf musicians in time and in tune with other musicians, given the requisite vibrational sensitivity. Music as felt rather than simply "heard": here, sense categories blur into each other. The resonant force that we perceive as sound is not bound to hearing, to our ears, quite so firmly. That we detect and process elements of such a vibrational force without our ears is worth highlighting, for it indicates that acoustic perception exceeds the very organ that we designate as the organ of audition. And, it is noteworthy that this appears not to be true of sight and of the eyes. Complete blindness suggests that no information from the visual field is perceptible. Sound is thus not a bounded field nor is its apperception limited to one sensory pathway. Furthermore, hearing cannot be "turned off" the way sight can be by closing one's eyes. Even when not consciously aware of it, we are processing auditory cues that situate us in space; at the same time, we help mould the sonic signature of a given space. Bodies both emit and absorb sound, so that even if sitting quietly, we are still acoustic participants in that space.

Following Lefebvre, space is understood here as dynamically produced through human activity, while the particularities of a given space set up the conditions of possibility for future activity. The constitution of what Lefebvre calls the "spatial body" acquires its "material character… from space, from the energy that is deployed and put to use there" (1991, 195): a generative relationship between bodies and the environment that supports them and which they continually modify. There is a tension in this spatial production, between a strictly replicative drive to produce the same and a creative impulse that seeks distinction, advantage, difference. The space of play between embodied social beings, architecture, infrastructures and technologies of reproduction can be understood as encompassing a process of correspondences, of mimetic relations. Bodies are formed by space, while space is produced by bodies in motion, by the uses of and claims to space made by embodied beings. There is, thus, a question of a "politics of the sensible" (Laplantine 2015), as the relationships between sense perception and subjectivity involve the broader formation of the senses in a given society and what "counts" as sensible – what Rancière terms "the distribution of the sensible" (2006)[2]. The social mechanisms that accord importance to some ways of sensing and being over others, that impart speech to some but not others, that draw the parameters of what can be said and done, and by whom, produce a sensorium that is reflective of social-material conditions – a sensorium largely "attuned" to conditions at hand. This type of theoretical approach provides an excellent basis for a critical examination of the senses – their history, how they are conceived of, how they operate within socio-material relations, what they "do" and what they "are." Such an analysis questions what can and cannot be sensed, what "is" sensible: what is thought to be perceptible *and* what "makes sense" (i.e. seems reasonable). However, theoretical-historical analyses fall short if the corporeality of lived experience is left out of the equation.

Our engagement with the world is a fully embodied activity that is inseparable from the social and material practices of a given time and place. Arguing that "thinking, perceiving, remembering and learning have to be studied within the ecological contexts of people's interrelations with their environments" and each other, Ingold write that "it is through the activities of the embodied mind… that social relationships are formed and reformed" (2011, 171). All human environments have in some respect been inextricably altered by human activity, and the sonic realm of urban space is formed largely by building materials and architectural design. Moreover, "the perception of architecture is spatial before it is visible… we sense space… in a way that differs from our appreciation of pictorial space" (MacArthur 2007, 481). Sound perception is a vital component in this spatial sense of architecture: as much

2 *Le partage du sensible* might be variously translated as the "distribution", "partition(ing)" or "dividing/sharing out" of the sensible.

Audio clip 1

as we engage in and with any environment through sight and touch, we do so also by means of acoustic perception, with reverberation playing an essential role. A key point here is that the spatial positioning of both sound source and perceptor (the performer relative to the passerby, in the case of buskers) is central to the qualities of perceived reverberation. This is expressed in *Audio clip* 1[3]. Two continuous recordings of a song played by a busker, one recorded at close range and the second at some distance, are blended in and out of each other to accentuate the acoustics of that spot located in a long tile-lined corridor.

Sound, speech, and acoustic perception remind us of our intimate, embodied relation with the world. "The sound of the self," writes Truax, "is ultimately entwined with the environment" (2001, 38). If resonance suggests a sympathetic relation between different objects and materials, and between these and living beings, reverberation attests to the fundamental inseparability of sound and space. Because reverberation is integral to everyday acoustic experience, we cannot truly talk about hearing *anything* independently of the space within which it is heard or as distinct from the acoustic participation of various materials. Indeed, vibrational resonances are not limited to the perceptual apparatus of living organisms but may occur between objects and materials (Augoyard and Torgue 2005, 99*ff*). For example, the soundboard of a violin resonates in sympathy with, and amplifies, the frequencies set in motion by the string that is plucked or bowed. Simple objects may also be caused to resonate by vibrational forces if the wave frequencies of such forces coincide with the (latent) acoustic properties of the object. An example of such sympathetic vibrations is a tuning fork that is struck, causing it to ring, and is brought near a second one tuned to the same frequency: the vibrational waves from the first tuning fork cause the second one to vibrate and sound (O'Callaghan 2007, 79). The idea of a sympathetic relation between bodies or objects can be understood here as a mimetic capacity, a form of imitative replication. My use of "sympathetic" relates to Frazer's concept of sympathetic magic (1990) in the sense of "having an affinity with", of sharing important characteristics, and the possibility of exerting an influence on seemingly discrete elements via this mutual semblance – not necessarily in the emotive sense of "compassion" or "understanding". However, when it comes to the practices of metro buskers described later in these

3 Audio clip 1: Lalo Orozco at Berri-UQAM station
https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122006/Audio/WA308_152203_P366_Reverberation-as-Mim_00001.mp3. The first part of this audio excerpt was recorded at a distance of 2 metres from Lalo. At a little less that half-way through, the sound cross--fades into a second recording, made at about 15 metres distance (Author's recording 2016). The video from which this section of audio is extracted can be see at: https://vimeo.com/197644517.

pages, the sociality and intersubjective relations that they conjure can both express and produce vibrations that are sympathetic in more than one sense.

MIMESIS AND THE MODERN URBAN SENSORIUM

Benjamin contrasts the spatial fragmentation of modernity with the interior domestic spaces of the 19th Century, described as being like a shell that provides comfort and security. Leach writes that this shell-as-dwelling "serves as an inverted mould of the self in which the subject fits snugly, encased like a compass in a velvet covered instrument case" (2010, 123), linking architecture with a propensity to both integrate oneself through mimicry and adopt a uniquely subjective position. There is, thus, a mimetic relation between individual and environment: mimesis as the means by which an organism blends into its environment while also distinguishing itself from its surroundings and other, like, organisms – a simultaneous self-effacement and self-identification. In "the concept of mimesis," writes Leach, Benjamin finds "the possibility of forging a link between self and other" and that it is "through the discovery and creation of similarities" that individuals can come to know and understand each other (124). For Benjamin, the ability to find and produce similarities is being lost: "only minimal residues of the magical correspondences and analogies that were once familiar to ancient peoples" remain (2007, 334). However, my claim is that the perception of reverberation is an instantiation of a mimetic propensity that may serve to re-connect the sensing self and the space it inhabits. In over-emphasizing the visual, Benjamin may have underestimated not only the resilience of the human mimetic capacity but also "overlooked" its productive role in acoustic perception. In reverberation – a perceived relation between a sensing being and the space in which it moves – we may locate a mutual attunement between body and world. Moreover, the mobility of participants in this spatial production cannot be underestimated. Moving through space, we gain ever more information, greater spatial awareness, and define a space not only for ourselves but also, to a degree, for other participants in that space (Rodaway 1994). The co-productivity of body and space has been extensively theorized by Lefebvre, whose concept of rhythmanalysis treats the body as the means by which we both gauge and reconfigure the varied rhythms of the lived world (2004). While such rhythms are eminently kinesthetic, they may also be sonic – thus directing us back to reverberation.

Humans have been highly attuned to the effects of reverberation for millennia (Blesser and Salter 2007), but modern technologies have changed our awareness of and responses to spatial acoustics. As Thompson (2012) argues, what counts as "noise" is neither arbitrary or entirely subjective, nor is it historically consistent. Whereas previously, reverberation gave "the acoustic signature of each particular place", this

changed with the increased volume of rapidly industrializing cities and "reverberation now became just another noise, unnecessary and best eliminated" (119). The "problem of noise" thus became the concern of architects, technicians and urban designers. Thompson delineates a highly significant aspect of modern techniques employed in the "handling" of reverberation-as-noise: the subordination of spatial reverberation by technological means, which has two moments. The first occurs with the muting of reverberation inside buildings with new sound-absorbing materials, creating "an acoustically efficient environment and… engender[ing] efficient behavior in those who worked within" (2012, 121). This intensifies the uncoupling of sound and space, with architectural interiors sonically divorced from their physical surroundings. The second involves the microphone and sound engineering. With modern recording technologies, sound comes under the mastery of audio technicians who define "what constitute[s] good sound": clear, with minimal reverberation and easily manipulable, sound that "den[ies] the space in which it was produced" (122). In this account, architectural design and audio recording technologies alter the modern sensorium in such a way that sound seems to cut its ties to the specificities of place and production altogether. In the recording studio, musical instruments are typically recorded "dry"(with the least perceptible reverberation possible) and "artificial" mechanically-generated reverberation of a desired quality is subsequently mixed back in. In Benjaminian terms, the "aura" of sound is thus destroyed. Indeed, Benjamin wrote at length on modern technologies of reproduction, what Taussig terms "mimetically capacious machines" (1993), especially the camera lens and film production, both in terms of the loss of "aura" they cause and their potential for fostering new forms of mimetic activity. It may be, then, that reverberation is a key to somehow redeeming the fragmented sensoria of life under mature capitalism and recuperating sound's actual attachment to the space and means of its production.

My argument, thus far, is that acoustic experience is an often underestimated mode of being, of thinking and doing, of acting in the world; and, that reverberation, as the perception of sonic reflections of sound-events in and through an environment and of ourselves moving in that environment, represents a form of mimetic replication. Repetition of the same but with difference: an impulse toward reproduction that aims for integration into the environment and simultaneously seeks distinction, that aims for *self*-replication. The mimetic impulse: an insect camouflages itself by mimicking features of its surroundings, avoiding predators, gaining a reproductive advantage; a pedestrian falls into step with the momentum of the crowd, yet is able to exploit small openings in the movements of the mass; sound waves refract through space, bounce back toward each other, like a murmur of voices all saying the same thing but all in different ways. The pulse of the city reproduces the meter and cadence of its inhabitants, of human activity, simultaneously setting the pace for the rhythms of the everyday (*Photo 1*). The periodicity of sound waves is temporal and rhythmic; the

Commuters at Radisson station. Every station in Montreal's underground transit system is uniquely designed and each has its own unique blend of sounds of trains, commuters, rattling escalators, ventilation systems and public service announcements ringing through the reverberant space (Author's photo, 2016)

perception of reflected sound blending with direct sound from a sound-event involves a mimetic attunement with surrounding space. The resonances of objects and materials, alive or inert, suggest a relationship of sympathetic rhythmicity, while the reverberance of space reveals the co-productivity of perception and environment, of the social and the material, of active bodies and urban architecture.

To concretize this idea of mimetic reverberance as actual and embodied, we will descend into the urban underground. According to Labelle, this is "a reverberant space: cavernous and dim… echo[ing] with sounds and voices," and due to its "acoustical conditioning the underground provides a key geographic coordinate for acousmatic experience" (2010, 4). For Labelle, underground acoustics are pre-eminently characterized by a reverberance that accentuates some sounds while blurring others, creating a muddied acoustical space that disorients, perhaps even oppresses. However, my concern is less with the acousmatic experience of "reduced listening" than with how reverberation may *re*connect us to our surroundings. Reduced listening, according to Chion, refers to a "listening mode that focusses on the traits of the sound itself,

independent of its cause and its meaning" (2012, 50) – a sort of acoustical phenomenological reduction. The goal is to focus purely on the specific qualities of a sound. While this can be a productive activity, "opening up our ears and sharpening our power of listening" (51), it is one that deliberately attempts to sever sound from the conditions of its production. This approach tends to reinforce the fragmentation of sense perception with the reified sound-image becoming a free-floating object, as divorced from the world of grounded sensual experience as is the fetishized commodity form. My goal lies in the opposite direction: an attempt to reintegrate perceived sound into the socially and materially emplaced experience of the perceiver, into the subjectivity of singular experience. In point of fact, Labelle does situate his account of underground acoustics within the broader social realm, drawing on film, literature and historical accounts, some of which provide compelling instances of sound as experiential. Yet, in many discussions of sense perception and its relationship with dominant socio-political and material-economic structures, insightful as they may be, there appears to be a lacuna; something seems to be missing. What is in fact missing, or erased by the imposition of an abstract and universalized "type", is the body as a living being, as a relational subjectivity that is always materially and socially located, – not The Body writ large, but bod*ies*: gendered, classed, racialized, performed, linguistically enacted, but always and firstly sensed, lived. And, it is precisely the in-depth, experiential ethnographic account that is best able to address the lack of plurality and difference, the erasure of singular subjectivities in much theorizing of the human sensorium. As Laplantine notes, ethnography is concerned not with generalities but is "the method of the infinitely small, of attention to small details and details of details" (2015, 47).

UNDERGROUND RESONANCES: METRO BUSKERS

I have described elsewhere the musical and spatial practices of metro buskers, arguing that the "busker type" – what constitutes *a* busker – is, in fact, not a type. Irreducible to a simple classificatory definition of "profession, identity or bounded subject-position," the activity of busking must "be understood as an assemblage-act, involving multiple participants – human and material – that emerges through the practices and creative tactics of an individual performer" (Wees 2017). As an ensemble of practices, busking is always relational, embodied, temporally and materially transient. Given the extremely varied motivations and self-conceptions of buskers, as well as the details of what and how they perform (including instrumentation, repertoire, whether amplification and/or recorded accompaniment is used, how they position themselves and engage, or not, with passersby) and how all of these are tied to personal trajectories and wider historical currents, it is impossible to accurately describe what busking *is* without reference to the material and social conditions within which these

practices unfold. Furthermore, busking – particularly in the subterranean spaces of the metro – demonstrates how reverberation situates us within an environment, as well as how acoustic experience offers an avenue for creative action and tactical appropriations of public and semi-public spaces.

In his description of the Paris metro, Augé (1986) treats this subterranean space as separate and distinct from the city itself – a sort of heterotopic space, where chance encounters and the unexpected brush up against the habitual trajectories of commuters. Yet, at the same time, he sees the metro as integral to the city as a whole, creating direct correspondences between locales that, at surface level, appear far-removed from each other; it is an under-world of memory and displaced sense, defined above all by movement. In her study of Paris metro musicians, Green (1998) links the temporality of the metro – a key characteristic of such spaces – with that of music. Thus, an apparent affinity exists from the outset between live musical performance and the liminal spaces of the metro. As does Green with respect to the Paris metro, Tanenbaum (1995) qualifies the spatial acoustics of the New York subway as reverberant and sonically cluttered. For some musicians this creates difficulties, with their music becoming muddied or lost in the noisy cavernous spaces, but for others the pervasive reverberance can be a boon, adding warmth and depth to their sound. A busker who performs in Grand Central Terminal extolls the acoustics there, telling Tanenbaum that he knows the musical key to which that space is tuned (1995, 15). Similarly, in my own research in Montreal, some metro musicians complained about the echoey and generally loud atmosphere at some of the performance sites, while others said that the reverberant character of certain spots enhances the overall quality of their sound. A professionally-trained percussionist playing steel drums (or "steel pan") says that the acoustics in the metro are ideal for his instrument: the reverberance adds warmth, while the bright sound of the "pans" cuts through the sonic murkiness of the station. Indeed, even from afar his instrument is clearly heard above the general din of trains and passersby (*Photo 2* and *Audio Clip 2*)[4]. Similarly, a trumpet-player says he knows that he can be heard clearly on the train platform below, and up above near the street-level exit: he is halfway between, in a wide hall where several corridors converge. The sound of the trumpet resonates through the station, making audible the underground architecture.

Audio clip 2

4 Audio clip 2: A recording of Joseph playing steel pan, from a distance: the spatial reverberation is perceptible (Author's recording 2016).
https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122006/Audio/WA308_152203_P366_Reverberation-as-Mim_00002.mp3.
The entire video from which this section of audio is extracted can be see at:
https://vimeo.com/202567140.

Joseph at Guy-Concordia station. Despite his proximity to the train platform, the bright sound of the "steel pan" is clearly audible through the rush of passing commuters (Author's photo, 2016)

Some musicians feel that the acoustics of certain busking spots suit them better than others – largely a function of their instrument(s) and musical style, with one busker saying that what is most important is if the music is a "good fit" for that spot. The most popular spots typically combine good exposure to passersby with enough space to set out a case, hat or other receptacle for donations ("tips" in the words of several interviewees), and what these enterprising musicians consider to be good sound: not too "noisy", with some attention paid to the reverberance of the spot. The spaces where these spots are located are built of hard, sonically-reflective materials: concrete, brick, tile, steel, plate glass. They are varied in shape and dimensions: long corridors, wide platforms at the juncture of stairs and escalators connecting different levels, cavernous concourses where the murmur and rush of commuters marks the daily rhythms of the city. Materials and infrastructures show themselves to be active participants in the resonances of the underground. Aside from the level and tonalities of the spatial reverberation, noise is an important consideration for musicians: trains arriving and departing, announcements on the public address system, rattling escalators, ventilation systems and, of course, the footsteps and voices of passersby, who may surge

past in great masses during rush hours (*Audio Clip 3*)[5]. Some musicians seek out quieter spots, but for those who use electrical amplification, it is easier to adjust to the varied conditions of different spots. However, this can involve more than simply adjusting the volume by turning a knob.

Audio clip 3

One musician says that at one of his favourite spots he turns his amplifier to face the wall directly behind him, otherwise the sound bounces off the opposite wall about five meters in front, sonically oversaturating the narrow space; but, if he simply turns down the volume, he gets drowned out when a crowd filled with many voices passes by. Another electric guitarist talks about the dominant frequencies at different spots: low-end bass frequencies tend to dominate in long corridors constructed of tile and brick, whereas in a more open spot, high frequencies come to the fore. To compensate, he makes tone adjustments on his guitar and amplifier. Moreover, in addition to volume and tonal modifications, some buskers are cognizant of the rhythms in the underground; indeed, some musicians will play in time with the pace of passersby. "Watch the timing of people's footsteps as they walk by", I was told, "and then you play to that beat." The idea is that if the music is "synced" with passersby, they will "connect" with it and will respond more – a form of sympathetic rhythmicity, perhaps. This explanation from an experienced busker exhibits a creative and relational understanding of busking practices, suggesting a certain rhythmanalytical sensitivity that performers may develop. Indeed, this practice-based theorizing derived from pragmatic experience may be taken as an affirmative reply to Lefebvre when he asks: "Is there an *instinct* of rhythm?" (2004, 64). While most of the rhythmic synchronizing in our daily lives operates at a barely conscious level, it is possible also to "read" the various rhythms in a given setting, working with these to both integrate oneself into, and distinguish oneself from, the surrounding environment – a mimetic correspondence with reverberant space. The performer must "sound good" in that spot, must blend in to a degree, but must also stand out, capture and hold the attention of passersby, if only fleetingly. These few examples illustrate musicians' creative engagement with the spaces of the metro and their attempts to adjust to and play with those spaces' reverberation and rhythmic structures, revealing a dynamic constructionist understanding of space on the part of many metro musicians. Whether by mimicking movement or sensing architectural resonances and

5 Audio clip 3:
https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122006/Audio/WA308_152203_P366_Reverberation-as-Mim_00003.mp3. The footsteps and voices of a multitude of passersby resonate through a long corridor at Berri-UQAM station as the drifting sound of a saxophone plays out a familiar refrain, blending into, yet adding its own distinctive voice to, the sonic texture of the metro.

reacting accordingly, these performers both reproduce the acoustic and spatial characteristics of the metro and alter them, infusing new possibilities into the subterranean sonic realm: metro buskers in mimetic correspondence with passersby and with the architectural acoustics and physical layout of a space.

For some performers, visibility and comfort are at least as important as considerations of sound. Yet, while some give little thought to the acoustics of the performance space, others go to great lengths to work with and against the sonic constraints and affordances of the underground. One professional musician who plays baroque music on the viola performs in the metro largely for the sound. He comments that the acoustics in many of the stations are similar to those of a baroque cathedral, and that a lot of the music he plays was composed for precisely this sort of acoustic environment. Not simply mundane and mute aspects of urban infrastructure, the cavernous stairwells and long open corridors of metro stations resonate with tonal qualities of the past: music and architecture, echoes of human history and creation converge, comingle, reduplicate, reverberate. "An echo", writes Smith, "is nothing if not historical" (2015, 355). Indeed, another form of echoic replication is found in the common busker practice of playing "cover songs". The majority of the musicians I spoke with play only, or at least some, "covers": songs by other musicians, usually well-known pop, rock or folk tunes (by artists such as The Beatles, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, etc.). While the motivation for this can often be financial or simply to "connect" more with passersby (in busker logic, people respond more to what is familiar), the practice constitutes a form of quoting[6] that references a past event but re-creates it always afresh. Music is never static: it is only perceptible, only exists, in its performance and reception.

By appealing to the past (i.e. the original version of the song) and emotional connections to the past (associations individuals may have with that song), there may be an element of nostalgia implied by the performance of covers (Boetzkes 2010). However, busker practices and repertoires are much too varied for the nostalgia-tinged playing of covers to be somehow definitional of busking as a whole. Moreover, this appeal to the past may be to an imaginary as much as to an actual past. Tanenbaum argues that while some South American New Yorkers may feel a nostalgia for their homeland and a sense of shared ethnic identity when they hear buskers playing "Andean music", this cultural identity is specifically diasporic and may bear only a partial relation to an actual common regional heritage (1995, 91). In my fieldwork, I spoke with and observed several Latin American musicians, some of whom play musical instruments and/or styles that are specific to certain regions. I witnessed many instances of cultural recognition, of a shared sense of identity initiated by the music,

6 For an example of the mimetic aspect of quoting in a very different context, see Taussig's argument that the quoting of quoting of quoting (… and so on) characteristic of the Cuna people is a "decisive mimetic component built into Cuna speech" (1993, 109).

when passersby originally from those cultural regions stopped to talk with musicians. In one case, a woman passing a busker – a recent immigrant from South America, singing in Spanish – stopped and, inspired by the music, sang an unaccompanied Andean folk song, *performing for the busker* and two other strangers of Andean origin who had stopped to listen. Busker practices, then, include – but are by no means limited to – what might be thought of as nostalgic quoting and inter-cultural citationality *(Photo 3)*. Old forms are renewed, initiating new encounters, new circulations of sociality, with the propagation and diffusion of sympathetic vibrations that may take on an affective quality.

In fact, I was struck by how many musicians see busking as a form of exchange or of gift. Certainly, monetary donations can be an important motivation, but it is not the only nor necessarily the primary one. Indeed, more than a few buskers said that other considerations were more important than money. The most common of these can be summed up, in the words of one musician, as "giving something nice to the public, in a place that isn't very nice," that is dirty, loud and often thought of as

William at Jean-Talon station. He plays traditional Andean instruments but includes many popular songs, by The Beatles for example, in his repertoire. He sells CDs of himself playing, but says that he usually gives away the flutes, bracelets and other items he makes – seen here in his case. Pre-recorded accompaniment tracks play out of a small speaker. (Author's photo, 2016).

inhospitable, if not dehumanizing. Getting a positive reaction, even just a smile or a nod of acknowledgement, is highly valued, signalling an awareness of and concern for social resonances – an inter-personal connectivity that can break through the anonymity of the crowd. "Music touches people", said one seasoned busker, "it's a gift" – echoing Mauss' concept of the gift which initiates circulations of goods that, ultimately, create and maintain wider social networks (1967). Busking and gift come together as an inter-personal encounter mediated by and through music: the production and circulation of sympathetic vibrations resonate through people and things, making space and duration sensible – a creative appropriation and re-enchantment of everyday urban space.

CONCLUSION

Sound and movement, space and sensation are processual relations which are in every instance temporal, transitory, grasped but ephemerally. Likewise, "the perception of similarity is in every case bound to an instantaneous flash," writes Benjamin; "it slips past, can possibly be regained, but really cannot be held fast" (Benjamin and Tarnowski 1979, 66). Surely such a description can be applied to the perception of reverberation. For if the visual image lends itself to a quasi-permanence, a durability and transpos--ability, even if this is largely illusory, the apperception of reverberant space can be but fleeting, as time-bound as it is space-bound. This presents a challenge to the ethnographer who would include the experience of reverberation in the study of a given cultural setting or practice, as we generally have a limited awareness of reverberance and its effects on us as well as of how we ourselves modify the acoustics of a space. Yet, to not account for this would be to ignore an essential aspect of sense perception, of our emplacement in the world, and of our relations with others and with the material infrastructures of everyday life.

It is beyond the scope of this article to detail specific techniques, tools, and analytical frameworks that may be of service in working toward an anthropology of reverberance. However, models that may be productively adopted do exist in ethnographic work on sound and on the senses in general (e.g. Feld and Brenneis 2004, Helmreich 2012, Imai 2008), and in particular on the creative and critical uses of audio and audio-visual recording and editing (e.g. Boudreault-Fournier 2017, Pink 2009). Moreover, as I have argued, despite the oft-subtle effects of reverberation, we possess an innate mimetic attunement with our surroundings that provides a degree of access to the production and effects of reverberation, of the mutual resonances between bodies and between body and environment. We possess a sensory awareness of the multiple rhythms and resonances that (in)form us and that are transformed by our activities: though largely a pre-conscious sensing, it can be brought to the level of

conscious awareness though critical, focussed attention. A "subject-centred" ethnographic approach makes sense here, particularly as the perception of sound (and the more specific experience of musical perception), though mediated by social processes and material realities, is a fundamentally subjective experience (Rice 2003). Participant observation, the core of ethnography, provides a bridge into the individual subjective experiences of those whom we wish to learn from and with, and this entails a fully sensorial engagement. In my research among metro musicians, I busked (guitar and vocals) on numerous occasions at different spots in the metro, allowing me to reflect on the perception and effects of reverberation from the position of the performer. In this way, we may look to, and learn from, the pragmatic everyday understandings that research participants have of acoustic experience and sense perception more generally. Indeed, many metro buskers, in the ways that they creatively work with challenging spatial acoustics, exemplify a practical, localized knowledge, becoming everyday practitioners of urban rhythmanalysis, and savvy readers and manipulators of mimetic relations. Just as ethnography can function as an engaged theoretical-practical activity, a detailed analysis of acoustic experience can unite critical academic understandings with the applied know-how of our everyday lifeworlds.

As I have shown, reverberation is an embodied perception of the relationality of space, of our own presence and of that of others, and, as such, is an instantiation of an innate mimetic capacity present in living beings and seemingly inert matter. Mimetic reverberance may be thought of as a sensed intersubjective awareness of self and other, with the vital participation of objects and architecture, of the materiality of the city in everyday experience, and as expressing a capacity to reproduce the world both as it is and as different. Whereas the reverberant spaces of the city are continuously modified by all who inhabit and traverse them, buskers can alter the acoustic character of urban space in unique and creative ways, creating and transmitting resonances that flow through the city, precipitating ever new trajectories of social and material circulation.

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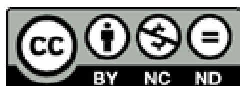

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THE "FLOATING HERSTORIES" SOUND PROJECT: A HELICAL COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

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This article describes the sound project "Floating Herstories" in all its levels: from its conception and development, to its trial in the field on the island of Trinidad, in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies. Inspired by the childhood experience of hearing a shell on Caribbean seashores, this sound work uses seashells as the medium to transmit stories narrated by women authors from Trinidad. Co-written by two authors, this article describes the multidisciplinary construction of the project, involving the participation of the three narrators of the soundtrack. Following a *situated* heritage of storytelling, "Floating Herstories" aims to tell stories collected poetically by the Caribbean Sea. The trial with the finished prototype conveyed the reactions of the population *in situ*, from which we gathered some meanings concerning the experience of both telling a story and listening to one. On this basis, the article sets out some questions about the value of silence and selected sound in a familiar or estranged context.

KEYWORDS: Trinidad & Tobago; seashell; audio-electronics; orality; art-anthropology; morphology, women.

Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies.
A seashell is sounded in order to signal the beginning of a cricket match.[1]
A seashell was sounded during the colonial period in the plantations in order to signal a fire emergency.
Seashells are used in divination ceremonies.
A seashell is an object of memory of all adults who remember themselves when they were children, playing at the beach on Sunday afternoons during *limes* with their families.[2]

1 Cricket is the national sport of Trinidad and Tobago (West Indies).
2 The term *lime* is a creole word that locally means to hang out.

This is an article about a sonic artistic project, made in collaboration between the two authors of this article, which has been tested in the field in the Caribbean country of Trinidad and Tobago. It explains the sound project and its theoretical foundations. It continues by describing the content and technical development of the devices. Finally, it ends with an ethnographic analysis of the project *in situ*, which took place during the summer of 2019.

THE PROJECT AND ITS ORIGINS

The relations between art and anthropology have been analysed by many researchers: according to Arnd Schneider (2010; 2013; 2017), for example, there is a congruence between the act of making art and that of doing fieldwork. They are both productive, and explore and shape that which cannot be clearly understood. The entry of art into anthropology as a research practice, rather than a topic or object of research, generates a mutually transformative environment between the researcher, possible collaborators and the audience. It involves both an improvisatory endeavour (Ingold 2013) and a common suspension of disbelief out of which new forms of collaboration and participation may arise (Grimshaw and Ravetz 2015). However, there is an important difference between the roles of an artist and a social scientist: according to Bourdieu (1995: 139 cit. in Sasanka and Dev Nath 2019), the former acts in a belief of the uniqueness of the creator, while the latter, on the contrary, seeks to understand, explain and account for what s-he finds. This experimental project was neither a *mise en scène,* nor an installation practice; the intent was to propose a medium different from well-established qualitative interview methods and participant ethnography, one that could release the creative part of the researcher into a different approach of exchange with artistic communities and the general audience.

The idea of using seashells came out of a discussion with the Trinidadian contemporary artist Christopher Cozier, while we were brainstorming about a poetical way to aurally translate the concepts of insularity and transnationality. Thinking and working on sound, instead of the more common visual media, generates different questionings towards the notions of space and time and different opportunities for the audience to relate with them. Vision is historically associated with knowledge: from the Latin, *videre*, it is the source of the term "evidence" and "providence" (Le Breton 2017). There is a factual rapidity and sense of reliability connected with vision that is expressed to an audience. On the contrary, the etymology of the Latin verb "to listen", *ascultare,* evokes the act of attentively lending the ear. It implies an attentive will and motion to the other that goes sonically, physically and emotionally close to the source of the listening; it functions as a connector and it requires attention and time. According to the artist Salomé Voegelin (2010), the act of listening reminds the human being

that s/he inhabits their environment. Listening awakens an affective geography (25), which triggers the unseen action of the visual world: it attunes us to an experience of the unseen aurality.

The Cuban novelist Antonio Benítez-Rojo calls the population of the Caribbean, “People of the Sea” (2001: 28). This term refers explicitly to the notion that the inhabitants of Caribbean islands have a polyrhythmic connection that is able to overcome the geographical separation and distinct ethnic origins of their citizens. Trinidadians also use the expression “People of the Sea” to refer to the whole population of the island: those who come from European origins, as well as those of the Middle Passage (i.e. from the slave trade from the African continent), those of Kala Pani origin (literally from the Hindi “dark waters”, identifying the East Indian population stemming from indentured labour from India) and the other multiple immigrations that encountered the First People, the native indigenous populations. In the name of this link with the sea, the shells in this project are interpreted as organic entities that, like the Caribbean people, are transitional.

In preparation for this project, the anthropologist contacted several of her closest friends, past informants of her PhD research. She asked them if they wanted to contribute to this project, while also participating in an act of joint creation. This process happened while she was in Europe, where she currently resides. The people who agreed to contribute to this journey are all women related to the art community. They were asked to use their own experiences and life as a starting point to think through what these seashells could talk about. They were asked what they would have loved to tell the metaphorical “sea” that could be heard by all coasts. They all decided, without having contact with each other, to create and record stories that deal with their matrilineage. This is why the term “herstories”, used as the title of the project, has been coined. They are *Floating Herstories*, because the shells carry stories narrated by women about women; and they are floating because they deal with issues of transnationality and displacement that cross the ocean, just as a shell does. Metaphorically, through these devices, the herstories move and float in the up and down waves of the ocean, until they run aground on sandy beaches.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the spoken word holds a sense of doing as described in the performativity of speech postulated by John Austin (1962). This oral performance was at the root of the creation of Calypso music, which was born in Trinidad. This music genre is characterized by highly rhythmic vocals, wherein the singer replaces the role of the griot (West African storyteller). It was originally a masculine and patriarchal (Rohlehr 2004) musical practice. With this sound installation, the wish is to allow some intimate her-stories, silenced by the overwhelming abundance of patriarchal his-stories exemplified by the Calypso genre (Obolo 2011), to be heard. Proposing Herstories therefore challenges this secular heritage that is linked with storytelling.

The act of telling stories in a post-plantation society intimately involves the notion of silence. During one trip to Barbados, a Trinidadian friend who had migrated there for professional reasons stated: "In plantation societies, silence is more talkative than words" (2018). Her statement has accompanied this sound project in both a metaphorical and a theoretical way.

During another period of fieldwork in Trinidad, we came across an old expression that is still used: "If the river stones could talk." This saying denotes human relief at the impossibility of "talking" stones: because if stones were anthropomorphized, they could reveal intimate stories about usually illicit romantic encounters and affairs, gossiping (locally, *mako*[3]) and 'bad talks' that took place during the period when women washed clothes along the rivers. Such activities were described as well during colonial times, when washerwomen and blanchisseuses[4] washed and whitened their masters' clothes in the waters of the island's rivers.

This project also takes its inspiration from the creole mode of storytelling of "Crick--Crack". This practice in Trinidad has been recounted in *Crick! Crack!: Trinidad and Tobago Folk Tales* (1966), written by Eaulin Ashtin, and a visual example is shown in the seminal Martinican and French movie: *Rue Cases Nègres* (1983) by Euzhan Palcy. In this practice, the storytelling was performed through a verbal refrain that linked the storyteller and the audience. The storyteller announces that a story is about to be told by calling out "Crick!" to which the audience responds by shouting "Crack!", thus completing the phrase "crick crack". Through this refrain, the audience is not only listening to the story, but also affirming their presence in it. Hence, this practice of storytelling required a group performance in which the 'audience' participated with the narrator, thus creating a dialogic connection between the two that mixed them to the extent that they almost become one. This performative practice, which stems from West African heritage, has always been part of the cultural foundation of the Caribbean region. Nowadays, the expression "Crick Crack" is still used between adults and children when telling modernized stories. So, inspired by this regional cultural performativity, the project wishes to evoke a similar relationship between the shells and the listeners.

This sound project raises the connection between the etymology of "person" and "personhood" on the one hand, and the word "persona" and the verb "personare" on the other. This last term means to masquerade, to play a role, and thus comes close to the sense of autobiography. It is composed of "per" and "sonare": "to sound through", in reference to the sound made through the masks used in ancient Greek and Roman plays (Goffman [1959] 1969: 31; Hollis 1985; Mauss 1985). The shells in this sound work fulfil the same function as the ancient masks, which metaphorically created the persona, or the personage (the drama and social character), through a sound that

3 *Mako*: a local creole term meaning gossip.

4 The island of Trinidad still has a beach crossed by a river that is named Blanchisseuse.

comes from a hole. According to this interpretation, the voices that are listened to from the shells should function as subjectivities that are heard, once attention is given to them by another person.

FLOATING HERSTORIES AND ITS CONTENT

The *Floating Herstories* sound project aims to immerse the audience in the most common childhood experience of being on a beach. By bending down and taking the shell to the ear, the audience enacts a memory journey. Instead of hearing the sound of the sea, the listener hears stories and sounds from Trinidad, recorded between 2018 and 2019.

The sound content consists of storytelling. This is understood as the act of telling personal stories that have intimate significance and that communicate personal experiences, feelings and desires, allowing narrators to recognize how relevant these stories are (Portelli 2005). Moreover, storytelling, according to Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996), is a form of reconstructed fiction; in a postcolonial context, it serves to reposition history within and alongside settlers’ stories. The act of remembering the stories and re-enacting them aurally is part of the process of reinvention of the narrators themselves (Muñoz 1999).

Vincenta Jessie de Archbold listens to a shell (2018)

The shells poetically translate the stories carried by the sea. The project would like to be a poetic attempt to translate the sound of waves into human words and natural sounds.

The *Floating Herstories* project is the fruit of collective work between the two authors of this article and the three authors of the audio content: the writer Lesley-Ann Brown, the visual artist Tamara Tam-Cruickshank and the video maker Aletha Dale Mccullough. These last three were born or have family in Trinidad and Tobago.

FLOATING HERSTORIES: TERMINOLOGY

• Floating
Adjective from the verb to float: being buoyed up on water; moving from one place to another. This term gives a sense of insularity. The act of floating represents a 3rd space (Bhabha 1996) in which the subject is neither underwater, nor in the air. While floating, an object follows waves and currents. For this project, the term corresponds metaphorically to a way of meandering between forces. Moreover, floating suggests a sensory metaphor of fluxes, flows and migrations, evoking the diaspora and the historical trade routes of which the country was part.

• Herstories
The authors collaborated digitally with the anthropologist at a distance, from three different locations: from Hawaii, where Aletha is located; from Trinidad, in the Caribbean region, where Tamara lives; and from Europe, where Lesley is based. The three authors have Trinidadian ancestors and/or were born in the country. All of them have lived or are still living abroad.

Floating Herstories

The herstories that are heard from the shells alternate with sounds of the natural and urban life of Trinidad[5]. The audio starts with the sound of the waves of the ocean that bathe the coasts of Trinidad. It continues with a recording of a police siren in the capital, Port-of-Spain. Then come frogs, which sound like crickets, echoing the herstories told by Tamara of both her grandmothers' love for the sport with the same name (cricket), which is the national sport of Trinidad. The audio-project finishes with

5 Sound Composition *Floating Herstories* https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122007/Audio/WA308_152207_P366_The-Floating-Herstor.mp3.

Beethoven's *Für Elise* interpreted by Michael 'the Pan Doctor', a steelpan drum musician who lives and works on the island of Tobago. This last element of the soundtrack, in which Beethoven's piece is played on a steelpan, the pan-Caribbean musical instrument invented in Trinidad, suggests a symbolic dimension of self-exoticism and the European colonial construction of the tropics (Thompson 2007).

The herstories start with the text "Country, the map of liberation" by Lesley-Ann (2018). She begins with an Amerindian prayer whose geographical origins are unclear. It summarizes her feeling about the unknown possibility of tracing her ancestral heritage and the transnational construction of her identity.

The author touches on the issue of country, since this is the most frequently heard question for a transnational subject. She asks listeners which country they are from. Following a linguistic analysis of the meanings of the word "country", she continues with a synesthetic etymological analysis of the word, unveiling a poetic matrifocal dimension to its origins: "kunt", which refers to female genitals, and "tree", which the author connotes with a genealogical tree. Through her introduction, Lesley-Ann opens up the herstories to come from the other two authors.

The audio continues with Tamara's herstory. She starts by mentioning her autochthonous heritage from Carib descent. She wants to highlight the names of Trinbagonian locations that shaped her life and the lives of her family; to names derived from the Arawak language (such as Siparia and Chaguaramas), she adds those with Spanish origins (for the city of San Fernando), and others demonstrating English influence (represented by the Queen's Park Savannah). Moreover, she mentions her Chinese heritage, evoking and gently highlighting her family's silence about their African origins.

The third herstory is by Aletha-Dale. She recites a poem she wrote about and dedicated to her mother. She describes her mother's struggles in the modern era in Trinidad as an Indian woman of indentured labour descent, recounting how she decided to lead an autonomous life far from any masculine presence during the time of Black Power in the country. She describes her displacements from the countryside, where most Indian-descent Trinidadians were located during the colonial time, to the urban Creole capital, and then again when she decided to leave the country for the USA.

THE CONCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE "TALKING" SHELLS

The seashells, commonly found on the seashore and on beaches, are left by sea snails (kingdom *Animalia*, phylum *Mollusca*, class *Gastropoda*), a large mollusc found ubiquitously in tropical waters. The shells are created by the animal in order to build a self-made confinement composed of deposits of calcium carbonate. This material

A "talking" shell device by the Caribbean Sea (2019)[5]

has the properties of human bones, which the animals can adjust to match their required hardness and density in order to become a protective barrier (Gutierrez et al. 2003). Thus, these shells provide a solid, moveable and growing shelter that accompanies the animals throughout their lives.

For this reason, the shell represents a testimony (a story) of the animal's life cycle, which is etched in the shell's cyclical structure. From ancient times until today, civilizations have questioned and used the stories the shells can "tell" on account of their shapes, sounds and compositions (Vermeij 1993). These never-aging stories and interpretations are ones that initiated and guided the technical development of the work.

While brainstorming together throughout the proto-engineering phase, we identified three conceptual templates that constituted the base of our creative framework:

1. The shape template

The initial template comes from the shell's raw form, which in the literature we collected has received a plethora of metaphorical interpretations. During this research, we found a peculiar phonetic connection between the word "aural", related to what the ear can

6 The electronic components have been pulled outside the shell for explicit illustration.

hear, and the word "aurea" which means "gold" in Latin. Moreover, digging deeper in the biological and mathematical domains, we found additional connections.

First, we start with the association with "aurea". The spiral formed of ever-incrementing rings in seashells follows a proportion called the *sectio aurea* (Latin for "golden section"), a standardized aesthetic formalized by the ancient Greeks (Fletcher 2006). This proportion constituted a point of rupture in the ancient Greeks' rational understanding of nature, because it could not be formulated on the basis of their ideal mathematical framework. As a result, it was deemed irrational, almost magical: yet this proportion appears very often in many natural and human-made structures (Fletcher 2006; Stipancic and Matotek 2010; Debnath 2011).

Long after the ancient Greeks, other mathematicians tried to reinterpret the magical realism of the *sectio aurea*, with the most salient example being Leonardo of Pisa (alias Fibonacci). He realized that a numerical sequence made of the sum of the two last consecutive numbers would produce this golden proportion (Debnath 2011), and as a result of this revelation, the origin of this proportion was made clear. So, whenever this proportion is present, it can be interpreted as the result of a linear, continuously progressing sequence (such as the numbers Fibonacci found). Interpreted in a geometrical sense for the shells, this proportion implies a story of an uninterrupted sequence of growth events, from the smallest ring to the biggest. This gentle and unencumbered growth story in the shell resembles a pristine, almost child-like story, without discontinuities or incoherencies. This simplicity of the story resonated with the shared appreciation of shells being an object of wonder. We also felt that childhood memories of being at the seaside with a shell reverberate with the story shaped by the shell itself.

In terms of the "aural" part, we were presented with a strong connection to this dimension when coming across a child that put a shell to their ear just to "hear de sea in de shell", as we were told, on one of the beaches in Trinidad.

In pursuing this link, we found that the human ear itself also has the shape of a spiral containing the *sectio aurea*, as explained above with regard to the seashells (Persaud and O'Leary 2015). Metaphorically, we can imagine these two spirals talking to each other in the moment when a child puts an ear to a shell. What the child hears is the "conversation" between the two spirals that sounds like the murmur of the ocean. In reality, this sound comes from the acoustic filtering caused by the shell, which eliminates high-frequency content (Jiang and Smith 2012). However, another valid interpretation is that what is heard in the shell is an absence of sound, or to put it in equivalent terms, the "sound of silence". Thus, what the child really hears is the auralization[7] (Oliveros 2011) of the silent, un-hearable conversation between their ear and the shell.

7 The term "auralization" is used by Pauline Oliveros to refer to the mental modeling that can evoke the perception of sound even when it is not physically present, similar to an image that is imagined.

With this idea in mind, we wished to translate this "conversation" by giving it an understandable voice, so everyone could hear the stories that crisscross the sound of the ocean.

2. The functional template

The second template comes from the interaction between the shell and the animal it protects. The mollusc creates the shell with the purpose of being wilfully isolated, thus constructing both an internal habitat for itself and an outer surface that faces the environment. On the inside, the shell is smooth and polished (Barthelat et al., 2009), offering a comfortable and intimate passage between its inner and outer curves. On the outside, the shell functions as a barrier that protects from harm (Gutierrez et al., 2003). These two essences tell us about the shell's bivalency and about stories in general: both of them have a side that every outsider can see, but there is also an intimate side only accessible to the insider. This strongly resonated with a situation commonly encountered in anthropological fieldwork, where a story used for research also has a more intimate version that, from time to time, emerges spontaneously. We thought that these guarded stories could inhabit a place that suited them, maybe inside the sheltered space of a shell.

3. The modular template

For the last template, we looked at the acoustic features that shells seem to directly share with other existing structures. Once again, the most obvious connection we found sprang from their resemblance to the architectural legacy of the ancient Greeks. It turns out that late Hellenistic theatres were constructed using the same rationale as the molluscs apply to their shells. These theatres feature a series of sequential rings to seat the public (*theatron*) with incremental diameters that also follow the *sectio aurea* (Stipancic-Klaic and Matotek 2010). In addition, the *theatron* was made of hard materials, such as marble (composed mainly of calcium carbonate, as are shells), that could endure wear and tear from both the weather and audiences. Moreover, the theatron was constructed with a smoothed inclination (*koilon*) in order for the sound to flow easily and reach every audience member (Chourmouziadou and Kang 2008). Therefore, both the seashells and the theatres have been optimized in a similar way, allowing the clear passage of beings and sounds, and probably, of both at the same time.

While searching for evidence of this modularity, we found that researchers have recently described the origin of the shell's sound by using modern methods to relate its shape to its acoustic resonance. Most shells have a specific set of resonant frequencies on the audible range, which can be excited by lip vibration and are transmitted omni-directionally (Pouraghdam 2016). In accordance with this, it is not surprising that many populations use shells as tools for music and communication (Schaefner

1931). It was on the basis of this knowledge that we used the shell as an instrument to transmit our collected stories.

To sum up, the seashell is a playful teaser to everybody who has dwelt on the stories carved in its windings, through the ages and at all ages. We wanted to employ this fascination to convey oral stories grounded in the intimacy gained during fieldwork experience in anthropology. The bivalency of the shell's shape, and its acoustic properties, gave us the confidence to create a private scene for unheard stories to be (re) played to listeners.

In constructing our shell storyteller, we started our design process from the acquisition of the natural material. There are many types of different shells coming from numerous sea snail species. Amongst these, we aimed to select only shells with the following characteristics: (1) a wide inner compartment in which to fit the electronic components, (2) an aperture of a size big enough to fit tightly on the ear of a human listener, and (3) a light weight to facilitate transportation and handling. The only types of shell we found that fulfilled the chosen criteria were from the *Voluptidae* family, genus *Melo*, which unfortunately come from outside the Caribbean region (Buczkowski and Boron 2019; MolluscaBase 2019).

For the shells to be able to literally "tell" a story as we wanted, we needed to add some functions that they do not naturally possess. First, we separated its functionality into two main categories: the shell needed to be a speaker, and it needed only to "talk" when there was someone present to listen. For the first function, we used the DFPlayer (DFRobot, 2019) as a playback device.

However, for the second function we needed to create a special detector capable of "feeling" the presence of a human ear: this detection function needed to be able to work in the confined space of the shell, and be both inaudible and out of the line of sight. After pondering possible detection mechanisms, we decided to use one based on the measurement of acoustic reverberation: through this phenomenon, the detectable volume of the sound increases when it bounces inside an enclosed space (Everest and Pohlmann 2009). This effect depends on an interaction between walls that receive and reflect the sound, such that they constructively overlap a part of the soundwaves, thus amplifying them.

This type of interaction in reverberation has been employed in a range of domains, not just that of engineering, to express a sense of repetitiveness, recurrence and a spread effect (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). It would be easy to think of this interaction as a sort of "dialogue", whereby a sound, idea or effect is transmitted and amplified within a group of walls, people or objects. However, this dialogical interpretation of reverberation is a piece of trickery. In a real dialogue, the communication is multi-directional, where every participant in the dialogue receives, interprets and elaborates a message (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2019). On the contrary, reverberation does not create new content: the message (or signal) is amplified just by the repetition of its copies

that bounce from being to being. Therefore, what we ought to detect as the effect of reverberation inside the shell is just a bigger copy of the signal emitted by the shell.

As a result, we chose to use ultrasonic sound waves (47 kHz) as the reverberation carrier signal. This was selected for two main reasons: first, the shell wall and human tissues (especially skull bone) act as reflectors at those frequencies (Culjat et al., 2010; Pouraghdam 2016), and second, human hearing cannot perceive them (Everest and Pohlmann 2009). In the end, a custom-made electronic circuit was designed to do all the jobs: to emit the ultrasonic waves, to receive their reverberated version, to extract its amplitude and to trigger the playback device accordingly.

The final working state of the shell could be explained parsimoniously as follows. The shell responds to the presence of the listener as soon as the listener (or any hard object whatsoever) gets close to its aperture. This physical closeness and intimacy create a confinement of the volume of air inside the shell. This condition augments the volume of the unperceivable ultrasonic sound through reverberation, which makes it surpass a threshold of detectability in the circuit. It is as if the shell actively "asks" for a listener. Once the shell circuit "hears back" the presence of its new neighbour, it entrusts its (her)story to the listener through the playback speaker. As in a performance of Crick-Crack origin, the shell itself is a storyteller that plays to an audience after checking that it is being heard.

THE "TALKING" SHELLS AND *FLOATING HERSTORIES* IN THE FIELD, AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE[8]

During my doctoral fieldwork and in the experience of co-writing with some of my most important interlocutors, I was told that they were pleased and happy to continue long-term conversations, because they felt they were deconstructing their own thoughts and positionings while discussing them with me. The value of being asked to talk about issues, memories, personal opinions and life stories was desired and even requested by the interlocutors. The fact of personal exchange, wherein the interlocutors listened to and felt themselves talking about themselves, provided a sense of authorship of their own subjectivity (Gugolati 2018). The exercise of autobiography (Muñoz 1999) is a rehearsal of fiction, and becomes a field for self-production. The interlocutor, therefore, while talking about her/himself, exercises agency and becomes the subject of the narrated stories. Following this mutual joy of sharing, when I went to Trinidad in summer 2019 I proposed a different way to exchange with

8 This part of the research was carried out by the anthropologist Maica Gugolati.

the people I am very close to. Since *Floating Herstories* was still at the prototype stage, I did not organize a formal sound installation, but asked some of my closest contacts to experience it and exchange ideas about it, in relation to both the content and the medium, in order to possibly improve the project. This happened informally, mainly at the homes of these interlocutors.

A year before, in 2018, the seashells were already functional, but without spoken content. In several *limings*, I brought with me a seashell with a very famous Calypso song (Mighty Shadow's *Stranger* 2001) recorded in order to see the reactions to the device itself. This was welcomed and accepted with great enjoyment: people were passing the "playing" seashell from one hand/ear to another, and as soon as people recognized the song (Mighty Shadow's *Stranger* from his 2001 album), they would pass the shell to the next person that was waiting with intense curiosity. That year, I just shared the shell as a tool of discovery, rather than asking people to engage with the content. This I did the following year, 2019, when I went to Trinidad with *Floating Herstories* in the seashells.

This was the first time that the people I have been in contact with for almost a decade were asked to meet in order to discuss an already established issue. In comparison with previous meetings, as soon as I asked to change the rules between the speaker and the listener (themselves and myself), suggesting to them that we start an exchange with listening to the shells and only afterwards continuing with a discussion of it, the reactions were very different.

It was explicitly stated to me that the fact of listening for 9 minutes (the duration of the sound file) to people (female authors) they did not know, even though they shared the same nationality, was not felt to be as involving as talking about their own personal stories. I was offering and asking my interlocutors to listen to others' stories before talking about their own opinions. With this sound project, I asked for a radical change in interpersonal approach: instead of starting by asking interlocutors to talk about their points of view on specific issues, with me listening to them and afterwards discussing it together, I asked them to start by listening to the narrations of others expressed through the shell as the basis for the discussions. Faced with this different approach, most of the interlocutors reminded me that the role of listening to other people's stories was one that was meant to belong to me (as a researcher and as a foreign friend) whereas they were meant to explain themselves.

One person boldly told me that (I paraphrase): they (Trinidadians) do not want to listen to what they already know. In another conversation, another person told me that: "Trinis want just to talk and to listen to themselves while talking about themselves." One of the other answers I was given upon asking them to listen to this sound experience was that I should be "telling somebody else this story, because I already know it": in other words, these experiences were felt to be common to Caribbean

people, and thus generated an aural sense of déjà-vu. The question of a lack of interest in listening to others' narrations is linked to an experience of estrangement. The most important issue for my interlocutors was to spread their voices and their narrations outside the community, as far as possible. I, as a foreign researcher, was embodying a double role: I was the incarnation of passing their stories formally to academic institutions or to media, and I was a trusted person and a friend with whom they could share who they are and give their critical analysis of their own society. But, with *Floating Herstories* and the seashells, I was asking them to start by listening to somebody else on topics they felt very familiar with, before creating new discussions.

In a country where a major part of the cultural tradition is based on orality and music (Huggings 2016), it was interesting for me to ask why this intimate performance of storytelling did not get a positive response. Sound is constantly present in the daily and sometimes nightly life of Trinbagonians. At home, for example, people usually have loud music coming from speakers or the TV playing loud, and family members carry on different conversations at the same time, selecting the sounds and the voices of the people they are talking to, without waiting for silence. At weekends, cars are parked on the beaches with their trunks open, in order to benefit from vibrations of the bass of the sound systems that are attached directly to the batteries of the cars. These examples of daily soundscapes show how the perception of sound, unlike that of other senses, cannot be voluntarily suspended. For example, sight can be temporarily stopped by closing the eyes, touch by withdrawing the hands, but sound continues to surround you, regardless of your will or intention (Le Breton 2017). In 2014, I attended an open-air sound installation made by the artist Christopher Cozier entitled: *Sound Systems*. He closed off some streets of the neighbourhood of Woodbrook, in the capital Port-of-Spain, and installed several cars there that were completely full of sound systems. These cars performed a re-enactment of what happens in some mall parking lots, usually located at the centre of the island, during weekends. The sound coming from the high-volume speakers allowed observers to experience the Caribbean concept of "being consumed by the sound" (Shabazz 2011), where the sound of the music speakers is loud enough to move people physically as "sonic bodies" (Henriques 2011). With this installation, the artist imposed on the audience an experience of sound as it occurs in local daily life.

On the contrary, with *Floating Herstories* the purpose of the shells is the opposite. People need a quiet or silent place in order to hear the voices "of the shells". Their posture toward sound is different: they are not absorbed by it, but they have to wait for the sound to come out, through an interaction with the shells which requires physical proximity with them. What was proposed through the act of moving the shells to the ears was to experience an act of recollection, where silence and partial solitude are required in order to understand the voices and the meanings behind the

narrations. This was definitely not like the previous trial I had made in 2018, where people spent a few seconds each with the "sounding" shells, listening until the moment they recognized the well-known song in the shell. In almost all the feedback I received in the field, the fact of needing silence in order to hear the voices in the shells was deemed annoying by most of the interlocutors. The fact of taking time, in an informal and pretty silent environment, to listen to others' stories seemed like it was reducing the time available to talk together.

The opposite happened when I asked the family members of two of the herstories' narrators to listen to the shells. When I visited them, they expressed surprise in a positive way. The children of one narrator, for example, were extremely shocked to hear a shell "talking" as they got closer to it. When they heard the voice of their mother, they grew even more excited. They felt a dual experience: one wherein estrangement and novelty combined with proximity and familiarity. The husband of this same herstories' narrator was moved by her story, and fascinated by the engineering technique of the shell. He immediately shared his feeling of pleasure in experiencing, thanks to the project, a different intimate relationship with his wife and with the story she told. A similar situation occurred with another narrator's family members who were interested in the "talkative" seashells only when their cousin's herstory was being played. All of them were proud and very interested in the project (or its parts), because it related to people they knew intimately.

This audio project offers an experience of aural intimacy, of a type that listening requires. In listening, the listener needs to acknowledge what is being heard and to put aside time to reflect on it (Back 2007). This seems to occur mainly when the listener has an intimate relationship with the person behind the narrations. The intimacy of the act of listening required by the shells is therefore not just related to the individual relationship between the listener and the storytelling-s in the shell, but also to an intimacy that links members of a community already created by the content of the narrations.

On the contrary, when there is no previous intimate relationship with the people's accounts (and these accounts are not sung and collectively shared as it happens in music tracks), the act of listening is reserved by participants for listening to themselves when they tell their own stories and give their own points of view. In this case, the performativity of talking does not require an audience as an active listener distinct from oneself, but it evokes a self-referential act. Here, the relationship between sound and receiver functions like the shells of the prototype. The shells are self-referential devices that "talk" and "listen" without requiring any feedback from a listener other than that from itself. In sound, the person is immersed in what they are hearing. A person hears her/himself as if in a monologue. The perception of the self in sound is therefore embodied (Bataille 1994).

CONCLUSION

This article deals with the creation, development and testing of the project *Floating Herstories*. It explained the steps of its collaborative creation of the project: starting from brainstorming, continuing with the development of the theoretical framework, followed by the design process of its expressive devices, and then advancing into the feedback and discussions collected from a field test.

This project opened avenues for a collaborative interpretation of soundscapes, by finding overlapping paths between anthropology, art, biology and engineering. These emergent links exemplify the trailing effect of the reverberation of ideas across disciplines, which forms a starting point for more thought-provoking dialogues between them. Some of the subjects raised by this project are related to the internal tension between listening and being listened to, and involve such issues as aural perception, (re)sounding silences, and reverberating intimacy.

Through this small field test, it has been possible to trace the evolution of the relationship between speech-voice and listening. From the seminal postcolonial question, "can the subaltern speak?", raised by Gayatri Spivak (1980), it is possible to move to an interpretation through the decolonial theoretical frame of Tuhiwai Smith (2012), which would read: "does the non-subaltern want to hear the subaltern's speech?". The small experience of *Floating Herstories* might lead us to further nuance this question as: "How does the historical subalternized subject want to listen to subaltern stories different from their own?"

In the field test in Trinidad and Tobago, there were two kinds of interactions: one mainly displaying a lack of interest, expressed by those who stated their desire for and the importance of the chance to talk about themselves. For these interlocutors, the primary goal was the act of being both authors and subjects of their narrations, rather than listening to those of others. In a way, they behaved like "talking" shells themselves. By acting in a self/shell-centred manner, they actively seek a listener to share their stories, but they filter what does not resonate with them, until it might sound like the "silence" of the ocean. The second group, who took time to listen to the herstories and discuss them, were mainly connected with the authors, as family members or relatives. From this last observation, we conclude that there is a voluntary need to listen attentively to somebody else's stories when we are already emotionally connected with them, and thus where the act of listening reflects a kind of extended act of care.

In conclusion, this project opens the way to more ongoing collaborative experiments that stimulate new lines of questioning and research pathways. From an anthropological viewpoint, the impulse to talk without the complement of an equal (or even empathetic) motivation for listening is a compelling theme to follow up in present-day, for example in relation to facing new waves of different contemporary migrations. In a neurobiological frame, the distinction between a self/shell-centred automaton

and a dialogic life-being is an upcoming hard problem deriving from the rapid progress of bio-inspired artificial intelligence. From an engineering perspective, there are still more design possibilities that could be added to the “talking” shells, such as a wireless communication system that could enable more contextual control of the playback and blur the line with its listener counterparts even further.

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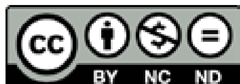

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INDONESIAN MUSIC-CULTURE AS A PERSONAL AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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In this article, I address music – that is, humanly and purposefully organized sound (Blacking 1973; Shelemay 2001) – as a personal, cultural and research experience. Drawing on my experience of learning, researching and performing Indonesian music, I discuss several issues that are pertinent to the ethnomusicological/anthropological study of non-native music-cultures. I examine the concept of bi-musicality, its challenges and limitations; the role of a phenomenological perspective and hermeneutics in conceptualizing the complexities of music experience and meaning in music; and the role of music in shaping identity, especially at the community level.

KEYWORDS: ethnomusicology, music anthropology, Indonesian music, Christian music, musical meaning, intonation, reflexivity, experience of music, identity and music

Music constitutes an extremely important sphere of social, cultural and individual human life. It is a "powerful human resource," which is "at the heart of our most profound social occasions and experiences"; music sustains communities, fulfils diverse needs and contributes to social integration (Turino 2008, 1). Furthermore, music has a high capacity for emotional expression. It holds a real visceral power and is capable of making specific connections at the deepest level of consciousness (Slobin 1994). Music shapes both individual and group identity. Its symbolic power and "[t]he direct experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability" enable people to "place themselves in 'imaginative cultural narratives'" (Frith 1996, 124).

In my personal and scholarly life, I have experienced many of music's attributes, inherent qualities and roles: the visceral power of music, its profoundness, participatory social and communal character, feracious creative energy and unique ability to shape identity – both my own and that of the people with whom I worked in the research field. My personal experience of Indonesian music began in Poland: as a student of Warsaw University, I had a chance to learn *gamelan* music at the Indonesian Embassy

in Warsaw.[1] From that time, I recall the extraordinary auditory and visual experience of witnessing Indonesian dance performed for the first time. Dimmed lights, dazzling colours, tender music, glittering costumes and sublime dance gestures transported me into a kind of subliminal space. I was watching the dance and the performers, and absorbing what was happening with all my senses. This was a very physical response – as I could hear, see and feel the music with all my body – accompanied by a feeling of complete awe: this was clearly unlike any kind of music experience I had had thus far. At that moment, I was experiencing the very tangible "visceral power" of music first hand.

From this first, quasi extra-terrestrial, encounter with Indonesian music, my experiences have gradually evolved, reaching a terrain where Indonesian music is not as astonishing or overwhelming. On the contrary, it oftentimes constitutes my daily-life experience: it brings comfort and feels like home. It has become familiar and intimate, but at the same time it is still very special and unlike anything else. As Anne Rasmussen noted, it has truly become a part of life, not just a research topic (2004, 222).

MUSIC-CULTURE

The field experience of a researcher – a music anthropologist or ethnomusicologist – is first of all cultural, but also aural, visual, embodied. The cultural aspect of this experience is determined by the way the discipline and its subject are defined. There are many studies that examine music "in its own terms" – as a "sound fact" – a perspective and method that is generally associated with musicology. However, the anthropological perspective that often dominates in ethnomusicological studies can be credited for the large field of studies that treat music as culture and examine it in relation to other activities and domains of social activities.

Ethnomusicology, characterised as the study of music in culture or the study of music as culture (Merriam 1964), looks at music as a way of organizing human activity: one that is deeply embedded in culture and in fact is itself culture. Jeff Titon, an American ethnomusicologist, goes even further when defining the subject of ethnomusicological inquiry: his term music-culture signifies a group's total involvement with music. Therefore, the music anthropologist/ ethnomusicologist investigates both elements of music organisation (sound and structure) and the place music occupies in human life (ideas, actions, material objects, institutions). The researcher examines

1 The term gamelan is used for various types of ensembles (or orchestras) present throughout the Indonesian archipelago, which vary in size, function, musical style and instrumentation. The best-known gamelan ensembles are in Java and Bali. The central-Javanese gamelan consists of many different instruments, mainly metal (primarily bronze): horizontally and vertically suspended gongs, gong-chimes, single- and multi-octave slab (key) metallophones, and also xylophones, drums, bamboo flutes, bowed and plucked chordophones, and (male and female) singers.

a group's involvement with music on various levels: individual, family, community, regional and national. From this standpoint, ethnomusicology as a discipline becomes "the study of people making music." This "making" is understood both as people producing the *sounds* they call music, and constructing the *idea* of music or the cultural domain that is demarcated as music (Titon 2008, 41).

Indonesian music-culture is very diverse in terms of ethnically and culturally distinctive groups[2], as well as in terms of music genres and styles. I have had contact with various kinds of Indonesian music, originating from Sumatra, West Java, Jakarta, Bali, Sumbawa, Flores and East Timor. However, I have had the longest relation with music of central Java, cultivated in the courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta and at the Indonesian Institutes of Arts in these cities.

After researching traditional Javanese music and its contemporary formal (government) and informal (private) education, I then turned to the music of Indonesian Christians, who comprise about 10% of the population (ca. 25 mln people). Fascinated by the phenomenon of the presence of traditional (ethnic/local) music in Catholic and Protestant Churches, I embarked on a research and personal journey investigating two contrasting examples, one a central-Javanese Christian community (a minority group in a Muslim majority setting) and the other a Catholic community on Flores (a small island, with very little Muslim presence, in the predominantly Christian East Indonesian province). In my research, I used classic anthropological qualitative research methods complemented by experiential and performative approaches to music, which I discuss in more detail in the subsequent section.

THE EXPERIENCE OF MUSIC AND A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

Ethnomusicological inquiry necessitates not only honed analytical and methodological skills, but also a very practical, experiential and embodied involvement with the music one studies. Since the 1960s, when American ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood introduced *bi-musicality* as one of the essential abilities to be acquired by a music researcher studying non-European cultures, the practical knowledge of the music that one researches has become an increasingly common norm.[3] Ethnomusicologists were able to capitalize on their bi-musicality by carrying out "truly participatory

2 Indonesia is home to over 600 ethnic groups (2010 Census).

3 Mantle Hood (1918–2005) established the very first formal ethnomusicology program at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA) by founding the Institute of Ethnomusicology (1961) and introducing the music of Javanese and Balinese gamelan at the university. The curriculum he created included bringing native performers to instruct students in a range of non-European musical traditions. Hood's students went on to found other similar programs (e.g., at Wesleyan, Michigan, Seattle).

participant-observation in the field" (Shelemay 2008, 143). The method proposed by Hood positioned ethnomusicologists as "leaders in the ethnography of performance, or performance practice" (Cooley & Barz 2008, 20).[4] Eventually, despite its limitations, bi-musicality "has come to be widely understood as a way of expressing musical competence in disparate styles" (see Cottrell 2007, 101).

Mantle Hood strongly believed that "the training of ears, eyes, hands and voice" (1960, 55) gives a window to music theory and theoretical understanding. In his approach, he was much less concerned that extensive training in Western music, which many ethnomusicologists have, constrains them in studying other traditions (Shelmay 2008, 142). Among impediments that might hinder understanding of Javanese music-culture at the early stage are issues of musical system and intonation. The physical properties of the sound, especially pitch, are essential to music. The selection and adjustment of pitches – tuning and intonation – are elements that very often distinguish a given music-culture. The intonation and tuning used in Javanese gamelan music is unique and considerably differs from that of Western music.[5]

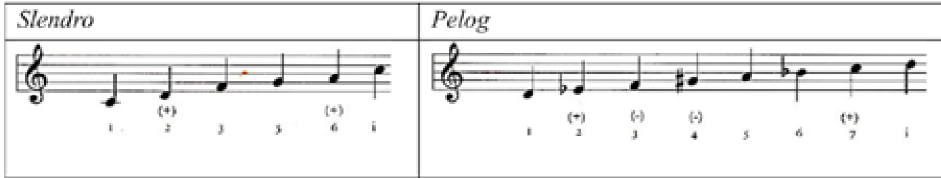
The two major tuning systems of central Javanese gamelan are *slendro* and *pelog*. On the fixed-pitch instruments of the gamelan, slendro is tuned as a pentatonic (five-tone) scale; its intervals fall between a Western major second and minor third. The singers and *rebab* (bowed lute) may occasionally play extra pitches. Pelog contains seven tones, which are in fact a source of two other pentatonic scales that use intervals located between a Western half-tone and whole tone, as well as intervals larger than a Western major second (see fig. 1). An additional intonational challenge is posed by the fact that different gamelan sets usually have somewhat different tuning, which calls for self-adjustment, especially on the part of singers and rebab players.

Other elements of the Javanese music system which differ conceptually from Western (classical) music are: the cyclic character of the music structures; the importance of improvisation and variation of melodic and rhythmic patterns (that requires developed improvisatory skills); and differing norms of music accentuation (the emphasis is on the fourth note in the four-note units, not on the first, as is the norm in Western music).

The differing (from Western) principles governing sound in gamelan music require a Western musician to surpass his/her assumptions, preconceived notions and conviction that what s/he had learned is "natural" and "universal." Studying Javanese gamelan music involves questioning and subsequently abandoning a musical order which had been well known, but which subsequently becomes not self-evident anymore in the face of different musical norms and logic.

4 See *Performing Ethnomusicology* (2004), edited by Ted Solis, which gives an account of various performative aspects and approaches in ethnomusicological work.

5 See Marc Perlman (1994) for an in-depth analysis and comparison of western and Indonesian/Javanese intonation.



Approximate intervals of Javanese scales: *slendro* and *pelog*. "Plus" indicates a slightly higher and "minus" slightly lower pitch than that of a Western scale

Learning about Indonesian music-culture through formal classes I attended at art schools, private music and dance lessons, informal rehearsals with various groups (foreign, mixed and Javanese), music sessions, concerts, dance performances and music festivals, as well as through my own performing in a variety of contexts have all been very important parts of my fieldwork experience in Indonesia and beyond. With time, through intense and comprehensive study, I have acquired an embodied knowledge of Indonesian culture – in terms of music, dance and social skills – that I have absorbed and internalized. I can self-identify as a performing ethnomusicologist who teaches and researches through performance, in addition to other (more or less) conventional anthropological methods.

Studying, learning and comprehending a music-culture (non-native or other) is a life-long process. Nevertheless, this process is not all about learning. Once "inside" the music-culture, the ethnomusicologist assumes also other roles: that of a culture bearer[6] and those related to the preservation, replication and active transmission of tradition (Shelemay 2008, 150). The researcher fulfils these roles in a constant dialogue with native masters, fellow musicians and scholars, students and various audiences.

INSIDER, OUTSIDER, OR SOMEONE ELSE?

The relation of a music anthropologist/ethnomusicologist to the music-culture s/he studies is a complex one. Marcia Herndon (1993) problematized the dichotomy of competence and understanding between the insider and outsider, or emic and etic perspectives. Being of mixed-blood Cherokee heritage, Herndon claimed a possibility of speaking as herself: "neither fully insider nor outsider, neither fully emic nor fully etic" (77). Similarly, Tim Rice asserts: "I am neither insider nor outsider; I speak as myself, a self formed, reconfigured, and changed by my encounters with and understandings of Bulgarian, and indeed all kinds of other, musical works and performances" (2008, 57). Rice, while describing his involvement with Bulgarian music, goes beyond

6 See Rasmussen (2004) conveying her experience of Middle Eastern music.

the emic—etic dichotomy by reaching for the philosophy of Ricoeur and making use of the concept of the "hermeneutical arc". He points out that in terms of music the hermeneutical arc begins with "pre-understandings of music, either as a performer or as a listener who finds it coherent, and passes through a structural explanation of music as sound, behaviour, and cognition, to arrive at an interpretation and new understanding of the world or culture referenced by music acting as a symbol." The arc provides "an interpretation of the world that music references by a self operating within finite but expandable horizons" (56). Hermeneutical arcs may "mediate between method and experience and between explanation and understanding by moving through time" (61). Anyone may use the hermeneutical arc to move "from pre-understandings to explanation to new understandings" (58). Such arcs are very effective in explaining and depicting experience; they portray inward and outward movement, providing "a pathway from the outside, with its cultural alienation, toward the inside by means of appropriation and understanding", and one "from the inside, with its cultural engrossment, toward the outside by means of distanciation and explanation" (61).

Every researcher can identify their own hermeneutical arcs in the on-going experience of music they research and study. For myself, reaching different levels of understanding and musical competence has often been marked by particular moments of "revelation" or specific performative acts. Such moments also indicated my advancement to another level of understanding and musical competence.

When – after studying Javanese gamelan music for a period of time – I began researching music of Indonesian Christians, my previous experience with and appreciation for traditional Javanese music gave me a window onto the musical experience of Javanese Christians, immediately establishing points of convergence and situating myself not as a total stranger but in a somewhat familiar zone. In this way, I was entering the second hermeneutical arc, gradually acquiring an understanding of the role that music plays in consolidating community and shaping communal identity. My general music competency and specific gamelan competency allowed me to join the female (*ibu-ibu*) gamelan groups at various Catholic churches and multiple vocal groups at Protestant churches (see figs. 2 and 3). Attending rehearsals and performing side by side with church gamelan players and choir members on multiple occasions – from church services to annual celebrations and weddings – gave me multiple opportunities to share the experience of a musical "being-in-the-world" (see Titon 2008, 31).

ETHNOGRAPHY AND SHARED EXPERIENCE

Jeff Titon strongly emphasizes the experiential component in the ethnographic process of learning about music-culture. He construes the research "field" as a "shared

Female (*ibu-ibu*) gamelan group, with a few male guest players
(San Inigo Catholic church, Surakarta)

Protestant singing group in the church in Surakarta, with the author

experience" of playing music with other individuals (Titon 2008, 40). Similarly, Harris Berger, while advocating for phenomenological ethnography, defines its object as "partially shared experience"; its focus being placed on "the commonalties and the differences in the participants' perception of the music" (2008, 71).

Looking at the precepts for ethnomusicological research methods (see Barz & Cooley 2008), it does seem that phenomenological ethnography is the desired model for 21st century ethnomusicology.[7] Berger outlines three tenets of phenomenological ethnography. First, he emphasizes the multiplicity of the object of study: "it is not music sound or music structure, but rather pieces, performances, sounds, or structures in the lived experience of social persons" (2008, 70). Second, he highlights the contextuality of the sound/music event: that is "the participant's organization of attention to the music and the situation as a whole." And third, he draws attention to the meaning of sound events: to the affect, style and value that are embedded in experiences of music (71).

Deborah Wong, on the other hand, emphasizes the specificity of ethnomusicological ethnography (as compared to an anthropological approach) by emphasizing the role of performance. Ethnomusicologists need to be "consistently engaged in the practice of critical ethnography", and at the same time "focus explicitly on creating performative ethnographies while acknowledging the place of autoethnography" in their methodologies (2008, 77). She maintains that ethnomusicologists offer "a particular take on ethnography that redirects postmodern and poststructural critical methods." She calls this *performative ethnography*. Its role is twofold: to convey "the vibrancy and the critical effects" of music and to reflect on the author's own "process of telling, testimony, and cultural critique" (78).

The phenomenological perspective indeed has a great deal of methodological potential thanks to the conceptualization of music as a multidimensional and multifarious, complex "domain of practice," a "realm of activity," shaped by other practices and influential upon them, and a "realm of experience." This perspective allows for tackling fundamental issues in the study of music and culture such as musical meaning, musical interpretation and "the nature of the performance event" (Berger 2008, 2015). In the subsequent section, I will discuss issues related to meaning in music.

MUSICAL MEANING AND *RASA*

Music carries a "complex of ideas, sensations, and associations" (Sullivan 1997, 10). It has a particular capacity to "signify meaning in especially complex ways" (Bohlman in Sullivan 1997, 83). A phenomenological approach to meaning considers it "as actively

7 The critique of this model is pursued by decolonial studies (see, for example, Smith 2012).

and socially constituted and differential, though partially shared, across the various participants in a social world" (Berger 2008, 72). Phenomenological approaches to music see "the constitution of meaning in music as an open-ended process": something to be discovered over time through performance of, listening to and reflecting on music. The meaning in music is of an exploratory nature and is shaped through dialogue and reflexive techniques. Music anthropologists/ethnomusicologists "seek to partially share the meanings that their research participants find in social life" (72). Their goal is to "perceive and understand the liminal quality of musical meaning" (Cooley & Barz 2008, 3), a quality which is often ambiguous. Jeff Titon provides the direct link between meaning and experience: it is through a common, inter-subjective experience that the musician-researcher enters the world of interpretation. Consequently, the interpretation turns sound into music, and being into meaning (2008, 32).

In the Javanese philosophical and musical tradition, there is a concept that indicates in-depth knowledge, profound understanding and attainment of deeper meaning. This is *RASA*: a feeling, a sense of taste and above all an aesthetic category[8]. Rasa is semantically complex (see Geertz 1960): it combines two distinct Sanskrit roots. Marc Perlman explicates that: "As 'feeling', rasa refers to the five senses as well as to moods and emotions. As 'meaning', it refers to the semantic aspects of language, especially to the indirect and allusive speech so characteristic of Javanese culture" (1994, 540).

Apart from being defined as "affect, mood, feeling" and taste, rasa also demonstrates perceptive qualities: "as a mental or spiritual capacity [rasa] ranges from the ability to distinguish between various styles to knowledge of inner meaning" (Benamou 2010, 48). This cognitive aspect of rasa clearly points to an "intuitive perception of inner realities" (Perlman 1994, 540). In its more profound sense, rasa refers to the deepest meaning achieved through mystical efforts.

Marc Perlman emphasizes a duality of the rhetoric of rasa as it relates to musical discourse. On the one hand, rasa allows for a certain creative autonomy from the tradition and the authority of others. On the other hand, there is a sense that not all feelings are equal or similarly valuable (1994, 540). The dual characteristic of rasa makes it evident that both rasa and the inner meaning of music are relative. It is this particular quality of rasa that is "responsible" for differing evaluations of music/sound events and performative acts. Their meaning very much depends on who is doing the evaluation and what kind of subject position s/he occupies[9]. Differing opinions

8 For an extensive discussion of aesthetics in Javanese music, see Marc Benamou's *RASA. Affect and Intuition in Javanese Musical Aesthetics* (2010).

9 Marc Perlman points out that in the European tradition, there is a similar duality associated with the category of *taste* (one of the meanings of rasa). While taste is very much a matter of individual judgment ("there is no disputing about taste"), there is also a concept of "good" and "bad taste," where the former is more valued than the latter (see also *Critique of Judgment* by Immanuel Kant, 1790).

indicate the existence of a realm of music criticism that – although informal – has real social power.

The aesthetic dimension of rasa ascribes positive value to music that is *enak* (pleasing) to the ear and compliant with musical sensibility, or *cocok* (suitable and fitting). Suitability – pleasant and enjoyable sound that brings aesthetic satisfaction – is achieved when a number of components converge into a satisfying whole. These components are musical (such as melody, form or intonation) and extramusical, such as generated emotions and associations.

Rasa is very difficult to attain (especially for a foreigner) and equally difficult to verbalize. It depends on the individual music competency, knowledge, and experience of the performer[10]; it generally requires years of studying, listening and performing particular music.

In my research on the music of Indonesian Christians, it became clear that differing preferences and evaluations of the Christian repertoire might be attributed not only to differences in theological perspectives and music competence, but also to varying musical rasa. In turn, differences in rasa lie at the root of differences in musical meaning. Therefore, the meaning of a music event and/or performative act might be different for different participants: a Javanese person singing a Florenese Christian song and a Florenese person singing the very same song may extrapolate different kinds of meanings. For a Florenese, the song may carry various kinds of cultural connotations and associations that may not be fully (or at all) "visible" to a Javanese, and beyond their perception (this is of course true for any ethnic group in a multicultural nation).

Audio recording 1

The most controversial of traditional genres that I studied in the Javanese Christian context[11] was *kentrung*[12]. Kentrung is an Islamic music genre, as well as an ensemble consisting of frame drums of different sizes, called *rebana* or *terbang*[13]. Because of its association with Islam, kentrung's presence in the Christian church is a contested topic. Opinions on kentrung vary significantly. Although

10 See Benjamin Brinner: *Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction* (1995) for a detailed discussion of these issues.

11 See the following authors for discussions of Indonesian Christianity and music: Okazaki 1994 (Sumatra–Batak), Aragon 1996 (Sulawesi), Rappoport 2004 (Sulawesi), Manhart 2004 (Sumatra–Nias), Hodges 2009 (Sumatra–Batak), Meka 2012 (Flores) and Wiebe 2017 (Bali).

12 Audio recording 1: Kentrung; a music group from Joyotakan church, Surakarta: https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122008/Audio/WA308_152208_P366_Indonesian-Music-Cul_00001.mp3.

13 *Rebana* or *terbang* are typically played in an ensemble (of six to eight drums) in an interlocking style, to accompany the singing of songs in praise of God and the Prophet Muhammad, and in religious and ceremonial processions.

there does not seem to be overt hostility toward it, some are hesitant to accept it as "proper" church music for worship. Those who do use kentrung not only accept it in the church, but also feel proud that this kind of music (simple and plain) can be used to glorify God. The members of the Christian kentrung ensemble that I worked with in Surakarta, in addition to frame drums, use instruments that are typically associated with traditional Javanese music: key-metallophones (saron), double-headed barrel drum (kendhang), kemanak[14] and some European/Western instruments, including a violin, an ukulele (a small guitar) and occasionally a keyboard (see fig. 4). The reasons for using such a hybrid variety of instruments in the ensemble were very practical. These instruments were readily available to the ensemble's members at the time and were acceptable to an older generation with minimum education. They were also relatively inexpensive and portable (unlike most gamelan instruments). While the members of the ensemble did not view the usage of kentrung as wrong, inappropriate or unsuitable and treated it as an artistic medium in the worship of God, some Javanese musicians would not use kentrung for aesthetic reasons: the atmosphere of kentrung was perceived as too closely associated with Islamic religious elements.

Motivated by both religious and aesthetic considerations, some Christian composers strive to compose songs that are perceived as aesthetically distinct from traditional Javanese songs (for example, Wignyosaputro[15] and Surono). Hence, the more common use of: the 7-tone pelog scale, which evokes the Western diatonic scale (and

Rehearsal of a Protestant group (Joyotakan church, Surakarta)

14 *Kemanak* is a pair of banana-shaped idiophones, one pitched higher than the other, and played in a hocketing manner.

15 See M. Poplawska 2016.

Audio recording 2

consequently church music[16]); unusual (for Javanese music) vocal lines[17]; changes to traditional poetic verses (e.g. by adding syllables); and Western techniques (e.g. harmony, canon), which implemented within traditional forms generate new acoustic, artistic and aesthetic results. All of these serve to create the overall feeling that the piece of music is no longer Javanese in character, even though performed by gamelan[18].

Guided by their rasa – artistic tastes and feelings about what is appropriate and what works well in a composition – Javanese Christian composers (for example, Surono, Sigit Astono, Is Sri) incorporate different musical elements and conduct experiments beyond the norms of tradition. They incorporate elements of various Indonesian regional traditions (for example, Sundanese and Balinese), use unconventional instrumentation (only selected gamelan instruments) and playing techniques. They try to conceptualize music and its role in the church, and to form a philosophical and aesthetic basis for their creative work in the field of church music.

Differing views and evaluations that arise from different rasa also concern newly composed (but traditional in nature) Catholic songs/hymns, created during composition workshops organized by the Center for Liturgical Music in Yogyakarta (Pusat Musik Liturgi or PML)[19] in locations throughout Indonesia. The most problematic and contentious issue, rooted in the aesthetics of rasa, is the issue of arrangements of local melodies. Because most of the local traditions on Flores (an island in Eastern Indonesia) do not employ multiple melodies sung simultaneously, the origin of multipart singing on Flores is often attributed to a Western (church) influence. Similarly, the four-voice (choir) arrangements of tradition-based church songs were, at the outset, an imitation of Western style[20].

16 *Pelog* (being a 7-tone scale) uses smaller intervals than *slendro*. Because of that it is more akin to a Western/European diatonic scale. However, it still preserves the unique Javanese intonation, which does not equate to its Western counterpart.

17 Traditional Javanese songs feature only one vocal part. Adding additional vocal parts changes the character of the piece. Wignyosaputro, for example, noted that after he added the second vocal part, the traditional character of the song disappeared. Moreover, vocal melodies of Christian songs are usually more elaborate and thus not predictable in the way that traditional *gerong* (male chorus) melodies in a traditional piece would be.

18 Audio recording 2: A song in 3/4, by Bapak D. Wignyosaputro, Surakarta: https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122008/Audio/WA308_152208_P366_Indonesian-Music-Cul_00002.mp3.

19 The Center is led by two people: a German Jesuit, Rama Karl Edmund Prier, and an Indonesian music educator, Bapak Paul Widyawan.

20 See John Ghono, interview. See also J. Kunst 1942 and 1946.

The methods employed in compositional workshops are mostly Western. This at times generates contention, because certain features of traditional songs do not comply with Western theory, but are a part of indigenous practice. For example, the use of parallel fifths and octaves – generally discouraged in standard classical European polyphony – are unique characteristics of Ngada music from central Flores.

Some local musicians claim that in some of PML's arrangements and alterations, the final product is no longer recognizable to indigenous people. In their eyes, the arranged songs lose their uniqueness: they do not carry on tradition because the local idioms and nuances that are considered most important are not preserved. With an insensitive arrangement, the song's distinctiveness and individuality disappears and cannot be felt anymore. This is considered the biggest danger in adapting songs. In general, the various music experiments are accepted as long as they conform to local aesthetics[21,22].

Audio recording 3

One other issue that is a potential source of conflicts, differences in opinion or even misinterpretations or misunderstandings is the need for simplicity. The Center for Liturgical Music intends for songs to suit the abilities of ordinary people: members of congregations. But "simplicity" may be defined differently, depending on the singing tradition of a particular location. In some cases, debates arise when the views on simplicity of the cultural "outsiders" (the team from the Center) differ from the perspective of cultural "insiders" (local musicians and teachers). What is deemed too difficult for a typical congregation may be part of an indigenous style commonly executed without any difficulty by local people.[23]

These examples show that different levels of musical/cultural competence generate different musical understandings, different rasa, and in consequence also different interpretations and meanings.

MUSIC AND IDENTITY

Identity can manifest itself in manifold ways. As Mendieta (2003, 413) notes, it "has defied and will continue to defy easy encapsulation by one or even a group of

21 The norms of acceptance are rather difficult to articulate. As in Java, the main criterion is music's pleasantness and enjoyable sound.

22 Audio recording 3: Song in traditional style, by Pater Pit Wani, Flores: https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122008/Audio/WA308_152208_P366_Indonesian-Music-Cul_00003.mp3.

23 For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see M. Poplawska 2018.

disciplines. For identity has to do with the most fundamental, but also wide-spanning, aspect of human existence."

Music, as a means of expression with many layers of culturally defined meaning, is a creative force in shaping identity, one nearly as powerful as ethnicity and language. It constructs people's sense of identity. It can draw distinctions and reinforce similarities. Music provides potential for change and reconfiguration of identity. Musical instruments, songs and musical styles may symbolize particular groups and communities, sometimes as a principal constituent of their identity. As Tim Rice notes, music's role in shaping identity is unique, for music has "the ability to index different aspects of multiple identities through the multiplicity of its formal properties (melody, harmony, rhythm, timbre and so forth)" (2007, 35).

While researching Christian traditional music in Indonesia, I was particularly interested in the music's capability to shape identity and to maintain community. In what ways people use music as a vehicle to express their individual, ethnic and religious identity; how Indonesian identities are constructed through music; and what is the role of music in negotiations of identity at various social levels: local or ethnic, regional, national, and global?

The issue of Christian Indonesian identity is rather complex. Christianity was brought to Indonesia by Europeans (the Portuguese in the 16th, Dutch in the 17th, and many more in the 20th century). It was considered by some members of the Muslim majority as *agama Belanda*, the religion of the Dutch (that is, a foreign religion). This opinion was especially common before Indonesian independence from Dutch colonial power (1945), and continued to have a powerful effect, as Indonesian Christians were accused of being heirs to a colonial religion and spirit.[24] After independence, several Catholic leaders made a conscious effort to integrate the Catholic community into the new Republic of Indonesia. The first Indonesian bishop and archbishop, Albertus Soegijapranata, was known for his motto: "A hundred percent Catholic, and a hundred percent Indonesian!" (Sunquist 2001, 786).[25] Maintaining connections to their cultural and social environment has been a goal of the Christian community in Indonesia ever since. Its members aspire to be an integral part of the larger society and are striving to make a place for themselves within the Indonesian nation. The words on the message

24 In the 19th century, indigenous Christians fell into two groups: *Kristen Londo* (Dutch Christians) and *Kristen Jowo* (Javanese Christians). The former group was most often supervised by Europeans and abandoned Javanese customs in exchange for European ones, while the latter – under the leadership of Javanese evangelists – tried to integrate Javanese customs into the Christian faith (see Kim 2004, 42–44 and Yoder 1987, 279). Contemporary Javanese Christians are successors of *Kristen Jowo* adherents.

25 This is not unusual for other ethnic groups as well. Daniel Reed (2005), for example, examines a case of Dan people in Cote d'Ivoire, who simultaneously proclaim strong ethnic and Catholic identities.

board on the website of the Forum of the Catholic Indonesian Community of the Archdiocese of Jakarta express a political awareness, and a contemporary declaration of striving for a distinct identity: “We are fully Indonesian, fully Catholic, and we will stand up for our rights!”

Judith Becker affirms that music in Indonesia has always been centrally linked to religious faith (Harnish & Rasmussen 2011, 352). Through a plurality of musical genres, which “offer a variety of templates and suggest multiple possibilities,” Indonesian Christians (similarly to their Muslim counterparts) learn how to be Christian within an Asian (or Southeast Asian) context, how to relate to Euro-American Christianity and how to shape Indonesian Christianity. Through music performance, Indonesian Christians are making diverse statements about history, power, and cultural and social alliances, while continuously exploring their own communal and individual identities (see Rasmussen 2010, 210).

Music performance plays a vital role in identity negotiations at all levels (local, regional, national, global). Christian local communities in Indonesia musically redefine themselves, while acting against social ostracism and re-establishing connections with society at large (see Wiebe 2017). Performing local Christian music in churches is a way of claiming national space by Indonesian Christians (see fig. 5). It stems from the

Gamelan group and choir, joined by a violin player (Purbowardayan Catholic church, Surakarta)

desire to be active members of the Indonesian nation and society, and is part of an ongoing, long-term political debate that involves various religious minorities struggling to secure a place for themselves in modern Indonesia (see Steenbrink 2004).

The inclusion of traditional performing arts in the church has been central to the formation of Indonesian Christian identity[26]. It enables the Javanese and Florenese (and indigenous people in other geographic locations) to express their faith in a form that is most compatible with their local identities. It enables them to be Christian, and yet retain a sense of their own (local) cultural identity. In a symbolic sense, local Christian music might be viewed as an act of *performative resistance* to hegemonic power structures, such as the state or the church itself. When performing indigenous music, 19th century Javanese Christians resisted colonial era missionary attempts to eradicate local cultural practice, while 20th century Javanese Christians have resisted the attempts of radical Muslims to conflate religious and ethnic identities into a uniform national identity (see Steenbrink 2015).[27]

In this paper, I have tried to show that music – humanly organized sound – is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It is an expression, which is simultaneously musical and cultural. As a realm of activity, it is located at the centre of social (and individual) lives. It constitutes a means by which communities define themselves. It is participatory, experiential, performative and embodied. Music researchers (anthropologists/ethnomusicologists) engage with music in a variety of modes: through listening, learning, teaching, researching and performing. Their experiences of music are equally personal, social and cultural.

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26 Not all Indonesian denominations incorporate traditional arts in an equal manner. Many Catholic churches and the Christian (Protestant) Javanese Church (Gereja Kristen Jawa) include traditional arts most methodically and extensively. Other churches do so to a lesser extent; it very much depends on a particular local church congregation.

27 See Reed (2005), who discusses in detail a case of performative resistance among Dan people in postcolonial Côte d'Ivoire.

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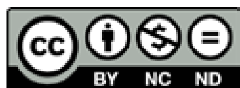

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DISCO POLO FROM THE PODHALE REGION: THE CULTURAL POWER GAME

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The Podhale Region, located at the foothills of the Tatra Mountains, is a special place in Poland. It is generally regarded as the region which has retained its oldest traditions. The inhabitants of the region – *Górale* – still speak the local dialect, build houses in a traditional style, wear traditional clothes; and they still play, sing and dance to traditional music. Much has been already written about the folk music of Podhale. However, rarely in the literature can one read about the less prestigious genre of music which is called *Górale* Disco Polo.

Nowadays, the popularity of this music in the Podhale region is enormous. It can be heard all the time: in local shops, public transport, discos, and it is also the core of the soundtrack to indigenous wedding parties. You can hear it in thousands of *Górale* houses, mostly because Radio Alex – the most popular radio station in the Podhale region – plays it al the time. Radio Alex is also the institution responsible for the local development of Disco Polo. This banal, simple, uncomplicated music, characterised by the sound of lo-fi keyboards and bawdy texts, also relates strongly to local, *Górale* issues. It is not an export product. It is created exclusively for people from Podhale region, for *Górale*.

During my ethnographic fieldwork, I noticed some interesting threads concerning Disco Polo music. Above all, I argue that the members of the *Górale* local elite treat Disco Polo as a distinctive element in the sense described by Pierre Bourdieu. In their view, this genre has the power to indicate who are 'real', 'authentic' *Górale* and who are not. Moreover, Disco Polo music is a bone of contention between members of local *Górale* elites and businessmen gathered around Radio Alex. It is a tool in a battle for symbolic power. In the end it is worth asking whether Disco Polo can be called a new local tradition.

KEYWORDS: Podhale Region, music, anthropology of music, disco polo, distinction, power game, new tradition

The Podhale Region is a special place in the territory of Poland. Located in the very south of the country, at the foothills of the Tatra Mountains, it is one of the most ethnographically acknowledged regions in Poland. Since the beginning of the 19th century, many travellers, writers and scholars have written about the culture of this region. During the period when Poland had lost its independence, Podhale was seen as a reservoir of 'Polishness'. Representatives of the Polish intelligentsia treated the

inhabitants of the region, called Highlanders or in Polish *Górale*, as the inheritors of the most ancient and genuine national values and traditions[1]. The process of mythologizing Podhale was influenced by Romantic ideas, which located the national spirit in the countryside under the thatched roofs of rural cottages. Johann Gottfried von Herder can be cited as the most prominent author within this line of thought: he demanded that one look for a sense of national authenticity in the most unreachable and outlying places (Cocchiara 1981, 178–179).

Górale became endowed with the most desired 'Polish' attributes – such as bravery, gallantry, independence and a love of freedom (Malewska-Szałygin 2017, 43–50). Polish elites believed that making the *Górale* a symbol of 'Polishness' would help in retaining the feeling of being a nation, and afterwards in regaining national independence. Thus, elements of local traditional culture were not only admired and promoted in their genuine shape, but were also separated from the local context and introduced to the 'high' culture of the Polish intelligentsia. The process of ennoblement of *Górale* people and their culture has had a lot of consequences. One of them, in my opinion, was that the *Górale* believed that they were a special kind of people and that their culture was something of which to be proud. Furthermore, I argue that, to this day, *Górale* still feel some sense of superiority. Perhaps this is why nowadays Podhale is famous as a region which has retained its oldest traditions. The inhabitants of the region still speak the local dialect, they build houses in a traditional *Górale* style, wear traditional clothes for special occasions; and they still play, sing and dance to traditional music. One could say that the region is the folkloric calling card of Poland.

I did ethnographic fieldwork in Podhale in the years 2011–2015. During eight visits, I focused my attention on two distinct, but connected topics: music and tradition. I talked to *Górale* musicians about the music they play. I took part in many official musical events: festivals, competitions, folk music and dance concerts and rehearsals. I also participated in events that were closed to others: in private meetings called 'posiady', music lessons, wedding parties and funerals. In addition, I visited many places where music was performed for tourists, such as restaurants and pubs with live music, as well as special lectures about *Górale* culture and music. By analysing the different situations in which music was played, and my interlocutors' behaviour and statements about the music which they refer to as theirs, I tried to explain what this musical tradition meant to modern *Górale*, what role it played in their everyday life and how it mattered in the process of self-defining and naming the local identity. It should be mentioned that all my interlocutors belonged to the highest class in the local community. Indeed, I call them local elite: they were well-educated, involved in

1 The inhabitants of the Podhale region call themselves *Górale*. In using this expression, they want to be distinguished from other groups that also live in mountain areas.

many actions in favour of local culture and were seen as promoters of 'góraleness'[2]. They all felt proud of being *Górale*, and worked hard to educate other people, especially children and teenagers, to reproduce the *Górale* culture.

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant elements of the local culture is music. There is no other region in Poland where traditional music is preserved in such a wide ambit. When carrying out my fieldwork research in the Podhale region, I realized very quickly that the place was full of music. I would even risk the hypothesis that the town of Zakopane – the capital of the region – and its surrounding villages are the most musical places in the Polish landscape. Music plays in all the local restaurants and pubs – it flows from loudspeakers and *Górale* music bands play every evening. A peculiar cacophony rules everyday in Krupówki Street – the main thoroughfare in Zakopane – characterised by different sounds floating from shops and bazaar stands with regional products. On public transport and in shops, one can also hear music broadcast by the local radio station – Radio Alex. In the afternoons, many children and teenagers attend local music schools, where they explore traditional melodies, and practice singing as well as playing the violin and *basy*[3]. Children, teenagers and also adults meet in local community centres where regional dance groups rehearse once or twice a week. Every village in Podhale has its own folklore dance group! They practise and repeat *Górale* dance steps and prepare for upcoming performances. Members of the *Górale* elite meet in the numerous galleries or villas of Zakopane, where they talk about the most important local issues, and here also they sing, make music and dance.

Predominant among the events where music is played are local weddings – none can be held without music. Funerals are also often accompanied by music: men in 'cucha' jackets and with violins in their hands walk with the dead from the church to the cemetery, playing farewell melodies. Music is played during holy masses – not only church music, but traditional *Górale* music as well. My interlocutors stated that people often invite musicians even for christening parties. One of them told me: "There is no other region in Poland that is as musically and culturally developed as Podhale[4]."

By dint of such words, *Górale* musicians tried to convince me how full of music the Podhale region really was. Much has already been written about music in the Skalne Podhale region (Kolberg 1966, 1968, Chybiński 1924, 1927, 1961, Mierczyński 1930, Kotoński 1953, 1956). Moreover, journalists, essayists and scholars still write

2 *Góraleness* is a term I use to describe *Górale* culture in its entirety (music, language, architecture, painting, legends, traditional professions, shepherding etc.). *Góraleness* is also a specific local point of view: the atmosphere and way of living in the region of Podhale.

3 *Basy* is three-stringed bow instrument, similar to cello. In *Górale* music, it plays an accompanying, harmonic role.

4 All quotations from interviews are the words of my interlocutors, translated from the local dialect into English.

about it today (Pinkwart 2006, Trebunia-Tutka 2009, 2010, 2011, Krzyżanowski 2006, 2007, Cooley 2005). However, rarely in the literature can one read about less prestigious genres of music which, nonetheless, are very popular in the *Górale* context. I posit that such genres do not only exist, but that they are highly present in the everyday life of *Górale*. I would like to highlight this oversight and look at one of the non-elite genres of music which has recently developed very intensively in the Skalne Podhale region. More importantly, this genre can be claimed to be the 'new *Górale* music'. This text is about *Górale* Disco Polo music.

In the next part of the text, I will clearly explain what is meant by the term Disco Polo music. At this juncture, it is important to mention that this genre of music, treated by the local elite as disreputable, as artistic 'trash' and as a serious danger for local tradition, seems to me an interesting starting point to consider other processes in contemporary *Górale* culture. I will therefore try to show how the debate on *Górale* Disco Polo music reflects the local class hierarchy, how music is involved in a process of cultural distinctions in Pierre Bourdieu's sense, and in what ways the music industry is engaged in a cultural power game. In the end, I am going to consider whether *Górale* Disco Polo music can be named a new local tradition.

METHODOLOGY – MUSIC AS A WAY OF EXPERIENCING AND ANALYZING

As you can see, music took centre stage in my research, where it appears in two different meanings and dimensions. First of all, in my fieldwork music functioned as a predominant mode of experience. Listening to *Górale* music, hearing the local sounds and taking part in many musical events – these elements dominated my participant observation. In this context, I perceive music as a social process rather than as an irrelevantly existing phenomenon or a work of art. Christopher Small's approach is very useful in explaining the difference: "The essence of music lies not in musical works but in taking part in performance, in social action. Music is thus not so much a noun as a verb, 'to music'. To music is to take part in any capacity in a musical performance, and the meaning of musicking lies in the relationships that are established between the participants by the performance" (Small 1999, 9). Small's idea to turn the word music into the verb 'to music' should be understood as an invocation to notice the deep meanings that are being established, played out and experienced during any musical performance. "In that real world where people actually make and listen to music, in concert halls and suburban drawing rooms, in bathrooms and at political rallies, in supermarkets and churches, in record stores and temples, fields and night--clubs, discos and palaces, stadiums and elevators, it is precisely what Dalhaus calls social action, which is to say performance, that is central to the experience of music"

(Small 1999, 11). Thus, by taking part in such musical performances, I shared a social experience, in the sense described by Kirsten Hastrup (1995).

Secondly, I use music as a key to analyze and explain *Górale* culture in a broader sense. I believe Tia DeNora when she claims that music has power: "It is implicated in the very dimension of social agency [...]. Music may influence how people compose their bodies, how they conduct themselves, how they experience the passage of time, how they feel – in terms of energy and emotion – about themselves, about others, and about situations" (DeNora 2000, 16–17). This is why taking part in musical performances, talking about and listening to music can help the ethnographer understand many complicated relations that are meaningful in a particular local context. Tim Cooley stated that music behaviours seem "to be a locus of people's most deeply held beliefs, motivations, and meanings. Music is especially useful for expressing the unquantifiable and intangible such as religious belief, historical narrative, profound emotion and ideas about identity" (Cooley 2010, 15). I am sure that music can be used as a mirror or even a magnifying glass, in which different aspects important to a particular group, culture and local worldview are reflected.

A VERY SHORT GUIDE TO DISCO POLO MUSIC

The main street in Zakopane, Krupówki, is full of souvenir shops and bazaar stalls with local handcraft, and also thousands of CDs with 'local' music. The sounds that float from dinky little loudspeakers located outside the shops encourage pedestrians to stop and peruse the offers of the vendors. However, anyone who knows anything about music would very quickly realize that these CDs, for the most part, do not contain traditional *Górale* music. Beautiful albums with dainty names and titles such as: 'Górale Feast', 'Jolly Meeting', 'Our Music' or 'Górale Mix' are, without a shadow of a doubt, part of a popular music genre which in Poland is called Disco Polo[5].

It is commonly acknowledged in Poland that Disco Polo is bad music – that it is banal and has no artistic value. You should never admit that you listen to it, because to do so brings shame. Paradoxically, it is also widely known that since the late 80s this music has become more and more popular. It is hard to define Disco Polo music without pronouncing value judgements – I failed to do this, one sentence above. In my opinion, Zofia Woźniak described the genre very well when she wrote that: "Disco Polo is a Polish version of disco songs that is characterised by simple melodies and Polish text, which invokes the tradition of folk songs, familiar festive songs and gipsy romance" (1998, 187).

5 The name 'Disco Polo' literally means that it is the Polish version of disco music.

Primarily, Disco Polo is uncomplicated: it provides fun and is easy to dance to. It has simple melodic lines – which everyone can repeat easily – and trivial texts about parties and romantically naïve or sexual love. The roots of this genre can be found in the peri-urban culture of the inter-war years, when backyard ballads and corny old-fashioned dancing were extremely popular (Leszczyński 1997). Other scholars consider that Disco Polo stems from the activities of amateur local musicians, who played before the Second World War during wedding parties, knees-ups and other family ceremonies. As Woźniak claims, the biggest advantages of Disco Polo musicians were spontaneity, vibrancy and a lack of professionalism. These traits helped everyone to identify with this music and participate in it (1998, 189). Appealing to the most fundamental human needs – to have fun and sing together – was the overriding idea of this banal music. It offered leisure: one did not have to engage intellectually in anything too complicated. This music, later called side-walk music, was played and sold outside the official phonographic market until the end of the 80s. This was the time when "private producers started to release homemade cassettes with this music, which – although it was absent in the media – responded to a great need for publicity" (Leszczyński 1997, 128). The first recordings came from the United States, where Polish emigrants who lived there, missed the Polish style of partying. They also had much broader access to technical support and tools, such as synthesizers, voice recorders, etc., which they used to perform a 'renewal' of Polish folk songs. Although they had no promotion, pirate and homemade recordings made by members of the Polish diaspora in the USA were sold successfully at local bazaars in Poland: "Their only advertisement was a continual playback on uncomplicated boom-boxes on the streets" (Woźniak 1998, 188).

The basic make-up of a band consisted of a multifunctional keyboard and a vocalist. These kinds of bands were later called Disco Polo by Sławomir Skręta, the owner of one of the first record labels of this genre. There can be no doubt that Disco Polo music became extremely popular in Poland in the 80s and 90s, and this should not be surprising. More astonishing, rather, is that the phenomenon of Disco Polo is still alive. The Polish essayist Krzysztof Varga (2015) ironically wrote:

> Not so long ago [this music] seemed to be a funny relic of the colourful, bazaar of the 1990s, our clunky answer to global mass culture, something that is going to die soon in a natural way, because it was nothing more than bazaar shit. Everybody believed that, after relishing this trash, we would reach for something more ambitious. This kind of thinking demonstrated incomparable naiveté, because today Disco Polo has achieved its great comeback, today Disco Polo celebrates its huge victory. Anyone who doesn't like Disco Polo music is a nerd. On the contrary, we are believers in equality, which means that we should keep down, not up.

Although one might not agree with everything he says, many music journalists still agree that "disco polo is bad music, it is objectively bad" (Sroczyński 2015). This

does not change the fact that Disco Polo has a devoted audience which is still growing[6] and a huge market: with its own TV stations, websites and festivals organised in the biggest and most prestigious concert halls in Poland, it has gone way beyond being a music only for wedding parties (Woźniak 1998, Cieślik 2011). Even more significantly, however, everyone in Poland knows the most popular songs of Disco Polo, and in this context the phenomenon can be considered our common cultural reference.

WHAT IS GÓRALE DISCO POLO?

One can hear Disco Polo music everywhere in Poland, so it is not surprising that this music is also played and listened to in Podhale. But the most fascinating aspect of the issue is that *Górale* have their own Disco Polo music, which is as simple and banal as the countrywide versions of it. *Górale* Disco Polo is also characterised by keyboards and unsophisticated texts, but aside from this, without 'missing a beat,' it also relates strongly to local, *Górale* issues and to elements of the *Górale* music tradition. How does this happen? Firstly, *Górale* Disco Polo vocalists often sing in the local dialect. Their vocal style is similar to that characteristic of traditional local music: it is loud, strong and often sung in two voices. Furthermore, in the songs' texts we also encounter figures characteristic of the local culture, such as *Górale*, shepherds (called 'baca' and 'juhas' in *Górale* language), highland robbers ('zbójnicy'), the Tatra Mountains, sheep and other features that can be associated with the region.

In addition to keyboards, guitars and percussion, violins are also used in *Górale* Disco Polo music, as the violin is the most *Górale* of all instruments. The violin leads the melodies in a characteristic *Górale* style and is accompanied by other instruments used by *Górale* musicians in restaurants and pubs, such as accordion or double bass, but is rarely or never used in standard Polish Disco Polo music[7].

Górale Disco Polo bands do not play under English-sounding names, which, as the examples 'Bayer Full', '4Ever', 'Fanatic', 'Boys' or 'Mega Dance' indicate, is normal practice in this genre of music. On the contrary, they prefer local-sounding names, like 'Ogórki' Band (Ogórki is the last name of the band's leader, and also means

6 Mariusz Cieślik announces that in polls conducted by OBOP (Polish Centre for Public Opinion Research) in 2011 29% of interviewees named Disco Polo as their favourite music genre (2011). https://www.newsweek.pl/kultura/dyskotekowy-charakter-narodowy/s7zrtpo (accessed: 11.01.16).

7 The traditional *Górale* band consists of three violins (which play first and second voice) and the *basy* (which accompanies). These kinds of traditional bands play during competitions, and regional dance and music groups shows. Whereas in restaurants and pubs perform 'modern *Górale* bands' (violins are accompanied by accordion, viola and double bass). The repertoire is also different. They do not play traditional *Górale* melodies, but rather Gypsy, Hungarian, Balkan and Slovakian melodies, as well as covers of popular Polish songs (Cooley 2005).

'Cucumbers' in Polish) or 'Baciary' and 'Basioki' (both names mean 'Rascals' in Polish). On stage, musicians and vocalists wear costumes that in part equate to traditional clothing – they dress up in jeans with white shirts and traditional shepherds' hats or belts. *Górale* Disco Polo music often echoes Slovakian, Hungarian and Gipsy music, styles also rarely heard in Polish Disco Polo, but popular in Podhale. One of the musicians I talked to explained what *Górale* Disco Polo music was in these words: "They remake everything, I tell you. They remake Górale traditional music: they use Slovakian melodies, and replace the words with local ones. So it is totally mixed, it is a kind of hodgepodge".

To elucidate further, I will give as an example a short analysis of one of the *Górale* Disco Polo songs. For this, I have chosen the song entitled 'Jo jest górol'[8] ('I am a Góral man') from the repertoire of 'Baciary' band. The title clearly indicates that there is a reference to 'góraleness' – firstly, it contains an explicit declaration of identity, and secondly, it is in the local dialect. The song is perfectly suited for dancing – we hear a regular beat, in a quadruple metre – everybody can move to it. The composition starts with a kind of prelude, in which the violin plays the main melody, accompanied by percussion, accordion and keyboard.

The violin theme evokes a Hungarian csárdás with the verve and bravura of a Gypsy virtuoso show. It is accompanied by short shouts of 'hej', 'hej' and whistling. When the prelude finishes, the vocalist starts to sing in the high pitch characteristic of traditional *Górale* singing. After the first musical phrase, the second voice joins in, leading the melody at the interval of a third, as is also very popular in *Górale* music. The words sung in the local dialect narrate a story:

> I am a Góral, I have nothing, but one tiny lover, with whom I dance.
> I am a Góral, I have nothing, but one tiny lover, with whom I sleep.

Then follows a second instrumental fragment, very similar to the first one. There are also a few seconds dedicated to a violin virtuoso show in a Gypsy style. Afterwards, the second verse is sung:

> She laid down and she gave her lover a kiss.
> She laid down and she gave her lover something more.

The whole composition ends with a third instrumental fragment that is almost identical to the initial prelude.

8 You can listen to it on youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkfqriDMwXg (accessed: 28.08.2017).

This song can be seen as a representation of the *Górale* independence ('I have nothing'), so important in Podhalan mythology[9]. Because the main character has nothing, he cares about nothing and is attached to nothing. He can thus spend his life dedicated to the most enjoyable subject – love. Love is the overriding theme in both traditional folk songs and modern Disco Polo music. In the style typical of this genre, the story is told in a ribald and rather obscene way. The text is not sophisticated, but everyone can easily understand it and, more importantly, everyone can easily remember it. The melody is simple as well (it is based on six tones of the major scale, which are harmonically arranged in the most banal way – tonic, sub-dominant, dominant and tonic again), so everyone can repeat it. The majority of Disco Polo songs have a very similar harmonic character.

The popularity of local Disco Polo music in Podhale is enormous. You can listen to this music in discos, at wedding parties, during open-air summer festivals, in normal *Górale* households, and in cars and public transport, because the most popular local radio station – Radio Alex – broadcasts it all the time. The most interesting fact for me was that *Górale* Disco Polo is not an export product for those visiting the region. Tourists can buy CDs of this music, of course, but primarily it is local people who listen to it. This is a product made by the *Górale* for *Górale* clients, and *Górale* consumers buy it.

ASSESSING GÓRALE DISCO POLO MUSIC

It was not so much the music itself that I was interested in, but more the question of evaluating and assessing this kind of musical activity. I would at this juncture again stress that most of my interlocutors belonged to the highest social class in the region of Podhale – the local elite. These people were almost all musicians, who have identified themselves very strongly with *Górale* culture, with 'góraleness'. For these interlocutors, *Górale* Disco Polo deserves to be placed in the lowest possible position in the ranking of musical activities. Krzysztof Trebunia-Tutka, one of the most renowned of the *Górale* musicians, leader of the folk band 'Trebunie-Tutki', and a teacher and a journalist told me: "To tell you the truth, I am fighting against pseudo-Górale Disco Polo music with all my strength ". His words in a very direct way express the elite attitude to local Disco Polo music – it is a terrible phenomenon against which one should fight.

9 Independence is one of the most important attributes stereotypically imputed to the *Górale*. In the 19th century Polish intellectuals described the *Górale* as independent, stubborn and adamant people. They wrote that it was the harsh mountain nature that was responsible for this. These attributes differentiated them from the rest of the Polish peasants. Anna Malewska-Szałygin gave this stereotype the name of the "free son of the Tatra Mountains" (2017, 42).

According to my interlocutors, most of the musicians involved in Disco Polo music can hardly be called 'real' musicians: on the contrary, they are amateurs who play in a slapdash way, and their musical and technical skills are at best average, and sometimes scandalously bad. Or, as my interlocutors put it: "These boys, who only yesterday learned how to hold a bow" enter recording studios and their songs are played on Radio Alex. The music itself, in my interlocutors' opinion, is 'trash', a 'piece of shit' or a 'pot-boiler'. However, I was curious why Disco Polo music – evaluated so negatively – had so many listeners among the local inhabitants. I was also interested why the *Górale* elite treated it as a real danger, and not simply as a local colourful *curiosity*.

The answers to the first question revealed some interesting issues. Above all, my interlocutors tried to assure me that Disco Polo music is not listened to by 'real' *Górale*. Those who are familiar with traditional music cannot accept it:

> When they are not well up on music, they prefer to listen to Radio Alex, to the kind of shit that young boys play nowadays. Shit is shit. I can't stand it. I don't listen to Radio Alex!
> For people like me, who live in families in which tradition is an important issue, Disco Polo is not music. Do you know any musician, who doesn't feel offended by Disco Polo? There are three chords in this music, that's all! Let's be honest, there are people who play Disco Polo who come from Podhale region, they are inhabitants of Podhale, of the surrounding villages. It is hard for them to break away from the image of the Górale, because they are Górale. The problem is that this Disco Polo music reaches people here. But it is not the kind of music of which people are proud here. Thousands of people do not identify with it, they are ashamed of it. They don't want to have anything in common with Radio Alex. But for whom is this music made? Not for 'real' Górale, not for real musicians and their families, not for people who have attended folk dance groups.

In considering the words above, one can come to the conclusion that the ability to value music properly is a 'distinctive factor' in terms described by Bourdieu[10]. Pierre Bourdieu argued that people with a high volume of cultural capital – which tends to be inherited rather than inculcated in schools – impose on others what constitutes taste within society. Good taste is, in this sense, something that distinguishes the elite from those with lower volumes of capital (Bourdieu 1984). The attitude to *Górale* Disco Polo music can thus be seen as a litmus test. In the elite´s opinion, whoever listens to local Disco Polo music is a lowbrow person and cannot call him or herself a 'real *Góral*'. Bourdieu would say that the fans of this music are located at the lower level of the class hierarchy: *Górale* Disco Polo music is a product for local people who do not understand their own roots and culture, and who do not possess the most

10 In an article titled "Musical Distinction of the Skalne Podhale Region", I wrote more about music as a distinctive element in the modern Podhale region. In my opinion, music is an important element of symbolic capital, which is used by representatives of the local elite, in order to establish and sustain local social hierarchies (Małanicz-Przybylska 2019).

elementary musical competence. One of my interlocutors said: "The receivers, most of them, are lowbrow. They need something totally simple, something to dance to, which you don't need to concentrate on; you don't even have to listen to it. You know, it plays, because it plays. Nothing more".

A lot of musicians with whom I talked suggested that the popularity of Disco Polo music in Podhale is a result not only of the minimal musical expectations of local people, but of something else. They argued that Radio Alex, which plays this music all the time, had falsely created a Disco Polo boom. What is more, the owner of the radio (the editor-in-chief), Piotr Sambor, is responsible for recording this 'terrible' music on thousands of albums. My interlocutors saw the activity of Radio Alex as a gross transgression, as a self-perpetuating mechanism which is concentrated only on creating financial benefits for its owner:

> There is this local radio, Radio Alex, which promotes this music all the time, because it is paid to do that. And because it is paid, it plays it all the time. And because it plays it all the time, people buy the recordings. And because people buy these recordings, Disco Polo musicians have free promotion. And this is a closed circle. People want to listen to Disco Polo music, because Radio Alex plays it. People want to listen to the local radio, because they need locality. They need a sense of familiarity.

According to my interlocutors' statements, Radio Alex's policy works as follows: the radio enables recordings of Disco Polo music, plays them on-air and does not pay the performers. In exchange for this, Disco Polo musicians get free advertising: the radio gives the telephone numbers or the websites of the bands. People can easily contact them, buy CDs and invite them to wedding parties or discos. In this way, young boys play their music, earn some money and are satisfied. The radio owners are satisfied as well, because the cost of the copyright is much lower and they, as producers, also earn through selling the recordings.

All my interlocutors were convinced that this was a kind of a package deal beneficial to all the participants: the radio, the recording company and Disco Polo musicians. The business seems to be excellent and Radio Alex, which some years ago used to promote good folk music, now plays almost exclusively Disco Polo: "Formerly, when they played other music, people used to phone them and ask: why don't you play our Górale music? Now they play only this Disco Polo. I mean, they do whatever they want. The performers are much worse. I would pack them all in a sack and throw them into the Dunajec River. They ruin our music. There is no Górale music in it at all".

Radio Alex functions as the local organizer of the music industry, which decides what kind of music the *Górale* listen to. Or, to put it in the terms proposed by John Storey (2010), it defines the use value of the products that it produces. At best, the receivers passively take what is being offered to them, and at worst, they are "cultural

suckers", ideologically manipulated by the music they listen to. The music industry does not give the audience what they want, but rather what the industry wants, and then persuades the listeners that these are their own desires (Storey 2010, 118–137): "As I say: it is played over and over again, like a mantra. People do something, they don't think about the music, and the music is played on the radio all the time".

Even if people do not pay attention to the music, they hear it. The radio achieves the power to create its popularity through the perpetual repetition of the same songs. The effect of continual repetition is to promote passive listening, which Theodor Adorno argued (1941) is the most primitive mode of music perception. Adorno, one of the first men to write about popular music, claimed that the main difference between 'lowbrow' (popular) and 'highbrow' (classical) music is not its complexity or sophistication: "standardization and non standardization are the key contrasting terms for the difference" (Adorno 1941)[11]. By standardization, Adorno means that all the music pieces belonging to the category of popular music are the same in terms of their general structure. "Standardization extends from the most general features to the most specific ones […]. The detail has no bearing on the whole, which appears as an extraneous framework. Thus, the whole is never altered by the individual event and therefore remains, as it were, aloof, imperturbable, and unnoticed throughout the piece" (ibid). Popular music in Adorno's opinion was banal, trivial and did not provoke listeners to any intellectual effort.

Naturally, his statements have to be understood in the context of critical theory promoted by the Frankfurt School, as Adorno was one of this group of ardent critics of modern society. He wrote that "listening to popular music is manipulated not only by its promoters, but, as it were, by the inherent nature of this music itself, into a system of response mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society" (ibid). Adorno's forthright rejection of popular music has proven controversial: his statements have been broadly criticised and the author himself called "prejudiced, arrogant and uniformed in this field" (Paddison 1982, 201). Despite this, I would agree that, in terms of Adorno's categories, Disco Polo music is standardised. Disco Polo songs are based on what people already know: they use the melodies of traditional *Górale* music or rewrite popular hits. As Zofia Woźniak states: "The best recipe for a Disco Polo hit is to use a commonly known melody – a folk song, Polish pop song or local version of a great international hit. I do not have to explain that this kind of operation provides easy success with minimal effort. Disco Polo musicians just latch on to people's habits and sentiments" (1998, 191). The second aspect of the repeatability effect, which promotes passive listening, is that people hear

11 http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/DATABASES/SWA/On_popular_music_1.shtml (accessed: 01.10.2019).

the same compositions a thousand times on the radio. They are played over and over again or, as one interlocutor said, *like mantra*. Even if listeners initially feel distaste, they remember the songs and, in the end, begin to like them.

In the opinion of *Górale* musicians, Radio Alex is responsible for stupefying local people and for destroying traditional *Górale* self-knowledge. As one of my interlocutors said, as a result of the activity of Radio Alex, a lot of children, as well as adults, regard local Disco Polo as real *Górale* music. In the end, this is logical: the local *Górale* radio plays it, so it must be *Górale* music. According to my interlocutors' statements, it is however not necessarily a catastrophe that this kind of music exists. If treated as a local, internal and colourful element of *Górale* reality, it could be acceptable. Disco Polo could be, for example, played at wedding parties. Truly alarming to them was the fact that, through the activity of Radio Alex, many unmindful *Górale* started to identify with this music and call it *Górale* music:

> Unfortunately it is treated as Górale music. This is the case, because these CDs are titled 'Górale party' or 'Górale mix', and it is played non-stop on Radio Alex. People here in Podhale listen to it, for example construction workers. On the building site of my house, Radio Alex was played very loud, and on that of my neighbours', and on a third building site as well. Everywhere the same music. Disco Polo, over and over. Non-stop. People listen to it in cars, at homes, everywhere. Even my students – I asked them at the beginning: what bands do you listen to? They listed some titbits. Of course, I couldn't deride them, but later I tried to point them towards better music. Disco Polo is the worst thing that could happen to 'góraleness', Radio Alex is the worst.

As they say, Radio Alex cares only about money: it sells people "trash" packed in a traditional *Górale* costume. Some of my interlocutors predicted that Radio Alex would in the future even contribute to the disappearance of traditional *Górale* music:

> R1: What Radio Alex does, is…
> R: The final nail in the coffin.
> R1: It is a kind of a steamroller, which is not going to stop. Disco Polo will be the new Górale music soon.

It seems to me that all these very negative opinions about both Disco Polo music and Radio Alex's activity result from my interlocutors' feeling of not being able to control the situation as they should, being the local elite. Pierre Bourdieu claimed that people with high cultural capital should be able to determine and impose on others what is good taste and what is not (Bourdieu 1984); but this form of 'symbolic power' does not work here. In regard to their control of the content of traditional music, the local Disco Polo industry acts arbitrarily. The game is about power, but it is also about class distinction and the local elite´s prerogative to define what is valuable, desirable, and good for the community. In my opinion, members of the local *Górale* elite regard it as their duty to care for the musical education of other *Górale* people:

> Disco Polo, this music that is nowadays played in the Podhale region, irritates me. It irritates me that it reaches a wide audience, including Górale – the local people. You know, it's fun to play something unambitious, something simple, at a party. But it all depends on the question: are we going to educate our local inhabitants musically, or not. Am I right?

Radio Alex disturbs them in this task. In many conversations which I have had with *Górale* musicians, I felt a kind of powerlessness and regret, even sorrow. They were convinced that it is impossible to stop this machine or to exert any influence on it. Radio Alex has a very strong position in Podhale: most of the time it is the radio of choice there. Why is this so? The answer is simple. Radio Alex transmits regional information very effectively and widely. I listened to the radio for some time during my investigation, and I must admit that it really is an invaluable source of local information. One can get news concerning local politics, the local economy, or infrastructural works that are currently underway. There are cultural and sport events' announcements, as well as hourly local news bulletins and current weather forecasts. Radio Alex dedicates a great deal of attention to religious subjects, which also obviously contributes to its popularity, as Catholicism is an important element of modern *Górale* identity.

In my opinion, the non-musical side of Radio Alex is a major factor, why this radio station is commonly perceived as a *Górale* one. It is almost inconceivable that the local community would not listen to it. My interlocutors were very aware of the impact of this issue, and this would explain their evident regret at its non-involvement in a 'proper' identity building process among the *Górale*, particularly in the musical sphere: "They are Górale, so they listen to a Górale radio. One could sell a lot of interesting things through this radio". Everybody is also convinced that it would be impossible to compete with Radio Alex, which emerges as a kind of a hegemon,who has conquered the *Górale* souls and destroyed their musical self-knowledge.

IS DISCO POLO A NEW FOLK MUSIC?

Some music journalists, musicians and scholars claim that Disco Polo is becoming new, or even perhaps the only possible, folk music. For example, Maciej Szajkowski, a member of the famous world music group 'Warsaw Village Band', made the following comment in an interview for one of the most popular Polish newspapers: "For all the rest, today Disco Polo is a folk music which fulfils all the necessary criteria – it is a music belonging to villages and provincial communities, it accompanies rites and ceremonies like weddings, and finally it is collectively sung and desired" (Sankowski 2012). Marta Trębaczewska, who was looking for modern versions of folk music, states that one can use this expression for pieces of music which meet the following conditions: they are performed for fun and pleasure; they accompany important local

community events; and their texts deal with everyday topics. “If additionally [this music] is performed spontaneously and in a casual way, without perfect respect for the details and if it enables one to react to everyday troubles [...], then today the easy, facile and enjoyable music, which Disco Polo music constitutes, can also be named a new folk music” (Trębaczewska 2011, 147).

Górale Disco Polo basically fulfils the conditions needed for it to be considered folk music. Apart from Radio Alex, it can be heard at local discos and weddings, it is made for fun and accompanies local customs. It definitely addresses everyday life and certainly has a value of locality: it differs from Disco Polo music elsewhere in Poland and the *Górale* treat it as their own local music. It also fulfils, to a certain degree, the conditions of spontaneity that Trębaczewska describes (2011). Local Disco Polo music also satisfies a simple need for fun. It helps people join together in dancing or singing. In the terms proposed by Tom Selwyn, this kind of music could be matched to the category of ‘hot’ authenticity, in contrast to that of ‘cool’ authenticity, which might rather be applied to traditional music (1996, 18–28). ‘Hot’ authenticity refers to the way we experience the world – emotionally, affectively: feelings and subjective feedbacks play a dominant role here. If people like this music, if they enjoy it, if they need it and treat as their own – it is authentic in a hot way. ‘Cool’ authenticity, by contrast, must be validated scientifically, institutionally; it needs hard data, evident proofs. Traditional music of the Podhale region can be assigned to this category: as it is well described in scientific literature, it benefits from institutional education, and it is commonly approved and officially valued.

Members of the *Górale* elite believe rather in the markers of ‘cool’ authenticity. Moreover, they should be seen as guards of genuine traditional in its unchangeable form – even if this is mostly imagined (Shils 1983). For them, Disco Polo music is understood as bad practice and is not valuated positively, whereas tradition, by definition, has to be affirmed (see: Shils 1983). My elite interlocutors argue that this music destroys the image of *Górale* people and ‘góraleness’. But even they, occasionally, do enjoy this music. It all depends on the context. To repeat the words of one of my interlocutors: “To tell you the truth, this music is wonderful to dance to. Disco Polo is ok at a wedding party”.

But, paradoxically, even non-elite *Górale* do not call Disco Polo traditional music. They used expressions such as: local, *Górale*, our. In the opinions of all my interlocutors, *Górale* Disco Polo music was seen as not genuine. Sometimes it invokes tradition, while on other occasions it steals from it, borrowing different elements. The most interesting fact is that no one, neither antagonists nor adherents of this music, acknowledged that Disco Polo music has anything in common with a broadly understood notion of tradition, even if the traditional inspiration is obvious in this music at first glance.

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ETHNOGRAPHY / LISTENING / RECORDING SOUND ENVIRONMENTS OF THE MALAWIAN NORTH AND BEYOND

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Anthropological writings barely comment on practices of listening and recording that are in fact essential for ethnographic fieldwork. They constitute the foundations of encountering the local environments approached by ethnographers. This research practice recontextualizes recorded sound in the new settings of academic or commercial repositories. Two case studies from fieldwork in Northern Malawi elucidate ways in which reflective listening and the utilization of technology constitute knowledge generative processes. The example of the recordings entitled "Bicycling through Chibavi" concerns questions of distance and engagement during fieldwork. The case of an experimental recording of *vimbuza* music constitutes a methodological project of a "situationist event". The project demonstrates how the subjects of the research performatively navigate between local sound environments.

KEYWORDS: anthropology of sound, sound studies, technology, archive, Malawi, Africa

Local sound environments differ significantly from one another. Likewise, the relationships between people and their (sound) environments are remarkably varied. The act of listening constitutes an essential performance of one's relationship with the environment and furthermore is an act of the social construction of reality. Given the continuity between everyday life experience and ethnographic methods, listening also comprises a part of participant observation, even though the name for this method is based on a visual metaphor (Rice 2003). The modern aural experience of any environment also includes recording and playback, involving the use of various technologies and coding methods. This applies not just to human speech, but also implicitly to every sound registered by the human ear or a similar device. In the era of modern registration technologies, listening and recording have been irreversibly entangled, and the distinction between them has become blurred.

The injunction that ethnographic method should be a continuation of everyday life experience refers also to the use of technologies. For example, sound recording is a component of ethnographic research, in forms ranging from the taping of ethnographic interviews to the use of more complex registration technology to capture particular acoustic phenomena. However, more often than not audio recording in ethnography has been treated as a virtually transparent process of documentation. In contrast, I intend to critically re-think the role of sound registration in our discipline. In this paper, I problematize the recording of sound during ethnographic fieldwork and think through the implications of this for research methodology. The aim is to place sound recording practices at the forefront of the research method. Recording, I argue, can reveal or generate other cultural practices, by turning them into objects of ethnographic knowledge. These emerging practices are not free from issues of hierarchy; however, increasing awareness of recording processes can generate means to negotiate with, contest, or challenge existing instances of power. In the following pages, I explain these methodological propositions for the ethnographic research of sound environments. I use my fieldwork concerning rural and urban sound environments in Northern Malawi as an example. The methodological direction proposed, I argue, can widen our understanding of what anthropological knowledge is, or may be, in relation to listening and recording. To unpack this project, I start with a discussion of the mediating character of ethnographic work, which connects local sound environments with technologized repositories. In order to do so, I firstly review the concept of the sound environment and its connection to human subjects.

SOUND ENVIRONMENTS AND REPOSITORIES

Broadly speaking, the term "sound environment" refers to the relations generated by sound between entities in a given environment. In more detail, I present here three characteristics of the sound environment that are significant for ethnographic research of listening.

The first characteristic of the sound environment is its spatiality. Deleuze and Guattari discuss sound as a way of living the relation with the environment (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 310–350). According to these authors, the environment urges its inhabitant firstly to attune, to respond and then to actively engage. Both listening to and producing a sound constitute profound practices of engagement. These practices are also particularly important for creating the difference between the interior and exterior of a certain territory. As an example, I imagine a group of workers in a forest, willingly or unintentionally announcing their presence and thus affecting the ecological environment. Their presence is marked by its acoustic dimension (not to mention the

other long-term effects of their intrusion). The spatial nature of a sound environment implies physicality. However, due to the development of technologies for sound production and distribution, it is also necessary to take virtual or imagined spaces into account. These spaces function, for example, through information technologies, as I describe in more detail in the following pages. Amongst exemplary spaces of this kind might be mentioned the ephemeral "sonic afro-modernity" that spread across continents (Weheliye 2005) or the noise music scene that connects listeners in multiple physical places (Novak 2013).

This leads us to the second feature of the sound environment, which is the physicality involved in its perception. Listening requires the presence and involvement of the body or its mediatizations. Novak describes the listening process as always corporeal, regardless of whether it takes place at a concert or in a lonely room through headphones (Novak 2013, 4–5). Physical involvement in the environment can be ambiguous, especially in our technically saturated modernity. For example, a person listening to music on headphones on crowded city public transport is placed in two environments at the same time: the space of music and a different physical locality. However, this does not change the fact that listening is always embodied, notwithstanding the form and source of the sound. Tim Ingold emphasizes that embodiment does not mean limiting aural experience to a single organ of hearing, but rather involves the immersion of the whole organism in a certain specific space (Ingold 2007). This applies regardless of whether the environment exists independently of human activity, such as the rainforest constituting the world of the Kaluli described by Steven Feld (Feld 1982), or in highly urbanized and mechanical surroundings, such as offices (Dibben and Haake 2013) or modern concert halls (Thompson 2008).

The third characteristic of the sound environment to be noted here is its social and intersubjective construction. Peter Sloterdijk draws on the threads mentioned above when describing the sonic dimension of a social environment, which he designates as a *phonotop*. *A phonotop* separates a human community from that which is external to it: it creates a sense of immersion in a familiar, socially constructed sound world, through such features as a native tongue, as well as other human and non-human sounds (Sloterdijk 2016, 362–400)[1].

The key question in the context of this research is how these features affect the ethnographic research of sound environments. I believe that the key to understanding this problem is to examine the relationship between sound environments and ethnographic accounts. Recording and storage technologies play a key role here.

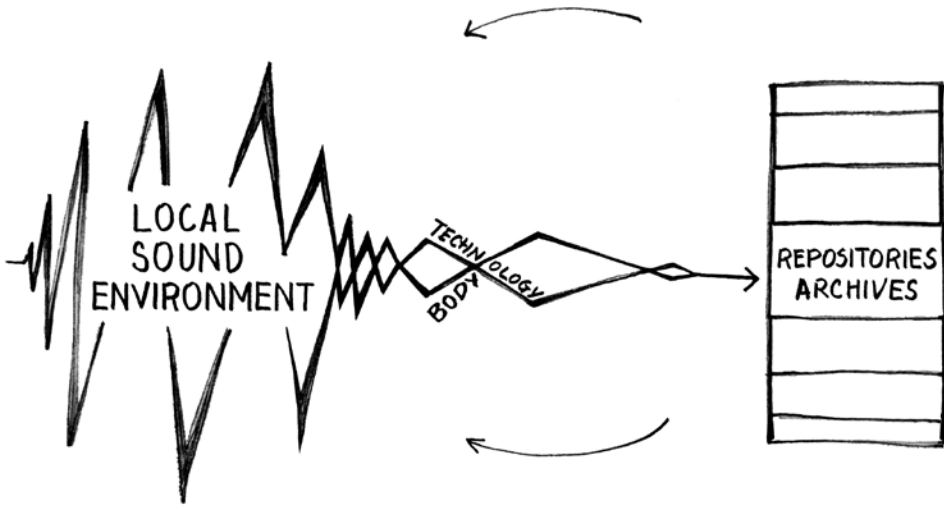
1 Such a distinct boundary between the internal realm of any culture and its outsides can undoubtedly be reprimanded as an essentialization. However, for this discussion, it is important to grasp the intersubjective emergence of a social boundary.

Jonathan Sterne explains that the development of recording devices, like the microphone, forged a new hearing subjectivity. This new subjectivity was the result of the interaction between bodies and technologies (Sterne 2015, 69–70). Moreover, this emergence marked the split of sound away from its immediate physical source. The possibility of the recording and playback of sound away from its initial resonance reconfigured the sense of being in a specific time and space for the listener. Likewise, the use of sound recording devices during ethnographic field research means that elements of the localized, embodied and intersubjective experiences of the fieldwork are transformed into entirely different, evocative objects – for example, digital audio files. After Derrida, I emphasize that this iteration between experience and representation requires varied kinds of technological memorization and methods of storage. In elucidating this, the French philosopher noted that memory functions through the recording of a "trace" of experience. I suggest that this understanding can helpfully be applied to the oscillation between internal and external memories. The comparison between ethnographic recording technologies and memory might therefore be framed as follows: a technologically adjusted trace is objectified by recording and external storage technologies (Derrida 1996).

This description applies both to ethnographers who only tape their interviews and to those who produce field-recordings in a given location. One can describe the memory of listening ethnographers as embodied or internal, while the sound objects registered by recording devices can be treated as external and stored outside the body. This terminology indicates how the process of memorization is technologized during fieldwork. However, the two entangled types of memory can in the end elevate what is recorded to an environment that is separated from that of the initial recording. Within this new environment, which I call a repository, recordings achieve new meanings and new connections. The question of these archives, which absorb and reorganize the sound objects, is a separate and significant problem. These issues impact heavily on the ambiguous relationship between ethnographic knowledge and power. Limited by the volume of the article, I am not able to discuss this question in detail: I therefore seek only to highlight and explain problems related to the archiving and redistribution of data.

Through recording, the flow of experiences and sound waves from a particular environment becomes an object. Registered sounds are transferred to a distinct repository, identified as an accumulation of archived knowledge and entertainment intended for public use[2]. Transfers to archives occur under the control of systems of governance (Foucault 1982, 129). Through the history of modernity, these repositories have taken

2 Derrida also comments on the relationship between individual subjectivity and a repository (an archive), noting that the latter extends the internal voice to a public sphere and, by doing so, governs and disciplines it (Derrida 1996).



Relations between local sound environments and repositories
(drawing by Thuy Duong Dang, Piotr Cichocki)

the form of national or scientific archives, or also commercial catalogues. At the end of the 20th century, the Internet began to integrate all these repositories into a multidimensional and even more publicly accessible network. I can explain this process through an example of archiving and sharing a field recording, whether this be a piece of music, a soundscape or an authorized interview. At this moment, the recorded sound moves to one or many of the following repositories – a library, a specialized digital database or an Amazon store. From then on, potentially everyone can use this sound object, but on different principles than in the environment in which it was recorded. The ethnographic recording of a religious ceremony during which, for example, a sacrifice or purification was performed can thus become a sound file informing about a certain culture or entertaining a music listener.

Therefore, an ethnographer who records sound plays the ambiguous role of being both an observing participant and a supplier of the repository, and thus s/he performs at and for two separated environments. I assume that understanding these processes informs us about how the relationship between local sound environments and repositories affects our methodologies. This recognition should enable us to reflexively intensify ethnographic method. Also, I argue that it requires a rethinking of modes of participation in sound (and social) environments. As a prelude to recounting the research I conducted in Malawi, in the next part of the article I will propose certain methodological orientations to better elucidate the approach I used.

METHODOLOGICAL RE-ORIENTATION

In order to introduce the practice of listening and recording into the reflexive ethnographic method, I refer to a strand of work in our discipline which considers its experimental component as a core value[3]. I argue that ethnographic method not only allows for the objectification of listening and recording practices, but also, by utilizing one method of audio registration or another, takes part in their social construction.

During fieldwork, the relationship with the sound of a certain physical area involves an attunement to multilayered environments (Massumi 2015). The process of attunement is usually substantial, involving acquiring the social competencies of a local "audiovisual culture"[4] and becoming an active subject within it. Hence, sound ethnographers do not only study and participate in local sound environments, but they may also animate them. Sound environments, as constantly changing processes, are in their essence inclusive. I argue that participation in them is also affected by this processual dynamism. As part of this, research interested in local sound cultures engages varied competencies. These methods should be reorganized in order to contribute to ethnography, without questioning its core values and emancipatory cognitive interest (Habermas 1987). Among the various disciplines potentially enhancing the ethnographic method of studying sound environments, I refer only to applied ethnomusicology[5], sound engineering, musicianship, composition and sound studies, among others. What is essential for me in this context are changes to methodological paradigms. I argue that this methodological reorientation implies a conceptualization of fieldwork as a network (Shumakher 2001, 255–257) and opens the research process to a situationist approach (Debord 1957). I will discuss these two inclinations in the next sections of the essay.

To illustrate how these approaches contribute to the acquisition of ethnographic knowledge, I narrate two events from a research project I conducted in the northern region of Malawi[6]. The first example concerns how the listening to and recording of

3 Numerous authors have commented on the experimental quality of anthropology (Schneider and Wright 2010, Faubion and Marcus 2009).

4 I use this term paraphrasing Sarah Pink, who writes about "visual cultures". According to Pink, ethnographers should achieve understanding of these cultures' values and be able to act creatively within them (Pink 2001).

5 Pettan and Titon define applied musicology as: "a music-centered intervention in a particular community, whose purpose is to benefit that community – for example, a social improvement, a musical benefit, a cultural good, an economic advantage, or a combination of these and other benefits. (…) The understanding (…) drives it toward reciprocity [and] is based in the collaborative partnerships that arise from ethnomusicological fieldwork." (Pettan and Titon 2015, 4).

6 Recollecting these events, I decided to adopt a writing technique borrowed from Paul Rabinow's book *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (Rabinow 1977). I hold this text in great esteem because of

a sound environment develops steadily through participation in a social network of relationships. The second case presents the ethnographer co-navigating between physical and virtual sound environments together with members of the researched community. Co-navigation, in this case, was a situationist process that helped the ethnographer to understand the relationship between local sound worlds. At the same time, for other subjects, it gave an opportunity to experimentally, performatively, fuse these environments.

LISTENING THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS ON CHIBAVI STREET

From my first trip down the few kilometre long Chibavi Street during my initial stay in Mzuzu in spring 2016, my senses were moved by the life of the street and its surroundings. I was fascinated by its dense sound, consisting of layered eruptions of music, prayers, advertisements, electric mills, conversations and the labour of artisans. I travelled this route almost every day, cycling to the city centre from the Luwinga district where I dwelled in the early stages of research.

Soon after, I decided to start regular recordings, aiming to represent my practice of listening. I installed a stereo recorder on my backpack and, at a moderate speed, I pedalled along Chibavi[7]. The intention was to record the moving sound; although in practice the microphone was driven through this vibrating space. In this manner, I created over a dozen recordings, together provisionally entitled "Bicycling through Chibavi"[8].

Bicycling through Chibavi

Each of the recordings lasted for about 15 minutes, as long as it took me to traverse the distance. A stereo microphone captured "what occurred" in the space at the moment of my passing. The speed with which I drove limited the length of interactions with people. Because of the motion, my understanding of the conversations I passed was limited to contextless sentences, words or gestures.

its core base in ethnographic material and the researcher's experience, which provide a foundation for further theoretical conceptualizations. In the following examples, the method also emerged from the practice and the interpretation, from the fieldwork.

7 The very basic set up that I used during the first recordings consisted of the Tascam DR-05 recorder and a small windshield. At a later stage of work, I also connected the Rode NT-4 microphone to the same recorder.

8 Audio recording Bicycling through Chibavi: https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122009/Audio/WA308_152210_P366_Ethnography-Listenin_00001.mp3.

This practice resembled sliding across the surface. As such, recording sound became a method to perceive the place, but it also alienated me from the environment. I was isolated because I did not share in practices typical for inhabitants – in talks, labor, commerce, partying or devotional activities. I moved, only observing and recording glimpses of these practices.

Apart from my role as a passer-by, also the fact that I was a white person on a sportbike (purchased cheaply in Mzuzu, but different than those belonging to Mzuzu professional bicycle taxi drivers, known as *sacramento*) emphasized the isolation. These circumstances echoed in the recordings. For example, it resounded in the shouts of *azungu!* (Hey, white person!), that form a counterpart to the constantly audible squeaking of the bicycle chain.

In 2019, I returned to Mzuzu for my next months of fieldwork, planning further recordings of the street. It turned out, however, that the Chibavi area entrapped me more intensely than just through its surface. I was living in the nearby area of Chiputula, and several of my important interlocutors from Chibavi regularly called me to their homes next to the street. Some mentioned that I should learn more through such visits about the everyday life of Mzuzu and Chibavi. One of them commented that my coming into their home was also an act of honouring. During these closer interactions, I started to learn about shortcuts, passages and alleys not visualized on Google maps. Due to my friends, I began to visit churches located along the street, and I used local shops, bars and the services of mechanics. My interlocutors took the roles of guides in this self-revealing environment[9]. The gradual cognition of the street continued also through sensual practices: shared meals in roadside kiosks with fries, listening to music with mp3 sellers, participating in church services, for example on Easter night at the ceremonial bonfire by the local Catholic church. I also recorded some of these micro-events, but the effect remained significantly different from the "Bicycling through Chibavi" recordings.

This constant thickening of contextualized experience shows the role of relationships in the local sound environment. In this sense, social relationships generate meanings. During the first recordings, I listened to the street "aesthetically" and in a way that referred to the properties of physical movement in space. As the recording project advanced, new knowledge began to emerge. This knowledge was generated by the networks of relationships into which I entered. The other actors in the network were parts of the environment of Chibavi Street. In mentioning actors, I mean people who defined me, my research project and their participation in their own ways[10].

9 Urban anthropology often uses methods of walking and discussing in movement. De Certeau (1984) and Bendiner-Viani (2005) among others described this method in detail.

10 An important role was also played by non-human actors – for example, speakers that blasted noisy cascades of sounds or my own sound recording devices.

Their activity marked the ethnography not as a venture of an individualistic ethnographer, but rather as a network connecting many participants of different roles, motivations and varying levels of involvement (Schumakher 2001, 255–257). Entering neighbourly relations expanded the network of relationships and generated ethnographic knowledge about the local environment. Through participation in the network of social relations, I slowly transited from an individualistic mode of fieldwork (based on a barely contextualized, but aestheticized attitude) into a connective mode. This connective mode is defined by the ways in which other actors cast my participation. In other words, to a great extent, the environment determined how to approach listening to it.

Although such increased participation meant less regular recordings, it opened up the opportunity to reinterpret earlier recorded sounds through the ways in which my interlocutors understood and experienced them. Any previously recorded sound or noise could reveal potential associations. If the "cycling" sound experience of Chibavi concerned the surface, the second mode enabled an entry into overlapping layers of practice and meaning. I consider these two as complementary modes of fieldwork experience. The surface may enable to embrace the whole; while countless paths into entanglement are potential expansions of small fragments. What allowed the transition from one experience mode to the latter was the strengthening of the network of relations with the environment.

RECORDING AS A SITUATIONIST EVENT

The second example concerns active participation in the movement between sound environments. These environments concern local music, widely understood. The compass of navigation was *vimbuza* music – a religious and medical practice prevalent in rural areas of the Malawian north – and the role of co-navigators was held by members of the band Tonga Boys[11].

I have introduced the band in more detail in other academic (Cichocki 2019) and popular (Cichocki 2018, Cichocki and Wieczorek 2018) writings, so here I limit myself to a brief presentation of my relationship with them. The group Tonga Boys was formed by minor vendors selling second-hand clothes for Malawians and hand-made souvenirs for whites passing through Mzuzu. Most of the group members spoke *Chitonga* and identified with the Tonga group, which gave the band its name.

My collaboration with the group can most appositely be described as a situationist event. By this term, I indicate the dynamic character of participation in the researched

11 The band consists of Albert Manda, Guta Manda, Peter Kaunda, Myrius Minthall, and Solomon Nikho. In some situations, I partook in the recordings as a supplementary member of the band.

social reality. For both the researcher and other people from the studied environment, the participation consists in an active anticipation of events and production of their meanings. Therefore, the fieldwork is not only a method to register activities. Ethnographers inevitably participate in this process of production. To apprehend this participation I refer to the term "situationism" that I borrow from Guy Debord. For Debord, "situationism" functioned as the contraposition of modern society, which he defined as spectacular. In the society of the spectacle, centralized power defines the role of the individual as a passive viewer of hegemonic display (Debord 2010, 7–11). As an antithesis, "situationism" is a political and artistic program of disrupting the hegemonic spectacle by arranging non-spectacular events and participating in them in an embodied way. These actions enable the rejection of the subordination to power, and create opposing, non-hegemonic modes of identification (Debord 1957, 12–15).

Situationism in fieldwork refers to a methodological awareness of undertaking events[12] in which researchers participate in roles assigned to them by other people from outside the "research staff". As a result, the ethnographer begins to learn the principles of the local social environment (Hastrup 1995, 52–55). A situationist event is an activity in which an ethnographer participates in an initiative or action, co-negotiates its goal or, being aware of possible power asymmetries, creates and assembles necessary infrastructures[13]. Examples of such ethnographic situational practice could be audiovisual performances, especially those in which people from the studied community play a significant, active role, for example as producers, cameramen or directors[14]. Such activity enables cooperation in a network with actors involved in the fieldwork in various, but always autonomous, roles (Schumakher 2001, 255).

This particular situationist event produced ethnographic knowledge about the dynamics of relations between the imagined future and the past, between a rural way

12 Kirsten Hastrup, who was interested in everyday situations, commented on "happenings registered as events" (Hastrup 1995, 52) in which ethnographers participate, sharing the situation and movement with other subjects.

13 Infrastructures remain particularly significant in the contexts of postcolonial states, and relate there to hierarchies and access to goods. At the same time, the experience of modern infrastructures is part of the identities of ethnographers, who mostly originate from groups that are privileged on a global scale. I discuss methods of opening and sharing infrastructures as a project of questioning these asymmetries.

14 Even though visual and audio media have historically provided platforms to consolidate the hegemony of the spectacle (Debord 2010), they can also contribute to the encounter of many attitudes and voices from outside centres of power (Deger 2013, Ginsburg 1995). In anthropology and ethnology, the role of audiovisual technologies similarly reflects this duality. On the one hand, colonial photographic and phonographic archives served administrative ideologies of supremacy, but on the other, projects such as Jean Rouch's films undermined epistemological and aesthetic domination in the visual field (Rouch and Feld 2003).

of life and the necessity to lead a struggling existence in a modern African city. Last but not least, it informed me about connections between the global music market and academia.

The recording of live performed music took the central role in the happening. In 2016, the Tonga Boys and I conducted four recording sessions at the houses of band members and their friends[15]. They performed music that referred to many sound environments. A large part of these songs were thematically associated with villages on Lake Malawi, identified as the origin of the Tonga tribe. They sang about shortcuts in the forests and spots by the lake. On the other hand, a common motif was also immigration. Several band members, like hundreds of thousands of men from northern Malawi, had worked for a time in South Africa[16]. Finally, the instrumental arrangements were connected to the everyday environment of their lives. The only semi-professional drum (more similar to a West African *djembe* than the native *ng'oma*) was supplemented by plastic and tin buckets, an axe blade and other items of basic household appliances.

After 2016, I finished the post-production of the songs in a studio in Poland and published a CD, after signing a contract with the band confirming 90% of the sales for the group. The post-production emphasized the conditions of the recordings and relations with other social spaces, rather than exoticism. The final sound was related to an ethnographic critique of hegemonic representation, and aimed to reveal the contradiction of the everyday experiences of musicians and listeners[17]. As a result, the songs have gained new meanings in distanced social environments.

Since then, we have been in continuous contact, as long as they had funds to buy telephone credits. During my fieldwork in 2019, we conducted the next three recording sessions, and had many conversations about the further aims of the band. During these discussions, Tonga Boys referred to their work reflexively, identifying it in relation to local styles and sound environments. Their self-definition critically reconstructed both official and local identity discourses. In the Malawian state, each officially recognized "tribe" is assigned with a specific dance and music style. Within the terms of this categorisation, reproduced by primary level schooling during performative art

15 During each of the first four sessions (carried out at the same time as the street recordings of Chibavi), I utilized a stereophonic microphone Rode NT4 connected to a Tascam DR4 digital recorder. Encouraged by the band members, I videotaped parts of the session using one or two mid-resolution video hand-cameras.

16 These migrations have shaped the social landscape of the whole region for at least a hundred and fifty years.

17 The reviewer from the online music magazine Roots World interpreted these artistic aims as follows: *With rhythms often in 4/4, there's a familiarity here, a sense of connection with so much pop music the world over. Yet, there is nothing slick about any of this; it's straight up, hardcore, crude-by-necessity Malawian modernity* (Miller 2017).

classes, the local *malipenga* dance is assigned to the identity of the Tonga people. Of course, the present practice of performing these dances does not easily match the historical tribal boundaries affirmed by the administration. Tonga Boys considered that instead of *malipenga*, their style might rather be associated with *vimbuza*, officially characterised as an immanent part of the culture of the Tumbuka people. While dancers perform *malipenga* in a celebratory context, as a burlesque of military parades, *vimbuza* has spiritual affinities. It is a healing dance for possessed patients affected by "spiritual disease" (Friedson 1996, Soko 2014). During the dance, the spirits, animated by the rhythm, introduce themselves (sonically and by movement) through dancing bodies. Later, they calm down after receiving offerings prepared for their satisfaction. Some of those possessed, who have a constant relationship with spirits, start a medical practice. Their healing concerns both solving health problems (using herbs also indicated by the spirits), and prophecizing about their causes, usually either witchcraft or possession. This happens during dances and dreams.

Members of the Tonga Boys have encountered *vimbuza* several times in their lives. One of them, when he once moved back from the city to the countryside, was attacked by the witchcraft of a certain *madala* (old man) from his home village. He explained that he owes his life to one of the spiritually possessed doctors (*sing'anga*), who removed the charm and applied suitable protective medicines. Others as children attended night *vimbuza* sessions, clapping their hands as others gathered and thus increasing the rhythm that allowed spirits to rise. The next day they usually fell asleep at school.

One day I shared with Albert Manda my plan to visit doctor Kanuska Msowoya, a recommended *sing'anga* and *vimbuza* dancer. Albert, who had experiences with traditional medicine, expressed interest in my idea and thereupon, from word to word, we coined a plan for a joint visit to her *thempili* (temple). We decided to ask her for a collective recording session and a diagnosis of the problem of the Tonga Boys, who, despite the two released CDs, suffered from poverty and "bad luck". We soon presented the idea to the other band members, who acquiesced.

DIGITALIZING THE SOUNDS OF SPIRITS

Some days later I moved from the biggest city of the region, Mzuzu, to the village Katula, several dozen kilometres north. I stayed there with one of the band members. He was the only Tonga Boy living outside the city and, as a teacher in a primary school, the only one with a full-time job. The village was located a few kilometres from Kanuska Msowoya's *thempili*. We soon went there with my host. In a respectful conversation, she agreed to the band's visit, and the recording and medical diagnosis for the musicians. The Tonga Boys came to Katula a few days later, whereupon we soon set off for Doctor Msowoya's house. As a result of getting lost after using

a shortcut, we arrived at her place long after dark. On arrival, we were allowed to rest for a while and were fed a meal of typical *nsima* (a staple food from maize) with chicken, which usually indicates an honourable welcome. During the meal, I installed the recording equipment in the *thempili,* while being attentively observed by young people and children gathering in expectation of the ceremony. I placed microphones under the thatched roof, strengthened with massive wooden boughs and foil[18]. After performing these technical activities, I returned to Doctor Msowoya's house, where the band members talked about the upcoming performance. They were instructed that the evening would begin with a prayer, then one of the possessed patients would dance. Later they should perform five songs as guests. Knowing this, they discussed the tracklist.

After an hour or two, over a dozen people entered the room in which we waited. Among them were Kanuska Msowoya and her patients (i.e. people possessed by *vimbuza* spirits) dressed in white and red attires with crosses, as well as children from the choir of the nearby African *Chipangano* (Eng. Covenant) Church. In a procession led by the doctor, we moved to the temple in the complete darkness of a new moon night. Patients and honourable guests (*walendo*), including us, took a seat on the platform. I decided to step aside from the dais in order to control the recording equipment. Doctor Maphiri, one of Doctor Msowoya's patients, was about to start the dance. At first, he sat down next to three drums, so the exploding resonance hit his body directly. After a few minutes, he began to shake and moan, and finally got up and started to take steps. He danced for a total of approximately one hour, pausing every few minutes to speak up and diagnose viewers' illnesses. Shortly after, the Tonga Boys began their performance and the crowd got even denser[19]. Children were sitting on the floor, young people pushed to get closer, and on the platform some elders stood up to view the band. The vocalist of the Tonga Boys, Peter Kaunda, called to the crowd to sing along in a pop-singer-like manner. Three drummers of Kanuska's orchestra joined in, playing a spiritual *vimbuza* beat in their routine style. The motoric beat added a new pulsation to the songs performed by the band. Among these songs, there

18 For this session, I prepared a Rode NT4 microphone to capture the complete scene. I used a SM 58 dynamic microphone to collect sound from the main of the three drums used in *vimbuza*. I connected the microphones to the SoundDevice MixPre3 audio interface, using the three available inputs. Except for this session, I also often utilized a contact microphone for recording a signal from a percussion instrument. This time, however, because I was working in a new environment and preferred to access it gradually, not necessarily by concentrating on a more sophisticated cabling system, I skipped this additional microphone.

19 It is risky to assume a clear distinction that Maphiri's dance was spiritual and the performance of the Tonga Boys, merely entertainment. Although this thought occurred to me, Kanuska Msowoya increased my doubts by pointing out at subsequent meetings that serving a chicken for guests was a spiritual practice.

Zaninge Kwa Yehova

was a tune from *vimbuza* ceremonies in the band's native area of Nkhata Bay. A few people from Doctor Msowoya's team started clapping and adding a secondary voice. Peter performed a few dance steps resembling the *vimbuza*. When they completed presenting the fifth song and withdrew to the back, I halted the recording[20].

This extensive account reveals the entanglement of practices from various social and sound environments[21]. It can therefore be seen as an example of a situationist event, in which performed and recorded sound reveals and creates a constellation of relationships. Urban music, in the specific example of the Tonga Boys' songs, relates to rural *vimbuza*[22], but only indirectly (as it also has some resemblances with rhythmic arrangements of catholic gospel from Malawi). *Vimbuza* and urban music do not co-occur in one sound environment. The practices of these two sound environments usually stand in contradiction to one another. For example, the performance of pop music requires control over its flow: i.e. through a tracklist (as the Tonga Boys intended). On the contrary, *vimbuza* works through the suspension of human subjectivity, as in the uncontrolled (or rather controlled by non-human forces) dance. The most important difference for my interlocutors from the city was the presence of *vimbuza* spirits, who are supposed to be the opposite of the Holy Spirit. The performers, however, rarely conceptualize the relationships between these different sound environments. It is anthropologists who make a claim for the insights to be gained by comparative reflection. The possibility of the interplay between *vimbuza* and urban music was perhaps animated by this need of comparison; but it was also the result of a co-operation between anthropologist and performers, of their "alliance" for knowledge (Turkle 2008, 7–8).

20 During the same night, I continued recordings and registered, with Doctor Msowoya's permission, a few dozen *vimbuza* themes performed in a ritual context. Audio recording Tonga Boys and Group Kanuska - Zaninge Kwa Yehova:
https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122009/Audio/WA308_152210_P366_Ethnography-Listenin_00002.mp3.

21 The other problem of key importance is the role of technology in the recording process. Because of the limited space and the fact that I addressed this topic elsewhere (Cichocki 2019), I can only list some of the most important aspects. Among them are the issues of control over and through technology; the differences in understanding the role of technology between the ethnographer and other people participating in the situation; the role of technological devices as provocateurs; last not least the question of what elements failed to be registered due to the limits of the technological inscription.

22 In the eighties, Friedson observed *vimbuza* rituals in the centre of Mzuzu (Friedson 1994). 25 years later I participated in them, at best, hidden in the suburbs, or more openly in smaller towns and villages.

The meeting of the Tonga Boys and the people of Doctor Msowoya enabled the emergence of a new sound happening. It was both ephemeral as an action and documented as a recording. The registration of this musical performance provoked, therefore, an experimental combination of several environments: Mzuzu city, *vimbuza* villages and global data networks.

The first of these environments was Mzuzu city, or more specifically its poorer districts where the Tonga Boys lived. As demonstrated in the previous section on the arrangement of Tonga Boys' songs, the city sound and city life emerge in them from a combination of varied elements. The band members, feeling nostalgia for rural life, played music that modified motifs from the villages of the Nkhata Bay district. This nostalgia combines with an amalgam of objects and styles to build a noisy, multilayered sound environment.

The villages around Enukweni and Katula formed the second environment. This space is marked by the thunderous drums that accompany the *vimbuza*. There, *vimbuza* is an almost everyday vehicle which links together the domains of music, dance, intangible beings, dreams, medicine, botany and people. In local practice, they are entangled in the spiritual sound environment of *vimbuza*.

Thirdly, the performance from the thempili of Doctor Msowoya also relates to the virtual environment formed by digital infrastructures of data distribution. Earlier, I described this environment using the term "repository". As mentioned above, we can understand the repository as a cumulative data storehouse (like the Internet). This storehouse is subdivided into such categories as music and entertainment or scientific recordings and papers. The sound recordings and academic analysis of that night's events will be located in these virtual environments. This process will separate the effects from the momentum of the performance. In the virtual environment, the sound becomes a file, but this file has a potential of evoking an imaginary shape and meaning of the event.

Furthermore, this event also explained how *vimbuza* was perceived, felt and performed by migrants from villages who had gone to look for "greener pastures" (as they say in Malawi) in the city, and by a newcomer from Europe[23]. Yet, the situation also gave me the no less important question of how the records produced during ethnographic research can be recontextualized by people practising *vimbuza* in the Malawian village or by dwellers of poor city suburbs. Hence, this is a narrative about a convergence of multiple practices and methods to produce meaning in performance, initiated by the technological practice of sound recording.

23 The question of how *vimbuza* is understood and felt by listeners and reviewers from Europe or the United States approaching the albums of the Tonga Boys and shortly also by the Kanuska Msowoya Drummers adds another thread to this connection.

METHODOLOGIES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC LISTENING AND RECORDING

The above remarks point to the relationship between people (inhabitants or strangers – ethnographers) and their sound environment. The aforementioned cases question also the documentary role of listening to and recording social practices. Following Marcus Banks, I assume that what we perceive as documentation is neither innocuous nor transparent (Banks 2001, 115). On the contrary, listening and recording are performative and, most of all, entangled in social relationships. Moreover, they are always localized and related to specific sound environments. The way we organize these practices rearranges the fieldwork, redefining its spatiality and scope. Moreover, the cases I described are not cut and paste formulas of fieldwork procedures. I have rather described multidimensional happenings that have in common a sensitivity of listening and a willingness to take action in line with the flow of social life (or also against it, if this happens in cooperation with local others).

At the same time, the interval between the recording of the Chibavi street sound and the ephemeral performance of *vimbuza* reveals something more. It suggests a transition: from attempts to monitor objectively to an interspersed practice of listening and recording. The ethnographic subject gradually shifts from listening to a landscape to listening through the environment. The first steps of the research constituted a situation of listening not inscribed in local social relations. At this point, I was attempting to apprehend the general "shape" of a given scene. Subsequently, I entered into a system of relationships in which I began to lose perspective[24]. In so doing, I gained confidence in tracking my interlocutors and finding newly comprehended possibilities of acquiring emerging knowledge. As such, I would describe my general methodological attitude as a movement. This approach finds its inspiration in a range of anthropological concepts, such as "traces" (Derrida 1996), "lines" (Ingold 2007), and "grains" (Stoler 2009), which concern both substantiality and embodiment. Hence, the methodological proposition of reflexive listening and recording corresponds with the core paradigms of anthropology. It seeks other forms of knowledge about diverse social worlds and the connections between them. I argue that attentive listening and recording offer a variant of ethnographic subjectivity, in which perception, the body and their technological extensions unlock new possibilities of understanding.

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24 I argue that the questioning of perspective might be a positive practice, that is a potential critique of the hegemonic oculocentric model.

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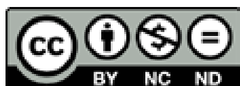

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COLLECTING SOUNDS. ONLINE SHARING OF FIELD RECORDINGS AS CULTURAL PRACTICE

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Field recording is a sound practice that gains increasingly more popularity nowadays. We can observe effects of this practice in two contexts: 1. On the websites dedicated to digital sound production; 2. During the activities accompanying various artistic, cultural and educational events. I consider the first context in which I participate as a fieldrecordist, who uses sound recording as a non-visual method of (audio) anthropology. The goal of this article is to look into the field recording as a category of socio-cultural practice related to the technological development and growing significance of sound production, and more generally, to the global process of sounding the western, mainly urban, culture.
Websites dedicated to audio recordings are used to publish and share sounds collected by tourists and other travellers, who catch sounds in the same way as they take photographs. These recordings are brought from exotic vacations, business trips, sightseeing tours, or sentimental journeys. Analysis of field recording practices encourages a broader reflection on the status of sounds, why some of them are audible and others are not, how new technologies influence the processes of democratisation of senses and raise public awareness of the importance of acoustic space. Moreover, tourist field recording enable us to take a closer look at the stereotypical hearing and listening processes, as well as the cultural mechanisms of exoticising non-European/non-urban soundscapes.

KEYWORDS: field recording, audioanthropology, sound technology, digital anthropology, cultural pratice

A French composer from suburban Paris creating music for a theatre, who commutes to work by train every day; an American drummer traveling around the islands of Indonesia; an ethnology student fascinated with industrial music, who lives in the suburbs of Barcelona; an admirer of hiking in the wild places of the US; an Australian, the founder of Trans Industrial Toy Orchestra, who lives with his grandparents in Oldenburg; an Italian musician from Parma on vacation in Zadar; a Dutch manager in medialab in Amsterdam, living in Rotterdam, involved in sound projects in Switzerland, who went on holiday to the Canary Islands; a font designer from Brazil who occasionally records ambiences of Santos for a company from Israel; a Finnish internist who travels more than 600km to enjoy his inherited cottage in the countryside; an

American graphic designer and amateur anthropologist from Boise in Idaho, who loves listening to people's stories; a Hawaiian admirer of electromechanical sirens; an American tourist who got lost on a housing estate in Rio de Janeiro; a Dutch professor of the history of electronic music strolling through a church garden in the centre of Florence; an English radio journalist from York; an IT specialist from Greenville, who works at home; a sound artist from Berlin, who teaches in Seoul; a European citizen currently living in Belgium, realizing sound and musical projects in Asia; a Dutch journalist doing a story on the tsunami devastation in Bangladesh; a Polish sound technician providing sound systems for various events throughout the whole country; a German biology teacher on a trip with his students; a Canadian soccer fan temporarily living in Genoa; an English Jew on a trip to Israel; a Hollywood resident involved in citizen journalism; a documentary filmmaker from Denmark dealing with a movie project in Delhi; an English tourist in Africa for the first time; an Australian who got married in Cuba.

What connects these people? Each of them is a collector of sounds. They are field recordists – more or less professionals – gathered around an Internet collaborative repository of sounds that gives the possibility to reuse the sounds released under Creative Commons licenses[1]. In other words, they are representatives of an online community of people who make, share, distribute and remix field recordings; a community which believes in the idea of free culture (Lessig 2004; Fitzgerald 2007) that promotes the freedom to distribute and modify creative works in the form of free or open content by using the Internet and other forms of media[2]. From the anthropological point of view, such a movement emerging around field recording can be considered as an example of a cultural practice (Choe and Ko 2015).

1 Creative Commons is an American non-profit organization devoted to expanding the range of creative works available for others to build upon legally and to share. The organization has released several copyright licenses, known as Creative Commons licenses, free of charge to the public. These licenses allow creators to communicate which rights they reserve and which rights they waive for the benefit of recipients or other creators. They replace the individual negotiations for specific rights between copyright owner (licensor) and licensee, which are necessary under „all rights reserved" copyright management, with „some rights reserved" management employing standardized licenses for re-use, wherein no commercial compensation is sought by the copyright owner. The first set of copyright licenses was released in December 2002. See: https://creativecommons.org/ (accessed 10.07.2017).

2 The free culture movement has objections towards over-restrictive copyright laws. It argues that such laws hinder creativity and calls for a permission culture system. The movement, with its ethos of free exchange of ideas, is aligned with the free and open source software movement. Today, the term stands for many other movements, including open access (OA) culture, remix culture, hacker culture, the access to knowledge movement, Open Source Learning, the copyleft movement and the public domain movement.

Field recording is a sound practice that nowadays is gaining more popularity. I am myself a field recordist who uses sound recording as a non-visual method of (audio) anthropology (Stanisz 2012a; 2012b, 99–111; 2014, 305–318; 2017, 1–19), but one who also looks into field recording as a category of socio-cultural practices related to the technological development and growing significance of sound production, or more generally, to the global process of sounding western culture. There are hundreds of websites dedicated to audio recordings (audio snippets, samples, bleeps, sound effects, field recordings) that make it possible to publish, share and reuse sounds that are very often collected by tourists and other travellers who catch sounds in the same way as they take photographs (see Cusack 2012)[3]. These recordings are gathered from different places: as part of exotic tours, business trips, sightseeing or just sentimental journeys. The example of field recording practices encourages a broader reflection on the status of sounds: why some of them are audible and others are not; and how new technologies influence the process of the democratization of the senses and raise public awareness of the importance of acoustic space. Moreover, the phenomenon of tourist field recording makes it possible to take a closer look at stereotypical hearing and listening, as well as at the cultural mechanisms of exoticizing non-European or non-urban soundscapes.

Practising field recording is not pure and free of, often unconscious, processes essentializing a given cultural context (see Wyness 2008). Field recording is sometimes an ideologized and discursive activity. In social and humanities' studies, it is related to the concept of soundscape, which refers not only to urban, rural, public, household, natural and mechanical sounds (Schafer 1977), but also to sounds composed, created and recorded by people, such as musicians, artists, journalists, archivists, phonographers, folklorists, sociologists and anthropologists, with the help of various technologies (Truax 1996, 49–65; 2008, 103–109; 2012, 1–9). As a sonic type of landscape, a soundscape doubtlessly undergoes processes of aesthetic or symbolic valuation and branding. Thus, its production, registration, manipulation and the creation of the forms in which it is represented belong to different discursive practices, which can be social, institutional, religious, scientific and artistic. The interest in experiencing the world acoustically has grown since more and more sounds started being produced due to industrialization, and has intensified in tandem with the emergence of IT processes, the development of multi-channel communication and the digitization of basically everything in complex societies (Choe and Ko 2015; Lin 2015, 187–197).

On the one hand, the unlimited possibilities to reproduce, archive, manipulate and distribute sounds offered by technology and the media have caused the traditional

3 One of the most popular tools for disseminating field recordings are sound maps. See the Internet platform "Sound Cartography", which offers a review of over 70 global sound maps: https://soundcartography.wordpress.com/ (accessed on 02.08.2018).

boundaries between sound and music to disintegrate. This blurring of boundaries has led to new acoustic practices coming to life that create new cultural and auditive knowledge and identity systems. On the other hand, we can observe a phenomenon of the acoustic aestheticization of life (daily activities, consumption, knowledge) and of sound itself, which can be exemplified by field recordings that enclose a fragmented reality in sound postcards, samples, soundtracks or subjective mental maps. What this brings about is an intensive discursification of sound awareness and acoustic experience, which hyperbolizes the sense of hearing and contrasts it with visuality.

Something is happening with sound, and not only in terms of scientific, academic or artistic communities. The process of increasingly appreciating sound and a more pronounced acoustic awareness has to be connected to the development of technologies enabling people to register sounds. It was at the end of the 19th century when the phonograph was invented, and from the outset this technology was used by researchers to study musical and spoken folklore. However, in my opinion, field recording in its non-scientific, non-academic version appeared only when the possibility to share, i.e. to distribute and remix one's field recordings was developed on a large scale. The field recording boom is, therefore, not so much a matter of the appearance of increasingly sophisticated, easy-to-use, portable recording equipment (recorders and microphones), as it is a product of the development of Internet websites, such as Web 2.0 created after 2001, which are solely based on the content generated by Internet users (O'Reilly 2005; Lin 2015, 187–197).

Thus, the history of field recording and its modes of use is a history of the appearance and development of sound registering technologies, and only in this context can it be accurately described (Caughie 2010, 91–109). It is complicated to analyze the history of using field recording as a scientific method of creating audio data, because from the very beginning it was simultaneously applied in different scientific disciplines, as well in as various music and music-related artistic trends.

The idea of field recording involves making sound recordings (whether they are analogue, digital, musical or non-musical) in the so-called field, far away from the recording studio, in conditions that are somewhat unpredictable. However, perceiving field recording as the mere registration of sounds from the world around us does not exhaust the contemporary understanding of this notion. For this term also covers the art of the manipulation of field recordings, e.g. their editing and contextual use, which deprives them of their purity and objectivity. Field recordings should always be perceived as involved in the context both of their creation and of their distribution. Both the practice of registering sounds and the impacts of the sounds thus made available are conditioned by history, culture, society, politics and the environment. Recording is thus an activity whose inherent components are verification, analysis and interpretation, and whose history is not only the history of evolution of recording equipment and the techniques of using it, but also that of the history of listening and hearing (Sterne 2003).

Generally, field recordings can be divided into two categories: natural sounds (e.g. animal or ocean sounds, forest whispers, wind blowing) and sounds generated by people (e.g. street traffic, public places, construction machines, all types of vocal and bodily sounds). They are described as phonographic, a term which indicates their analogy to the socio-cultural function and role of photography. This type of recording outside the studio initially appeared as additional documentation created during field work (ethnographic, musicological, linguistic or geographic) and during the production of sound effects in cinematography. At the beginning, the recordings of natural sounds were used mainly in documentaries, and only later did they gain not only commercial, but also symbolic and scientific significance. Among the main factors contributing to changing the way non-music sounds were perceived should certainly be counted the activity of the famous composer of silence John Cage and the work of Alvin Lucier, who in the 1960s was already creating sound installations.

Technological development, especially in terms of improving sound quality, brought about more and more compact recorders. As a result, field recordings became a separate genre: something in between alternative music, avant-garde, experimental, ambient or musique concrète. Recordings were used more and more intensively by scientists and researchers. Field recording understood as the registration of atmosphere types (ambiences) which are supposed to reflect the acoustic character of a given place, its special quality and dynamics, has developed since the end of the 19th century. However, it gained popularity as late as in the 1970s through a series of soundscapes with birds singing, rain falling, waves crashing or leaves rustling on trees, called "Environments", created by Irv Teibel from 1969 to 1979. These published recordings were an immediate hit on the market, making Teibel the person who introduced the sounds of nature to the public (Ballard 2018).

Field recordings also comprise monaural or stereophonic recordings of vocal and music folklore registered in various folk-creating contexts, the history of which goes back to the 1930s. Field recording in this sense is mainly made and presented within the domain of ethnomusicology, where from the very beginning it was used as a way of documenting musical and extramusical voice performances. Pioneers in this area were Charles Seeger and John Lomax (Porterfield 1996; Yung and Rees 1999). Moreover, the role of field recordings and field recording activities in arts should not be overlooked, especially when it comes to the development of ambient music or musique concrète, whose main pioneer, both in terms of theory and practice, was Pierre Schaeffer. In this discussion, we also should not leave out Raymond Murray Schafer – the author of the influential transdisciplinary concept of soundscape. Since his pioneering work in the 1960s (Schafer 1977), soundscape research has evolved into a multidisciplinary field (Raimbault and Dubois 2005, 339–350). The methods and ideas developed in Schafer's multidisciplinary approach to the relations between sounds and society have inspired a variety of fields, including cultural history of sounds,

qualitative research on the sonic environment and acoustic communication (Uimonen and Kytö 2008, 15–21). Soundscape research seeks to understand how sounds, both from natural and human-made sources, "can be used to understand the coupled nature-human dynamics across different spatial and temporal scales" (Pijanowski et al. 2011, 1213–1232). In particular, recording and listening to various sounds is an important area of soundscape research (Kang 2006). One of the major goals of researching these practices is to engage in the notion of "care for the sonic environment" through "listening with care" (Westerkamp 1974, 18–27; 2000, 7–13), which may constitute "a tending to the soul that resides in nature as well as in human beings" (Moore 1992, 270). As such, this body of work draws upon acoustic ecology and seeks to improve the quality of a soundscape. While this is an important area in soundscape research, I consider the strand of work that examines the social and cultural environment shaping our perceptions of sounds (Kang 2006) more relevant to my study in this article. In particular, I draw upon three perspectives from this area of my work. The first is that of the efforts made to map soundscapes; the second is the discussions around and practices of listening to landscapes, usually in an artistic context; and the third is that of examining the production of soundscapes as a social and cultural practice. These three fields are related, pointing to the importance of examining the fluidity and hybridity of soundscapes, and their relations with the environment and society (Lin 2015, 187–197).

More or less at the beginning of the 21st century, field recording took on a more social aspect and became one of the most important audio phenomena on various mushrooming websites gathering people active in the music industry. These websites provide the opportunity to share sounds: from single, autonomous and invoked sounds to (more often) elements of whole soundscapes. In 2006, I became interested in the communities which were formed around those websites, and I started my first attempts at registering sounds in the field. As a result, I have been doing field recording for 12 years, since conducting elective classes at the AMU Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Poznań called "City Project: Space, Activities, Presence." These were aimed at creating alternative maps of Poznań city centre. On the basis of the knowledge that I had gathered till then and a small, far from perfect, collection of sound recordings, I created "Soundmap – an alternative map of Poznań[4]". This mini-project consisted of a situational floating through the streets of Poznań and listening

4 In 2009, on the basis of the gathered recordings, a miniature sound map of Poznań was created as a part of a more comprehensive Internet project PalimpsestMaps. The project was carried out as a part Urban Legend Art in the Public Space Festival organized by Academy of Fine Arts in Poznań (today the University of Arts). It was available on the Internet until May 2018. Its homepage was archived in March 2018 in the Internet Archive, Wayback Machine: https://web.archive.org/ (accessed on 09.08.2018).

attentively to the sounds they were generating. Initially, this task was not easy, as it was accompanied by a feeling of walking aimlessly and recording ordinary and typical sounds of everyday life. This is why my first recordings were of music in public spaces: a street busker and a brass band. This shows that the sounds I found interesting were not from normal daily life, but rather were somewhat exotic in the acoustic environments of the city. However, it soon turned out that the general ambience was mainly about the everyday buzz, drones and screeches of the streets. This small sound collection led me in 2009 to a community gathered around a non-commercial Internet sound repository called The Freesound[5]. The project was launched in 2005 as an initiative of the Music Technology Group, a part of the Audiovisual Institute (Department of Information and Communication Technology) of Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. MTG is an interdisciplinary group which conducts research concerning sound processes; it also studies descriptions of the content of musical compositions, interactive sound systems, music and sound perception, and technologies connected to music social networks.

The sounds are shared in accordance with Creative Commons licenses, and as a result they can be used freely and by anyone. On The Freesound, one can search for sounds using keywords, upload and download sounds and communicate with representatives of the sound art community. Field recordings uploaded to the repository have to be tagged, geotagged (with a clear indication of the place of origin) and described in detail (what this sound is, its context, date and time of recording, etc.). In 2017, more than four million users were registered on the website. The most active user has uploaded almost 38,000 sounds and the website as a whole contains more than 381,000 sounds[6].

In 2009, there were not so many field sounds. This is why I was able to listen to most of them. Though they were localized and described, they seemed to me out of context. I was curious why the people recording them chose and decided to share those particular sounds and not others. At the same time, I was interested who the people recording them were; so I did some research in the area of digital ethnography. I chose almost 50 field recordings – ambiences registered on each continent, in different cultural contexts. The choice was not arbitrary, but it was definitely far from the methodologies used in the social sciences. For me, the key issue was the technical aspects: I chose the recordings with the highest quality (shared in the form of uncompressed audio files), whose duration was long enough to feel the character of a given place.

5 https://freesound.org/ (accessed on 02.08.2018).
6 https://freesound.org/ (accessed on 02.08.2018), https://blog.freesound.org/ (accessed on 02.08.2018), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freesound (accessed on 02.08.2018), https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/freesound.org (accessed on 02.08.2018).

Then I contacted their authors asking for additional information. I talked to some of them by email or Skype. This is how I learnt where they came from, how mobile they were, what they did for a living, why they were in the places whose sounds they registered, why they did those recordings and why they decided to share them.

> "(…) Recording sounds is very exciting, finding the right place at the best moment. It's like taking art pictures (…) I have always a recorder in my bag. I record like others take photographs. For my job and for pleasure too." [Arnaud/*arnaud coutancier*][7]

> "I love recording sounds. I do it everywhere (…) I'm slowly building a sound archive. Generally, I wouldn't say recording is anything more than collecting sounds for music. I always have Edirol on me, regardless of where I'm going, why and what for. I'm particularly sensitive and responsive to sounds. Generally, I'm interested in those sounds which I know will disappear." [Baruch/*gottlieb*]

> "(…) I travel owing to music and sound projects, and while travelling I either collect sounds or use them later in music. I like collecting sounds, because they express much more than a photograph or a video. When I'm in a city, I like rambling around, just to find some unexpected sounds." [C-drík/*cdrk*]

Most of the field recordings which led me to meeting their authors were stereotypical: in the countryside, they were natural sounds and in the cities, the sounds of traffic flow (opposition countryside/city = silence/noise = hi-fi/lo-fi). Thus, they reflected some stereotypical audio impressions: in tropical forests, recording cicadas or exotic birds is a must; as are muezzin calls in the Middle East; the French language in France; religious elements of the soundscape in Central and Eastern Europe; street fairs, bicycles and traffic chaos (specific traffic sounds dominated by cars honking) in South-East Asia; water in the Pacific Islands, and in the world outside Europe – music folklore (traditional singing and the sound of musical instruments). Generally speaking, regardless of the location, the sounds deemed worth recording are usually either exotic ones or typical sounds reflecting the character and atmosphere of a given place. What is often collected are ambiences from the most popular tourist sites or traditional events related to some yearly customs.

Intense cicada – Quesada Gigas – ambience from Catamarca[8]

7 In the text every effort has been made to retain the punctuation, spelling and grammar of the original sources, i.e. e-mails from my research partners. Some minor alterations have been made in cases where errors made the quotations difficult to read.

8 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00001.wav.

Most importantly, these are recordings made by representatives of European-American culture, mostly (white) middle-class males, characterized by (tourist and professional) mobility. Therefore, field recordings often contain sounds heard from the tourist's perspective, which makes them somewhat akin to sound postcards or souvenirs (see Bijsterveld and van Dijck 2009). More often than not, they are actually a kind of additional outcome of professional work and are usually made by traditional musicians, DJs, electronic music producers, sound directors, reporters, IT specialists, artists, scientists and film makers. They might also be gathered for various sound art or scientific projects, usually interdisciplinary in nature, whose aim is to document and maintain the sound tapestry of cities and the environment. Such projects almost always have an Internet version, usually in the form of sound maps. Sometimes, these field recording projects or private collections are connected with other Internet spaces, such as YouTube or Vimeo videos, Soundcloud compositions, blogs, other websites, etc.

A street in downtown Delhi[9]

Field recording understood as a cultural practice has a multifaceted nature: it can be perceived from different perspectives and interpreted in many different ways. Firstly, such a practice can be looked upon from the point of view of postcolonial studies and interpreted as rooted in the colonial trend of collecting elements of non-western and exotic folklore. From outset, field recording was aimed at creating collections. As was the case with the 17th century trend for collecting material things, the trend of collecting sounds is also politically-marked and ideologically-grounded (Edmondson 2016, 30–32). This is why field recording is a product of activities that are socially-conditioned as well as of subjective experiences. It is thus necessary to analyze this interest in objects in a wider socio-historical context, as exotically-sounding records brought from Asia, Africa, Australasia or South America can be equated with trophies and souvenirs.

Water lap from South East Misool Island off West Papua[10]

9 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00002.wav.
10 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00003.wav.

"This was on this huge market Kikar Shabat in Jerusalem. I was on holiday in Israel during a Jewish Festival called Sukkot. I live in England and I'm a Jew. I was in the market to buy lulav and estrog. It was a huge traditional festive fair opened a week after Sukkot. It was my first trip to Israel since I was a teenager. There was bustle, a lot of Jews. I recorded this sound, because I wanted to have a souvenir, to keep this experience of this bustle and hubbub". [Mike/*Sparrer*][11]

"I am a journalist myself, working for a public radio and television in the Netherlands. As a radio reporter I visited Bangladesh just after the cyclone Sidr hit the coastal area in November 1997 (…) I travelled to the islands on a boat. On that boat were two boatmen and one of them started singing while we were sailing. As I geotagged this song you can see exactly where it was. I was staying at that time in Pirojpur, took a taxi to the river and got a boat. A long tall typical motorboat. It was a journey of three-quarters of an hour during which he sang two songs." [Jeroen/*zeshoog*][12]

"I was on vacation in Mala, living in a self-catering holiday cottage, together with my girlfriend (we're together for 11 years now), recovering from a heavy workload in the second half of 2008. We were sitting outside, probably sipping a beer, when we heard the sound of bells approaching. Stepping on the stones that enclose the little forecourt of the cottage, we could just see the goat herd being driven by. I dashed for my R09 (recording equipment) to get that impression – but too slowly too late, it seemed, the herd had disappeared and with it the sound. When I was about to pack my R09 again the sound appeared to come back, so I dashed down the driveway, just in time to see the herd pass, and then I followed it a couple of hundred meters, walking behind the herd, trying not to breathe or make stepping sounds, eventually, when dogs started barking and a car approached from behind, I stopped and let the goats go on, the car passes, honks ... and I cut the recording and walk back to the cottage." [Peter/*ptroxler*][13]

Field recording is also a cultural practice, which contributes to a democratization of the senses and to appreciating the sound image of certain places. It substitutes or complements the visual experience of the world (See: Stoller 1989; Classen 1993; Seremetakis 1994; Synnott, Classen and Howes 1994). As a form borrowed from

11 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00004.wav.
12 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00005.wav.
13 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00006.mp3.

cultural phenomena and most of all, as a tool of preserving and documenting them, it has been practiced since the end of the 19th century, first in social studies, which themselves developed more or less simultaneously with the invention of the phonograph – a technology allowing for sound registration (Caughie 2010, 91–92). This invention brought about new listening practices and firmly established a special modernistic involvement in sound. Field recording at the turn of the 20th century was technologically limited (recorders were large, carriers were ineffective and the recording quality was low) and was characterized by very defined substantive restrictions (Brady 1999). Moreover, it had nothing to do with soundscape registration. At the time, field recording was mainly used for documenting folklore, so the recordings contained mainly vocals and music.

One of the examples of early field recording, in this case from American anthropology, is the sound documentation of Native American folklore compiled by Franz Boas, whose first sound records were created at the turn of the 20th century. A sound recording collection gathered in the Robert Lowie Anthropology Museum in Berkeley is also worth mentioning. The oldest samples there were registered on wax-coated cardboard cylinders in 1900 (Keeling 1991). Collecting field records of folklore in the USA gained popularity in the 1930s, when the Works Progress Administration was established, which supervised and supported the Federal Writers Project. A folklore section was one of the parts of this project. Its task was to conduct field research on folklore, an important aspect of which was to focus on registering the sounds of traditional songs, music and stories.

The reason why I mention the collecting nature of the beginnings of field recording is that it reflects a long-standing understanding of sound in anthropology. Until the end of the 1980s, when the theoretical and methodological foundations of the democratization of the senses were developed, only sounds that were connected to music or, in a wider sense, to folklore were deemed worth registering, documenting and distributing. Only then did the anthropology of sound, standing in a way in opposition to the anthropology of music, resign from artificially separating musical and non-musical (environmental, mechanical and non-vocal) sounds (Feld 1990). As a result, it connected acoustic manifestations of social life with their cultural, historically conditioned meanings and became interested in the social dimension of sound creation – its sources, causal dynamics and reception – searching for answers to the questions of who has the right to produce and manifest certain sounds, what is audible and who is predestined to listen. It is in this context that the modern form of field recording appeared.

Field recording is a practice which can also be analyzed in the context of collective or individual, subjective memory. Usually it has some emotional background and is connected with sentimental feelings: with nostalgia and a longing for the old days, for long-gone landscapes or for past activities and situations.

"The place where I did record the sound "saunan lämmitys" is our family's summerhouse. My father bought it year 1955. He was born nearby in Virojoki village in 1911 and passed away in 2003. As you know Sauna a is very relaxing and important thing to Finns. We like the warm and silence of sauna atmosphere and heating the sauna is almost religious to us. For me it is remembering moments I spent with my dead father and other relatives. I am 56 years old internist and living 600 km away from that place but still I visit there for about 2 months yearly." [Timo/*timofei*][14]

"I was the class teacher at that time. It was a class trip, usually organized near the end of the schoolterm in summer. The pupils went there by bike to have a barbecue at the sandy banks of the river Rhine near Dusseldorf. The landscape around is mostly dominated by agriculture and glasshouse cultures. You find a mixture of former villages nowadays completely suburbanized. The population finds jobs in the nearby urban centers like Dusseldorf, Neuss and other big cities. The reason why I recorded the scene is simply because I am interested in collecting sounds in general by doing recordings in different surroundings like nature, cities and everything between. My memories about the event are that it was a relaxing and funny atmosphere, which is not always the case while teaching in a classroom" [Reinhard/*reinsamba*][15]

"The sound comes from a meadow in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California. The meadow is at an elevation of 2400 meters near a mountain named Olancha Peak, which is 3700 meters in altitude. I have a group of friends with which I backpack (trek) into the mountains. Our goal was to spend some time in the mountains and hike to the top of Olancha Peak (…) By the time we reached the meadow, we were in a forest and there was still snow on the ground in some places. We took the trip in June of 2006. The Sierra Nevada Mountains are a large mountain range. Much of the range is protected by national parks or preserved areas we call 'wilderness areas' (…) I have been backpacking for nearly 40 years and I will hopefully continue with this challenging activity for 40 years more! Many of my friends are much younger than I am and it gives me much satisfaction to be able to have as much or more stamina for this activity than they have! When we are on these trips, we hike up peaks, catch fish, drink some whiskey around campfires and enjoy our time in the beautiful solitude. My memories of this trip were of the steep, hot hike from the desert to the cool meadow; the overall beauty of the nature, the absolute solitude of our campsite near the meadow; the strenuous hike to the top of Olancha Peak; the camaraderie of my friends; and, of course the sound of the frogs in the meadow. The frog sounds were

14 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00007.wav.
15 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00008.wav.

astounding to me and I would listen in awe of the creature's instinctual desire to reproduce and continue the existence of their kind. Surely there were different species in the meadow for some of the frog sounds were different than others. The sounds only occurred after the Sun went down for the evening. I stood next to the creek in the meadow and recorded the sounds using my digital camera." [Peter/*plentz1960*][16]

Finally, field recording is a cultural practice which tells a lot about knowledge distribution modules (field recordings are after all a type of field knowledge) – about how knowledge is distributed and shared, opening endless possibilities of verification, use and also manipulation. Such a community as the one belonging to The Freesound is a great example of such a cultural practice. Field recordings in the project have free licenses, which allow for their unlimited use. In this way, for example, the Polish countryside ambience may become a part of a soundtrack for a computer game, a theatre play, a background of a university lecture, it may be mixed into a musical piece, etc.

"It was recorded on Sunday, morning of the 28th of September as some of the slower runners of the Berlin Marathon made it past Torstrasse near my flat. I was out to buy some bread for breakfast, but I usually bring a camera and my Edirol R-1 recorder whenever I go out. Since I was freshly returned to Berlin I guess I was sensitive to the more antiquated sounds which still survive there, like that of the organ grinder. I am generally interested in how human beings are replacing the presence of Nature with an artificial environment made entirely by human hands (and thus far more understandable, it is hoped). In this new Human Nature, the sounds of Nature are also Human made. I write about these things, but I also use the sounds in my videos and my interactive and generative media work, so generally I am wandering around building up my archive of media documents for use as material in future works." [Baruch/*gottlieb*][17]

"I'm something of an untrained, unofficial cultural anthropologist myself. I have a business interviewing people to capture their personal histories. I'm always interested how people fit into their world and how they affect their world. I'm a graphic designer who works in the same building as the printing presses that I recorded. I walk past the presses every day on my way to talk to the folks in the prepress department. I'm on friendly but not drinking terms with the pressmen. I'm a friend with the prepress manager. Three Heidelberg presses are installed side by side in an open warehouse-like room. The presses are about twenty feet long and about five feet high. With their series of four humps or mounds where each printing cylinder is located, the presses remind one of giant, gray, mechanical caterpillars. Each press has a cyan cylinder,

16 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00009.wav.
17 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00010.mp3.

a magenta cylinder, a yellow cylinder and a black cylinder – so the humps are brightly colored. The presses are well lit by banks of fluorescent lights hanging from the ceiling over each press. When you walk into the press room you hear the sound of rock music blaring from a boom box radio mixed with the general din of the presses. It is only when you walk up to a press like I did for the recordings that you really start to hear the individual strains of clicking, clacking and mechanical, syncopated chattering. When I made my recordings I was intrigued by the subtle variations in the sounds produced by these machines that aren't apparent when you first walk through the door. The pressmen were kind enough to allow me to walk right up to the presses and poke my microphone quite close to the rotating press cylinders. I use a Danish Pro Audio microphone about the size of a pencil eraser. An extremely sensitive mic with the capacity for capturing loud sounds such as the presses up close. Rotating the mic to one side or the other focused on the unique sounds coming from one cylinder or the other." [Kevin/*KMerrell*][18]

"I made the recording because I am an amateur recording engineer and also work for a radio station. At the time, I was researching for a religious programme, for the radio and by pure chance and good luck, I was in the centre of York at the time the street preacher was there. I am building up a personal library of 'ambient sounds' to use on various radio shows as 'sound effects'. The recording was taken outside St Helen's Church in St Helen's Square, in the centre of York. There was a fairly large crowd walking about, shopping. It was a Saturday. Some people were standing and listening to the man, some were mocking him, others didn't even notice. It was a sunny day, with a slight wind. St Helen's square is a large 'meeting place' for people with seats, flowers and usually musicians. I live in the centre of York and hear a lot of very interesting sounds there, everything from busking musicians, to many foreign languages, church bells, animals and much more. I really liked the recording of the preacher as it is quite clear that he passionately believes what he is saying. He was unaware that I was recording him. I wish I had captured his whole sermon. He, and other members of his church visit the centre of York quite often, and preach there. I don't know the name of his church." [Jools/*vedas*][19]

Field recording as an act of actively listening to surroundings in an open, exploratory way changes how we think about sound, music productions and the world as a whole. But what are we specifically talking about when we say "field recording"? The earliest examples of this practice were colonial powers documenting their subjects to aid Western people understand the world. Access to recordings of non-Western music in particular had a profound influence on music in the 20th century; but this

18 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00011.wav.
19 https://rcin.org.pl/Content/122015/Audio/WA308_152211_P366_Collecting-Sounds_00012.mp3.

is a story intimately associated with exploitation since many key early recordings are connected to state institutions or private foundations.

Today, field recording has expanded into other contexts and when we use this notion, we can be referring to any number of things: measuring how human sounds affect the ecology of natural ecosystems; studying acoustic tourism, which is being recognized even as a separate industry; or considering how field recording is distributed and who is listening to it. It is important to take into account that the field is now virtual and its sounds inevitably tend to recur somewhere online. Sound engineer, Mark Smith, claims that the effects of field recordings might not even be audible and, in this sense, field recording is a way to manipulate how people feel about sounds in potentially profound ways (Smith 2016).

Field recording opens many perspectives because it is located at the intersection of several powerful forces, such as human perception, history, science and technology. The possibility of unlimited archiving and distribution of recorded sounds can be regarded as sonic journalism, based on the idea that all sounds, including non-speech, give information about places and events in a specific cultural context and that listening provides valuable insights, different from, but complimentary to, visual images and language. This does not exclude speech, but redresses the balance towards the relevance of other sounds. In practice, field recordings become the means to achieve this. They can, of course, be used in many ways. Sonic journalism occurs when field recordings are allowed appropriate space and time to be heard in their own right, when the focus is on their original factual and emotional content, and when they are valued for what they are rather than as source material for further work, as often is the case in sound art or music. The interpretation of sound benefits from the knowledge of context in the same way that captions and titles enhance photographs. However, field recordings convey far more than just basic facts. Spectacular or not, they also transmit a powerful sense of spatiality, atmosphere and timing, and this applies even when the technical quality is poor. These factors are key to our perception of place and movement, and so add substantially to our understanding of events and issues. They give a compelling impression of what it might actually be like to be there.

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https://freesound.org/people/gottlieb/sounds/61789/ (accessed 12.05.2020), page 137.
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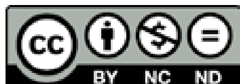

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ORTHODOXY, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY IN SOCIALIST AND POST-SOCIALIST POLAND

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Drawing on the analysis of the life trajectories of second and third generation Orthodox Belarusian farmers born in Poland (aged 50–70), this article discusses the interconnections between religion and economy by looking at the dynamic of the relationship between the socialist modernizing project and a religious identity considered as subaltern. It is argued that by downplaying the significance of religion in the public sphere, socialism made possible social mobility in this group and opened avenues to economic prosperity. The biographies of these farmers indicate a strong correlation between Orthodox identity and aspirations to leave their peasant roots behind and attain a high social status, which has often led to them prospering economically in the post-socialist period.

KEYWORDS: Orthodox, economic prosperity, Weber, post-socialist capitalism, subaltern, social mobility, socialist modernity

This article concerns the relationship between economy and religion as reflected in the life trajectories of Orthodox Belarusians living in Poland[1]. Weber's question concerning the relation between economy and religion has a long history in the social sciences, but – to the best of my knowledge – it has rarely been considered in the Orthodox context. I argue that there is a specific historicity of the concepts circulating in the scholarship tackling this issue, which contributes to an avoidance of the Eastern Christian perspective in the analysis. Instead, I propose a research-based theory-building approach enabling a revision of the dominant theoretical models. Such an approach

1 This article is based on the material collected during intermittent fieldwork in the Podlasie region in the years 2014–2017, as part of the project financed by NCN, DEC-2011/03/D/HS3/01620. Apart from participant observation, the method comprised of collection of life stories. Within the project on Orthodox economic decision-making, I collected around 30 biographies of Orthodox and Catholic inhabitants of the region.

has the potential to illuminate both the logic of the relationship between economic prosperity and religion as lived by a specific group in a specific period of time, and the ideologically constructed and conditional nature of the theoretical concepts we rely on. In this article, I ask what implications the salience of Orthodox identity within the Polish post-socialist capitalist economy has for definitions of "economic success". In particular, I would like to open the floor for a discussion about how to conceptualize the category of "economic prosperity" in non-capitalist settings like socialism? What is the logic in which post-socialist capitalisms are embedded?

HIERARCHICAL PLURALISM IN PODLASIE

Before I attend to the details of my argument, I begin with a story from the field which encapsulates the problem. Mrs. Zoja Stepaniukowa[2], aged 81, is an Orthodox believer from the Podlasie region in Poland. I was sitting in her living room, prepared for the initial interview opening my fieldwork in June 2014. I was able to meet her thanks to the acquaintances I had made earlier amongst Mrs. Stepaniukowa's daughter's Roman Catholic schoolmates. Bearing in mind all the social and scientific implications my regard for those local connections might have, I was very eager to make a good first impression. I had brought some sweets with me, which I had thought would be a nice addition to the tea Mrs. Stepaniukowa would serve. Mrs. Stepaniukowa refused to put them on the table, as if this undermined her image as a hospitable host, and instead served sweets she had baked herself. "They say it is 'second class' Poland here. Well, perhaps not necessarily" (*Mówią,* że *tu Polska 'B'. No, może niekoniecznie taka 'B'*), she said. As she introduced me to the details of her life, I learned about her childhood in a peasant family. She, her brother, parents, grandparents, and three uncles lived together in a single household in a village located some 30 kilometres from Supraśl. One of her grandmothers was a Roman Catholic. They were all peasants, and were poor but did not go hungry. It was the physical work of farming that was remembered as excruciating, in the same way for all neighbours alike, be they Catholics or Orthodox. Her parents were illiterate and thus "backward" (*zacofani*), as she put it. But, she said, her parents were also aware of this, so when a school was opened in the village at the beginning of the Second World War everyone saw this development as an opportunity.

However, the ways the school served the community, and specifically the family of Mrs. Stepaniukowa, were complicated. Her older brother, born in 1931, had already completed a year of schooling before the war and, because of this fact, was assigned to a Polish language class; Zoja, born in 1933, had not, and was sent to a Belarusian

2 All names are pseudonyms.

language class. In 1940 the Soviets came, and the language of instruction was changed to Russian. After the war, classes were held in both Russian and Belarusian. When she had completed two years, she was sent off to Supraśl to continue her education in a comprehensive school, in Polish. This was a dramatic change, as she had to learn this language and the Latin alphabet, everything from scratch. Yet, she was very ambitious, as proved by the fact that she was one of only three pupils who completed their fourth year with excellent results and was thus allowed to continue her education at the next level. While in general religion was suppressed by the communist authorities, in the school there was a religion class organized for Catholic children. The Orthodox children, including little Zoja, were welcome to stay quietly in the room and occupy themselves. She thought this was very good, because it helped her to get to know Polish prayers, and taught all the children to have respect for others.

Her parents arranged for her to live in Supraśl. Many of her classmates were from the surrounding villages. Some of them walked 10 kilometres every day, through swampy meadows and forests. The parents of others rented a room in exchange for food. The children had no shoes, and their school bags were made by hand from potato bags. But a point Mrs. Stepaniukowa made explicitly was that education was free, provided by the socialist state. Parents were obliged to contribute by providing food, but, as villagers, they did not see this as a problem. Later, Zoja finished a vocational secondary school as a seamstress, and still later she trained in an administrative school in Białystok – the central city of the region. As a result, she became an accountant, and this remained Mrs. Stepaniukowa's profession until retirement. During the early post-war years, the educational system underwent a series of structural reforms, which never discouraged her in her pursuits of a better tomorrow.

Thus, after the Second World War, Zoja, her brother, the seven sons of her widowed aunt and all her cousins were among the first generation of the local Belarusian population to receive formal education. All of them left their villages and their peasant families to become professionally trained soldiers, Orthodox priests, mechanics, carpenters, seamstresses, gardeners, state office workers, waitresses, foresters, shop assistants or took on other trade related positions while working and living in urban centres. Zoja has stayed in Supraśl to this today, although her brother emigrated to Warsaw and so have her children. They all appear to be doing very well, pursuing satisfying careers in the capital of Poland and visiting their grandmother from time to time.

While we were sitting and talking, the sounds of a popular Catholic song suddenly filled the air. I looked at Mrs. Stepaniukowa, a devout Orthodox believer, to see if this made any impression at all on her, but she just smiled ruefully saying that: "This is normal here." Nonetheless, during my stay in the field I could not help but detect an ongoing symbolic tension. Supraśl is a popular tourist destination. The showpiece here is the Orthodox (once Uniate) Monastery of the Annunciation, located on the outskirts of the town. Supraśl, and other picturesque settlements in the Podlasie region,

like Królowy Most, Sokółka and Tykocin, have functioned as pieces of scenery in several popular Polish television series and in this way have become embedded in the collective imagination as an idyllic land of cultural harmony. At the same time, in 2014, the aural landscape of this small, pastoral semi-urban settlement seems to be dominated by signs of the Catholic religion. One can hardly hear the bells from the monastery, but is constantly confronted with loud Catholic music, emitted three times a day from one of the two Roman Catholic churches in Supraśl. I was accompanied in the field by my mother, a middle-aged woman brought up in a small city in central Poland, and she found this "innocent" musical practice very enjoyable, affording her an opportunity of a sentimental return to her childhood. *Maryjo, Królowo Polski* (Mary, the Queen of Poland) or *Boże, coś Polskę* (God Save Poland) are some of the most popular Polish religious songs, and are imprinted in the minds of virtually all Poles who grew up in socialist Poland with the feeling that the church provides them with a sense of belonging to a national community. In provincial, multiethnic regions, however, these religious songs translate into ethnic anthems, which have a powerful effect on the symbolic balance between multiple local identities.

That there is a real tension here is highlighted by another fact I registered in the field. When I entered the premises of the local municipality – with a Catholic cross on visible display – to introduce myself and explain the aim of my visit – I received a discouraging answer from the local authorities, who suggested that I had picked the wrong place to study Orthodoxy: "There are no Orthodox in Supraśl. Maybe 10%." This statement refuses the Orthodox minority any significance and, in fact, shows that local religious diversity is not acknowledged. Moreover, the denial of the existence of minorities is supported by the two most serious institutional players: the Catholic Church and the city administration.

This phenomenon is described for other multicultural regions of Poland as "hierarchical pluralism" (Pasieka 2015), a term denoting a configuration of social relations which allows plurality, while at the same time establishing one (ethnic/religious) group as dominant and norm-defining. In other words, expressions of pluralism do not only hide real power relations, they also become a way for the majority to exercise symbolic power. Pasieka argues that the foundation of hierarchical pluralism is the normativity of the idea of the "Pole-Catholic", which is promoted and reinforced by different state and Church policies, and which is referred to and deeply internalized by minority groups.

In Podlasie, the question of identity and the majority/minority dynamic is complex, and there is no consensus among the academic community. Relevant scholarship concerned with questions of difference in this borderland region pays attention to configurations of religion, ethnicity, language, culture and class (e.g. Babiński 1997, Sadowski 1995, Smulkowa 2002, Golachowska 2012, Straczuk 2006, Engelking 1995, 2012). It is interesting that the same literature has been called upon by the two

anonymous reviewers of this text, but led them both to competing conclusions on the nature of the constellation of these aspects. On the one hand, since these studies often concern the uneven distribution of prestige attributed to these selected aspects of identity, some of these authors claim that the links between religious and ethnic identities are not obvious and firmly defined, but rather that they are labile, dependent on historical and social circumstances. The role of religion as the trigger of social mobility is thus occluded. However, others stress that it is the characteristics of Orthodox practice and the specific cultural and historical context of this area that result in religious denomination being so strongly connected to ethnicity, class (peasantness) and political affiliation.

While not denying the significance of these insights, I believe that the employment of the concept of hierarchical pluralism allows us to turn the analytical gaze towards emic experiences and manifestations of symbolic violence as a marker of difference. I argue that the conditions brought about by the socialist modernizing project opened a space for social mobility among the suppressed Belarusian minority, many of whom attained high social status because they were Orthodox[3]. Their subaltern position is a result of both formal and informal modes of local politics which have favoured the Roman Catholic majority before, under and after communism. While I do not attend here to the details of Orthodox practice, I do inquire into how people conceptualize the aspirations which have shaped their life trajectories, including their economic pursuits, and where they draw lines of potential cultural difference. As I show further, my informants made a move forward on the social ladder in terms of comparison with their Polish Catholic counterparts, and at the expense of their religious identity, which nevertheless remains at the centre of their economic decision-making. Therefore, in the analysis I render religion a contributing, not a "genetic", or determinant, factor of long-running patterns of political and economic development. I thus place religion within the context of wider institutional changes and power relationships, and their consequences for self-understanding.

BELARUSIANS ORIENTALIZED

The people described in this article are a local population inhabiting the peripheral region of Podlasie and self-identifying as ethnic Belarusians. Their forefathers became Polish citizens when these territories were incorporated into the Polish state in 1921, after the resettling of borders with the Soviet Union through the Riga Treaty, or, in their own words, "when the Polish administration came here." As a minority group,

3 While a similar observation has been made earlier (e.g. Kłoskowska 1996, 204–233), in this article I look at the distinctive ways whereby religion played a part in this process.

their everyday life has been shaped by two complementary factors: the conditions of hierarchical pluralism (Pasieka 2015), with Polish-Catholic identity seen as "normal", and the socialist project of class emancipation through, among other things, policies of atheism. These two factors seem to be at the root of people's life decisions concerning their choices of careers.

Within public discourse, the Orthodox orientation of my informants (and their Belarusianess) has been crudely orientalized. Thus, the popular derogatory designation for a member of this group, *kacap*, denotes a range of attributes held in contempt in the Polish public sphere: sympathy for Moscow, a leftist (or – during socialism – communist) orientation, disloyalty towards "Polish values" or acting to the detriment of the Polish state, passivity in the face of adversity, a submissive attitude towards the authorities (Gołubowska 2013), peasant origins, helplessness, lack of education, crudeness, uncouthness, stupidity and a feeling of being treated unjustly (Giedroyć 2013, quoted in Gołubowska 2013, 259–260). Although everyday interactions make such opinions more benign, this does not preclude such "non-modern", orientalized images being internalized by the Orthodox themselves. The ancestors of this group were described by one of my interlocutors as "imprisoned in an alternativeless peasant way of life", but their life trajectories, forged under socialism, were shaped by conscious decisions directed at abandoning their Belarusian identity in all its possible expressions and "becoming Polish". This process has generated a high rate of upward social mobility in this population, which in the generation of 50–70 year-olds translated into the aspiration to achieve a higher education (often accomplished beyond the Podlasie region), leftist sympathies, a tendency to secular attitudes, an abandonment of work in agriculture, gravitating towards an urban lifestyle (and place of settlement) and a choice of careers they associated with Polishness (e.g. white collar jobs, clerical positions in state administration) or considered prestigious, but that under socialism were possible to achieve only through membership in the party structures. All these life decisions turned out to be crucial for accumulating social capital during socialism, which they have further attempted to convert into economic capital after 1989. Such has been the foundation of the economic status and social position they have attained by 2014.

Initially, the project of which this article is one outcome was designed to explore the links between economy and religion in a more general way, and did not specifically focus on the legacies of socialism. Drawing inspiration from a number of other studies that have taken a similar point of departure (e.g. Köllner 2012; Kormina 2010), it aimed at investigating current economic practices connected with pilgrimages, as the Monastery of Annunciation in Supraśl is a centre of Orthodox pilgrimage. I expected to see some capitalist-oriented activity: proliferating guesthouses, restaurants and all sorts of services provided for guests, that – I speculated – might cater for their religious and other needs. My first weeks of fieldwork brought virtually no results, as the market

of services connected with hosting pilgrims is either non-existent or run exclusively by monks. This observation, for which it is hard to provide a simple explanation, prompted me to combine both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. It turned out that the areas of economic activity capable of mobilizing the Orthodox community had already been carefully chosen in the distant years of early socialism. My initial assumption, that economic success needs to be expressed in financial terms and in the conditions of formal capitalism, therefore turned out to be erroneous. I had to adapt my project to consider longer historical trajectories, because the dynamic of the relationship between religious identity and economic decision-making in this particular case can only be seen over the course of entire lives, if not indeed over two or three generations.

Thus, the research into the salience of Orthodox identity within the Polish post--socialist capitalist economy had to be modified in the face of empirical findings which challenged the theoretical framework that had underpinned the design of my project. The relevant social theory makes normative assumptions emphasizing the ("organic") link between modernity, individualism and secularity. In so doing, it draws on Western culturalist assumptions not sufficiently commensurable for meaningful comparisons to be made with the Orthodox, postsocialist context. The exposure of these ethnocentric premises is thus an additional benefit of the fieldwork. Deeply ingrained biases concern the definition of religion, the relationship between religion and culture and the definition of material success. These all become clearer by incorporating a temporal dimension into this research.

In line with the scholarship on post-socialism attempting to develop methodologies to structure continuity and change, I look for an analytical framework able to account for the shift in the social significance of various concepts intrinsic to the socialist and Western incarnations of modernity by looking at the dynamics of social mobility. The Belarusians under study experience their Orthodoxy as a "phantom religion" existing alongside their self-avowed secularity; their Orthodox identity thus constantly influences them with regard to how to place themselves within a wider, Polish-Catholic society. How, then, are we to explain the significance and the role of religion in these processes? The explanation of this question must start with the specificities of the Orthodox conceptualization of religion, because the practical responses they inspire may generate an impression that religious identity is non-existent or irrelevant in this process.

SOME INADVERTENT LEGACIES OF MAX WEBER

Eastern Christianity as an area of study remains under- and misrepresented in the social scientific scholarship (Hann and Goltz 2010; Hann 2011; Lubańska and

Ładykowska 2013), and its interplay with different fields of power, including that of economy, remains understudied; a lacuna in scholarship which has serious implications for anthropology, and for social theory more broadly (Hann 2011; 2012). This situation owes much to Max Weber. Weber's framework underlined the economic ethic (*Wirtschaftsethik*) of Protestantism as key to the genesis of modernity, secularity and European exceptionalism, but an inadvertent result of this line of thought is the continued emphasis on Protestantism which has dominated anthropological reflection on religion ever since. The exposure of the "Christian bias" embedded in the deep structures of anthropological theory (Cannell 2005; Robbins 2007) brought little amendment to this imbalance, since the scholarship produced in the relatively new current of "anthropology of Christianity" continues to be distorted by a Protestant bias (Cannell 2006; cf. Hann 2007). The result is the general neglect of anthropology for other branches of Christianity (Hann and Goltz 2010; Hann 2011; 2012; Zowczak 2000; Lubańska and Ładykowska 2013), as under the heading of the "anthropology of Christianity" one finds almost exclusively ethnographies of Protestant or Pentecostal movements from the postcolonial world (e.g. Cannell 2005; 2006; Robbins 2003a; 2003b; 2004; 2007; Keane 2007; Tomlinson 2006; Engelke 2006; Tomlinson and Engelke 2006). Eastern Christianity is thus excluded from many levels of anthropological reflection, including deep structures of anthropological theorizing.

At the same time, another solid anthropological/theoretical meta-representation, also owed to Weber, is the link between material/financial success and interiorized belief. The cornerstone of Weber's concept of work ethic (2001) is Luther's notion of work as a vocation. Weber, thus, argued that the emergence and spread of capitalism relied on mobilizing Protestantism's stress on hard work and productivity. The link between a Protestant ethic and economic success has been pursued by numerous authors since Weber to describe the distinctive evangelical spirit of American capitalism and establish a firm representation of "prosperity theology" (a.k.a. the health and wealth gospel), linking faith with financial success. Outside of the U.S. context, prosperity theology has been linked to the globalization of charismatic Christianity (Coleman 2000), and described as a highly "portable", transnational entity that is easily adapted to new social contexts (Bielo 2007). This conceptualization inhibits the possibility of the inclusion of other religious traditions into the agenda set by Weber. In effect, with a few notable exceptions, such as Köllner (e.g. 2012), studies addressing the "Weber question" in the Orthodox context are almost non-existent.

Another corollary of Weber's influence is a widespread bias in the definition of religion, based on a Christian (or, more precisely, a Protestant/Calvinist) idiom (Asad 1997; Cannell 2005). Most often, anthropological scholarship ideologically privileges a notion of religion that prioritizes personal, private faith over collective, public practice. This means an inherent discrimination toward religious traditions in which public manifestations of religion are privileged, as is the case, amongst others, in Eastern

Orthodox Christianity. Historical-sociological studies suggest that the patterns of the historical development of Orthodox societies have shaped an understanding of religion as a core constitutive element of ethnic and national identity (Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005; Werth 1996), heavily influenced by the territorial spread of faith. As a result, Orthodoxy remains a matter of birthright rather than personal belief, (and therefore the globalization paradigm, held responsible for the spread of Charismatic Christianity, produces remarkably different effects in these societies), and can be seen as a source of a collective identity even without belief in any form of divinity (Ghodsee 2009). Weber's influence remains fundamental in the way it has shaped anthropological common sense, but equally his thought forms a methodological and theoretical obstacle to the anthropological study of Eastern Christianity. This article is an attempt to circumvent these deadlocks and offer an innovative perspective by investigating non-capitalist forms of accumulating wealth, signalling unexpected ways in which the religious factor plays out in the economic sphere and at the same time being inclusive of Eastern Christianity.

CAREERS ENCOURAGED BY THE SOCIALIST STATE

Mr. Bobryk was a retired, elegant man, described to me by his son as a successful entrepreneur running a modern hostel in the centre of one of the urban settlements in Podlasie. The son described himself as an atheist, but suggested that his father was Orthodox and, therefore, a "potentially interesting person to talk to." Mr. Bobryk was`born in 1947 into a peasant Orthodox and Belarusian family in a tiny village in the region. During his secondary school years in an urban settlement, he discovered the prestige accorded to the profession of a geodesist when geodetic surveyors visited the village of his origin and demonstrated enormous power over the locals by re-measuring the land allocated to each household. This prompted him to pursue a university education at the geodetic department of the local university in Białystok, an education which, he imagined, would grant him a similar status and free him from the fate of being a farmer. This move proved profitable. He was very soon allocated a prestigious job, and then an apartment. He noticed that formal participation in the communist party structures brought further benefits. Thanks to this, he was easily able to attain goods unavailable to others. He and the head of the police were the first to be allocated apartments in the first block of flats built in his city. He was also the first to receive a telephone connection, with the notable number "1" underlining the significance of this development.

Mr. Bobryk married a Catholic woman. They married in a Catholic church, in a remote, homogeneously Catholic region of Poland in order to avoid gossip and provoking *zacietrzewienie* – heated attitudes and fights. This, in his view, had no

important effects on their family life, because in essence he "is an atheist." This meant in practice that Mr. Bobryk visits the Orthodox church "on occasions, like Christmas or Easter, or when someone dies or gets married", which serves to prove his attachment to his Orthodox community and identity rather than to its ritual life. For years, he and his wife received the visits of both Catholic and Orthodox priests during *kolęda* – a traditional round of visits to parishioners' homes, usually connected with the collection of donations. The soliciting of donations, along with the fact that religious institutions do not pay taxes and behave "as if the law did not concern them", filled Mr. Bobryk with contempt for both Orthodox and Catholic clergy alike. His career developed beyond his expectations: he was promoted within the state geodetic office and often sent for business trips abroad. Trips abroad were a tremendously attractive activity for the citizens of a socialist country, and almost impossible to arrange on a private basis without bureaucratic hassle. These trips proved in his eyes that he was a man of success, and they are what he misses most today.

This mixture of contempt and fascination for Orthodox traditions, that at once provide the bonds to home and an impediment in striving for a better future, is also, though to a lesser extent, visible in the account of Mr. Mironowicz. Mr. Mironowicz is one of the wealthiest cattle breeders in this part of Poland, a full-scale entrepreneur whose capital was accumulated long before 1989. When I asked him whether he feels Belarusian, he answered: "Today, this is a less complicated issue than earlier in life. As a young man, I was doing everything to become a Pole. But this did not work". He was born in the 1940s, to a peasant, Orthodox Belarusian family. They lived in a village "beyond the forests, the periphery of peripheries", with 40 households, 4km from the closest train station. An "enclave in the middle of the forest, with extremely primitive life conditions, but this was normal then." His first job, undertaken at the age of 4, was cattle grazing. From then on he has continued to enjoy nature and the presence of animals. When he was a schoolboy – attending school in another remote village, travelling each day through the snow and mud with no shoes – he encountered an officer from the education office. The officer visited the school to perform tests on pupils, probing their capabilities, potentialities and knowledge, and then indicated their possible career paths. Unexpectedly for himself, young Mironowicz heard: "You can do anything you like in life. You are a person of many talents, you can engage in whatever you dream of." Today, when he looks retrospectively at his biography, he understands that this was the decisive moment: the first time when he was presented with other life opportunities, and recognized them as such.

Mr. Mironowicz understands also that in his family his was the very first generation with a range of possibilities to explore in life, because his ancestors were "imprisoned in an alternativeless kind of life". So young Mr. Mironowicz dreamt of a career as a teacher. He moved to an urban settlement where a pedagogical college was located. As a Belarusian, he was allocated to a class in the Belarusian language. The school's

strategic – but not articulated outwardly – aim was to educate professional teachers for the Belarusian minority in the region. This goal was attained by means of allocating as pupils Belarusian locals, who would not therefore be learning an additional foreign language. When young Mironowicz was about to pass his final exams he discovered that the lack of a course in a foreign language was a deliberate move: it inhibited his eligibility for admission to the university level education (where it was a requirement), of which he had dreamt, and in this way ensured that the college alumni would not leave for other regions, but instead stay among the local population. This, according to Mr. Mironowicz's retrospective attempts to make sense of his biography, was a political aim of the Polish state to handle ethnic minorities and keep them under control in specific regions. He learned the basics of Russian and passed his exam. Then young Mironowicz was conscripted into the army and sent to Warsaw, where he was again confronted with people from different walks of life.

During these years, he decided on a career as a professional farmer. He was eager to have a university education, but amongst all the possible disciplines he saw cattle breeding as the only one he would be capable of studying, as it was something that he liked and knew. When he occasionally visited his parents in the village, he already felt like someone with a different background than his family and peers, and there was no real communication between them. His schoolmates could not believe that something like cattle breeding, an activity known to any child in the village, could become a separate scientific discipline at a university. They treated his words with a mixture of respect and disbelief. At the same time, his colleagues in Warsaw also had reservations. The first question he was usually asked concerned his place of birth. When he once replied "Podlasie", his interlocutor replied with laughter: "You don't have to tell me that, I can hear it in your accent. Which part exactly?" This made Mr. Mironowicz reflect on the way he spoke: his accent and pronunciation revealed his Eastern roots, his selection of words and expressions revealed his peasant origin. He decided to make an additional effort and forced himself to "speak like a normal Pole." Feeling lonely and othered in Warsaw, he frequently visited an Orthodox parish, but what he found there was not really a local community, just a group of Orthodox people who happened to be in Warsaw, far from their homes scattered across remote peripheral regions. Longing for some brotherly spirit, he visited a Ukrainian organization, but did not feel at home there. A university colleague, also an Orthodox Belarusian, once told him: "Wasia, you will never become a part of the Polish intelligentsia. Don't bother yourself with it." He was clearly determined to attain this status, but at the same time felt that what he perceived as barriers – discovered so late in life – such as his speech, his religion, his lack of manners and his inability to talk about various topics in a sophisticated way, are extremely difficult to erase.

Socialism eliminated the first barrier by removing religion from the public sphere; but there were other factors that he was unable to combat on his own. He decided to

go back to Podlasie, where he met his future wife, an Orthodox Belarusian woman, with whom he genuinely fell in love. With his university education, he entered the communist party structure in the village and was immediately allocated one of the best jobs in the area: that of the director of a cooperative for maintaining agricultural machinery. Soon, his father-in-law decided to sell his land to the state and start a socialist-entrepreneurial farming activity, a move which enabled him to build a professional full-scale cowshed. Over the years, this activity has developed: thanks to Mr. Mironowicz's connections, they were able to obtain low-percent loans from the state. In the late 1980s, when the socialist system was about to fall, Mr. Mironowicz intuitively expected inflation and made a gigantic effort to pay off the loans. This move saved him the enormous financial troubles which would inevitably have followed in a few months after the fall of the system. He instead invested a small amount of capital into a herd of calves, sold for next to nothing by the previous state farm that was now in a state of collapse. Soon his new business developed, and during the period 2000–2015 Mr. Mironowicz's capitalist intuition allowed him to avoid risks and to multiply his capital by thousands.

I chose these two accounts, because they are indicative of different aspects of one and the same thing: of how an entangled identity comprising class, ethnicity and religion evolved under conditions established by the policies of socialism and hierarchical pluralism. By removing the first barrier, i.e. downplaying the significance of religion, it allowed these (Orthodox) Belarusians to compete with (Catholic) Poles for lucrative positions. These two stories are complementary in the way they illuminate the intentions of both these men. The normativity of the idea of a "Pole-Catholic", internalized by these people, in complicated ways motivates decisions that bring changes to the configurations of different aspects of their identity. Mr. Bobryk benefited from the socialist policies of atheism and of class emancipation through education in his pursuit for a better life, but this does not entail a wholesale rejection of Orthodoxy. That these pursuits are a conscious choice of the abandonment of one aspect of identity in favour of another is visible in the biography of Mr. Mironowicz. He presents his social mobility decisions as an attempt to become "a Pole", an attempt that failed, as he remarked bitterly. The line of difference that he draws between himself and his Polish counterparts is one of class, but seeking to change it involves a modification of language, education, status and intellectual horizon. In his attempts at identifying the meanings of different kinds of bonds he has maintained – with fellows from his home region, with Poles from central Poland or with local institutions – he is confronted with a whole range of aspects of varying political valence, which nevertheless have an impact on his ultimate self-identification as an Orthodox Belarusian. In effect, the status and success that these two men have attained has been stimulated by their continuous reflection on their identity as confronted with the construction of the idea of a Pole.

CONCLUSIONS

I propose here to look at the economic choices of Belarusian farmers in Poland as inspired by their subaltern position, due to the policies favouring another religious denomination, and by the opportunities opened up by socialist policies downplaying the significance of religious identity. When religion is seen as a "phantom identity" which informs future life decisions, the cases presented show clear affinities between an explicit religious identity and one's economic trajectory, and may thus add another dimension to the existing body of literature and theory within the anthropology of Christianity.

At the same time, I believe these examples illustrate the complex local legacies at play. The socialist legacy of suppressing religion, viewed as an antithesis of modern identity, was particularly well absorbed by members of the Orthodox community. Paradoxically, the success of this legacy needs to be seen against the backdrop of the idea of "Pole-Catholic". Class inequalities in pre-war Poland determined specific modes of belonging, but socialist modernity reshuffled not only the class affiliation but the entire allocation of different forms of social and economic capital altogether. Socialist policies thus softened many barriers and restrained hierarchies inhibiting these Belarusians from integrating into the (Polish) society. Moderating the meaning of religious identities in the public forum and promoting a specific perspective on what it means to be modern stimulated upward social mobility and contributed to the accumulation of social and economic capital. These legacies have continuously marked the patterns of local relationships in the region, bringing surprising reconfigurations between class, religion and national identities.

Erroneous was the initial assumption of my project that economic success needs to be expressed in financial terms and in the conditions of formal capitalism. Biographies of my interlocutors show clear patterns that allow for some more general conclusions. But I could not see these patterns until I met Mr. Mironowicz. His biography thrown light on all the other biographies of my Orthodox informants. It helped me to conceptualize aspirations as a mode of social mobility, signalling the status at the point of departure, the projected future status and the means to attain it. Mr. Mironowicz's life story allowed me to structure the life events of others in economic terms and see them against the backdrop of accompanying political – formal and informal – processes.

In this way, this article hopes to show how simplistic are widespread explanations emphasizing the absence in the Orthodox tradition of a Protestant ethic based on an interiorized asceticism, and, by this token, Orthodoxy's failure to develop the combination of political, legal, and economic conditions that allow for a breakthrough to an increasingly secular modernity as in the West. Instead, I look at the distinctive ways in which Orthodoxy locally patterned, but not necessarily determined, conceptions concerning the relationship between the self and the wealth.

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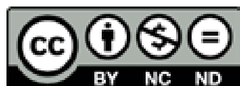

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