

# *The Sounding Museum: Towards an Auditory Anthropology*



The Value of Human / Non-human Soundscapes and  
Cultural Soundscape Composition in Contemporary Research and  
Education on American Indigenous Cultures

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## Abstract

Based on the authors' field experiences, one of anthropology's main theoretical reflections in the past decade is used here as a starting point: the relations between humans and non-humans. It reveals that the role of sound is paramount within the Amerindian ontology named *animism*, especially if compared to Western *naturalism* and its visual primacy. Consequently, we propose an auditory anthropology as a theoretical concept, underpinned by further examples from the field. Finally, the practical application of an auditory anthropology is discussed. Researchers may make use of cultural soundscape composition in order to supply a museum's audience with a means to listen to the manifold cultures of the world.

## Introduction – Auditory Ethnography and the Sound of Indigeneity

Indigenous societies of the Americas have always acknowledged sound to hold a prominent position in cultural life and the taxonomy of the environment, granting it a pivotal role also in artistic expression, which, today more than ever, builds the keystone for the formation and re-formation of identity in many indigenous communities (Schoer in press).

To dance a mask of supernatural origin in a Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch ceremony requires song; the *parishara* hunting ritual of the Pemón and Makuxi includes songs acquired from tapirs and other prey animals. Among indigenous peoples in the Ucayali Valley of the Western Amazon, it is very common that in both magical rituals as well as non-magical or secular songs non-human agents appear in the songs' lyrics. The contemporary art scene has cautiously started to embrace these cultural expressions as being part of the canon beyond the primitivist notion of indigenous form as exotic inspirational material.

But not only in song does this strong relation between sound and culture manifest. It is argued that the natural soundscape influences the characteristics of a culture, as the latter's artificial soundscape impacts on its environment (i.e., Schafer 1977).

In relation to the critics of western primacy of the visual (McLuhan 1962, Welsch 1993, Tworuschka 2009) and on the basis of ethnomusicological works by Seeger (1987) and Menezes Bastos (1978, 1999), the authors take off where Schafer (1977) and others leave us, intending to initiate a discussion on an auditory anthropology as a tool for

rapprochement between American indigenous cultures and Western observers, allowing for "coeval" exchange of thoughts and ideas, of contemporary and traditional expression on the artistic as well as the metaphysical and social level.

This paper discusses the value of an auditory approach to indigenous culture, contemporary identity reaffirmation and cross-cultural communication, prompting a debate on whether an auditory anthropology can help us learn from each other and to relocate indigenous culture where it belongs, transcending the still-persisting evolutionist and orientalist notion in favour of an emancipated coexistence.

We conclude that by including sound in all its active, and reactive forms as manifest in cultural life, our understanding of identity formation will be enhanced, utilizable in field work as well as in mediation of findings, in exhibition design as well as in publication formats such as books, audio CDs, and interactive platforms. It will also facilitate exchange on a glocal level, transforming the researcher – interlocutor relationship into a mutually beneficial dialogue.

## To Dance a Mask

*"If the air is jam full of sounds which we can tune in with, why should it not also be full of feels and smells and things seen through the spirit, drawing particles from us to them and them to us like magnets?" – Emily Carr<sup>1</sup>*

In October 2009, Hein Schoer had the honour of being invited to Chief Bobby Duncan's Potlatch at the Campbell River BigHouse on Vancouver Island, BC.

He was on field research for his ongoing project *The Sounding*

*Museum*, making recordings of the cultural soundscape of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation on commission for the NONAM (Nordamerika Native Museum, Zürich, CH), which he was to supply with a composition covering indigenous cultures of the Pacific Northwest Coast of North America.

Equipped with surround and shotgun microphones Schoer recorded the proceedings of the potlatch, the most important traditional festivity of Northwest Coast indigenous culture, over the course of 16 hours, collecting a vast number and variety of dances and speeches honouring the chief and his family, making claims on inherited titles, a *hamatsa* initiation, and many other ritual and festive performances, inadvertently unfolding as ceremony over a noisefloor<sup>2</sup> (here used as a mere technical expression without connotation) of background conversation (usually ceased during performance). The large fire crackled in the middle of the space comprised of a huge wooden plank house on earthy ground smoothed with woodchips. Although much of what happened due to his limited knowledge remained un-decoded for Schoer, the atmospheric impact on him was profound. The acoustic aspect, being an essential part of it, makes an impressive representation of what he experienced.<sup>3</sup>

At one point, somewhere in the later evening, the Chief opened his Box of Treasures, which contained a number of important supernatural heirlooms of his family, embodied in the form of masks, that prompted dance to the appropriate songs. One of these supernatural treasures was the power of the deer. This mask is “danced” by a male human, and by means of a hidden string, opens up to reveal a (carved) human face underneath the deer head to show how all creatures are, from their own perspective, in fact also humans, just in different garb; in essence the dance to the song belongs to the mask. Schoer mistook the dancer to be Chief Bobby Duncan himself (Schoer 2011), when in fact, as he learned later on, it was master carver Beau Dick who wore the mask that day, whom he had seen carving it in the weeks before, as to be endowed to Bobby Duncan at the feast.

When Schoer wanted to apologise for his mistake (which by that time had been published) with both Bobby Duncan and Beau Dick on a consecutive visit, they both put him at ease, exclaiming that once either one of them wore the mask, they became the spirit represented by it, so it did not really matter who actually took it on. The dancer literally transforms into the entity whose dance he performs, which is also why one does not “wear” a mask during a dance, but one dances the mask.

This notion of transformation, or rather, trans-specific communication (Halbmayer 2010), will accompany us as a fundamental concept in our proposal of an auditory anthropology based on Amerindian ontology and its expressions in the praxis of performance.

## Amerindian Ontology

Based on the model of four ontologies introduced by Philippe Descola (2005) and on Amerindian perspectivism as proposed by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998) and Tânia Lima (1999), our proposal for an auditory anthropology is mainly informed by the findings of fieldwork with indigenous peoples from lowland South America as well as the aforementioned Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation.

We have started to consider an auditory anthropology out of the incomplete methodological framework within ethnomusicology, sound studies and anthropology. Whereas the ethnomusicologists' prime domain should be sound, many of the findings in the field are still presented predominantly visually, as transcripts, scores, and texts, with a strong focus on analysis and interpretation of music (although in many Amerindian societies the concept “music” does not even exist, see e.g. Seeger 1987, Brabec de Mori in press) while sonic and ontological circumstances remain widely unacknowledged. Following Classen (1990), Sarah Pink (2009) has already suggested an approach to ethnography that attempts to include “sensoriality” in the ethnographic process. However, sensory ethnography and

anthropology are still very much biased towards the visual, evident in the growing body of research in the field of visual anthropology. On the other hand, sound studies, as wide, ramified and interdisciplinary as they may present themselves, have not yet generated a comprehensive symbiosis of sound with anthropological theory (cf. Brabec de Mori 2012, 79). In *Four Worlds* (Schoer in press), we introduce an approach to an applied auditory anthropology that aims to mediate theoretical concepts and field research on an affective/atmospheric level, borrowing from Gernot Böhme's considerations on atmospheric perception (Böhme 1995, 2000, 2001).

An auditory anthropology addresses the perception and production as well as taxonomies and axonomies of sound (Menezes Bastos 2013), the role of the sonic in the construction of ontologies, and the quality and finally the interaction of senses. It takes a clear position against the primacy of the visual. Before delving into the sonic domain, however, one shall reconsider a basic question: What do we hear? Sound, of course, one may reply, but what is sound? Is it waves, the physical compression and decompression of a carrier medium; vibration? Or is it rather events, like, if I knock on a table, does a listener actually perceive the sound – implying an event of knocking? Or is it the properties of the material that is being knocked on/excited that are revealed by the act of knocking? Is it the table itself that we hear, or its interaction with knuckles?<sup>4</sup>

Here is another set of questions only partly answered at this moment: Do we only hear with our ears? It has been noted that the sense of hearing, namely through phase discrimination allowing for distance and directivity analysis of sound sources, as well as spatial attributes of an environment, is of crucial importance for our orientation in space. The same holds true, evidentially, for the equilibrium sense, which happens to be physically located in the inner ear; its function based on the same physiological principles as hearing; lymph in the vestibular system exciting hair cells through its movements. Thus, spatial information, not only of the acoustic kind, is generally perceived by the ears. Frequencies below 20Hz cannot be transduced by the cochlea, but with our body we can feel them;<sup>5</sup> high frequency vibrations can be felt on the skin, even enabling humans to distinguish vibration patterns, as exemplified by a cello's timbre from a trombone (Russo et al. 2012). The possibility of the skin being able to process frequencies above 20kHz cannot yet be finally eliminated. Finally we are confronted with phenomena such as inner voices, imagined music and auditory hallucinations or tinnitus, where sounds are perceived but not measurable – and the other way around, in the case of blocked out sounds, where measurable acoustic waves are not (consciously) perceived.

It is common that researchers doing fieldwork among indigenous people report situations where their interlocutors heard sounds that they, possibly due to their different cultural background, did not (e.g., Menezes Bastos 2013, 287). So the questions posed above all hint towards the complexity of sound and hearing that cannot be reduced to physical attributes. One alternative interpretation was proposed with Böhme's atmospheric approach, with all its synaesthetic and multisensorial aspects. This approach takes into account that different cultures or collectives may deal differently with the acoustic world around them, not the least in several cases due to different ontologies.

Descola's matrix lists four ontologies (animism, totemism, naturalism and analogism) that oppose each other in the way they deal with physicality and interiority. Here, physicality refers not only to a materiality of organic and/or abiotic bodies, but to a totality of visible and touchable expressions which takes the characteristic dispositions of an entity (Descola 2005, 182). Interiority, on the other hand, includes for instance habitus, intentionality, reflexivity, affect, and the capacity of dreaming (2005, 181). Considering Descola's ontological model, the opposition between naturalism and animism appears most striking: In naturalism, which Descola equates with Western thinking, a similar physicality is opposed by a discontinuous interiority. This

means that we are all made of the same substance, but our minds or “souls” are the point of distinctiveness, condemning us to a monadic existence in all these inner aspects. Contrastingly, in animism<sup>6</sup> – an ontological system Descola explains with examples from Amerindian societies – physicality differs (we all have different bodies), but we are of the same interiority. This means that a peccary, for example, owns a body obviously distinct from humans’ bodies, but the inherent perceptual organization of peccaries shows every feature of human individual, social, or cultural behaviour, living in houses, dressing in clothes, celebrating festivities and rituals. However, if naturalism and animism are described by terms of physicality (body) and interiority (soul), the question arises, where is sound located; from whence is the voice? Does the voice pertain to the physical, or to the interior?

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998) proposes a concept he calls Amerindian perspectivism, according to which humans and non-humans perceive the world in the same way, but they perceive a different world. The world they perceive is determined by their bodily form – and as bodies are different in indigenous ontology, consequently the world is different, too. Going with the above example, peccaries see themselves as “persons” wearing clothes, etc., and humans do so likewise. The perspective determines who is a (human) person and who is a (non-human) other. Again, perspectivism relies on a strong visual bias, the very term being a visual idiom, ignoring the sonic. Therefore and again, is the voice different in distinct perspectives (as pertaining to the body), or is it similar, as an emanation of the interior?

### Acoustic Communication and Trans-specific Soundscapes

In ethnographies of Amerindian rituals and other occasions where the community deals with non-humans (animals, spirits, the deceased) it is almost always sound that enables ritual specialists and participants to bridge the gap between species. Therefore, we can locate the voice as a part of interiority.<sup>7</sup> Lewy (2012) confronts the visual primacy expressed in Viveiros de Castro’s thinking. Based on historical and ethnographic examples, he concludes that humans and non-humans, according to animist ontology, may hear similarly between perspectives, allowing them to interact trans-specifically via sound, resulting in a concept Lewy terms “sonorism.” With *sonorism*, we propose an auditory primacy as a valid orientation when dealing with Amerindian ontologies and lived worlds (Lewy, in press), as will be shown in the following case studies.

The Pemón, a Carib indigenous group living in Venezuela, Brazil, and Guyana, practice the hunting ritual *parishara*, consisting of a song cycle of 30-something songs that take three to four hours to perform.<sup>8</sup> To understand how this ritual works, we have to follow Lewy’s observation that Pemón myths reflect perspectivism in Viveiros de Castro’s sense: Prey animals, from their perspective, see themselves as humans, but humans as spirits or hunter animals in an anthropomorphic framework, accordingly.<sup>9</sup> However, and that is where sonorism comes in, in the *parishara*, hearing, not seeing, is employed as the central mode of comprehension. Clearly, “real humans” (the translation of Pemón) sing the songs, but these are tapir songs! When the tapirs hear the songs of the *parishara*, they believe that there is a party of their own people going on, and they feel invited to join. Since the songs are *their* songs (according to many Amerindian ethnographies, most original sound creation is attributed to non-humans),<sup>10</sup> they perceive the people who are singing them as being of their own kind. Only once the tapirs see the hunters, they realize their mistake; the hunting begins.

Another example of auditory ethnographical findings comes from the Western Amazon, namely the Ucayali valley in the Peruvian lowlands. From the *parishara* we have heard that on the sonic plane animals and humans (who all perceive *themselves* as humans) can interact. However, interaction is not always intended; on the contrary,

often it is necessary to prevent interventions from (dangerous) non-humans, for example in social gathering. Among the Shipibo-Konibo (henceforth Shipibo), certain species of birds are understood as equally or more powerful than the Shipibo themselves, specifically in their competence of perception.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, such bird-persons may not be mocked without risking unpleasant consequences. For example, when wandering in the jungle, these birds, having a much better overview than the humans, may warn them of imminent dangers. However, birds can likewise pass on information about the Shipibo’s vulnerability to dangerous entities (like spirits). But if you have ever been to the Amazon, you will know that birds are always around; you can hear their singing all the time, so consequently, they can hear you, too. In order to avoid discord, the Shipibo have devised a way to break the inter-specific acoustic link in a way that reminds of the masking properties of the noisefloor briefly mentioned in the introduction: They create a sound carpet, a lo-fi soundscape, with rattles and small objects attached to the women’s festive garments, that is so loud that the birdsong cannot be heard anymore. Accordingly, the birds will not be able to hear the humans’ singing, as long as this noisefloor is kept up.<sup>12</sup>

“The initial question then must be extended from “what do we hear?” to “how do we hear?” and “how does the Other hear?” In respect to a field of sound ontology dealing with trans-specific soundscapes we finally need to ask: “How do humans think non-humans hear?”

In one last example, which also comes from the Shipibo, we want to introduce a phenomenon that to a certain extent spans an arch back to the Kwakwaka’wakw far in the North. In indigenous communities all over the Americas much heed is given to trans-specific transformations. As briefly stated in the introduction to this article, a researcher may feel embarrassed when mixing up entities, in the way it happened to Schoer when mistaking Bobby Duncan and Beau Dick in reference to the deer transformation mask, and how they both put him at ease by stating that when dancing the mask, they become the entity represented by it. In this case, however, it was obvious for the (Western) spectator, that there was a real human behind the mask, and that the transformation therefore must be symbolic. No matter how fiercely a “traditionalist” indigenous person might object, no ethnographer, from the Arctic down to Tierra del Fuego, has ever actually seen such a transformation happen in the flesh. In the sonic realm this is different. Shipibo *médicos* (shamans) are believed to possess the capability of transforming into animals, even spirits<sup>13</sup> during magical rituals. That as well cannot be observed visually. But it can be heard. Becoming, for example, a spirit, the singing voice of the *médico* changes, and this change can be experienced and made evident also in recordings, a sonic transformation called “voice masking” (Olsen 1996, 159). The *médico* now is a spirit, and it would be dangerous for a common man to let himself be seen during that time, because the *médico* would see him as prey (while perceiving himself still as a human, but in the way all spirits perceive themselves as humans).<sup>14</sup> The ritual usually takes place in darkness. While from a naturalistic point of view, nothing may have happened, except for either deception or delusion, for the animist this change is absolutely real. Stoichiță and Brabec de Mori (2012) have introduced the term “sonic being” to describe this non-personalised intermediary – in-between – agency that is facilitated by sound.

From the above examples and many more experienced during fieldwork as well as examples found in the literature, we conclude that:

- Sounds and their ornaments (structure, instruments, lyrics) indicate the identity of a singing non-human;
- Non-humans transmitting these identities to humans and humans imitating these identities in performance aim to communicate trans-specifically;
- And, referring to Descola's concept of ontologies, sound perception and production is more related to interiority than to physicality.

With this relational definition of being<sup>15</sup> in mind we postulate:

- Amerindian ontologies are constructed principally around auditory perception and sonic phenomena.
- Neither is it sufficient to analyse and compare myths and other narratives (although it may help), nor just to look and see (which may help, too).
- All senses and modes of expression must be considered when intending to understand indigenous ontology.<sup>16</sup>

## From Field to Museum: Applied Auditory Anthropology

From the exotic magic of the Amazon rainforest we now move on to the – for researchers raised in the naturalist tradition – more familiar setting of a (ethnographic) museum.

In the didactic branch of *applied* auditory anthropology<sup>17</sup> aimed at a lay audience the ontological and epistemological groundwork behind such practices as the *parishara*, voice masking, or other, cannot be brought across one-to-one, but by applying sound and understanding the “aesthetic” (Böhme 2001) nature of perception and rationalization, the analytic, naturalism-informed gaze can be confronted. And once the atmospheric entry has been made, the rest will follow eventually.

A potent device for this has been installed at the NONAM, Switzerland-based museum for indigenous cultures of North America, the Sound Chamber. On two floors the NONAM covers historical and contemporary indigenous cultures of North America, from the icy wastes of the Arctic to the hot deserts of Nevada. Out of the ten cultural areas defined for the continent, it features the Arctic, the Sub-Arctic and the Northern Woodlands, the Northwest Coast, the Plains and Prairies, and the Southwest in its permanent exhibition. Temporary special exhibitions have covered a broad range of topics in recent years, such as kayak building, the silver smithery of the Hopi, Navajo and Zuni, mask carving of the Inland Tlingit, beadwork, wildlife, the paintings of Karl Bodmer, and a photo exhibition about Greenland and its indigenous people, to name a few.

In 2008, the former video cabin was transformed into what is now the Sound Chamber. According to the designs of acoustician Richard Schuckmann, we refurbished a small wooden booth into a space of acoustic experience. Four high- and mid-frequency loudspeakers and a subwoofer hidden behind black curtains allow for surround playback in an acoustically treated environment that comes close to an anechoic chamber.

By covering all walls, ceiling, and floor with Basotect acoustic foam, reverberation was reduced to a minimum. Initial sketches still included the use of visuals, either in the form of photographs, or screens on the walls, but were quickly decided against. The final design takes the visitor onto a circular metal platform with a handrail around it, all black and dark (except for a very chary and fuzzy chain of light halfway from the floor – and dimmed by the black, half-transparent acoustic curtain in front of it – and an emergency light above the entrance), accessible via a softly ascending ramp. The little visual and lighting design applied creates, as Schoer confirmed in a visitor study, a feeling of being in a cocoon, an igloo-like bubble floating in the dark, with the light chain suggesting a horizon.

Thus Schoer's laboratory came into existence, where he could research on the impact of sound with all other senses (especially vision), if not cut off, at least heavily attenuated. Once inside the Sound Chamber, the outside world is shut out by heavy curtains that swallow all the light and almost all the sound from the exhibition area. And then you hear it. Wind in the trees, a creek, the crows, first in the distance, then all around you; the forest awakes. Eventually you find yourself in the streets of Alert Bay, then you visit a dance class at T'lisalagi'lakw Native School, and before you know it, you are at the very same potlatch where Schoer saw Beau Dick dancing the deer transformation mask, taking a stroll into the spirit world along the way.

The Sound Chamber is a place designed to bring the soundscape of North America's indigenous peoples to the museum visitor, in high fidelity surround sound and without the distraction of visual or other sensual channels where the experience of the sounds of a culture brings an immediacy and intimacy, an immersive quality, that the usual object-focused approach of classical exhibition design is lacking.

However, such a tool, as convincing as it may appear especially to audiophiles and soundscape researchers, is not without risk. A museum is a place of great opportunity, a place of learning, but also of great danger in terms of creating or confirming misconceptions of the world around us, particularly when your target group, as holds true with many museum visitors, has not spent years studying its exhibitions' subjects. When “re”presenting the Other, schizogenic (schizophonic) aspects of exhibition design must be taken into account as much as matters of orientalism and coevalness; established power relations need to be questioned. The author's (here used in the widest sense, including exhibition designers and museum curators as much as field researchers and theoreticians) impact must be made transparent in order to drag the audience out of the illusion of experiencing the world as it is, instead of a distinct version of it seen or heard through the eyes and ears of the individuals who created its “re”presentation.

To avoid these pitfalls at the Sound Chamber, a number of strategies have been developed, mainly aiming at achieving a high level of transparency in respect to what is being presented. *Two Weeks in Alert Bay* is not pure field audio, for it is a complex composition, rather rooted in a musical than a documentary tradition.<sup>18</sup> The recordist/composer's own voice can be heard occasionally, breaking down the illusion of being in a different world, detached from one's own as the interaction between researcher and researched becomes apparent in such moments. The contemporaneity/cotemporality of the piece and with it that of the audience and the ethnographic subjects is further heightened by de-emphasising the focus on “cultural” sounds in favour of an everyday soundscape, which includes elements that for European ears will convey a feeling of exoticism, but equally many passages that depict daily routines that would not sound much differently in the outskirts of Zürich.

In workshops (*Das Tönende Museum*), school classes equipped with listening tools provided by cliraudience training as initiated by Schafer (Schafer 1986, 1992) can learn to analyse the sounds of their own (cultural) environment and compare them with what we have composed from our experiences with other cultures, thereby learning about themselves and their relationship with the Other. The compositional aspect is important here, because understanding unedited field recording would require tacit knowledge that only natives can possess or scholars with according contextual knowledge might access. We are very clear about this aspect; the participants (and museum visitors in general) listen to *our* image of the Other's soundscape, which, however, is being enhanced by as many First Voice (literally the informant's personal voice in the piece, but also the inclusion of as many of her/his suggestions as to what to include and how to position it) aspects as suitable in the compositional concept, creating

immediacy and realism, but not claiming general objectivity at the same time. Consequently, the pieces are made in the spirit of a session musician's approach, which differs from the ethnographer's stance in the sense that not scientific completeness is the paradigm guiding the data gathering, analysis and presentation, but the mutual interest in each other and what can be done in a collaborative effort, on the interlocutor-researcher as much as on the instructor-student end of the process with the composer-researcher-educator as mediator.

We cannot step into someone else's mind; we can only learn to accept that we will never understand it in full but still may regard the Other as equal (in difference). This applies to our acquaintances in the field as much as to the people to whom we wish to mediate our findings.

## Conclusion

*"[true] communication is possible only between equals."*  
–Hagbard Celine<sup>19</sup>

All these phenomena and the ontologies behind them cannot be exhaustively described without listening to the sounds that are affiliated with them. They also cannot be properly interpreted without taking into account the different ontologies, which also means to step out of one's own frame of reference (naturalism in our case) and accept that other ontologies are not simply false, but different takes on reality, as different perspectives of the same phenomenon. By integrating various perspectives – perception theory, the soundscape approach, Menezes Bastos' world hearing, Feld's acoustemology, Descola's ontologies and Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism – with our methodological approaches from the applied auditory anthropology, the First Voices and the session musician's approach (for the latter two see Schoer in press), we aim to develop an atmospheric approach to anthropology, transgressing the primacy of the visual and the Western "view" on culture. An auditory anthropology will have to employ "a multidisciplinary approach of socio-semiotics, ethnomusicology and a phenomenology of acoustic experience – an akoumenology" (Tan 2012, 23).<sup>20</sup> The initial question then must be extended from "what do we hear?" to "how do we hear?" and "how does the Other hear?" In respect to a field of sound ontology dealing with trans-specific soundscapes we finally need to ask: "How do humans think non-humans hear?"

Sound is, after all that has been said on the previous pages, beyond any doubt one major and powerful medium for this exchange. The strength of the Sounding Museum's concept lies in its integrative power, which, to no little extent, is the power of affects. If you are in academia, think about what attracted you to your field of study in the first place. Was it the promise of dusty archives to which you might spend much of your life, or was it the childly fascination for the adventure promised by the appeal of the unknown? We cannot take you to Alert Bay, or the Amazon, but we can give you an atmospheric (call it auratic, if you like) object to hold in your very hands, be it in a museum or immersed in a book discussing our findings and theories. In each case, theory needs to be backed up by hands-on experiences for the recipient, a Sound Chamber to walk into, an audio CD or an interactive DVD application that helps to relay a data-informed and, more importantly, affective impression of our theoretical musings. It is this atmospheric totality that creates a synthesis of soundscape studies, ethnographic fieldwork, anthropology, and museum didactics, and reconciles academic research, art, and education, and that can help establish coeval intercultural communication, be that between museum visitors and Amerindians, between researchers and their interlocutors on every level, or between humans and non-humans.

The main tools are the Session Musician's Approach and the First Voices' perspective, the glocal framework and the conscious and

constructive integration of schizophrenic aspects into it, and, particularly, the personal perspective: I am talking to you, not an impersonal omniscient naturalistic consciousness. Thereby we intend to build bridges between the worlds of the audiophile, the "Exotic Other," the scientist and the interested lay public. The Sound Chamber, originally built in 2007 as a fixed installation at the NONAM, has by now been set up in a mobile form as the central "object" at numerous events all over Europe, enabling the respective lay and expert audiences to step into the worlds they had heard of in talks, workshops and discussions on various aspects related to academic and political implications of an auditory anthropology. The Sounding Museum has indeed left the laboratory.

## Endnotes

1. <http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/canadian/Emily-Carr.html> (accessed 10-04-2013)
2. Please listen to audio sample 1 "noisefloor" for a model example (<http://soundingmuseum.com/soundscapejournal>).
3. An excerpt from the potlatch can be found in audio sample 2 "Two Weeks in Alert Bay (Walk-In Edit)" (<http://soundingmuseum.com/soundscapejournal>).
4. For a detailed treatment of the ontology of sound from the perspective of analytical philosophy see, among others, the comprehensive thesis by Sharif (2012). Further: Böhme (1989, 121–37) on the doctrine of signatures found with Paracelsus and Jacob Böhme.
5. In Steven Spielberg's 1993 movie Jurassic Park frequencies down to 3Hz are used to create terror among the crowd; you don't hear them, but you will be scared out of your wits!
6. Please refer to Nurit Bird-David's paper "Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology" (1999), including replies by Ingold, Viveiros de Castro, and others, and the author's reply to these comments, for an overview over the origin of the concept of animism and a debate on its broader contemporary reception among scholars.
7. Please note that in animist thinking, the voice, especially when super-formalised in song, can be heard and understood by different species (including spirits), therefore it pertains to interiority, which is considered similar among beings. In naturalism, on the contrary, many problems arise from misunderstanding and mutual unintelligibility of languages, especially when it comes to inter-specific cases. Here the voice is again part of interiority, though conceptualized as discontinuous.
8. Please listen to the first song of the cycle in audio sample 3 "Kewei" (<http://soundingmuseum.com/soundscapejournal>). For an exhaustive account on the parishara, please refer to Lewy (2012).
9. See Viveiros de Castro (1998, 470) and Lewy (2012).
10. This was most prominently stated by Anthony Seeger (1987), but see also the volumes edited by Hill/Chaumeil (2011) and Brabec de Mori (2013), among others.
11. For the concept of competence of perception and action, see Brabec de Mori (2012, 2013).
12. Please refer to audio sample 4 "Shipibo Party (technical progression)" (<http://soundingmuseum.com/soundscapejournal>).
13. It is beyond the scope of this short account to discuss the precise nature of this transformation, but see Brabec de Mori/Seeger (2013) for a detailed treatment.
14. Please listen to the audio sample 5 "Transformation" (<http://soundingmuseum.com/soundscapejournal>). It is the moment when the médico transforms back from spirit to human, returning from his high-pitched spirit voice to his low-pitched regular speaking voice.

15. Viveiros de Castro acc. to Karadimas (2012, 27).
16. Cf. Brabec de Mori (2012, 98).
17. The political dimension implied by the lexical proximity to applied anthropology is explicitly intentional. We have learned from Lévi-Strauss and others that anthropology nowadays cannot elude social and political entanglement, which must hold especially true in the context of the power relations inherent in museum politics, particularly regarding the consequences they have on its visitors; see especially Nader (2002, 47–54), also Colwell-Chanthaphonh (2009).
18. The full length piece CD is available at [gruenrekorder.de](http://gruenrekorder.de); a surround version is underway (Schoer in press).
19. Shae/Wilson (1975, 286).
20. See also Faudree's (2012, 519–36) suggestions for a synthesis of the soundscape approach and chronotopy with semiotic anthropology.

## About the Authors

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- Note: Audio Samples (<http://soundingmuseum.com/soundscapejournal>) include (1) Noisefloor, (2) Two Weeks in Alert Bay (Walk-in Edit), (3) Kewei, (4) Shipibo Party (technical progression) and (5) Transformation.

# Wayback Sound Machine: Sound Through Time, Space and Place

Article & Photos by Maile Colbert (*except where noted*)

## Abstract

Two years ago I found myself in a location and situation that brought to mind the connections between sound and memory, which lead to considerations about sound and history. Upon thought and research, then experiments within my own practice, I have since been exploring what can come from recreating or creating sound from back in time. I have been excited about what this research has meant to my own work, as well as exploring the work of others who I meet of other disciplines engaged in similar lines of practice.

## Introduction

Frank Vanclay said nicely in *Place Matters*, "Place is generally conceived as being *space* imbued with meaning. Thus, it refers more to the meanings that are invested in a location than to the physicality of the locality" (Vanclay 2008). He goes on to state, sometimes it is the biophysical characteristics that establish the foundation for those personal meanings.

When I travel to an unfamiliar location to create a work, I have become accustomed to bringing my VLF receiver, hydrophones, and underwater camera for exploration. Whether what comes out ultimately becomes part of the work or not, my interest in these particular tools stems from a fascination with capturing obscure events around me, real and happening, that I could not otherwise perceive. It also marks my wonder at events and elements in our world that have been, while evolving, continuous in a time line extending much further than my own. Similar to the sense one may garner from varied surroundings, such as a desert, or an ocean, with time and patience, what might at first seem bleak, barren, or monotonous, begins to give hint to a rich world hidden from our day to day experiences.



Fig. 1: Joshua Tree State Park, California. Photo by Vahid Sadjadi