

Sounding the Forgotten City – Soundurbance in João Pessoa, Brazil

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ABSTRACT: This study proposes to deepen the understanding of the contemporary cities soundscape by exploring their *present territories*, composed by urban voids, margins, transition zones or portions forgotten by traditional sound and urban studies. Held in the city of João Pessoa, Brazil, it investigates how inhabitants create and recreate their lives from their sound territories, while demonstrating the possibility of confronting dominant soundscapes through sound interventions in these marginal zones. In order to achieve that, the soundurbance methodology was formulated based on the soundwalk methodology and the transurbance procedure, thus forming a hybrid concept. This study shows to be particularly important for Latin American cities, where from the disorderly growth in territories outside of the capitalist order – whose domination logics have corresponding sound logics – also echo the sounds of social differences, excluded inhabitants, nature and silence.

KEYWORDS: contemporary urbanism, urban soundscape, present territories, sound cartography, sound intervention.

1. Introduction

Hidden in the shadows of the contemporary city, repressed by the lights of static and orderly spaces, moving territories are found, fugitive to attempts of organization and control. Not flaunted in tourist guides or postcards, the so called *present territories* are voids found among fragments of order. They are margins, transition zones or portions forgotten by traditional urban planning which are in constant transformation (Careri, 2013). This work proposes to explore the soundscape of these zones, insofar as they correspond to the dialectical complexity of the urban space production – according to the conception given by Henri Lefebvre (1991) – and at each attempt of sewing or repair are spontaneously reconfigured.

Developed from an experiment formulated by researchers of *Cidade+Contemporaneidade* group – from Federal University of Pelotas – for the International Seminar Urbicentros 5¹, held in November 2016 in the city of João Pessoa, Brazil, this study is particularly important for Latin American cities, where from the disorderly growth in territories intrinsic to the contradictions of the current mode of production – whose domination logics have corresponding sound logics – also echo the sounds of social differences, excluded inhabitants, nature and silence.

Articulating notions of *social space* and *everyday life* attributed to appropriation and experience (Lefebvre, 1991), passing through the theory of *spectacle* elaborated by Guy Debord (1997) in the context of the Situationist International, it investigates how the inhabitants create and recreate their sound territories in the space-time of this distinct urban organism, while demonstrating the possibility of confronting dominant sonorities through interventions in these “urban amnesias”(Careri, 2013, p. 152), which, being at the margin of the traditional city structure, hold opportunities for subversion and freedom. Apart from the western preference for the sense of vision, it removes the corporality from passive contemplation, placing the body as a practical-sensorial totality at the center of the investigation, as through its materiality the spatial practice is reconfigured in everyday life.

This study aims, therefore, to deepen the understanding of the contemporary city soundscape relating it to its structural complexity, exploring through the present territories other nuances and subtleties possibly forgotten by traditional sound and urban studies. From the notion of *rhizome* proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (2000), it assembles concepts and consolidated procedures – *transurbance* and *soundwalks*, discussed below – performing a hybrid approach, the *soundurbance*, which intervenes and creates soundscapes in interstitial urban areas, while seeking to identify under what aspects the structure and dynamics of this complex spatial conformation are connected or fragmented. As a researcher, to go

1. The seminar dealt with multidisciplinary aspects of the foundation processes of the contemporary city, establishing articulations between the field of architecture and urbanism with areas such as anthropology, law, sociology, geography and arts.

through it involves challenging the human activities submission (from production of space to knowledge) to the current mode of production and its reproductions, or still, to face the victory of economy over urban life translated by spectacle (Debord, 1997), exploring other possibilities for understanding the processes of the contemporary city and its soundscape.

2. Context: homogeneity results fragmentation

Urban space, understood as a social product in the conception of Henri Lefebvre (1991) – because it has a global character as an effect of the action of society on nature, on the senses and sensations, on energy, space and time – corresponds to simultaneity of abstract and concrete relations, composing, above all, the spatialization of the current mode of production (from its relations of production), not directly and transparently, but marked by juxtaposed ideologies and illusions, therefore, in a dialectical constitution. In other words, on one hand, the production of urban space subordinated to accumulation of capital and economic growth does not exclude its contradictions, nevertheless the attempts of homogenization and pacification. Otherwise, under the influence of rational modernism, homogeneity results false, paradoxical, since it is imposed through the fragmentation and hierarchy of spaces, culminating in the diffuse city². On the other hand, the capitalist need to subjugate the inhabited space to its exchange value (Harvey, 2009), impregnated by fetishism and alienation does not suppress the phenomenological meaning of inhabiting, even if urban spatialization is mediated by the relations of production.

For the analysis performed here, two conclusions are crucial in this conception. First, as homogeneous–fragmented dialectic spatialization leftovers, intermediate territories, empty spaces, “abysses” result. These remnants and remains are constantly changing, defecting each new attempt of order. They cannot be therefore directly attributed to the mode of production, since they do not obey its rules, but indirectly, as they compose the urban space as a social product. Intensifying this complex conformation, in Latin American cities – taken by vast social inequality – the gaps can be filled by illegal appropriations, slums composed of poorly finished houses that are unaware of land ownership and traditional urban organization. To this phenomenon a double meaning is attributed: these “voids” (now filled) are on the margins of capitalist production, given their constant modifications and escape any attempt of ordination. However, they are an effective component of this contradictory order that endorses its perpetuation in poverty.

Second, the notion of space as a present practice, with attachments and connections in act, since production and product are inseparable. Space as a product results from repeated

2. The term diffuse city refers to the isolated suburban settlements that spread forming discontinuous fabrics through large territorial areas (Careri, 2013).

acts and gestures, but it also incorporates signs and symbols. It is comprised by encounter, simultaneity and contingency. In the same way, territories are understood as present precisely because they are full of possibilities for current action and appropriation; they are interstitial because they do not configure hermetic spaces (of housing, leisure, transportation), they are not fixed (therefore nomadic), but are always in a process of transformation, always temporary, in between. How do these forgotten territories sound? What can their soundscape say? It is precisely what is proposed to be investigated.

3. Methodology: a contingent approach

The definition of the methodological approach is a central part of this study, given the need to address specific issues (the soundscape and its unfolding) inserted in the context of contemporary phenomena which inevitably require an interdisciplinary approach. Thus, from the cartography method proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1992), a methodological seam was elaborated based on the notion of *rhizome* (Deleuze; Guattari, 2000), a concept that opposes to the model of science represented by a tree, whose branches (disciplines) can only communicate with the trunk but never with each other. Characterized by a system of passages composed only of shortcuts and deviations, the rhizome is the place of unforeseen encounters, whose navigation is developed through a contingency system, where events have reduced causality³. In this way, the rhizome approaches and manages multiplicities of events concerning the research, combining an extensive map, formed by routes and stops in geographical places, to an intensive map, relative to the forces that move the researcher among these territories.

3.1. Assemblages

In the present approach, the concepts approximated in order to understand the relations between soundscape and residual urban territories (or nomadic spaces) renounce the possible privileges and prerogatives of the specialization, thus forming assemblages raised by the researcher's judgment or furthermore, by desire, whose existence the cartography method does not reject. On the contrary, it is precisely in desire that lies the whole revolutionary potential for transformation (Deleuze, 1992).

As it follows, will be exposed, therefore, the theoretical-conceptual assemblages which culminate in the Soundurbance conception as a cartographic methodology and an empirical procedure formulated by the researchers within the scope of this study whose performance is identified both as a means of access to the observed sonorities, promoting the perceptive

3. According to the interview given by Joseph Vogl, German theorist and translator of the duo Deleuze & Guattari to Alexander Kluge: *Soll und Haben. Fernsehgespräche*, S. 309 – 320.

engagement of the human body with surrounding space, as an end in itself, insofar it articulates appropriation and intervention in the soundscape of the present territories.

Walking as a critical, aesthetic and artistic practice

Several authors argue about the pleasures of erratic walking, an urban critical experiment through the body, the daily traveling as an artistic act. Henry Thoreau (2012) in his essay *Walking* refers to the act of walking as an art: the art of seeking the inapprehensible encounter with the sacred, the giving up of oneself in aimless direction or simply abandonment. Wandering, voluntarily get lost so that in the track itself there is the opportunity of finding again your own self, with the local memory, or with the world. Careri (2013) attributes to walking a symbolic method in which the primitive man transformed the natural scenery, identifying in such action the most important relationship established by him with the territory. Having later experienced in religion and literature in the form of sacred tracks, of peregrination and of procession, only from the 20th century on, however, walking was dressed as a way to experience, understand and modify the urban scenery, reaching an aesthetic character, especially from the Dada, Surrealism, Letterist International and the Situationist International (SI) movements.

Regarding the SI, an acting movement in Europe since the end of the 1950s until the beginning of the 1970s, whose studies have shown very useful for the contemporary city approaches, the creation of situations (a concept inspired in the theory of moments by Henry Lefebvre) should attribute new meanings for the daily life. They would work as articulated games in space-time capable of inciting in the usual daily tasks the uncontrollable and the passionate. As they occurred in the space-time – opposing Lefebvre’s moments, essentially temporary – the expansion of notions of appropriation and perception of space proposed by the *dérive* happened in the urban scope (Dias, 2007).

The situationist *dérive* means both a theoretical background and a practical procedure, and, according to Debord, it is inseparably linked to the effects of psychogeographical nature, that is, the impacts and influences that geographic environment, whether planned or not, has on human behavior. As a theoretical contribution, the *dérive* is described by Debord as a spatial and conceptual investigation of the city, involved in a “playful and constructive” conduct, which, through techniques of practical procedures of erratic walking, analyzes the affective nature of the relationships between individuals and the urban context, causing the return of the playful character to the daily experience in the cities (Dias, 2007). From the empirical point of view, the *dérive* presents itself as “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances” to be practiced from a set of rules previously settled (Debord, 1958. In: Jacques, 2003, p. 87). As a game, it relates rationality and playing, having an opening to luck and randomness as part of the plan of the explorations.

From Transurbance to Soundwalks

Conducting a follow-up of the *dérive* theory under the influence of the urban investigation carried out by the SI, Francesco Careri creates the group Stalker in the 1990s, whose exploratory territory of action and experimentation extrapolates the city administrative limits; the group wanders around the margins, on the borders where the outskirts becomes a “no-city”. The goal is to cover the map, to transform the *anti-art* experience in aesthetic practice, drawing the architecture of steps, remaining sensitive to contemporary transformations while characteristics of a changing society, but, most of all, seek the nomadic city in the interior or on the edges of the sedentary city. “The nomadic city is the path itself, the most stable sign in the void, and the form of this city is the sinuous line drawn by the succession of points in motion” (Careri, 2013, p. 42). Thus, the term *transurbance*, based on the seasonal tracks of people and animals called “transhumance”, with roots in the Neolithic period. In short, transurbance designates, therefore, the walking as an aesthetic (and critical) practice through voids and sections of order of the contemporary city.

The soundwalks, in its turn, are in fact similar to the situationist *dérive* or the Stalkers’ wanderings, despite its specific orientation to the observance of sound and sceneries comprised by this element. The term soundwalk, first and foremost, designates an empirical methodological practice developed to identify components and characteristics of the existing sound scenery (Adams et al, 2008). According to Westerkamp (2006), soundwalking is a practice in which we become aware of our participation as listeners and producers of sounds in the creation of the soundscape.

For Schafer (2011), the report of personal impressions concerning sound should happen through the use of the sound itself. Thus, a soundwalk can also be an exploration of the sound scenery having a music score as a guide, that is, a map which calls the listener’s attention to the sounds which will be heard along the walk. Or still, it can be a composition-intervention of the soundscape, when the walker produces sounds along the track with a determined intention. The important is to consider that acoustic information is noticed or produced.

The fact is that besides bringing people closer to their acoustic contexts, soundwalking has been used as a methodological tool to involve professionals who work with urban design, planning and development, and it can have its concepts adapted or expanded according to different research contexts, and can be carried out in group or individually, recorded or not (Adams et al, 2008).

Related to the practices studied, the soundwalking strategies, besides enabling a critical analysis of the urban soundscape, incite the game and the participation, associating itself to the subversion of the modern spectacle and consumption, promoting territorializations from the encounter of the sensitive body and the experienced urban space. In this context, they are cartographic procedures which follow experiences of walking as a critical, aesthetic and artistic practice.

3.2. Soundurbance

Having elucidated the original contexts, the soundurbance method is then understood. Built from a hybrid approach, soundurbance is, then, the practice of listening, exploring, intervening and composing the soundscape of interstitial urban territories, considering the analysis of the city sound territory from its voids, margins and fragments of order. On the other hand, it investigates structural peculiarities of the contemporary city conformation from its soundscape and what may arise from it. Besides this, soundurbance seeks for an end in itself as it offers the possibility of intervention in the confronted soundscape, that is, it presents itself as a form of appropriation that leaves temporary marks, nomadic tracks of creative acts which seek its fulfillment in the surpassing of the body passivity.

For this procedure to set a research methodology, other means and tools should be aggregated, not losing sight of the assemblages and detours which comprise the rhizome, as shown above. In the study at issue, besides the walking tracks, observation, sound and audiovisual recordings, sound interventions and field notes, were also had interviews with the participants (in a later moment, in an online questionnaire) and analysis of the collected material bringing the events closer to the theory and the reviewed concepts.

4. The City on Reverse: sounds of a nomadic journey

To pragmatically understand the local context, the city of João Pessoa, capital of the state of Paraíba, is located in the northeast region as the third oldest state capital in Brazil, founded in 1585. Its metropolitan area covers João Pessoa and 11 other municipalities; according to the population survey conducted in 2016 by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), comprising about 1,260,000 people. The city refers to an island: it is cut by twelve rivers – the main ones are Jaguaribe to the north, Sanhauá to the west and Gramame to the south – and bathed to the east by the Atlantic Ocean, along approximately 24 kilometers in length.

The experiment at issue took place in the context of the International Seminar Urbicentros 5, held in the second week of November 2016. From the agglutination of three workshops proposed for the event, about 30 participants were gathered and invited to walk, listen to and practice peripheral urban areas of João Pessoa. The union resulted in an immersive journey of almost 8 hours through the cracks and opportunities of the city, whether they were about political use of urban space or resistance actions against the sensory-perceptive passivity, with which we ordinarily confront the contemporary city, in an effective attempt of appropriation capable to subvert the alienation of everyday life.

Thus, around 9 o'clock in the morning on November 11, participants (from various regions of Brazil and the world) gathered around Hotel Globo, in the historical center of the Northeastern capital, overlooking the Sanhauá River. Most were architects, town planners

and artists, between 20 and 30 years old. Preliminarily, a stirring conversation about the goals and possibilities of the walk took place, where participants were called to turn their attention to the sound aspects of the walk. In addition, they were challenged to produce sonorities capable of subverting spectacular logics of space domination, demarcating sound territories on space-time surfaces of the trajectory. In this perspective, they would be able to develop a conscious relationship with their performance in the production of the urban soundscape. Among the walkers a local dance group composed by six artists/dancers⁴ who were familiar with street dance interventions also participated. Once the journey has been divided between footpaths, train rides and some pauses, the soundurbance experiment will be related out of passages or scenes from the space-time course experienced, narrated in the first person in order to include the whole cluster.

4.1. Passage 01: civil disobedience⁵

After the descent to the Porto do Capim community, formed on the banks of the Sanhauá River (threatened a few years ago by the ghost of gentrification under the pretext of “revitalization”), the gang entered in a foray to one of the several abandoned buildings around the place. From inside the building one of the researchers blew notes on a harmonica, trying to awaken aural sense and activate auditory memories in the walkers. Then we immediately heard the whistling of the intended urban train announcing its passage through the oldest part of the city. At that point, some of the attendees were approaching the window to watch it pass – before the scheduled time – as footsteps were heard on the ancient staircase. Later, in the interviews, the melody of the harmonica and the whistle of the missed train were recalled among the striking sounds of the journey.

The group then went to the train station (Figure 01), following a wide avenue whose background sound came from engines and vehicle tires touching the asphalt. Besides them, voices of pedestrians and peddlers, horns, wind and some birds sounded the quotidian composition of urban centers. Waiting for the train that would take it to the Jacaré station, located in the municipality of Cabedelo, in the metropolitan area of João Pessoa, the group found an opportunity for a new and bigger intervention: a book reading was started by two members; their voices stood out to the background music played at the station, but both were interrupted by the voice of the peddlers who repeatedly said: “water, water, water” or by the noise of the bulky buses that leaned against the stop of the avenue ahead.

4. The Radar 1 Group, from João Pessoa.

5. In reference to the book from Henry David Thoreau.



Figure 1. Passage 01.

Soon the first dance intervention started, followed by the sound of claps, batuques in plaques and trash cans and some songs chanted, once the wait for the next train would last almost half an hour. Due to such move, ordinary inhabitants watched curiously, laughing, some of them indifferent though, the very instant that the station became a theater. Thus, bodily experience retakes lost spontaneity, becoming appropriation, since simultaneously banal and surprising everyday life brings with it the unknown and the uncertain (Velloso, 2016). It went on until a new hiss announced the moment to leave.

Entering the train was an event. Earlier, talking with some citizens awaiting transportation, we noticed the religious interest of the majority. As soon as the convoy moved, we excitedly chanted a well-known Brazilian popular song on religious motivation, which says: “Jesus Christ, I am here!”⁶ Contrary to customary social obedience, we found in the sacred interest, motives to deflect, desecrate and resist. After the initial agitation, conversations in small groups were started, the occasional crackling of the wagons on the tracks sounded, while the ride passed smoothly (Figure 2).

6. *Jesus Cristo*, by Roberto Carlos, popular Brazilian music.

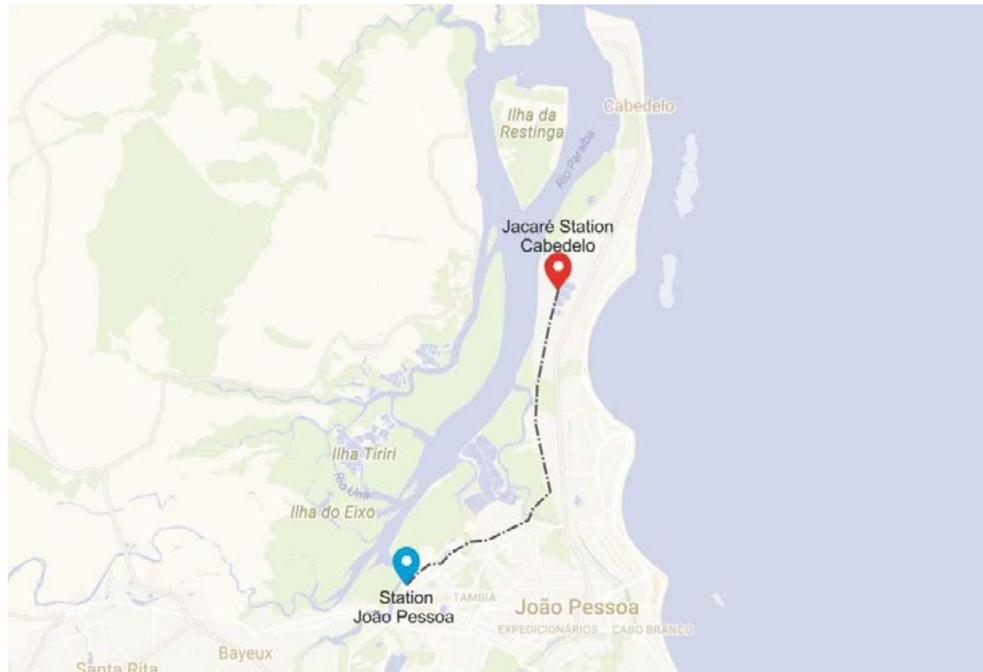


Figure 2. Railway from João Pessoa to Cabedelo.

4.2. Passage 02: da lama ao caos⁷

Getting off at Jacaré station in Cabedelo, a distinct scenery appeared before our eyes and ears. They were other sounds, other forms and other presence: silence as background. The first sound contact came from a huckster bank selling pirated CDs and DVDs, located on the descent of the station, reproducing popular music in the speaker. The dirt road continued ahead, desert, but then we went to the opposite direction, entering a stone alley with very small houses, which soon would flow into the fishermen's association of Jacaré Beach. Afterwards some residents cheered the group, laughing and surprised. From the house terraces or verges, people talked as they watched the passers-by movement, in a vigilant way, as if they were the street's eyes and ears. From inside the houses, children's voices, birds sing in cages, dogs bark, someone hears loud music, a father works with a saw before his little son as a car passes by... The street sounded like a small fishing village and had this common, community ambience.

Arriving at Jacaré Beach, a freshwater beach where the sand is mangrove (dark mud), boys swam in the river, playing. At the dock, some of us launched black bags in the wind intending to discover its direction, while listening to the boys and their aquatic acrobatics. On the shore, fishermen told stories among them. We went on, listening to the sound of the wind, walking through dirt streets, until a certain point where we found a lot of angry dogs

7. From mud to chaos, title of the Pernambucan band "*Chico Science e a Nação Zumbi*" first album, they combined rock influences with rhythms and themes from the Brazilian Northeast.

barking. With our feet making crunching sounds, we crossed a wasteland stepping through rubbish and burned vegetation. While some were dragging leaves, others imitated sounds of birds. As we reached a wall, we wrote protest phrases on the porous surface using pieces of plaster found on the floor.

Going around the wall, we crossed the railway when the noise of an engine rang out loud: it was a machine dredging water from the vast wetland that spread over a great void. We walked around, not in silence, but playing the harmonica again. We moved on towards a transition zone between the empty spaces and the formally built city, as a car was playing loud music. Some hummed, while we walked by unfinished apartment buildings, still on a dirt road. Ahead the street was silent, now paved with concrete; High buildings sounded lonely, from the people who lived there we heard only absence, from the children silence on an empty playground. The rising wind sound indicated a new presence: walking westward we approached the ocean (Figure 3).

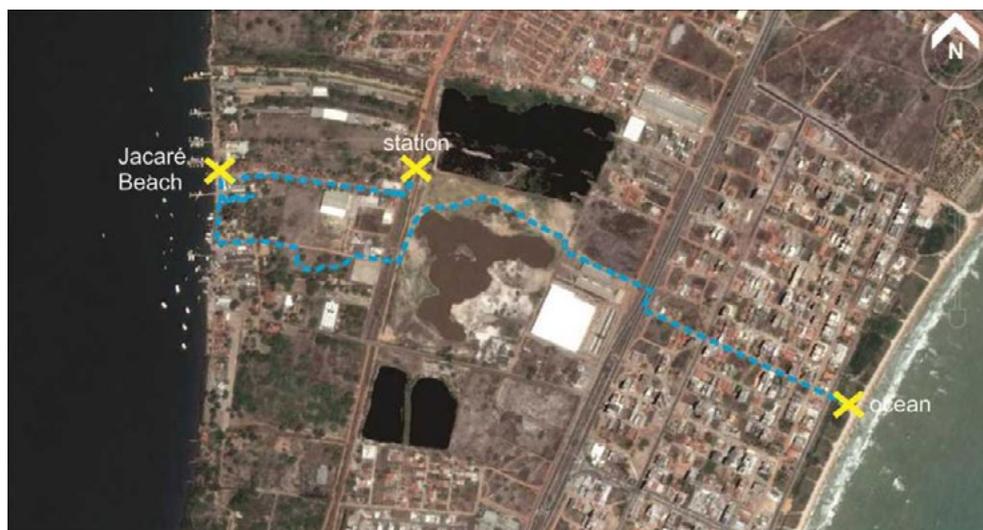


Figure 3. Passage 02.

4.3. Passage 03: in a kingdom by the sea⁸

The sound of the sea and wind became sovereign, even if less than 200 meters away the asphalt and the city unfurled. From this encounter comes the idea of coexistence of worlds, by assemblages and heterogeneity. Under intense heat we bathed in the sea, we were children in the body, young in imagination and old in thought, hearing and feeling the breaking waves. The sea is one of those places where one can feel “closer”, the body and the waves sound in the same transformation, unfinished transmutation, always in becoming. Walking on the water’s edge, listening to the constant waves roar, one thinks about duration time, where

8. From the poem by Edgar Allan Poe, Anabbel Lee.

past, present and future intersect, not in a linear way as we usually suppose time passes by. We are made of moments which in a given time are intertwined in a virtual multiplicity. “The past invades the future in the present.” (Bergson, 1999, p 176; Deleuze, 2008).

Already in the afternoon, we walked back towards the railway, once again crossing empty sections and pieces of the built city: organized vertical sets, always walled, barred, spread over large areas, composed of vacant lots, dirt roads and abandonment. Abandonment in two senses: as such as things we left behind, on a geographic map, in a renunciation action, or like those we do not care for in a neglectful attitude (Rocha, 2010). The forgotten city, the un-lived urban time, the street, the scattered garbage, are both abandoned moments and remnants left behind. Shortly thereafter, the group sat under a tree-shade to rest for a few moments. It was then that one of the participants, a local, told stories about João Pessoa, the route, the waters that bathe the city and the encounter crossed by the flock: river water, mangrove mud and sea water. We hummed African origin religious songs to honor these three elements. Among these encounters, detachments and confrontations, the course passed, slipped in time and drew in space the marks of our intervention (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Passage 03 in yellow.

4.4. Passage 04: walking on the railway

Walking a long stretch over the intercity railway line was a poetic and charming experience. Few of us had experienced this kind of trajectory before. Over the rails, we left the city, smashed towards the woods, crossing through walls of the gated communities. Nothing was certain, what we could find, hear, think or feel. In fact, the course which seemed monotonous

was full of surprises. The first one was during the passage of the train: the unknown metal melody sung by the rails before the wagons approached was revealed. It was a mutant sound, like a motor transmuting into birdsong. How could we hear this beautiful chant if we had been still bounded to the city limits? The whistle, no matter how much it was expected, also caused uproar among the hikers who laughed and whistled back in a childish way. The passing of the heavy moving cars defied our shivering bodies.

When the jungle became very brake, without much space beyond the rails, we calculated a way to survive if the train passed, entering the vegetation banks. For a long time we walked over the stones and ties, sinking the feet at every noisy step. Ahead, in a wider area, another unknown sound approached, mysterious and frightening: it was the trot of three horses guided by riders who were training for a race by the marginal zone. In the end we talked friendly to them, when they exhibited the imposing animals in racing shots (Figure 5).

What marked me most, no doubt was the trotting of the horses that appeared near the rails we were crossing. It was a surprise to hear them in the silent place, inciting some fear at the beginning. (Excerpt from the interviews).



Figure 5. Passage 04 – walking over the railway, in red.

Finally, we headed towards a poor neighborhood known for its violence events, which we would cross until reaching the Renascer station to take the train back to the historical center. In general, large Brazilian cities have neighborhoods or marginal zones around which a kind of imaginary of war or violence is formed, not necessarily remote from reality, but hyperbolic, not compatible with reality. Especially among middle-class residents, those who live in gated communities, who move around locked in cars and have fun in private parks, always afraid of the city, its encounters and the other citizens. Not indifferent to this

phenomenon, a mixture of apprehension and interest led us to that place. However, what we could perceive in reality was a quiet lifestyle, inhabitants walking in the street, as we heard children's shouts and excitement, the same sense of community perceived earlier in places where residents have more control over their own time, mainly because their lives are not completely submissive to the capitalist time – working time, resting, leisure, etc.

4.5. Passage 05: el palo presidente

Arriving back to the historic center, up the slope towards the Hotel Globo, we brought pieces of things found on the floor, marks and memories of revolutions (Figure 6), mainly internal ones, singing in unison the substitution of the country presidency for a wood trunk: *el palo presidente!*⁹

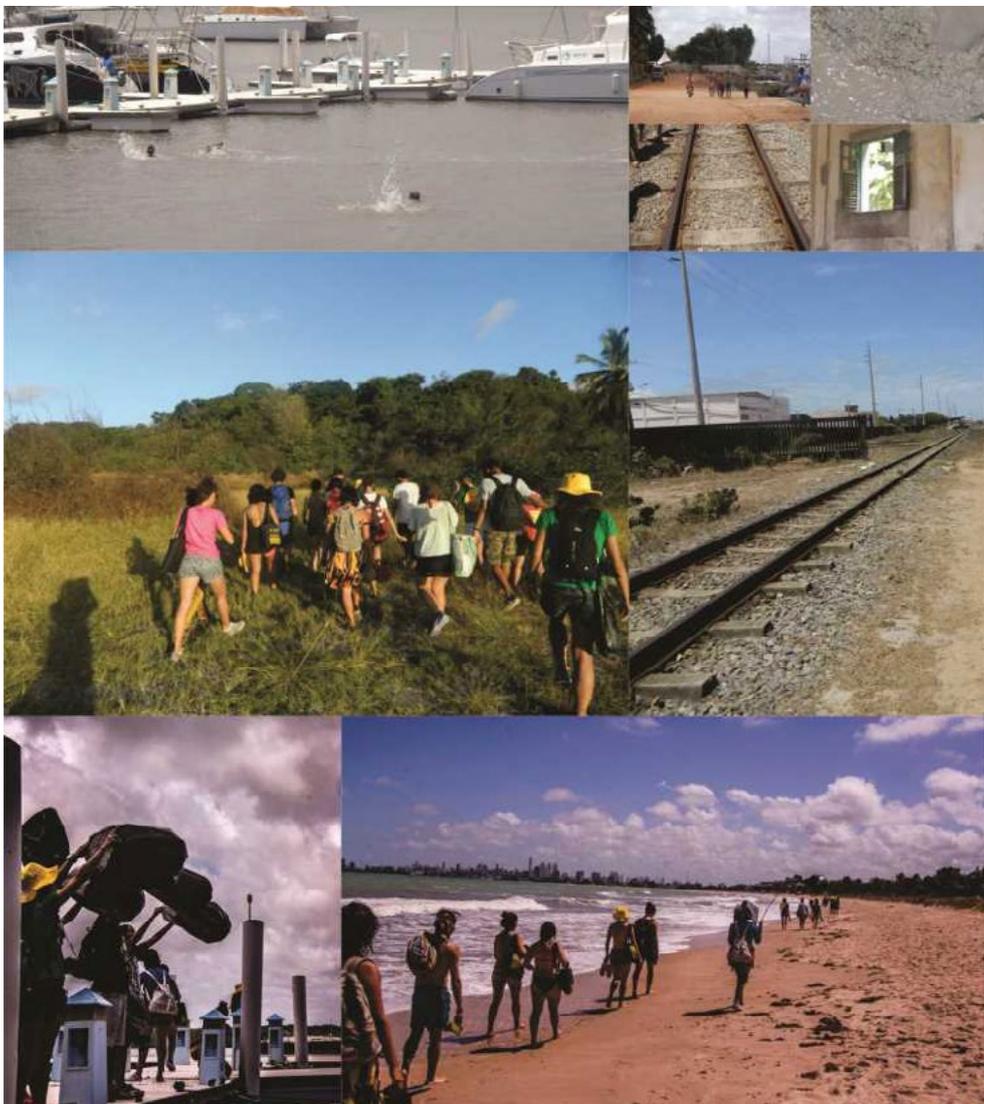


Figure 6. Collection of the soundburbance.

9. This scene refers to the historical political crisis which Brazil has been currently experiencing.

At the end, in the interviews, participants were asked about the implications of the experience, what they expected before, what they actually encountered, or how they felt marked or transformed by the events:

Quiet and surprising, I have never really “programmed” myself to actually notice the noises and sounds in any walking or urban wandering.

Unexpected. We usually take walks to see and touch things, eat and even smell. But listening to the sound of the city also seems to be part of the urban sensations...

Another sound that struck me a lot was the bell of the street peddler that we crossed in a very silent street which brought me a certain nostalgia of my childhood, where it was common to have elders selling *quebra-queixo*¹⁰ through the city and they announced their approach with the bell.

At last, the chant “el palo presidente” was the conclusion of the course in a factual and also very symbolic way.

5. Spectacle, detours and sound correlations

The soundurbance experience in João Pessoa rescued countless variations and nuances of soundscapes heard in the interstitial zones. It involved walking, singing, dancing, claps, batuque, sea bathing, reflection and silence. Different types of urban territories were crossed: vacant lots, banks, boundaries, zones of violence, poverty, gated communities and natural areas. While in the main zones of the planned city the best known and quoted background sound comes from traffic or shops, in the poorer areas, ordinary citizens listen to music in the middle of the afternoon, sit at the verge of their houses to see and hear other inhabitants pass by, children run and play freely. Passing by residential communities of wealthier classes, silence indicated the working hours, when the inhabitants are in the central zones and the children somewhere else but the streets. Crossing voids, we hear silence and our own sounds.

Similar to the urban tissue, the urban sonority is a dialectical composition, as it corresponds to the sonic expression of fragmented, heterogeneous (despite of the attempts of homogenization) and contingent social phenomena which compose the contemporary spaces, especially in the Latin American cities. For this reason, in the adverse flow of dominant forces of the urban sound environment, there are escapes which manifest other nuances of

10. A type of candy made with peanuts.

the city, less homogeneous, fleeting to less attentive ears; they are *minor*¹¹ sounds which do not reproduce laid down codes, as they originate from a *minor* becoming.

The currentness of the theory of spectacle developed by Guy Debord contributes for the analysis of contemporary sound phenomena that this study intends to carry out, specially concerning the logics (of domination) present in the urban soundscape. As the impoverishment and the fragmentation of the daily life in elements increasingly more separate are reconstituted through the accumulation of spectacles, “the spectacle consists of the recombination, in the *image* plane, of the separated aspects. Everything missing in life is found in the set of independent representations that the spectacle is” (Jappe, 2008). As the maximum abstraction phase, the spectacle manipulates, above all, the sense of sight, which is also the one of separation. The representations rise from the collective social practice but behave as independent beings and communicate as a monologue (Debord, 1997; Jappe, 2008).

Therefore, how can one understand the spectacle from a sonic point of view? It is in urban centralities that the artifices and supports of the present mode of production are structured and concentrated – among them the intense traffic, the rush hour, advertisement, entertainment and finally the consumption – which constitute the spectacle both as a project as well as a result of the dominant social model. In this context, the evident sonorities come from the vehicles engines, horns, advertising jingles, advertisements in speakers, construction machinery according to the real estate speculation and citizens in a hurry, involved in the routine of the market economy. That is, it is the one-sidedness of communication where the sound scenery has a considerable role. The possible escapes to such scenario remain silent as we hear loud and clear “the justification of the existing society as the only one repeatedly spoken by the instruments of the spectacle” (Debord, 1997). According to Debord (1997), the principle of non-intervention is exactly what connects spectacle to alienation.

If the technological changes drastically affect the urban soundscape and the increase of sound levels follows and consolidates the economy growth and progress (Schafer, 2011), the acoustic environment is the field where the system influence is notably disturbing. Thus, the sounds produced by the spectacular daily life – specially the transport system ones – are very often considered as noise, bad sounds and must be reduced. For such noises the idea of progress walks in an opposite direction, given the negative approach that traditional methods of sound study attribute to them.

Through the soundurbance practice it was possible to question preconceived notions of space and its sounds, besides apprehending ways of retaking the spontaneity in the lived experience. However, new questions emerge to the surface: how to rescue citizens who indifferently watched the group? Did not the episode consist of another way of separation,

11. Analogy to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of “minor literature” in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, related to the voice of the marginalized people that reappropriate the majority language for their own rights, emphasizing the collective forces above the individual dominance (Deleuze; Guattari, 2014).

of spectacle, for them? In so far as everyday life becomes an object of social organization, passivity corresponds to a harmful accommodation (Velloso, 2016). The critical point in the questioning is to challenge the isolation of individuals, the *blasé* attitude mentioned by Simmel (1973).

(...) the configuration of such a state of affairs does not stem exclusively from an evil inherent in the nature of specialists, but from an additional portion of responsibility that must be conferred to the inhabitant himself. Now, who is the user, seen from the top of the specialists podium? “A very repugnant character, who dirties what is sold new and fresh, who it spoils, who fortunately carries out a function: of making the substitution of the thing inevitable, of bringing obsolescence to content”, “what little much excuses him” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 11–12. In: Velloso, 2016).

Thus, practicing soundscape through soundurbances is an effective appropriation tactic insofar as it creates concrete experiences from which sensible manifestations emerge. The creative act is a way of subverting separation and in this sense the urban soundscape offers countless possibilities of appropriation, intervention and perceptive engagement. In addition, it may allow the deepening study on contingent processes of subjectivation involved in the relationship between body and landscape, bringing new perspectives to urban sound studies.

But an environment is made up of qualities, substances, powers and events: for example the street and its materials, such as the paving stones, its noises, like the cry of the merchants, its animals, like the tied horses, their dramas (...). The path is confused not only with the subjectivity of those who navigate the environment, but with the subjectivity of the environment itself, since it is reflected in those who travel through it (Deleuze, 2011, p. 83).

6. Findings

João Pessoa soundscape study reinforced some antagonistic relations between center and outskirts besides revealing new contradictions: the orderly peripheric fragments, middle class zones, remain almost in silence during the day in complete opposition to the intensity of the resonant chaos found in the centers, showing extreme relations among its soundscapes. On the other hand, in the disordered forgotten zones, community sounds were found, of the urban life and freedom that one wishes to live in the city, the same freedom that the Brazilian middle class falsely tries to reproduce at the gated communities, clearly without success. If urban life could be reduced to sound, possibly the most interesting places would

be those located at the edges of hegemonic production logics, both in the central zones as well as in its peripheric correspondencies.

Finally, based on the interviews and reflections, two sound scenery aspects confronted during the soundurbance in João Pessoa stood out: the train sounds, under several nuances found in the course, and the sea sounds. These two different resonant environments caused intense impact on the walkers' bodies. It is exactly this dialectic relation with nature that differentiates human beings from other creatures. While in the depths of the sea sound we can find an expansion of the inner self, we are also fascinated by the machine sound full of symbolic meanings which send to past experiences (at present rail transportation is not spread in Brazil), to geographical crossings and to the wish of intervening and dominating the same nature within which we belong, spreading our productions over it.

Therefore it can be so complex to argue about the path urban soundscapes must take. Perhaps the sound we want to hear in the city, this very concentration of human production and its ambiguities, are not simply sounds of nature by one hand or sounds of capitalist production on the other. Presumably, the soundscape that transforms and territorializes ourselves in the existential continuum, which moves us intensively and extensively over space territories is that one produced not only by fetish abstractions that take on a life of their own (money, State, commodity), but those that symbolize and materialize fully human achievements, not separate, not independent but made tangible from the dialectical relation between man and nature. It is before these sounds that man recognizes himself in a complete, concrete way. On the other hand, it is exactly under this contradictory, dialectic but tangible relation, that man creates and recreates their space production.

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