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Collaborative Listening and Cultural Difference in Contemporary Art

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Visual Arts

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Abstract

The research represented in this thesis has a relationship with my sustained interest in the subject of cultural difference that typified my earlier artistic practice. During my Ph.D. studies in Art and Visual Culture at Western University, I have advanced new perspectives on this problematic by elaborating on the potentialities of listening in dialogic and collaborative artistic practice. It comprises the discussion about the projects and activities developed within my doctoral studies, according to two main and related purposes. The first is the examination of hegemonic practices of production of meaning regarding cultural difference with a backdrop of the social, cultural and historical processes that underlie the constitution of the space of modernity in my home country, Ecuador, one of the five nations that integrate the Andean region. The second is the analysis of artistic and collaborative activities where the cultivation of modes of listening (sounding implication, acoustic presence) foregrounds subaltern agency and the production of community. These preoccupations inform the analytical core of the two essays composing my thesis. *Mountains and Rivers without End*—a collaborative project involving artists and scholars from Canada and Ecuador in research on the historical, social, and environmental effects of mining in the district of Portovelo and Zaruma in Ecuador. Soundscape *Pasochoa*—a collaborative project developed in collaboration with José Sangoquiza that expand critical perspectives on the practice of the soundscapes to focus on the conditions for subaltern cultural production in the Valle of the Chillos, Pichincha province (Ecuador). A second section involving the presentation of my practice dossier includes documentation of the art projects and activities carried out during my doctoral studies. It also provides a brief discussion of the conceptual lines of the activities

I carried out while being part of the research team of *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador*. A comprehensive documentation of these projects and activities is found at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/.

Keywords

Cultural difference, modes of listening, sound art, collaborative art, hegemony, modernity, Ecuador.

Summary for Lay Audience

This thesis essay examines the projects I have been involved during my doctoral studies. Through this program, I elaborate on conceptual perspectives addressing topics (i.e. subalternity, identity, community) related with the problem of cultural difference. Various perspectives used within the terrains of socially engaged art practice and sound studies orient the essay's main lines of discussion, allowing me to highlight the relevance that my current artistic search has concerning the subjects of collaboration and listening. Throughout the essay, these subjects are shown as integral to the processes underlying the realization of the project, *Mountains and Rivers without End*, and the soundscape, *Pasochoa*. The former resulted in an exhibition that included the participation of scholars, researchers, and artists from Ecuador and Canada in research about the historical, sociocultural, and environmental effects of mining in the region surrounding the towns of Portovelo and Zaruma in Ecuador. The latter was a project developed in Ecuador in collaboration with José Sangoquiza, who is a skillful self-taught musician and manufacturer of musical instruments and sound objects. Central to my doctoral research was the notion of *Collaborative Listenings* which underline my interest in the potentialities within the practices of listening and sounding in artistic endeavours aimed at fostering modes of knowing through relations. As argued by Steven Feld, a key issue within knowing through relations is "making otherness into 'significant' forms of otherness" (Feld 2015, 13). The discussion of the projects included in this dissertation accounts for situations where the experience of the dynamic interrelations between sound and space—a main concern of sound art as stated by Brandon LaBelle —opens up conditions for considering the political dimension of situated listenings. Attention to the

capabilities of sound to index its own immediacy, and to build forms of material presence is proposed here as a relevant means to inquire into hegemonic processes leading to the configuration of specific social orders constituted amidst the blind spots of cultural difference. My main focus is thus placed on hegemonic processes that have as their backdrop the formation of the space of modernity in Andean contexts, particularly in my home country, Ecuador.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness and render my warmest thanks to my supervisor, Professor Patrick Mahon, who made this work possible. His friendly guidance and expert advice have been invaluable throughout all stages of the work. I would also wish to express my gratitude to the program advisor and committee members Professors Christof Migone and Kim Clark for extended discussions and valuable suggestions which have contributed greatly to the improvement of the thesis. The thesis has also benefited from comments and suggestions made by Dr. Amanda Grzyb who has read through the manuscript. My thanks are extended to Dr. Andrés Villar for his contribution in the realization of the project *Mountains and Rivers without End*. I take this opportunity to thank them.

Quito, July 13th, 2019

Ulises Unda

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First Section—Thesis Essay

Introduction

The research represented in this thesis has a relationship with my sustained interest in the subject of cultural difference that typified my earlier artistic practice. A series of participatory and collaborative activities developed more recently, and during my current Ph.D. studies in Art and Visual Culture at Western University, has required that I consider new perspectives on this problematic.

Working with groups of individuals and communities pertaining to cultural contexts that are very different than the one from which I originate has allowed me to recognize and value the experiential and relational aspects that envelop and model the constitution of identity. Such an acknowledgement, in turn, has aroused my attentiveness to the intercultural and dialogical potentialities ascribed to what can be defined as modes of listening. I have come to understand the elaboration of the potentialities of listening in artistic practice as necessary for the political activation of cultural difference in contemporary situations. The function of listening favors the recognition of difference by configuring situations where the experience of equality is exercised, and thus opens the conditions for emergent sites of social identification and spectatorship.

During the process of my doctoral studies, my interest in the expansive field of sound practices and studies has dominated my work. Part of my attention to this field derives from how it offers us a particularly extensive array of conceptual tools pertinent for considering the relational dynamism that informs the social. Such pertinence can be appreciated, at the outset, when we interrogate the situated or localized conditions of

listening. Implying a way of being—and thus also a way of knowing—that is different from what has been assigned to the subject of viewing in Western culture, Jean-Luc Nancy delineates, through his philosophical analysis of the listening subject, how the sonorous presence can constitute an emergent site for acknowledging—again—the ungraspable diversity of the social world and its constitutive radical difference.[1]

In my research program, Brandon LaBelle's effort to conceptualize sound art in terms of modes of listening is pivotal. The identification of the modes he defines as reduced, proximal, contextual, environmental, and so on, is not guided by a zeal for hearing as a search for representation, but is oriented to considering the multiple forms and purposes through which listening is inscribed in technological environments, social landscapes, musical and art institutions, as well as in the encounters of daily life. Moreover, the resonances this notion triggers with respect to modes of seeing, bring us close to the fact that sound practices, while being constituted around the specificities of the acoustic phenomena, are inseparable from regimens of discursivity, and thus underpin the production of a cultural system of meaning that points to a general context of the musical. Modes of listening, as I have come to understand this notion in my artistic practice, encapsulate the double value of cultivating a self-creative sonorous

[1] Through the relationships established between sound and image in this thesis I am aware of what several authors have advised as a tendency to reproduce a binary opposition, and/or hierarchy between the eye and the ear. Particularly, Jonathan Sterne has shown the effects of what he terms as "the audiovisual litany" regarding the contemporary politics of knowledge, which is elaborated further in pages19 to 21. (Sterne 2011, 212). The terms *modes of seeing* and *modes of listening* are introduced in this opening section to state my understanding of the eye and the ear as sites of production of subjectivity within specific regimens of knowledge, and therefore to state that my attention to an aural turn within contemporary art is not addressed "to replace visualist ocularcentrism with sonocentrism as any sort of determining force of essentialist sensory master plan" (Feld 2015, 15).

consciousness while auscultating—with an ear—the what, how, where, and when of the sonorous event that takes place in increasingly globalized contemporary societies.

What follows is a discussion about the projects and activities developed within my Ph.D. studies. It includes two general sections comprising my thesis and it aims to situate my commitment to addressing conceptual approaches to sound practices through two main and related purposes. The first is the examination of hegemonic practices of production of meaning regarding cultural difference with a backdrop of the social, cultural and historical processes that underlie the constitution of the space of modernity in my home country, Ecuador, one of the five nations that integrate the Andean region. The second is the analysis of artistic and collaborative activities where the cultivation of modes of listening (sounding implication, acoustic presence) foregrounds subaltern agency and production of community.[2] These preoccupations inform the analytical core of the essays composing my thesis.

In chapter one, *Listening to Difference*, I present a theoretical perspective of determined practices and processes through which meanings and values become attached to the concept of *otherness* in the Andes, a concept that is central to reproducing the conditions for the *management* of the population in Andean nations, where the "Indian problem" is prevalent. In particular, I attend to an analysis of how the category of race

[2] My understanding of the subaltern has been informed by my own artistic practice and trajectory constituted against the background of a process of intensification of globalization and expansion of new technological media. The increasing mobility and cultural hybridization globalization and new media push forward have led me to identify the subaltern with a position of permanent redoing in terms of identity and cultural expression. During my doctoral studies, my understanding of the subaltern has been modulated by my attention to the potentialities of listening in art practices. In this respect, the subaltern is elaborated as a form of sonorous presence that resounds within the processual dynamics of collaborative interactions and dialogic interchanges.

was historically embedded in the modern field of vision while focusing on the relevant role of images of the "landscape of the nation" in constituting a subaltern subject (Olson, 2014; Poole, 1997; Drinot, 2011). In the second part, I introduce questions the "worlding of sound enables" to expose how the production of structures of meaning regarding a racialized other in the Andes are implied the constitution of audible techniques that acted on the site of the ear and the voice (Ochoa Gautier, 2014: 4). In so doing, I set a theoretical terrain for inquiring into forms of subaltern agency from the field of *auralities*, where advanced conceptualizations in sound practices collide with critical approaches to spatial categories regarding their place in the constitution of subaltern subjectivity (LaBelle, 2006; Harvey, 1996; Weibel, 2015).[3]

In chapter two, I examine the exhibition project *Mountains and Rivers without End*—a collaborative project involving artists and scholars from Canada and Ecuador in research on the historical, social, and environmental effects of mining in the district of Portovelo and Zaruma in Ecuador. It began in the fall of 2014 as a joint project with my academic supervisor in Western University's Visual Arts Department, Professor Patrick Mahon. Through this examination, I include perspectives on sound and listening to highlight the relevance of collaborative interactions and dialogic exchanges central to this project for the development of artworks that were exhibited in Ecuador and Canada in 2016.

[3] Arising from the foundational theoretical attention that must be paid to the relational and spatial properties of sound, as well as to the situated conditions of listening, we find in this field a series of advanced conceptualizations about issues and topics (i.e. identity, race, subalternity) related to the production of social space. The terrain of sound art cannot be excluded from an analysis of these relations. Indeed, the artistic exploration of the interrelations between sound and space that is the central preoccupation of sound art, as observed by Brandon LaBelle, must be considered key to challenging perspectives regarding the relational dynamism of the social world.

In chapter three, I examine the soundscape *Pasochoa*, a project developed in collaboration with José Sangoquiza, a self-taught musician and instrument builder, and an inhabitant of a small neighbor located on the outskirts of the inactive Pasochoa volcano (Pichincha province, Ecuador).[4] In this chapter, I expand critical perspectives on the cultural practice of the soundscapes to discuss the making of this project, completed during the summer of 2017, as a reflection on the political relevance of "situated listenings" in advancing "modes of knowing made in relations" (Feld, 2015).

The second section complements the first section by presenting a concise documentation of the projects, which is then extended in my artist dossier developed as a thesis website. On this website, I also include documentation and information of a series of collaborative activities I have carried on as member of the research team of the project *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador*.[5] By including in my artist dossier to document these important activities undertaken during my doctoral studies, I show how I have expanded my conceptual approaches to sound practices that inform the analytical core of my thesis to include the function of listening in the production of community. The above-mentioned thesis website is found at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/.

[4] This project extended a series of participatory artistic activities I led in the parish of Amaguaña in 2012, in order to reflect on experiences of social exclusion and marginalization in this rural area next to the capital city of Quito.

[5] *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador* is a collaborative and interdisciplinary research initiative led by Western University professor, Amanda Grzyb.

Chapter 1

1 Listening to Cultural Difference

In this theoretical chapter, I examine practices and processes through which meanings and values become attached to the concept of *otherness* in Andean countries, predominantly in Ecuador. These practices and processes point us to the constitution of postcolonial modern nations in the Andes, and to the historical production of commonplaces of national identity. Their examination requires us to highlight the strategic function of foundational myths of national identity as situated at the core of operations of domination, mainly aimed at relinking indigenous and subaltern groups to the centrality of the State.

A central line of inquiry here rests in intending to expose the pivotal role of images of the "land of the nation as indigenous" in the constitution of a racialized subject (Olson, 2014). It is assumed that these images of "land-indigeneity" participated in the configuration of an economy of vision that, organized following the principles of modern knowledge, transformed "race in technology of vision in the Andes" (Poole 2008, 16). This line of inquiry, which is also useful to situate the concept of "landscape" as an object of thought within the artistic projects examined in the thesis, establishes the terrain within which to investigate in the second section of this chapter: how cultural difference was produced in the postcolonial Andes, when considering this question from the field of listening. In this respect, "the types of questions and relations that the worlding of sound enables" are introduced in this latter section. Through these examples, I seek to underline

the political role of an economy of subaltern auralities in broadening the contemporary field of hegemonic struggle.

1.1 Landscape of Difference

With respect to the formation of the postcolonial nation of Ecuador, Christa J. Olson states that the processes that have constituted the senses of *being Ecuadorian* are largely determined by the vision of the land of the nation as indigenous.[6] To support this claim, she attends to a heterogeneous set of nationally resonant discourses and practices along the process of formation of the space of modernity in this country (1860-1950), exposing the mythical foundational force of the imaginary of "the Indian" as integrated into the land of the nation. As exposed by Olson and other authors, this nation´s original image mirrored the elite´s anxieties about the country's predominantly indigenous population as culturally and racially backward and as obstacle to progress (León, 2010; Pérez, 2005).[7] Entrapped within the ambivalent figure of the cultivated/uncultivated, these stereotypes have been hegemonic in Ecuador (Clark, 1998).[8]

[6] Christa J. Olson, *Constitutive Visions: Indigeneity and Commonplaces of National Identity in Republican Ecuador* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014). C. Olson takes as a point of reference Kenneth Burke's studies on the formation of US constitutional law. Her conceptual tools belong to a field of rhetorical and constitutional analysis, and are oriented to examine the performative force of constitutional texts in shaping the social. For Olson, similar to other constitutional rhetoricians mentioned in her study, such force should be understood to be located in what is defined as 'constitutions behind constitutions.' It means that the nation´s main regulatory chart fulfills its strategic ends through a disparate set of multimodal and resilient materials, include artistic images that circulate in different spaces, including daily life.

[7] Christian León, *Reinventando al otro. El documental indigenista en Ecuador* (Ministerio de Cultura del Ecuador, Quito, 2010). Trinidad Pérez, "Exoticism, Alterity, and the Ecuadorean Elite: The Work of Camilo Egas," in *Images of Power: Iconography, Culture and the State in Latin America*, eds. Jens Andermann and William Rowe, (New York: Berghahn, 2006).

[8] Kim Clark, "Racial Ideologies and the Quest for National Development: Debating the Agrarian Problem in Ecuador (1930-50)," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30, no. 2 (1998): 373-393.

The underlying racialized ideologies regarding this vision of a subject lacking-in-culture, and thus in need of being cultivated, have produced countless sociocultural and political effects that, ultimately, explain the consuetudinary situation of marginalization and exclusion experienced by indigenous and subaltern groups. In fact, the perception of the indigenous population's backwardness with respect to the progressive movement of modernity has been functional to the State's strategic aim of relinking regional and local differences to its centralized operations. Likewise, engendering a dependent subaltern subject, adjustable to the social demands implied mainly in the nation's programs of modernization, has been congruent with the paternalistic relation the state's elites have established with indigenous groups—a type of relation that has marked the processes leading to their incorporation into the body of the Ecuadorian nation.

For Olson, the recurrent and strategic invocation of the land of the nation as indigenous by part of the white-mestizo elites during the period between 1860 and 1950, is "the most striking element of that common sense that built national identity" (Olson 2015, 11). Moreover, she suggests that these *topoi* of identity "circulated most widely in pictorial images. Ecuadorian artists and image makers pictured indigenous people in ways that echoed and legitimized the political roles made available to them in successive national charters. Political texts picked up visions of the nation circulated most widely in pictorial images" (Ibid., 27). Paradigmatic examples of the images referred to by Olson are easily found in the artistic production of the most emblematic painters, such as Joaquín Pinto, Antonio Salas, Agustín Guerrero, Rafael Troya, Camilo Egas, Eduardo

Kingman, Oswaldo Guayasamín, among others, whose styles are approached within the genres and tendencies of *costumbrismo*, landscape, *indianismo*, and *indigenismo*.[9]

For Olson, visual representations of the land of the nation as indigenous, a fundamental component of what she defines as *topoi* of "Land-Indigeneity," have functioned in Ecuador as "constitutions-behind-the-Constitutions."[10] The constitutive force of these common visions of a shared geography and history is so powerful as to "organize our sentiments, beliefs, and actions in the lifeworld," and a force that arises from the "generative potential of the familiar" to invite social identification, would explain their enduring and resilient determination in contemporary arrangements (Ibid., 8).[11] Olson's keen observations about how lasting senses of *Ecuadorianess* are activated by unfolding the visual dimension of the identity topoi of Land-Indigeneity leads us to consider the pivotal role of *images of the landscape of the nation* in informing

[9] A brief glance to the pictorial production of all these artists will inform us of the relevance in their works of the nexus between landscape and indigeneity. We can also notice the emphasis placed in depicting indigenous in relation to uncultivated land is dominant in artists producing during the second part of the XIX century, such as Troya, Pinto, Guerrero, in concordance with a dominant political discourse about indigenous as unable of adopting the guides of civilization by themselves due to their biological degeneration. If we compare with artists producing since the decade of 1920s, a moment when political discourse about indigenous, impacted by new liberal ideas, see them as potential actors of the national development, this emphasis change and is placed in depicted them in relation to cultivated land.

[10] As Olson mentions, by approaching conceptual, symbolic, and contextual aspects implicated in the making of the twelfth Ecuadorian political constitutions between 1862 and 1947, her aim is "to bring into sharp focus the roles played in nation making by both political Constitutions and the collections of artifacts and acts surrounding those documents—visual elements, political performances, and the material experiences of everyday life—, what K. Burke terms a "Constitution-Behind-the-Constitution" (Ibid., 26).

[11] Among the series of multiple manifestations of such enduringness in the last decades in Ecuador, particularly during the government of the Revolución Ciudadana led by Rafael Correa Delgado, the constitutional recognition of 'nature' as subject of rights can be seen as prevalent. Stated in the last Ecuadorian constitutional chart (2008), this world's unprecedented constitutional right granted to nature had the hegemonic potency to convoke a broad spectrum of social groups around a national agenda, included those belonging to the so called indigenous nationalities. It is important to note that the consignation of this right was produced in the middle of a political process characterized by the intensive presence of the State through politics of social investment, and after a period of neoliberalism. Such renewed presence of the State activated the foundational referents of the Ecuadorian identity through media images of the landscape of the nation, accompanied of the rhetoric catchwords of "The Homeland Belongs now to Everybody."

"economies of vision," within cultural contexts where the "Indian problem" has been regarded as central.[12]

Olson's analysis of the rhetoric force of these images as "constitutions-behind-the-constitution," emphasizes their favorable functionality in terms of organizing a system of equivalence and interchangeability, dependent on institutional, discursive, and technical arrangements. As she notes, these images of national identity—due to what is praised as their elasticity, resilience, and multimodality—not only informed the modern public life of Ecuadorians, but also became "sites of social negotiation in moments of social arrest".[13] As Olson claims, these commonplaces of identity have worked as sites of identification and negotiation, thus pointing to their hegemonic potency. However, I consider their constitutive functionality should be understood within the frame of a foundational racism of the Ecuadorian state. I want to suggest that it is within this frame that the theoretical relevance of commonplaces of identity should be understood,

[12] As the Indian 'problem' we refer to the elite's anxieties about what they saw as the main causes of the backwardness inherent to their conational indigenous. Kim Clark mentions that "in discussions of the Indian 'problem' during the 1930s and 1940s in Ecuador, two basic interpretations were seen as the causes of the Indian's non-progressiveness." The first "was focused on the biological roots of indigenous degeneration, while the other focused on their lack of 'culture', defined as education." The first interpretation supposed that "behaviorally-oriented issues such as hygiene, nutrition, alcoholism, and disease, […] were seen as acting over generations. From this perspective, in order to resolve social problems, one must first improve the biological conditions of *campesinos*" (Clark 1998, 382). The second supposed that "Illiterate Indians were considered to be dead weights on national progress and 'passive' elements not participating in the national polity, given that full citizenship required literacy. Thus the solution to the indigenous problem must begin with education. This perception was often directly translated into policy" (Ibid., 383).

[13] Olson mentions that "though the commonplace connecting indigeneity to the land was forged most prominently and consistently by white-mestizo elites and generally served their national projects, indigenous communities also accessed the *topos* and worked within its bounds to gain their own ends. Accounting for both dominant and resistant uses allows a sense of the full persuasive force of the *topos* to emerge" (Olson 2015, 55).

regarding the proposal of examining the social production of meanings and values attached to the concept of *otherness* in Andean contexts.

Deborah Poole's question about how difference became knowable in the explosive terrain of the Andean postcolonial relations is key in supporting this appreciation, due to how she attends to the formation of a visual economy that is organized onto the intersections of vision, race, and modernity for its elaboration.[14] Following Poole, the analysis of the social production of a subaltern "other" in the nation of Peru during a period congruent with Olson's study, demands attention to the intricacies of an economy of vision that is determined by the convergence of an emerging idea of race as a material, historical, and biological fact, and the expansion of visual techniques identified with the emergence of a "modern observer" (Poole 1997, 23).[15] As she argues, "a new discourse of embodied racial difference grounded in the sciences of biology and comparative anatomy" and "tailored to the specific political, geographic, and cultural realities of the Andes," met the implementation of modern visual descriptive procedures that were mostly applied in these realities to the determination of social types.[16]

[14] Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[15] Poole's approach of the application of visual techniques addressed to make visible the racial difference in the Andes is based on Jonathan Crary's analysis of the transformation of the field of vision during the first decades of XIX century, transformations leading to what Crary defines as the production of a modern observer. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990).

[16] Manifestations of the change referred by Poole in the pictorial production in the Andes is easily traceable during the second part of the XIX century, when we observe the increased attention during this period, as in the genre of *costumbrista* painting, to the physiognomy and phenotype features of the depicted subjects, mostly belonging to the category of 'people' at use at that time, and to subaltern groups.

As Poole states, debates on the techniques of physiognomy and phenotype description were prevalent among scientific travelers, image makers, and postcolonial cultivated elites by the end of the nineteenth century. These debates manifested an important transformation in the field of vision while extending some of "the principal concerns animating Europe's visual encounter with Andean peoples," an encounter where "the counterpoint between sensuous imagination and imperious knowledge acquired particular characteristics" (Ibid., 20).[17] Alongside this process, the determination of racial phenotypes was framed by the adoption of visual techniques aligned with the statistical technologies, moral discourses, and the regulatory power of the normalizing state (Ibid:16). Within the bio-administrative regime of the Peruvian modern state, Poole suggests that "race was perfected as a normalizing technology of vision," following "the principles of typification, comparability, and equivalence around which the broad epistemic field of modernity was organized" (Ibid., 14).

Seeing through Poole's lenses, these images of land-indigeneity, lying at the mythical foundation of Ecuadorian identity, can be exposed as signifying within a modern economy of vision, whose mechanisms of value were largely realized on the site

[17] For Poole, Alexander Humboldt is the symptomatic body of this counterpoint finally resolved through the prevalence of techniques of seeing congruent with the emergence of the "modern observer." His physiognomic method accounts for a transit from a classical to a modern episteme, transit characterized by the adoption of techniques of spatialization and typification aimed at managing an objective classification of natural species. Poole foregrounds that what underlies Humboldt's physiognomic method is a deep transformation in the perception of space. The modern techniques of spatialization and typification manifest a renewed conception of the space as made of discreet, fragmentary, discontinuous units, and whose apprehension can thus be managed by the abstractive procedures (serialization, standardization, and codification) that instill the logic of equivalence and comparison underlying the 'science' of types. Humboldt's disposition toward the description of nature through its intensive observation, derived in the application of physiognomic techniques that can be later found in the army of nineteenth century traveler artists and scientists, whose images of Andean people informed the European and local perceptions of the cultural difference.

of race. Moreover, seeing through the intersections of vision, race, and modernity, these images of national identity are highlighted as part of a regime of power and representation, whose principles of organization are congruent with social demands propelled by the expansive logic of modern capitalism. The adoption of these perspectives invites us to put into play analytical tools from within the field of contemporary art, with the aim of further examining the relevant place of visual topoi of land-identity regarding processes and practices leading to the production of meanings and values attached to the concept of otherness in Andean countries. As Olson states with respect to modern Ecuador, the potency of images making visible the land of the nation as indigenous rests in producing an enduring sense of identity, and thus in producing attachments to the nation largely based on hegemonic visions of otherness.

These images of the geography of the nation have tended to update what can be seen as the foundational racism inherent to the formation of the postcolonial Andean states, participating in an economy of vision functional to the state elites' demands, and thus constitutive of a hegemonic order of social relations. Renewed theoretical approaches to the tradition of landscape painting can be considered useful to recognize that the intensive production of these kinds of images in postcolonial Andean contexts, were integral to the constitution of a broad field of social relations. In the same order, these approaches may be useful for recognizing that the nationalist production of the landscape paintings in countries of the Andean region such as Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador, speak to us of an observer educated by apparatuses of seeing, in which "the scientific findings of a new conception of the world are inscribed" (Weibel 2014, 444). Such production that shares the practice of signifying indigenous bodies within the trope

of cultivated/uncultivated land, speak to us of a modern observer who extended abstractive procedures of description of nature towards making difference knowable.

For media theoretician and conceptual artist Peter Weibel, the consolidation of the genre of landscape painting during the European seventeenth century responded to the need of a strategic knowledge of the territory and space in a warrior century.[18] Through this observation, Weibel emphasizes the fact that the vision of emblematic landscape painters broadly coincided with an all-encompassing sovereign view of the early modern state, a view determined by "military and economic policies of expansion that were continuously reinforced in colonial expansion" (Weibel 2014, 444). For Weibel, the evolution of this genre in the following centuries should not be explained in the habitual terms of a history of naturalist painting, but in terms addressed to situating the emergent artists' vision of the landscape within changes in the field of perception. What in general terms characterizes the emergent vision of this modern landscape painter is both "his disposition toward the description of nature through its intensive observation," and his eagerness to "summarily represent extensive areas that could only be encompassed from the air." To fulfill this commitment, a painter such as Pieter Snayers "chose a bird's-eye view [when] he placed the viewpoint just below the clouds and broadened the field of vision like a wide-angle lens" (Ibid., 439).

[18] During the 17th century, "the omniscient view onto the landscapes of the mythological and Christian world-landscapes was transformed into a profane gaze that rulers and monarchs could let wander over their supposedly boundless territories. As artists made records of the geostrategic features of these political landscapes, they consolidated the historical pretensions of their commissioning patrons" (Ibid., 439). Landscape painters were involved in a trend of production that included works related with "fortification systems, fort constructions, sanitation, transportation and, especially, sailing fleet navigation" (Ibid., 444). Ulrike Gehring, Peter Weibel, and Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe. *Mapping Spaces: Networks of Knowledge in 17th Century Landscape Painting* (Münich;Karlsruhe;: ZKM, 2014).

Peter Weibel's study of seventeenth century landscape painting is aimed at exposing the production of this artistic tradition in its full political scope. In so doing, his study allows us to identify this tradition as modelled by a "descriptive disposition through the intensive observation of nature." Furthermore, Weibel's emphasis on the need to understand such descriptive disposition as part of a change in the field of perception, offers us an important conceptual register for interrogating the above-mentioned process and practices regarding how difference become knowable in the Andes. Deborah Poole suggests, difference becomes knowable in the Andes through the translation of physiognomic methods applied to the classification of natural species into descriptive techniques of racial phenotypes based on new conceptions of race as a biological fact (Poole, 1997).

The attention to the tradition of the landscape painting in the terms proposed by Weibel can indeed be oriented to consider other registers of the topoi of land-indigeneity regarding their constitutive force to produce attachments to the nation. The acknowledgement that modern visions of the landscape are affirmed by a territorial view of the space exposes the geographical dimension of images of the land of the nation as an important force to produce perceptions of the difference. By acknowledging the mapping and cartographic descriptive impulse that informs the epistemic field where the modern tradition of the landscape emerges, the visions of a shared geography of the nation appear to us as mobilizing a more complex set of forces within the intricacies of a modern visual economy in the Andes. It is a visual economy aimed at amalgamating a homogenous and hierarchical social body, and thus producing "viewers" determined by experiences of being situated *in relation to*…

The relevance of national identity visions of a shared geography in producing an order of social relations in modern Peru is explored by Latin American historian Paulo Drinot, who suggests that ideas about the Peru of the coast *and* the Peru of the Andes (about urban Peru *and* rural Peru) stand behind perceptions about the progressiveness of white/mestizo *and* the backwardness of indigenous in this country. For Drinot, these ideas that resound with imaginary fantasies about the geography of the nation, shaped racialized conceptions about the nature of work and the nature of workers, and thus these were integral to an understanding of the elites' project of industrialization in terms of transforming "passive Indians" into progressive workers.[19] Following Drinot, such images of land-indigeneity signified within a racial visual economy are inherent to the foundational myths of the postcolonial Peruvian nation-state. These images functioned as place-making entities with the potential to assign a *place* to every conational being key to the marking of who belongs to the category of citizenship.

Weibel's study, which recognizes the resonance between geographical imaginaries of the nation and the territorial foundation of the modern tradition of landscape, is important. It recognizes that, far from signifying within the semiotics of their depicting spatial guides, visions of landscape of the nation signify in-between mechanisms addressed to the production of subjects. This is why their symbolic hegemonic function is willingly exceeded all the time and by all the sides. The

[19] These ideas filled up in a process through which labor acquired a specific governmental function. For Drinot, the attention to the labor policies articulated as part of early industrialization project exposes how race played a key role "in the inscription of biopower/governmentality as a key mechanism of state power" (Drinot 2011, 9). To support this claim, he examines the administrative strategies underlying the state's social programs "in four state agencies created to address the labor question in the 1920s and 1930s, and to implement new labor laws and the labor provisions of the 1920 and 1933 constitutions" (Ibid., 5).

mechanism through which these images produce spaces of fantasy and imagination that serve "as vehicles for expressing and strengthening attachments to nation, race and empire" (Poole 1997, 19), are largely based on social drives "to see" that the "synoptic view" of the state orients "to count, manipulate, measure and assess" (Scott 1998, 15). Constitutive of modern apparatuses of vision (considering the "landscape" as one of these), these gazing social drives seem to be intensified when the expected search for pure, transparent, and objective abstractions that the modern observer privileges, are threatened by the eruption of the alterity's opacity. By identifying this gazing impulse, we could further argue that modern visions of difference are affirmed on figurations of nature as in need of being cultivated.

The ideas, concepts, and theories presented in this section foreground an analysis of practices and processes that have informed a system of meanings about cultural difference in the Andes. Attending to a symbolic economy of vision in which underlying technologies born from the desire "to see"—apparatuses of vision in which "the scientific findings of a new conception of the world are inscribed"—are aimed at acknowledging the fantasy surplus operating at the limits of the symbolic function of commonplaces of national identity. Thus, we can recognize that the hegemonic perceptions of the other are always defined by a radius of relations addressed to exclude the opacity of the difference. Following this approach, the examination of visual topoi of land-indigeneity in the production of hegemonic perceptions of "the other" in the Andes exposes their racialized foundation as entangled with psychical forces that, *in the between of our perception and consciousness*, are at play regarding our involvement with representations of the "landscape" of the nation.

1.2 Collaborative Listenings

Brandon Labelle opens his book "Acoustic Territories" by suggesting that his artistic and writing itinerary on the subjects of space and sound is woven together with the attention to the following question: *Where do sounds come from and where do they go?*

> . . . The seemingly innocent trajectory of sound as it moves from its source and toward a listener, without forgetting all the surfaces, bodies, and other sounds it brushes against, is a story imparting a great deal of information fully charged with geographic, social, psychological, and emotional energy (LaBelle, xvi).

Rehearsing an imaginary *scape through sound* made of complex and unforeseen interrelations, LaBelle invites us to consider the voice in its relation to the constitution of an "I". The voice's path delineates a field of affective forces regarding the constitution of the subject's identity, which differs from the "mirror model" based on the distanced externality of vision. Through its projection, the voice touches others and the self, sounding inside and outside of me, in every place and all the time, while announcing its return to the speaking body.

LaBelle's opening remarks also emphasize sound's main characteristics—its inherent relationality and material evanescence—in regards to the voiced subject. In so doing, he grants us a perception of this subject´s identity as marked by the ephemerality of its own place, and as he suggests, an appropriated perceptual scheme for considering agency facing the continuous networking required in a situation of globalization. Likewise, his attention to the voice's ambiguous materiality—the fact that its partly bodily tone is spectrally realized in the shared medium of air—invites us to understand the constitution of that subject in the order of the relational, an order that differs from that

defined by the search of the essential through primordial entities such as God, the Logos, the Word.

In what follows I consider notions of agency and positionality from the order of the accent, the tone, the timbre, the resonance and the noise (Nancy 2007). What LaBelle calls the relational lessons of sound art, his effort to conceptualize sound art in terms of modes of listening, is key in this proposal (LaBelle, 2006). Furthermore, following Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier, I introduce "the types of questions and relations that the worlding of sound enables," already echoed through the opening reference to the voiced subject, by interrogating the place of listening regarding, above-all, the constitution of a subaltern postcolonial subject in the Andes (Ochoa Gautier, 2014).

By introducing these questions, and establishing in some passages a tension between the aural and the visual, I intend to situate a central proposal in my research: exploring the relevance of an aural turn within the field of contemporary art, a turn that unfolds the dialogical drives of time-based art practices present in this field at least since the 1960s (Kester, 2004). In so doing, however, I am aware of not reproducing the binary opposition, and/or hierarchy between the eye and the ear, Jonathan Sterne terms as "the audiovisual litany" (Sterne, 2011). For Sterne, influential authors on contemporary accounts of communication history, such as Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong, have structured their theoretical perspectives "by sets of paired assumptions about the differences between seeing and hearing" (Ibid., 212). By doing so, these authors raised a "story of communication […] staged as a play in three acts: orality, literacy, and electronic consciousness" (Ibid., 208). In this story, orality conceived as sound-based culture is fabricated as the other of writing conceived as visual-based culture; and,

furthermore, is apprehended as a propitious category to mark cultural differences in non-Western societies.[20]

What is at stake in Stern's critique of the audiovisual litany is that the category of orality may be conductive for reproducing an idealization of the cultural other as the recipient of a preliterate Western consciousness. This form of romantic idealization is evident in McLuhan and Ong's characterization of the impact brought about by the rise of electronic media, as the return of the oral cultures or "second orality."[21] For Sterne, the "difference between orality and literacy as based on the difference between the ear and the eye," intends to reduce the oral tradition to what was assumed by McLuhan as "its aural nature" (Ibid., 210). Stern exemplifies this observation by referring to Paul Heyer and David Crowley's analysis of the different approaches to oral tradition proposed by Harold Innis. Heyer and Crowley argue that Innis' most important feature of the oral tradition is not its "aural nature," but "the fact that it emphasizes dialogue and inhibits the emergence of monopolies of knowledge leading to overarching political authority, territorial expansion, and the inequitable distribution of power and wealth." (Ibid., 210) Accordingly, Innis's attention to the dialogical aspects of oral tradition opened the way to consider the oral/literature contrast as an element in a critical theory of knowledge.

[20] Stern stresses the influence that "Christian theological debates […] that went on during the early and mid-twentieth century" had on McLuhan and Ong´s thinking arguing that "orality operates as such a weighty *doxa* in communication historiography precisely because it animates the category of Christian spiritualism" (Ibid., 209).

[21] As Sterne notices, this electronic post-literacy returning of orality didn't come accompanied, however, by the incorporation of voices of indigenous groups to the mainstream media in Canada. Sterne thus allows us to identify political effects derived from McLuhan and Ong's spiritualized definition of "oral consciousness as a sonic consciousness."

Following Stern, it could be said that for Innis the oral/literature dyad functioned as a critical strategy addressed to emphasize the relevance of the dialogical regarding the need of questioning a hegemonic order in the production of knowledge, an order largely based on dogma. In this regard, Innis' position illustrates how setting a productive tension between the eye and the ear can be resolved in orientating a critical inquiry about the contemporary condition for cultural production. It could be further said that by highlighting the dialogical features implied in orality, such critical inquiry mobilizes pertinent questions about historical modes of listening that point to a system of differences built upon the ear as a site of domination.

Ochoa Gautier's notion of "contrastive listenings" provides an important conceptual locus for considering questions about modes of listening in regards to the constitution of a subaltern postcolonial subject in the Andes (Ochoa Gautier, 2014). Through this concept, Ochoa exposes how the voice, in its relation to the ear, was a fundamental site for the assemblage of apparatus of listening addressed to the production of citizens in the formation of the postcolonial Colombian nation.[22] Her understanding of the formation of the Colombian national archive as constituted equally from written and aural materials sustains her claim that by listening to this archive against the grain, the encounter with the other in the Andes is exposed as fueled by the interactions of different understanding of the human voice, and "their cosmological underpinnings" (Ibid., 4).

[22] Ochoa Gautier's central conceptual reference is Fabián Ludeña´s anthropotechnologies (Ibid., 2014, 210. She mentions that Ludeña uses this term "to depict the different processes of constitution of the voice as an instrument of political transformation of the boundary between human and nonhumans in the history of hominization. This term brings to the foreground the biopolitical slant of Foucault's idea of governmentality by emphasizing the historical process of constitution of the human species as a product of the techniques through which the "species *Homo sapiens* acts over its own animal nature" (Ludeña 2010, 11).

Ochoa Gautier's "acoustically tuned exploration" of the Colombian nation archive—as crowded by "audible techniques" that ultimately have produced contemporary senses of "local culture and local nature, as well as, a 'refunctionalization of the ear' […] and its relation to the voice"—situates the relevance of sounding procedures as a matter of broadening the spectrum of the ethnographic task of listening to the difference (Ibid., 3). This endeavor is consistent with her adoption of aural figures such as the *spectral* to refer to how the acoustics of the worldly sound appear "as particularly disseminated across different modes of inscription and textualities" (Ibid., 8). Furthermore, it is consistent with her commitment to a practice that Stefan Helmerich defines as *transductive ethnography*, a practice that foregrounds a mode of acoustic attention addressed to "ask how definitions of subjects, objects and field emerge in material relations that cannot be modeled in advance" (Ibid., 24).

Her sounding research program is concerned with how difference became knowable in the explosive terrain of postcolonial Andean relations. Here, the notion of *transductive ethnography* appears as congruent with "the need to explore the richness of a multiplicity of variables among what different people consider the given and what they consider the made that come together in the acoustic" (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 22). Her approach presupposes a prevalent aural attention to the liminal place of local subaltern groups in the making of the acoustic of the nation, and, in this regard, she foregrounds the pertinence of Stefan Helmerich's suggestion that "a transductive ear can help to audit the boundaries, to listen for how subjects, objects, and presences—at various scales—are made" (Ibid., 24).

The attention to the edge of a sound and its listening as a matter of contrastive

resonances, attention attuned with Ochoa Gautier's acoustically tuned exploration of Colombian local differences, can be indeed seen as a fundamental endeavor in artistic search. In sound art installations—where interrelations are delineated upon the logistic of acoustic implications or in tension with the sonorous sense—the listener is situated in the presence of a self that emerges as a form or function "of referral, thus in spacing and resonance" (Nancy 2007, 9). The listener is situated in the place of a subject that "feels himself feeling a 'self'", which Jean-Luc Nancy argues is not "a relationship 'to me' (the supposedly given subject), or to the 'self' of the other (the speaker, the musician, also supposedly given, with his subjectivity), but to the *relationship in self*" (Ibid., 12). For Nancy, this kind of tension towards the sonorous sense presupposes a mode of communication that situates the listener in the presence of an access to the "itself" of the relationship (Ibid., 27). The implication of considering notions of agency and positionality from the order of the sonorous, point us to this access in which the listeners participate in a "reality" that this author describes as "indissociably 'mine' and 'other,' 'singular' and 'plural,' as much as it is 'material' and 'spiritual' and 'signifying' and 'a-signifying'" (Ibid., 26).

Key foundational pieces in sound art, such as *I am sitting in a room* by Alvin Lucier (1969) and *4´33* by John Cage (1952), bring us close to such "opening stretched toward the register of the sonorous" about which Nancy elaborates. In Alvin Lucier's emblematic sound piece, a short text that is conceptually and poetically meaningful, is reread in a loop by the artist himself.[23] In the process of repetition—and like any kind of

[23] "I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies

repetition subjected to the contingencies, mistakes and imperfections of the apparatuses including the ear and the voice—the sound of the words emitted by the artist interact with the specific acoustic conditions of the site. Lucier refers to this process as one in which the resonant frequencies of the room are reinforced by the repetition of "the speaking voice's sound until any resemblance of the speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed." Conflated within the dynamic interrelation between sound and space, the words become part of "remissions between the meaning and the sonorous sense." The empirical experience provided by Lucier's piece about sound's complex spatial phenomenology, reminds us that sounding is always a resounding, and thus a placing in resonance that positions the subject "in the 'itself' of the relationship" (Nancy 2007, 25).

The artistic exploration of the interrelations between sound and space, which for Brandon LaBelle is the central preoccupation of sound art, has informed a privileged field of practices for examining sound's properties in relation with such reflexive condition of listening emphasized by Jean-Luc Nancy. In this regard, works such as those by the above-mentioned Alvin Lucier would advance a definition of modes of listening led by the attention to the capacity of sound materiality to produce spatial events. Following LaBelle, this particular history of modes of listening is broadly based on the attention to how sounds "multiply and expand space, and in so doing generate listeners and a multiplicity of acoustical 'viewpoints'." Equally important, this history is based on the recognition that "sound occurs between bodies. […] Bodies lend (a) dynamic to any

of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have" UbuWeb. "Alvin Lucier." http://www.ubu.com/sound/lucier.html (accessed February 2, 2018).

acoustical play, contributing to the modulation of sound, its reflection and reverberation, its volume and intensity, and ultimately to what it communicates" (Ibid., x).

One of the fundamental lessons of sound art, LaBelle suggests, is the understanding that listening is "a form of participation in the sharing of a sound event, however banal." Moreover, occurring through different constitutive boundaries of "subjects, objects, and presences—at various scales—," this form of participation remits modes of spatiality that reaffirm the fact that "sound is never a private affair" (Ibid., x). This form of participation—"indissociably 'mine' and 'other,' 'singular' and 'plural,' as much as it is 'material' and 'spiritual' and 'signifying' and 'a-signifying'", as Nancy would say—overflows the terrain of the symbolic by redrawing the guidelines of the form, the body, and the place (and it happens all time by all the sides). In other words, in the sharing of a sound event, "form, idea, painting, representation, aspect, phenomena, composition," as stable referents, are undermined "for sound is marked by its immediacy" (Nancy 2007, 30) (LaBelle 2006, 62).[24]

I consider that such acoustic modes of spatiality, attuned with sound's resounding phenomenology, relate to a kind of agency David Harvey finds acting within the dialectic of space and place: "the carving out "permanences" from the flow of processes creates spaces" (Harvey 1996, 261).[25] Following Michel de Certeau and Alfred N. Whitehead,

[24] "[…]: in moving against the codes of representational meaning, it slips undercover to surprise the listener; it commands attention and disrupts the dividing line between subjects and objects; it happens all the time, from all sides" (LaBelle 2006, 62).

[25]. "Whitehead's doctrine of "permanences" firms up the idea. A "permanence" arises as a system of "extensive connection" out of processes. Entities achieve relative stability in their bounding and their internal ordering of processes creating space, for a time. Such permanences come to occupy a piece of a space in an exclusive way (for a time) and thereby define a place –their place- (for a time). [...] that place, like space, has no absolute reality. It is he insists, only a relation […] But relations are not equally present

Harvey mentions that this dialectic teaches us that "'permanences' [or, we would say, places]—no matter how solid they may seem—are contingent on the processes that create, sustain and dissolve them." Moreover, Harvey suggests that a place-space dialectic teaches us that a productive kind of agency is inherent to concepts of "positionality" and "situatedness" affirmed within material processes inherent to the production of space.[26] Adopting Harvey's suggestion, we could say that agency in terms of a resounding phenomenology is inherent to those concepts of "positionality" and "situatedness." This is so since sound's potential material for multiplying and expanding space is affirmed through the indexing of its own immediacy.

To consider this kind of acoustic agency, I turn back to Brandon LaBelle's relational lessons of sound art, and particularly to his analysis of activities that he considers to have developed expanded modes of listening by appropriating the context of the musical. LaBelle observes that the appropriation of the context of the musical by Fluxus artists, and the Ongaku group during the 1960s, was marked by the exploration of the "potentiality of sound and its use […] to bring with it questions of immediacy and presence" (LaBelle 2006, 35). The Japanese collective Ongaku "approached musical production as a space of action or performance, sounds result as by-products, as traces of

because" the concept of place marks the disclosure in sense-awareness of entities in nature known merely by their spatial relations to discerned entities (Whitehead, 1920: 52)" (Harvey 1996, 261).

26. "It is for this reason that we can reasonably speak of "spaces of liberation" and "oppositional" spaces, even give practical meaning to Foucault's idea of a "heterotopia" (a space beyond and outside of the instrumentalities of surveillance)" (Ibid., 1996:263). Harvey writes that "in a recent formulation given by de Certeau (1984: 117), place is understood as "an instantaneous configuration of positions," implying "an indication of stability". Place is, then, the site of the inert body, reducible to the "being there" of something permanent, in contrast to the instabilities of motion creating space. In short, space is a practiced place" (Ibid., 262).

physical action exerted beyond the body and against the found" (Ibid., 36).[27] "By inserting the found environment and the body more dramatically into the folds of musical production, Ongaku set a process of musical innovation led by empirical research into existing conditions, where the body is more a form of technology" (Ibid., 41). Through these observations, LaBelle suggests that the appropriation of the context of the musical by Fluxus artists and the Ongaku group, marked a reflexive turn in sound art characterized by the exploration of expanded modes of aurality, a turn that may "draw into question the very context in which music is produced and received" (Ibid., 44). Following LaBelle, I want to suggest that this turn unfolded modes of acoustic attention addressed to listening at the edge of a sound and to listening within a transformed public condition of the sonorous event. In other words, it is situated within a process involving the refunctionalization of the ear and its relation to the voice mediated by sound immediacy, and manifested in the body's presence.[28]

LaBelle situates the Fluxus and Ongaku activities in a trajectory initiated by John Cage (contextual music) and Pierre Schaefer (concrete music), a trajectory marked first by the liberation of sound from the dominion of conventional music and later by its elaboration in experimental music. LaBelle writes, "in seeking to liberate sound," both pioneers of sound art "discovered and cultivated […] sound's ability to build presence

[27] "[…]: random objects function as possible instruments, group dynamic unfolds as a conversation intent on uncovering new terrain, and the musical moment acts as a frame in which the found, the body, and sound intertwine to form composition, as noise" (Ibid., 37).

[28] Examining Nan June Paik's *One for Violin* (1962), and Geoge Brecht *Incidental Music* (1961), Labelle defines Fluxus´ performances "as a process of using music (whether a sound is heard or not) to set the stage for perceptual immediacy. […] music as a direct route into the heart of perception […]. The embrace of sound reflects Fluxus's ambition to activate perception through a performative matrix that would bring situations into play, for sound is marked by its immediacy" (Ibid., 62).

through processes of material crafting […], as well as through a locational sensitivity" (LaBelle 2006, 33). By conceiving their activities in this way, LaBelle argues that "the beginning of experimental music is marked not only by developing sound as a category, aesthetic and other, but by locating it in relationship to space and the conditions through which listening literally *takes place*" (Ibid., 33). In this regard, the reflexive turn in sound art during the 1960s is marked by an increased sense of position and situation, and thus is consistent with the exploration of an expanded listening "by opening up the ordinary and the nonmusical as an instrumental category," including the body (Ibid., 41).

The insertion of the body into the folds of the context of the musical can thus be taken as a symptomatic cue of modes regarding acoustic attention unfolded within a transformed public condition of the sonorous event. We can notice that the exploratory relation to sound materiality in bodily actions and performance took place at the boundaries of practices of listening defined by central disciplinary process of modernity. Ochoa Gautier observes that one of the central disciplinary processes of modernity unfolding in the territory of Western music has to do with the emergence of the concept of 'musical work' in Europe in the eighteenth century, which led "to a disciplinization of musical fields that divided philology /folklore /linguistics from musical disciplines (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 211).[29] Ongaku's insertion of bodily action and found object within experimental music can thus be seen as situated at end of a trajectory that exposed the boundaries of such process of disciplinization. By highlighting the body as a form of technology, concepts of positionality and situatedness emerge from listening to the edge

[29] "One of the tenets of Western music history is that the emergence of the work concept in Europe in the eighteenth century provoked an emancipation of music from language" (2014: 210).

of “worldly” sound’s capability to index its own immediacy: to index practices of listening that have informed bodies, spaces, discourses, and thus the acoustics of the public through “the global circulation of discourses about music and language” (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 211).

Ochoa Gautier’s study of auralities in nineteenth century Colombia suggests that “the global circulation of discourses about music and language” during this period, informed the experiences of subaltern groups that were encapsulated in a “notion of people central to enlightened nationalist politics” (Ibid., 211). Determined by the modern impulse “of constituting objects as ‘separate’ through disciplining or purifying a particular sphere,” these discourses produced audible techniques that “parceled out types of acousticities and political-expressive roles ascribed to different peoples […], easily seen in the differentiation between art and folk music” (Ibid., 211). Ochoa Gautier argues that such parceling operated through the formalization of enlightenment modes of listening *simultaneously* to the organization of a body of local aural manifestations under the concept of orality. The immanent notion of orality and the transcendental notion of “musical work,” “thus exist as a mutually constituted pair by virtue of their simultaneous entanglement and differentiation in their role in the production of the idea of the person as an autonomous subject” (Ibid., 211).

Ochoa Gautier’s acoustic account of the colonial archive thereby foregrounds the relevance of audible techniques in constituting the borders of the space of citizenship in nineteenth century Colombia. The determination of such relevance calls attention to how “the voice is particularly poised to be used as disciplining force and yet it simultaneously easily reveals the limits of such a process” (Ibid., 209). Affirming this argument, she

states that "the acoustic object *simultaneously* names the potential of its governmentalization and the difficulty of its proper containment, its tendency to come out of bounds. Its use for a particular politics and epistemology does not define its ground of existence" (Ibid., 212).

In this regard, her notion of "contrastive listenings," introduced at the beginning of this section, signals the potentialities of an extended form of listening to audit the borders of the multiplicities of auralities interacting in the "explosive terrain of postcolonial relations." These borders are hearable precisely as a consequence of how the limits of techniques addressed by disciplining the voice were revealed at the very moment of governmentalizing its ambiguous material ontology. A *transductive* ear, which "asks how definitions of subjects, objects and field emerge in material relations that cannot be modeled in advance," would be able to listen to how modern audible techniques produced practices of listening in the Andes on the ambiguous borders of contradictory epistemologies and cosmologies. [30]

I consider that Ochoa Gautier's aural perspective is highly suggestive and pertinent to situating the critical relevance of relational lessons of sound art regarding mainly the productivity of art practices concerned with the contemporary conditions of subaltern cultural production. Her use of the notion of *transductive ear* seems to be precisely moved by the acknowledging that perceptual acts are an effect of remissions,

[30] Ochoa Gautier mentions that in Latin America and the Caribbean, techniques addressed at disciplining the voice in music and language "produced a dispersed disciplinization made of different combinations of ethnology, the literary-linguistic-philological and the musical." Also, she notes that a resulting fuzzy boundary zone regarding the disciplinization of vocality, "was tied to tensions between metropolitan and Americanist belongings as well as to the rise of new discourses and genres as a response to the conflicts posed by colonial dominance and by the politics of modernization" (Ibid., 211).

regarding a “self” that is placed in resonance and spaced within the public nature of the sonorous event. In the expanded material exploration of sound through the appropriation of musical context, we find a developed notion of expanded instrumentality where the body is more a form of technology. In the development of this notion, we observed the relevance of seminal experimental musicians who infused sound with locational sensitivity and material presence, thus setting the theoretical conditions for a history of modes of listening. In this history, perceptual acts reveal themselves as potentially open to informing new assemblages of spaces, where the echo of the difference “is made by making itself heard” (Nancy 2007, 22). As I turn my focus to Ecuador-based art projects, I continue to expand these ideas by examining the reflexive lenses of contemporary art practice and the subjectivities that emerge at the borders of disciplinary processes constitutive of the noisy acoustics of the nation.

Chapter 2

2 Mountains and Rivers without End

The exhibition *Mountains and Rivers without End* (hereafter MRWE) is an interdisciplinary group project involving artists and scholars from Canada and Ecuador. It offered the general public the opportunity to experience artwork by six contemporary artists based on research on the historical, social, and environmental effects of mining in a region of Ecuador. It began in the fall of 2014 as a joint project with my academic supervisor, Patrick Mahon, a Canadian artist and Professor of Visual Arts at Western University. The initial phase of MRWE consisted of a residency in the Ecuadorean towns of Portovelo and Zaruma during the summer of 2015. Its goal was to give members of our group of collaborating artists and researchers first-hand experience of the history and lingering effects of gold mining on the social, economic, and environmental fabric of the region surrounding these two towns. During their stay in Ecuador, members of MRWE had the opportunity to meet with residents of Portovelo and Zaruma, including the mayor of Portovelo and members of the town council, local historians, artists, writers, teachers, and many others, to engage in brief interactions involving day-to-day experience. The participants in MRWE, in turn, presented talks, free and open to the public, in several different venues in Portovelo and Zaruma, about their particular artworks or areas of expertise. The outcome of this process was a series of artworks and texts that were

exhibited in the cities of Cuenca and Quito in Ecuador, and London-ON in Canada, in 2016.[31]

The opportunity during the residency to set up multiple dialogic interactions, and undertake activities such as visiting meaningful places accompanied by local researchers, authorities, artists, and cultural actors from the province of El Oro, underlines the relevance of collaboration and dialogue for the unfolding of this project. This relevance should be appreciated as enabling the fulfilment of several key practical matters for MRWE realization, but above-all as enveloping the procedures and resulting form of the exhibited artworks. In the first part of this chapter, I present a conceptual framework for the main characteristics the artistic and collaborative process. In the second part, I analyze the artists' responses to their experience of visiting the region surrounding the towns of Portovelo and Zaruma, responses that were concretized in installations, videos, performances, collages, among other media. In taking this approach, I intend to expose how the collaborative and dialogic endeavors modelling its progression are inherent to MRWE's theoretical and artistic underpinnings.

As a way of introducing general information about the mining district of Portovelo and Zaruma, it is important to mention that the catalyst for initiating MRWE

[31] The last exhibition, hosted by the Visual Arts Department at Western University, the institution where MRWE was conceived and organized, was accompanied by the interdisciplinary conference *Art Beyond Itself: Mountains & Rivers without End*. This conference was aimed at stimulating discussions about the role that socially engaged art can play, as well as, at extending the debate around problematics focused on the exhibition, by including as key speaker the Ecuadorian scholar, Andrea Carrión, and scholars from Western University: Cody Barteet, Amanda Grzyb, and Kelly Jazvac, as well as Dianne Pearce.

was the presence in this region of looming and merging ecological and sociocultural problems, such as the contamination of the main bodies of water used for human consumption and the vanishing of the material memory belonging to these towns' gold mining legacy. The alarming contamination of the main rivers of the region with chemical products used in gold extraction is a major indicator of the sociocultural and environmental impact of mining activities. In overall temporal terms, this impact spans from the outset of colonial times, through an intensive period of industrial exploitation during the first decades of the twentieth century, and continuing until the present, when unregulated and illegal modes of small-scale and artisanal mining are prevalent. Likewise, abundant evidence regarding this extensive temporality, particularly the evidence of the regime of industrial production managed by the transnational South American Development Company (SADCO) between 1895 and 1945, is found in a diverse material substrata dispersed in architecture, archeology, apparatuses, industrial ruins, images, and documents.[32]

Adopting a mode of seeing that foregrounds the perceptible marks of the ruination of the region´s natural and cultural systems, as well as the heterogeneous and multi-temporal set of elements of material memory belonging to the mining districts, the landscape of the region emphasizes the important role art practices can play in order to address the urgent need of societies to reflect on imaginary figures that underlie its own hegemonic modes of organization (Mouffe, 2007). As suggested by

[32] SADCO created the Portovelo camp in 1895, which is the only case of the production of a dedicated gold mining industrial district in Ecuador (Carrión, 2016). SADCO's gold exploitation continued until 1945, leaving behind not only the know-how of modern geological extractive methods, but also and more relevant, a deep and often troubling transformation of the environment and culture of the region.

Chantal Mouffe, “art can play a central role in undermining the imaginary environment favorable for the reproduction of the program of total mobilization of capitalism, by directly intertwining in a multiplicity of social spaces” (Ibid., 1). This important endeavor would require, as Mouffe claims, “thinking politically.” In other words, it requires seeing the contemporary social order as a manifestation of power relations unfolding in the dominant arena of liberal politics, whose effects are materialized today in an intensive process of individualization (Mouffe, 2013).

The MRWE project echoes this important challenge for contemporary art practices, a challenge that is necessarily raised when seeing the post-mining cultural landscape of Portovelo and Zaruma’s district. Dialogically and collaboratively oriented, this project invites a discussion, through the inherently public nature of the exhibition device, about labor, migration, identity, globalization, environmental issues, among other matters, opening up spaces of reflection on problematics through which society has the opportunity to think about “its very consistency, its self-understanding” (Mouffe 2007, 1). Underlying these problematics, we can evince naturalized figurations involving nature that, as suggested by art historian Andrés Villar, “converge in the mine, the place where the extraction of materials that drive our world actually takes place.”[33] As revealed in the examination that follows, the title of the project suggests that the materialization of the modern concept of “natural” landscape as an infinite site of intervention, can be considered as a fundamental imaginary figure for what has become the dominant order of economic and cultural globalization. In

[33] Essay prepared for MRWE project, available at https://mrwe.org/andres-villar-mrwe/.

this respect, the artists' approach to the post-mining cultural landscape of this mining district, helped establish conceptual and rhetoric critical tools for inquiring into the production of a modern observer, present within the field of contemporary art.

The MRWE exhibitions included the committed participation of Canadian artist and educator Patrick Mahon, who has been involved in a long-term artistic research on the subject of water. Professor Mahon was a main collaborator in MRWE, making feasible its successful realization from the very beginning (Fall 2014), when he introduced me to a series of artworks and projects produced as part of a group research initiative on the theme of water that he directed.[34] Thus, I came to know the artistic production of renowned artist Gu Xiong (originally from China), and emerging artist Gautam Garoo (originally from India), who eventually joined our project. The artworks produced for the MRWE exhibitions by these artists proceeding from Canada, extended upon their reflexive quests about representations of water within different systems of meaning shaped by cultural phenomena related to colonialism and imperialism. The exhibitions had also the committed participation of the Ecuadorians Jenny Jaramillo, Esteban Ayala, and myself. The works we produced for the MRWE exhibitions were mainly based on the recollection and artistic elaboration of elements of material memory belonging to the region's mining legacy. In so doing, we expanded upon our specific lines of artistic inquiry into sociocultural manifestations shaped by historical processes inherent to the formation of Andean modernity. The expositions involved the important contribution of art historian Andrés Villar, an

[34] *The Source: Rethinking Water through Contemporary Art*, an exhibition presented at Rodman Hall Art Centre at Brock University in Canada in 2014 that brought together artists involved in the *Immersion Emergencies* project.

important collaborator throughout the development of the project. For all of the artists participating in these exhibitions, dialogue and collaboration with local researchers from El Oro province and from abroad was fundamental in the decisions regarding their artistic proposals. Due to the collaborative intentionality at every level of MRWE, it is also important to recognize the individuals whose support was fundamental for its fulfillment: Juan Luis Suárez, Joy James, Eliana Bohorque, Susan Edelstein, Andrea Carrión, Rodrigo Murrillo Carrión, Roy Sigüenza, Martha Romero, Magner Turner, Paulina López, and Enrique Madrid.

2.1 Collaboration and Dialogue

The process undergirding the realization of MRWE involved dialogic and collaborative dimensions organizing the politically motivated agenda of art practices located around what is recognized as the social turn in art, established during the 1990s.[35] The dialogic and collaborative impulse we find in conversational, participatory, relational art, for example, is manifested in today's profusion of activities largely committed to the design and provision of contexts for situational encounters, among subjects located within diverse cultural and social spaces. In this respect, art critic Grant Kester proposes in his analysis of conversational art pieces where "the artist as a context provider," favors a disposition to openness and empathy

[35] Authors like Claire Bishop, Grant Kester, Nicolas Bourriaud, Chantal Mouffe, and Jacques Rancière have contributed to the configuration of a theoretical frame oriented to critically assess the achievements and limitations of socially engaged art practices, whose increasing presence in the globalized field of Contemporary art since the decade of the nineties have brought to the center of the stage terms such as participation, collaboration, and community. Artists' intention and desire to directly intervene in the fabric of social life, or in "the horizon of human interrelation" (Bourriaud) are marked by diverse objectives, among others to design experimental models of sociability, to provide context for dialogical encounters, to facilitate the mutual understanding between groups in conflict, to raise consciousness on risky environmental situations, to promote empowerment and improvement of societal and communitarian conditions, and to foster creative collaboration in art and cultural production.

among participant persons or groups, even those being carriers of antagonist beliefs or interests regarding a determined issue. He thus praises the virtues of a dialogical artist, who sees his own "identity and the participant as produced through these situational encounters"; and, moreover, who understand the discursive interchange as a tool of subjective transformation aimed at promoting an ethics of recognition of the other (Kester 2004, 112).[36]

For Kester, a key issue regarding the political realization of an "aesthetic of dialogic exchange and collaborative interaction," rests in the dialogic artist's commitment to recovering the relational potencies of listening. Referencing Italian philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara, he suggests that exercising an experience of equality and recognition of the other through situational encounters would largely depend upon the commitment "to acknowledge and bring into being, the long-suppressed role of listening as an integral component of discursive knowledge" (Kester 1999, 26). In this regard, a dialogically produced identity can be seen as resisting "the assertive tradition of saying that has dominated western philosophy, and art"—a tradition underlying central processes of modernity, and thus the identity formation of a modern subject, whose uses of language have predominantly been addressed to "speaking, molding, informing." An aesthetic of dialogic exchange and

[36] For Kester, activities related with an aesthetic of dialogic exchange and collaborative interaction "are performative to the extent that they see the identity of the artist and the participant as produced through these situational encounters, but they are not subsumable within the traditions of performance art to the extent that these depend on the concept of the "performer" as the expressive locus of the work" (Kester, 1999: 1). However, he also recognizes that this kind of activities have an important seminal impulse in the marked processual orientation of contemporary art production. In affirming this orientation, Performance art at least since the 1970s has been key, where the artist's body marked by differences of race, class, and genre, have exposed the institutional conditions that determine the relation between the viewer and art object (Kester, 2004).

collaborative interaction is thus concerned with transcending this kind of use of language, addressed primarily to naming and classifying, while unfolding other senses of "logos" whose etymological origin in *logein*, Corradi Fiumara finds meaning "to lie with, to gather in, or to receive" (Ibid., 26). I suggest that the implications of this "aural turn" for contemporary art practice should be contemplated as addressing contemporary life's submission to an all-encompassing productive terrain, thus facing an intensive process of individualization whose major effects are detected in violent forms of suppression of difference, and occlusion of the constitutive plurality of social worlds.

2.2 *Individualization-as-lives*

The intensive discussions in the last decades about the so-called "social turn" in art—and particularly the dialogic and collaborative orientation of practices identified with this turn taking place since the 1990s—have revealed that the contemporary conditions for artistic and cultural production cannot be considered as marginal to the neoliberal intensification of capitalist principles of individualism and competitiveness, a phenomenon that sociologist Angela McRobbie defines as "individualization-as-lives." On this subject, McRobbie observes that the once politically-motivated assertion, "everyone is an artist," has become the instrumental, "Everyone is creative" in our societies of advanced cultural industries. Her observation points to the fact that the creative individual artist has become the privileged figure for the promotion of the "libertarian" rhetoric that "the mission of government is to 'free the creative potential of individuals'" (McRobbie 2011, 79). Relatedly, she further notes that "individualization [as] a strategy of government breathes fresh life into what had

become a redundant modernist conception of individual creativity as an inner force waiting to be unleashed." What is stressed in her remarks about the instrumental uses of the modernist conception of individual creativity is the fact that today's artistic and cultural production participates in the promotion of neoliberal politics whose main purpose is "to effect the transition from the mass worker to the individual freelancer," thus playing an important part in the process of capital valorization and capitalist productivity. In this regard, the commitment of dialogic and collaborative practices to developing models of sociality, participation, collaboration, and so on, risk submitting to the "libertarian" rhetoric addressed to the "encouragement to the socially disadvantaged"—most of the times perceived as a disadvantaged "other"—"to develop their own creative capacities" (Ibid., 78).

The critical analysis of the instrumental uses of "aesthetic strategies of the counter-culture" for the promotion of neoliberal tenets of individualism and competitiveness has thus tended to foreground problematic aspects considering the socially-engaged art practices' risk of submitting to neoliberal values. In this regard, Claire Bishop keenly observes that the majority of omnipresent socially-engaged art projects define their aims related to producing models of social interactions, in sociological terms (Bishop 2012, 16). As she notes, the critical assessment of these projects is dominantly defined in terms of their capability to counter social issues produced as a consequence of the post-welfare state's cutoff of social benefits. A related manifestation of Bishop's scrutiny, we can detect how the available stipends within art and cultural institutional venues are increasingly destined to the fulfillment of activities we recognize as proper of social workers, cultural mediators, and

community managers. Noticing these dominant institutional conditions are mostly oriented to engendering self-empowered individuals, we could say that the identity of the artist is markedly subjected to forms of neo-management aligned with the neoliberal strategy of producing "self-standing or self-sufficient individuals whose effort will not be hindered by the administrations of the state" (McRobbie 2011, 78).

As Mouffe mentions, quoting Andre Gorz, "when self-exploitation acquires a central role in the process of valorization, the production of subjectivity becomes a terrain of the central conflict" (Mouffe 2007, 1). Following this author, the opposition critical art practices could present to such phenomenon of life's submission to an all-encompassing productive terrain, would require identifying its underlying strategies of domination, and furthermore would require undermining the imaginary figures through which those strategies are realized by producing subjects and identities. For Mouffe, one of the strategies of domination within liberal politics rests in "concealing (the fact) that what is called 'political' is the expression of a particular structure of power relations," and thus rests in censoring that "things could always be otherwise—[that] every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities" (Mouffe 2007, 4). She further suggests that such concealing of the constitutive antagonism of the social, is realized through the strategic updating of one of the fundamental principles of liberalism: "the rationalist belief in the availability of a universal consensus based on reason" (Mouffe 2013, 29). The contemporary realization of the dangerous effects of such rationalist belief—a belief we could identify as the kernel of the modern democratic system, and also of the aesthetic culture of modernism—, points precisely to an intensification of practices of individualization, and thus to the production of

hegemonic perceptions about the other as in need of cultivation, needing to exploit his/her own creative potentialities.

From this perspective, the neo-liberalization of arts and culture supposes a series of challenges for socially committed art practices, regarding a phenomenon of "individualization-as-lives" that becomes effective by negating the consubstantial plurality of social worlds. Their relevant task in opposing the sociocultural effects of this phenomenon would consist in orienting art's capabilities to intertwine in the symbolic dimension of the social, advancing alternative modes of articulation among public spaces, and thus broadening the field of the hegemonic struggle (Mouffe, 2007). As proposed in the following, "by bringing into being the long-suppressed role of listening as an integral component of discursive knowledge," and thus by unfolding the political dimension of art, the realization of the MRWE project can be seen as congruent with the commitment of opening up the conditions for emergent sites of spectatorships and social identification.

2.3 MRWE processual listenings

MRWE´s collaborative and dialogical orientation was founded upon the recognition that by providing contexts aimed at fostering collaborative interactions and dialogic exchanges, artists can strengthen experiences of equality that favor a valuable recognition of difference.[37] The understanding of discourse as a transformative tool is a central

[37] As mentioned in the thesis introduction, working with groups of individuals and communities pertaining to cultural contexts very different than the one I originate from has allowed me to recognize and value the experiential and relational dimensions that envelop and model the constitution of identity. Such an acknowledgement, in turn, has thus provoked my attentiveness to the intercultural and dialogical potentialities ascribed to what can be defined as modes of listening; potentialities whose elaboration in artistic practice I have come to understand as necessary for the political activation of cultural difference into contemporary situations.

matter for collaboration and dialogue in art practices, an understanding that presupposes surpassing the enclosing of discursive knowledge within the Western dominant "assertive traditions of saying" aligned to "speaking, molding, informing" (Kester, 1999). It could be said that within situational encounters where saying is fulfilled through its listening, the voice sounds deeper than what is heard, and therefore participants respond to a momentum, a summons, a convocation of sense (Nancy 2007).[38] Likewise, in these situational encounters where the assertive instrumentality of discourse is suspended, and then the voice resounds "further than meaning and sense in itself," the radical relationality of social identities is exposed, and indeed the bodily presence as a fundamental condition of the public is highlighted. By bringing into being listening as an ontological openness constitutive of the self, the identities of the participants can be conceived as being produced through an experience of equality, and thus produced through a self-awareness empathetic regarding difference.

The residency in Portovelo and Zaruma during the summer of 2015, a central component of MRWE process, provided a situational encounter among participants embodying different cultural experiences, and proceeding from distinct disciplinary fields of humanities, social science and arts. The sonorities arising from this encounter included those of the participants' openness in their disposition to listen and to respond "to an impulse, call, pregon, ruego" (Nancy 2009, 30). The shared "noise" of this ontological openness that placed in resonance the identities of the participants, resounded within the

[38] "To *say* is not always, or only, to speak, or else to speak is not only to signify, but it is also, always, to dictare, *dictare*, that is, at once to give saying its *tone*" (Nancy 2007, 35).

specificity of a sociocultural space spectrally crowded by stories of labor. The residency fostered favorable conditions for listening to the gaps and at the margins of these stories shaped by the productive ends of transnational mining interests, and thus for inquiring into the hegemonic configuration of visions of difference—visions constitutive of the expansive capitalist politics of modernity and globalization.

Participating in the residency for the scholars and artists from Ecuador and Canada became an opportunity "to lie with, to gather in, to receive" (Kester 1999, 26). This endeavor to listen arose from situated dialogues held with local artists, researchers, and authorities, and were materialized in artworks whose contents were elaborated adopting procedures that involved an intentional reflexivity on their own artistic and sociocultural identities. In fact, the artworks echoed public perceptions about the lingering effects of mining, revealing the relevance of situational encounters in contributing to generating articulations among different spaces, and in fostering the conditions for emergent sites of social identification and spectatorship.

Adopting pertinent terms proceeding from sound art theory, I suggest that the collaborative and dialogic impulse advanced through critical art practices contribute to placing in resonant relationships different cultural spaces, where the echo of difference "is made by making itself heard" (Nancy 2007, 22). These terms convey the public breadth of listening and—in its related qualities—to producing bodily centered places of communality aimed at the recognition of difference, and thus to unfold art's capabilities to intertwine with the symbolic ordering of social worlds. The integration of collaborative and dialogic dimensions as part of the MRWE project's theoretical and artistic underpinnings, responds to the aim of broadening the field of hegemonic struggle,

considering art's pivotal function for promoting a subjective transformation oriented to opposing the submission of life to the all-embracing terrain of production.

2.4 The landscape of MRWE

An important endeavor of collaborative and dialogic art practices is to confront the deleterious effects of liberal politics, affirmed on "the rationalist belief in the availability of a universal consensus based on reason" (Mouffe 2013, 29). The contemporary realization of the dangerous effects of this rationalist belief is manifested in the intensification of practices of individualization, and thus in the production of hegemonic perceptions about the other as needing cultivation—as needing to exploit his/her own creative potentialities. By placing the identities of the participants in resonance, situational encounters advance an opposition to contemporary strategies of domination based on the negation of the relational ontology of social orders. In this respect, in these encounters art's processual capabilities can be oriented to "undermine the imaginary environment necessary for the reproduction of the total program of capitalism" (Mouffe, 2009).

One of the central imaginary figures, linked to the historical constitution of the instrumental environment appropriate for the expansion of capitalist operations, is that of the "landscape," whose cultural production presupposed an observer for whom the spectacle of nature is "given." As highlighted by several authors, the cultural idea of "landscape" became operative at the zenith of modernity, supported by the application

of the technology of linear perspective in the representation of space (Steyerl, 2012).[39] The colonization of the horizon through abstractive methods of monocular geometry––which we find widely elaborated in the modern tradition of landscape painting—supposes, at the same time, the affirmation of a privileged observer for whom the framed world appeared as an experimental field of intervention. The enmeshing of the world of "nature" through technologies that conflated territorial expansion with prospective progress, propelled the European projects of colonialism, and set the conditions for the emergence of a modern observer, whose identity was enacted on the blind spot of the meaningful perceptual acts of "the others".

Consequently, the modern observer can be conceived as the subject of models of vision materialized in the imaginary figure of the "landscape" that, as above-mentioned, became possible through the techno-instrumental operation of establishing symbolic guides on the "territory." In this operation, moreover, resounds the longstanding Western logocentric belief about nature as a site of divine intervention or, rather, as a site where the divine verb is materialized by saying, naming, classifying, informing (Derrida, 2008). Considered in this way, the "landscape" has become a prominently rhetorical object for critical procedures within the field of contemporary art, aimed at inquiring into the identity of a sovereign observer. Incidentally, this observer has been exposed as the subject of the synoptic view of the modern state—a view from above and from the center aimed at simplifying the social

[39] "[…] linear perspective is based on an abstraction, and does not correspond to any subjective perception. Instead, it computes a mathematical, flattened, infinite, continuous, and homogenous space and declares it to be reality" (Steyerl 2012, 18).

and natural diversity with productive ends. Moreover, this observer is also presented as the subject of the postmodern politics of vertical sovereignty. As Hitto Steyerl mentions (quoting Eyal Weizman), this emerging model of vision "splits space into stacked horizontal layers [being] different strata of community divided from each other on a y-axis, multiplying sites of conflict and violence" (Steyerl 2012, 28).

The project's title *Mountains and Rivers Without End*, chosen by art historian Andrés Villar from a poem of the same name by Gary Snyder, alludes to the longstanding Western tenet about nature as a site of divine intervention, and thus expands upon the rhetorical approach of the concept of "landscape."[40] The pertinence of this approach to landscape and its underlying figurations of nature is revealed by examining the different procedures artists adopted for considering multiple effects—environmental, cultural, political—of mining in the region. I suggest that these procedures manifest their quest concerning the dominant *ocularcentrist* orientation of modernism, particularly its disciplinary tendency to constitute objects of knowledge as "separated" (Ochoa Gautier, 2015). In so doing, their adoption involves a reflexive intention about process and practices constitutive of the identity of a self-governing observer, for whom "the landscape projects his own reflection, thus being a false mirror that blinds him to what is actually there" (Villar, 2015).

In this respect, Andrés Villar's reference to the "endlessness" of the mountains and rivers "suggests some type of self-perpetuating matter that is always available,

[40] The title of the project is taken from Gary Snyder´s homonymous poem. Gary Snyder, *Mountains and Rivers without End*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1996.

always at hand" (Villar 2015, 1). He also notes that in such a vision of endlessness—or infinite available bounty offered by mountains and rivers—what is foregrounded is the interconnected senses of fullness and bottomlessness. In other words, the specters of being and nothingness that stand at the matrix of a culturally prevalent mathematical knowledge, converge in the mine. By leading us to trace these connections, Villar calls our attention to the fact that "we live with the widespread illusion that the earth beneath the thin veneer we inhabit is constituted by inert matter that is *purposive* or has some inherent purposiveness in *potentia*, a purposiveness that ostensibly corresponds to our own. […] this always available, self-perpetuating matter, acquires value just by being extracted and processed."[41]

Implied in the title of our project, the rhetorical appropriation of the concept of landscape rightly situates the reflexive character of procedures adopted by the MRWE artists, which is addressed to questioning the disciplinarian orientation of modes of knowledge affirmed on the modern field of vision. Moreover, such rhetorical appropriation keenly articulates how the collaborative and dialogic orientation of MRWE's processes allowed us to listen at the borders of stories of labor as informed by forms of political, cultural and environmental resistance to the strongminded techno-hegemonic visions of the landscape. The landscape of MRWE's project echoes those forms of agency that open alternative visions of nature, and are, therefore, attuned to the relevance that art can have in expanding spaces of reflection and aimed

[41] Essay prepared for MRWE project, available at https://mrwe.org/andres-villar-mrwe/.

at opposing the deleterious sociocultural and environmental effects of enclosing life within the narrow paths of the self-exploitative logic of capitalist mining.

2.5 Portovelo: an emblematic site of resistance and agency

As one of the world's most relevant gold mining enclaves during the decades of the 1920's and 1930's, Portovelo constitutes a remarkable example of a physical and social landscape in the Andes, deliberately modified in the pursuit of the productive goals of transnational investors. As geographer Andrea Carrión mentions (quoting Olivier Dinus and Angela Vergara), the Portovelo camp created by the transnational corporation, SADCO, in 1895, "symbolize[s] the power of industrial capitalism to exploit natural resources through social and spatial engineering in order to establish the material conditions required to sustain production and retain the work force in relatively isolated areas" (Carrión, 2016).[42] Such an exercise of power, however, was not exempted from forms of resistance the transnational company found at different levels of their heterogeneous processes, linked mainly to the control of operations implied in the relations between the surface and the underground, and the local and the global.

For example, the geographical conditions presented different levels of resistance and difficulties. As we can see in archival photos, imported heavy industrial materials and equipment required for the installation of the Portovelo industrial complex were dismantled and transported by muleback, with the animals led by Indians, along muddy and sloped narrow paths to the camp situated in the subtropical foothills of

[42] Essay prepared for MRWE project, available at https://mrwe.org/andrea-carrion-2016/

south-western Ecuador. The lack of road infrastructure in the region by the end of nineteenth century, however, can be seen as a minor difficulty compared with those resistances the company found at the geological level. As mentioned by Andrea Carrión, the district´s vein system is composed "by a dense network of tunnels and quarries throughout the mountains over an extensive plane that runs diagonally north-south for almost 15 kilometers." This particular configuration of veins demanded complex engineering works such as the Pique Americano (American shaft headframe), works that included a "tunnel 390-meters deep that connected thirteen levels of underground galleries for ore extraction and provided the means for men and materials to enter and exit the mine." Besides this, the mixed state of the gold with other metals and particularly with quartz-sulphide minerals required the implementation of specific processes for its separation, which needed the incorporation of techniques and the use of toxic elements, such as mercury and cyanine, whose continued employment into the present can be assumed to underlie current environmental issues (Carrión, 2016).

From a sociocultural perspective more akin to the goals of the present chapter, and as suggested by Andrea Carrión, establishing the material conditions required for realizing the profits SADCO expected, demanded above-all to secure a committed work force. This need implied the production of a subaltern subject that "associated the socio-spatial segregation and the "hygienism" of the campground with prosperity" (Carrión 2016, 2). Carrión suggests, "a combination of spatial segregation, discipline, benevolence, and social control," constituted a heterogeneous set of social and spatial "techniques" that contributed to informing a subaltern subject observant of the rigors and discipline of the work. These general observations lead us to recognize how the

production of a "place-making project" such as Portovelo presupposed the delineation of a novel set of social interrelations, and therefore the creation of conditions for emergent dynamics of resistance. In this respect, Carrión states that, "in developing the mining district, the company had to deal with existing socio-spatial structures and emerging social powers, which transformed the dynamics, the productivity, and the outcome of the overall industrial venture" (Carrión, 2016: 3).[43]

A central manifestation of this process of "crafting spaces out of places," which David Harvey characterizes as the dialectic of place and space, can be identified in how Portovelo became "a privileged site for the creation of collective consciousness, which resisted the oppressive nature of both capitalism and the state. […] The cultural transformation introduced by the transnational company not only helped to create conditions for a profitable mining enclave ruled by foreign investors, but also this process entailed proletarianization and class solidarity among Ecuadorian workers" (Ibid: 3).[44] Following Carrión, such emergent dynamics of resistance based on class solidarity, and consequently the problematic production of a subject committed to become a waged mining worker, are informed by processes central to the historical constitution of this postcolonial nation, processes through which labor acquired a governmental function.

[43] Essay prepared for MRWE project, available at https://mrwe.org/andrea-carrion-2016/

[44] "The industrial labour, the wage regime, harsh working conditions, unhealthy living conditions, and socialist ideas came together to create class awareness and solidarity […] Important labour struggles helped to redistribute the profits of the mining enclave in 1919, 1935 and 1947. In addition, national regulations came into effect to enforce the public dominion of natural resources and promote the redistribution of mining royalties to local governments" (Carrión 2016, 3).

In this respect, the effort of highlighting a system of resistance arising from a mining enclave such as Portovelo would require us, as has been discussed at length in the theoretical chapter of this thesis, to recognize that race was the prevalent site for the constitution of the centralized power of the Ecuadorian national state.[45] In accordance with this perspective, it can be inferred that early projects of industrial production in the country, such as the Portovelo mining enclave, updated racialized conceptions of work and the workers that were appropriate for the conversion of subaltern and indigenous peoples into wage labourers. These projects became means for a reconstitution of collective and individual identities in accord with the transformation of the space of citizenship in a nation determined to follow the arrow of progress. A central manifestation of the nation's transition to an industrial regime can be detected in the elites' profuse discursive production positing Indians as relevant actors in the nation's development, discursive productions widely circulated in visual representations of the landscape of the nation as based on tropes of cultivated/uncultivated land (Olson, 2015).

Indeed, the imaginary environment necessary for the cultural transformation of labor in a governmental dispositive in Ecuador, was largely affirmed through a figuration of the land of the nation as in need of cultivation, thus asserting the urgency of "imposing order on a disorderly nature and human nature." These instrumental modes of seeing the landscape speaks of how the materialization of a mining enclave such as Portovelo implied the reconfiguration of the relations between the local and

[45] Similar to other Andean nations where large indigenous populations exists, race was the site to mark the separation between the spaces of co-nationality and citizenship. Becoming a literate citizen implied leaving behind the status of being Indian, and thus surpassing a historical condition of backwardness.

the global as part of the creation of conditions required for the reproduction of the expansive rationality of modern capitalism. In this respect, a series of interdependent processes taking place at different spatial registers informed the sociocultural context of the mining region where inherent dynamics of subaltern resistance arose.

The modern Ecuadorian state's strategic goal of relinking subaltern and indigenous groups to its centralized power succeeded through the production of a racialized "worker" subject. By acknowledging this hegemonic realization, we can assume that emergent dynamics of resistance in Portovelo, which "entailed class solidarity among Ecuadorian workers" (Carrión, 2016), involved cultural aspects related to the endurance of local identities.[46] Therefore, I want to suggest that dynamics of resistance based on class solidarity also involved forms of identification that resounded with alternative patterns of political relationality. In doing so, it interpellated the rationalist tenets of proletarianization by advancing projects of cultural self-determination. Listening at the borders of stories of working within the mining district, stories shaped by hegemonic configurations of visions of difference and instrumental figurations of nature, brings into being seeds of alterity and difference within the complex networking of cultural operations that underlie the expansive rationality of a politics of modernity and globalization (Yúdice, 2003).

[46] It is worth noting that the conversion of Indians into waged workers, supposed on the one hand to accelerate their freeing from forms of exploitation suffered as resident peasants (huasipungeros) within estates (haciendas) and, on the other, to intensify the suppression of their cultural patterns of life, deeply rooted in indigenous communitarian practices linked to cycles of agricultural labor.

2.6 MRWE artworks and exhibitions

The dialogic and collaborative orientation of the MRWE project set the conditions for the elaboration of artworks that were exhibited in Ecuador and Canada during 2016 in the cities of Cuenca (January), Quito (June), and London-ON (November).[47] The elaboration of these artworks is conceived as part of a process largely enriched by the participation of artists, researchers, and scholars situated in different disciplinary fields and sociocultural places. This multi-situated participation favored the production of exhibitions, where a plurality of perspectives and perceptions on the lingering effects of gold mining in the region surrounding the towns of Portovelo and Zaruma were placed in resonance. The formidable diversity of produced and collected images, sounds, objects, as well as representations of historical and geographical features of the region displayed in these exhibitions, expressed the dialogic exchanges and collaborative interactions established through the organization and realization of the residency in the above-mentioned towns during the summer of 2015. Likewise, the exhibitions spoke of the relevant participation of local researchers, who guided the visitor artists and scholars to significant physical sites and also shared with us their investigations and archives, therefore orienting our perception within an unknown geography. Made of a heterogeneity of multimodal and multitemporal elements, the exhibitions can be appreciated retrospectively as polyphonic assemblages, open on all the sides to the spectators' own imaginaries on a mining landscape, located in the subtropical foothills of south-western Ecuador.

[47] Museo Municipal de Arte Moderno de Cuenca (MMAM), Centro de Arte Contemporáneo (CAC), ArtLab at the Department of Visual Arts, Western University, respectively.

Given the favorable conditions offered by Municipal Museum of Modern Art of the city of Cuenca (MMAM), where the first MRWE exhibition took place, the dialogic and collaborative inputs modelling the MRWE process were explicit. In this exhibition, which was displayed in a museum that offers an available area of 650 square meters, we could include an important part of the collection of the Portovelo mineralogical museum owned by geologist Magner Turner, a video documentary about the work of Zaruma-born historian Martha Romero, an audio interview with Portovelense poet Roy Sigüenza, and a photographic essay on the production of the mining space of Portovelo and Zaruma prepared by geographer Andrea Carrión. All of these presentations supported the project's process of providing to artists and scholars from Ecuador and Canada with a first-hand encounter with the mining region.[48]

I will now turn to the procedures adopted by the artists, which echoed relevant public perspectives and perceptions on the sociocultural and symbolic function of the contextual elements that were incorporated into their artworks. While doing so, I integrate the description of the exhibited artworks with their analysis, and also with quotations of the statements artists elaborated at different moments of MRWE's process.[49] This descriptive endeavor seeks to situate the contextual nature of the materials, objects, and referents included in the artworks, and demonstrate how such

[48] Other local researchers that kindly collaborated with the realization of MRWE were Rodrigo Murillo Carrión, who participated in defining the itinerary of places visited during the residency, and Mariana Cortázar who allowed us access to her extensive photo archive of the Portovelo camp. Both researchers are authors of important books about the history of Portovelo and Zaruma.

[49] The artists' quoted statements have been taken from several documents produced as part of the MRWE process. These documents, include, a catalogue issued as part of the exhibition presented at the MMAM, an application to the SSHRC Connection Grant, and other ones related to conferences offered by the artists at different venues in Ecuador, such as FLACSO (Quito), University of Cuenca, ITAE (Guayaquil).

inclusion points to a series of relationships established through the realization of the residency. I adopt a critical voice that expands upon what has been defined as a rhetorical employment of the concept of landscape to examine the artists' approach to problematics present in the mining districts, problematics that also express central concerns in contemporary art about the redoing of difference in the space of globalization and that partially explain the origins of the MRWE project. Through my analysis, I attempt to develop an interpretative locus that situates the relevance of listening in collaborative and dialogic art practice, advancing a reflection on my own artistic work whose discussion closes this section largely dedicated to the examination of the MRWE´s artists' proposals.

Ecuadorian artist Jenny Jaramillo presented two artworks in the MRWE exhibitions based on procedures related with the collage and performance art, respectively. Jaramillo's work, *Tea at Five O'clock*, was composed of a series of 9 different sized collages in which she used photocopies of an extensive photographic archive originally the property of ex administrators of the American SADCO.[50] This archiving of visual material registers different episodes of the social and cultural life of the mining district, as well as the multiple activities and spaces related with the SADCO mining operation, during the boom period of the industrial exploitation of gold in the Portovelo camp. In these photographs, we can appreciate the dimensions of the important cultural changes introduced by the transnational company in the region. Images of public works, celebrations of foreigners and locals, quotidian activities in private and public spaces, intermingle in this archive with images of machines, plans, productive activities,

[50] Among the main photographic sources about the period of SADCO administration, are the Elizabeth Tweedy Sykes and Romero Witt private collections.

and workers' common areas such as the huge dining room at Portovelo camp. The artist intertwines and reorganizes this visual archive, adopting for this purpose a quintessentially modern constructive procedure, the collage.

Jaramillo's decision to use the above-mentioned archiving material arose from conversations with Zaruma-born historian and educator Martha Romero, who is the custodian and main researcher of Elizabeth Tweedy Sykes Archive. Martha Romero's visual research about the accelerated urban and sociocultural changes introduced into the region as consequence of the presence of the transnational company is focused mainly on modes of dress, but also on the liberal character and relative permissibility of a feminine presence in public space. As is visible in these photos, new sociocultural habits were prematurely introduced into the region with respect to central and densely populated urbanized areas of the country, as part of the intensive presence of modern technologies required by the productive end of mining activities. In her collages, Jenny Jaramillo reflects on the inscription of a modern temporality into the social fabric of the region, while attending to the meaningful function of the visual archive in highlighting the socially sanctioned visibility/invisibility of bodies we are not accustomed to seeing within the masculinized space of mining. Her concern about the regulated visibility of bodies within a process of the production of an industrialized mining space is reflected in her photocopy collages by mixing private and public spaces, transfiguring objects and forms, and approximating subjects, objects, and contexts through the reproduction, multiplication, and juxtaposition of images, as well as through gestures of obliteration and the redrawing of elements present in them.

Her intention to reflect on the meaningful function of archive materials belonging to the region's mining legacy is somewhat more evident in Jaramillo's second exhibited artwork. In her untitled video-performance, we see the immobile body of the artist in a fetal position, dressed in a heavy mining coat and helmet used by SADCO workers.[51] In this second piece, the artist uses objects belonging to a private collection and charged with affective reminiscences, for further performing the presence of the female body in a mining space. During the time her fixed body dressed in mining suit is video exposed, the attentive spectator can register a very subtle movement produced by the flow of her respiration, and also can listen to the soundscape of the original setting. In her already extensive activity within the field of performance art, Jenny Jaramillo develops tactics of mimicry, repetition, quietism, and camouflage, exposing the activity of vision as conditioned by the context in which the viewer is situated, and indeed as inseparable from the observer's body. In this piece of durational art made during our visit to Portovelo, the exposition of the body as a contingent medium of images seems to be motivated by the intention of communing with the spectator into the folds of memory—veined by the imperceptible rhythm of its breathing, the sonorous body, inviting us to "feeling-oneself-feel" (Nancy 2007, 8).

Patrick Mahon's installation, *Ascending and Descending: Water Works/Mountains*, was elaborated through attention to a significant historical element within the specific cultural context. During the residency, Mahon photographed the abandoned Kellogg swimming pool located in the American complex in Portovelo, built as an homage to the tragic, premature death of Cyrus Norman Kellogg in 1927. His

51 Objects used thanks to the courtesy of Alex Rodríguez.

installation is composed of several large-scale photographs printed on Tyvek, a set of geometric sections of window screen, and a sculptural assemblage made of PVC plastic pipes whose form recalls the mountainous topography of the region. In the photographs, we see the empty swimming pool progressively deconstructed into its smaller parts allowing us to center our attention on its constitutive rocky, tiled, and piped materials and components. By printing the images on Tyvek, a synthetic semitransparent fabric made of polyethylene fibers, the photographs have an evanescent opacity. Additionally, the photographs' surface area is extended by collating them geometric sections of window screens, whose highly reflective surface produces suggestive undulating forms, similar to those of water, that change in appearance depending on the relative position of the viewer.

Mahon's visit to the abandoned Kellogg swimming pool was part of the residency's touring program proposed by anthropologist Rodrigo Murillo Carrión, a primary researcher of the history of Portovelo mining camp. For Murillo Carrión, elements such as the Kellogg swimming pool are material vestiges of a venerable past. In particular, it is a vestige of a moment when the guidelines of discipline, order, and progress—that Americans "helped" to implement—were largely observed by Portovelenses. For Carrión, preserving the mining legacy is an urgent task regarding the current town's sociocultural situation, to which he refers as permeated by anti-values introduced by recently arrived residents to the area who are associated with the illegal mining activities extended everywhere in the district. He believes that the preservation of objects of material memory from the district's gold-age could motivate inhabitants to rehabilitate standards of community organization, discipline, labor, and thus to make

Portovelo “great again.” By voicing these beliefs, Carrión participates in an extended public interest in placing value on the district’s mining legacy.

In Patrick Mahon’s installation, art procedures related with the examination of the disciplinary frame of pictorial modernism are adopted to elaborate on an object of material memory within the context he visited (the abandoned Kellogg swimming pool). Thus, we observe that the artist deconstructs the geometric container of the swimming pool through the set of displayed images by framing their constitutive minor components, and redrawing its spatial guides into a temporal stream of relations. Around this deconstructive proposal, we also observe that the pipes become elements that escape beyond the framed surface of the representation, playfully adopting the shape of mountains. In this regard, the photographed central element is overflowed by a multiplicity of points of view that seem to echo the memories “of the work and play of bodies now gone from the mining community” (Mahon, 2016).[52]

Mahon’s MRWE artwork expands upon his sustained research on the subject of water, and particularly on how representations of this “universal substance in the historical practice of picturing nature, becomes a means to manifest complex cultural histories and contexts.” In his own words, art can be understood “as a ‘vessel’ that embodies systems of meaning and knowledge” (Ibid., 2016). The several allusions to water we find be-tiding in his elaboration of an important object of material memory within the context observed, locates the relevance of art practices “in opening opportunities for aesthetic and socio-cultural engagement with the present.” In-between

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its presence and absence, water opens streams of memories in which stories of work and play seem to overflow visions of the landscape determined by the implementation of technical guides, visions associated with cultural colonialism.

Gu Xiong presented the installation *Water* and the video piece *Water Front* for the MRWE exhibition. *Water* is comprised of a series of 13 photographic diptychs subtitled "Water of Gold," and a statement about water displayed on the wall. The diptychs collate pairs of photos, each one occupying an asymmetric area in their panorama format, photos taken at sites we visited, mainly accompanied by local researchers, during our visit to the region surrounding Portovelo and Zaruma. The images communicate a perceptual experience playing in different spatial scales, including: far-reaching photographic frames of the landscape captured from high topographical points of Zaruma; focused scenes of illegal toxic deposits whose intensely colored poisoned water runs through the rivers of the district; portraits of people, old equipment, architectonic artifacts, and food products, which speaks of the extensive mining legacy, as well as of the natural and sociocultural diversity of a county marked by intensive migratory flows since colonial times; and close-ups of the textured mineral composition of rocky constituencies present in this land abundant in different kind of semiprecious stones.

In such musicalized vision displayed in the panorama diptychs, the artist's perceptual experience about the cultural landscape of the region is expounded, and thus is also expounded the position of an observer whose shifts in identity need to be rethought within the space of global culture flows. His photographic diptychs resemble nineteenth century emblematic apparatuses of seeing such as the panoramas and stereoscopic images

(meant in his diptych composition), and thus his proposal reminds us that emergent models of vision are realized in the normalization of bodies and observers, normalization required by the abstractive logic and increasing mobility of global flows of goods and capitals (Crary, 1990). At the same time, his "stereoscopic panoramas" seem to foreground the visual disparity and a-synchronisms that emerge in between the adjacencies of fragmentary images as spaces of agency and connectivity.

The formal strategies adopted by this artist for processing his perceptual immersion within the landscape of the region expand upon statements central to his artistic research on the subjects of water, migration, and cultural identity. In this respect, the panoramic format of his photographic diptychs, as well as his intention of displaying them "in a line resembling a river," should be seen as formal procedures that met his conceptual and metaphoric approach of water tide and rivers "as spaces over-written with histories, memories and the material traces of migration." In his own words, "waterways and rivers can be understood as complex 'waterscapes' in which uneven experiences of displacement, dispossession, and adaptation occur," and, therefore, where collective and individual identities "embodying the seeds of difference and alterity" are reconstituted.[53] In Gu Xiong's responses to his experience of visiting the mining district, we can recognize how the identities of MRWE artists and their specific lines of artistic quests were important factors regarding the integration into their artworks of contextual elements, as well as regarding their attention to the context's specific problematics.

[53] Gu Xiong's notes for his lecture at the Fine Arts Department of the University of Cuenca, June 2015.

These elements are also apparent in Gu Xiong's video piece *Water Front*, presented as a video projection within the MRWE exhibitions. This piece consists of a waterscape of the emblematic Puerto Bolívar situated close-by to the city of Machala, capital of El Oro province (a city better known as the world's banana capital).[54] The slow horizontal drift of the moving images—that register houses, bodies, activities—allows us to see the current slum conditions of this port, whose inhabitants survive mainly through the commerce of seafood products. Moreover, these images registered from a boat, and thus adjusted to its floating moving stride, situate the spectator in a seascape where referents of time and space are unanchored. The spectator is thus placed into a chronotope where images of dispossession and cultural impoverishment appear globally multiplied as consequence of the reproduction of the material conditions demanded by the expansive phenomena of modern capitalism. In such suspended "chronotropic" sequences, where the jarring marks of environmental and sociocultural ruination arise amidst the rhythms of everyday life made of bodies and voices "embodying the seeds of difference and alterity," we can also feel the undercurrent flow of a water of hope, opening the experience of the spectator to unheard memories and stories of cultural subjects, participants in the making of cosmopolitan modernity.

[54] The Puerto Bolívar, the second most important seaport in Ecuador, has played an important role in the nation's economy since its foundation in 1883, due to its privileged position with respect to the Pacific Ocean's main trading routes. Its history is strongly linked to the cacao and banana booms of Ecuadorian modern economy, booms that created the conditions to affirm the consuetudinary political power of the Coast agro-export elites in the country. A far less known and documented history has to do with the use of this port for SADCO trading (company that as revealed in several archive photos had an office in Puerto Bolívar), and thus about its relevance regarding the history of Portovelo and Zaruma district.

The conceptual and metaphoric approach of water tide and rivers through which Gu Xiong processes his own cultural experiences, adopting documentary procedures and visual arts practices, thus becomes a means “to delve into the dynamics of globalization, local culture and individual shifts in identity, and rethink the space of global culture flows” (Ibid., 2015). The wall text in his installation *Water* reads:

A water of gold

Una agua de oro

A water of suffering

Una agua de sufrimiento

A water of strength

Una agua de fuerza

A water of identity

Una agua de identidad

A water of transformation

Una agua de transformación

A water of hope

Una agua de esperanza

Gautam Garoo contribution to the MRWE exhibition was the drawing *3°42'48.5"S 79°36’48.8”W* and the video *3°42'48.5"S 79°36’48.8"W,* titles that respectively refer to the geographical coordinates of the sites where his research took

place in Portovelo, research that, in his own words, “examines the sacred nature of gold in India and the relation with gold mining in Ecuador” (Garoo, 2016).[55] Garoo describes the drawing as made with “yellow earth pigment mined from the holding tanks of an old abandoned gold processing plant by the Amarillo (Yellow) River Portovelo, Ecuador.” He continues: “The lines of the drawing are reminiscent of a sacred *mandala* and weave on the two-dimensional picture plane of the paper much like the tunnels of a gold mine. The lines are confined within the drawing plans of the temple complex at Angkor Wat, Cambodia, surrounded by a water body of yellow pigment derived from turmeric roots” (Ibid., 2016).

In reference to his video piece, Garoo mentions that it was “filmed at the holding tanks of the old abandoned gold processing plant by the Amarillo (Yellow) River Portovelo, Ecuador, and documents ants tunneling into the yellow clay sediment left over from previous human use” (Ibid., 2016). In this close-up video, the spectator observes particles of the intense yellow color earth of Portovelo being removed from very tiny holes. Such a continuous branching of earth grains leads us to guess that it is caused by the febrile activity of ants producing complex microsystem of tunnels. At a certain point in the video’s timeline, the high definition close-up image fades into a circular blur until the framed area of land is radially exploded, then restarts the piece´s looped temporality.

All of the subtle details we observe in this one-minute video communicate the artist’s intention to situate the observer at the granular scale of organic process. Arising in a mining context, this intention can be read as a commentary on the need to recognize the

55 Artist’s statement, *Montañas y ríos sin fin*, catalogue of MMAM exhibition, Cuenca, 2016.

increasing interdependence of material phenomena informing the general techno-cultural conditions of contemporary life, as well as recognizing that such interdependence does not exhaust, and is superseded by, forms of organic and cultural expenditure not assimilable to the rationality of that expansive system of relations. In this regard, we can conceive of the procedures adopted by Garoo for elaborating materials found at the mining district as aimed at interrogating cultural and ecological thresholds, where the potency of spiritual beliefs emerges as consistent with the search for alternative system of meaning and social organization. This endeavor can be discerned in the apparently uncluttered integration of elements and materials belonging to different symbolic, organic, and technical schemes present in the above-mentioned drawing.

Garoo uses the yellow earth he describes, which was found at an abandoned mining plant in Portovelo, as pigment for tracing a graphic composition "indicative of a sacred *mandala*" and "weaved much like the tunnels of a gold mine" (Ibid., 2016). Moreover, this graphic composition clearly resembles the technical diagrams found in electronic circuits. This natural material was also used to tint some plain areas of the drawing that represent the yellowed body of water surrounding Angkor Wat, areas contiguous to the depiction of the architectonic plan of this sacred temple located in Cambodia. Through the use of this natural pigment mined at Portovelo, the artist establishes a series of fluid spatial connections between entities belonging to different cultural contexts, highlighting the productive divergences of their meanings and functions.

Aimed at interrogating cultural and environmental thresholds, the procedures used in Garoo's drawing activate a rhetorical ambivalence between connectedness and

excessiveness. This critical operation can further be identified in the formal decisions to display the drawing horizontally on the floor, as well as to compose the drawing as a mosaic integrated by several equally sized parts. When displayed on the floor, the drawing challenges and supersedes the spectator's perceptual habits in his/her attempt to reorganize its multiple horizontal spatial relations from a position of verticality. In this respect, the artist's underlying intention of "examining the sacred nature of gold in India and the relation with gold mining in Ecuador," is manifested in his artworks through relational affinities that resound at the site of productive cuts, where life reemerges in all its potential plurality redrawing the diagrammatic "assemblage of organic, electric, and mechanical components with roots in the hollows created by real bodies burrowing into mud and rock" (Villar, 2016).[56]

As part of the MRWE exhibition, Esteban Ayala presented the installation *The Gold Has Never Really Been Seen by Anyone*, which is comprised of the reproduction in enlarged scale of a "canalon," an object commonly used to collect gold from rivers, and a small photograph of the landscape of Portovelo. Set within the installation space, the canalon appears as a massive sculptural piece that occupies an extensive and central area of the gallery. This piece reproduces the steeped and graded structure of the original object, a structure meant for separating fine particles of gold using the flow of water. In the different grades of this piece, the artist placed a heterogeneous set of elements that

[56] Relatedly with his visit to the cantons of Portovelo and Zaruma, Gautam Garoo has focused on a different form of mining established in his own country recently. Thus he mentions that "The video titled *28 °50'05.5"N 78°47'41.4"E Moradabad, India*, documents the electronic waste recycling in India, here workers from the unorganized waste management sector can be seen washing and panning the burnt remains of PCBs (Printed Circuit Board) on the Ramganga River Moradabad, India. The works conceived for the Mountains and Rivers without End project, draw upon the various acts and ritual corresponding to gold, its mining and the subsequent recycling" (Garoo's notes on SSHRC connection grant, 2016).

include pieces of scrap, bones, detritus, and sediments collected in the Amarillo River, elements that the spectator observed in the midst of a continuous flow of water pumped by a motor, and through a mechanism designed by the artist. Outside of the context of its common use in mining activities, and placed within the museum and gallery, this canalon performs a commemorative function. Ayala reflects, "the material that lies invisible under the continuous flow of the river of gold becomes visible, in this installation, as a silent allegory of the historical presence of humans in those paradoxical lands" (Ayala, 2016).[57]

Ayala's intention to make visible what lies invisible under the continuous flow of the river of gold is congruent with his decision to display a significant object like the 'canalon', in whose graded structure a series of collected objects and materials are exposed as the sedimentation of historical process. In their leveled and graded exhibition, the objects and materials that emerge from a river of gold expose their current state of ruble, disintegration, and sedimentation, becoming carriers of meaning and informing a form of affective archeology. The attention that Ayala offered to the material state of recycled elements and objects, expanded upon his interest on the central place of ruins within the aesthetics of a modern and contemporary sculptural tradition, to reflect on the sociocultural conditions of specific contexts. His almost archeological interests in the beauty of raw and poor materials thus elaborates on the memorial performativity of the sculptural object, expanding the political dimensions of aesthetics to make the silent echo of buried stories speak aloud.

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Along the way, his artwork foregrounds the relevance art practices can have regarding a sociocultural context marked by a history of dispossession and ruination, and where the meaning of gold has acquired a unique value associated with rapid profit. As Chantal Mouffe suggests, art can play a relevant role in overflowing the terrain of production by operating a subjective transformation oriented towards a collective appropriation of the public, an urgent task Esteban Ayala developed in his installation, when we considered the situation of environmental risk as the one being experienced by the settlers of the mining district (Mouffe, 2007). Regarding a context where *The Gold Has Never Really Been Seen by Anyone,* the statement displayed on a small panoramic photo of Portovelo town integrated in the installation, his artistic proposal positions us to face a landscape that reflects the spectators' hope for establishing a transformative dialogue enriched by the warm reverberations of the water of gold.

As my contribution to the MRWE exhibitions, I presented the sound installation *Sonorous exercises at the industrial ruins of Portovelo*. The installation integrated sound recordings of a series of short sonic interventions I performed in the abandoned industrial complex of SADCO in Portovelo. These performances consisted of exploring the sonic qualities of its rusted metallic apparatuses becoming rubble by knocking and scratching their surfaces with different materials found at the site, such as rubbers, stones, and wood. During the first exhibition at the MMAM in Cuenca, the collected recordings were reproduced within the space of one of the biggest pavilions of this museum, a space that was totally darkened (with the exception of a very small area at one corner of the room's floor, where I placed an illuminated quartz rock, a mineral abundant in the Portovelo and Zaruma district) with the intention that the visitors could enhance their listening attention.

To reproduce the audio material, I used a surround system 5.1 that allowed me to experiment with the spatial dynamic qualities of sound.

The abandoned industrial complex at Portovelo concentrated the main SADCO mining processes and operations, and therefore the complex included within it: “a sawmill, a chemical laboratory, a carpentry shop, an industrial blacksmith and automotive workshop, the foundry crushers, a cyanide plant, a compressor, the cellars, and a warehouse” (Carrión, 2016). At the heart of the complex was the Pique Americano, “a vertical shaft fully lined with concrete, equipped with a steel headframe thirty meters high, and connected to a winding tower structure called El Castillo (the castle).” This complex civil engineering project, which was completed by 1916, as mentioned by Andrea Carrión, “facilitated the exploration of underground lodes and rich mineral veins, […] and provided the means for men and materials to enter and exit the mine (a vertical tunnel 390-meters deep connected thirteen levels of underground galleries for ore extraction), as well as allowing light and air to enter the tunnel.” At the top of its vertical structure, “the siren announcing each working shift ruled life within the company town; it could be heard several kilometers away” (Ibid., 2016). Though the Pique Americano was dismantled in the decades after the company stopped its operations, just like most of SADCO’s main machinery, it continues being for Portovelenses a main symbolic element of the town’s mining history.

As the central space of SADCO mining processes and operations, the abandoned industrial complex situated in a hollowed valley crossed by the Amarillo River, concentrated and spreading sounds audible within an extensive geographical area, and above-all audible in close-by towns located at different altitude, such as Zaruma. It can be

inferred that the sounds being generated at this place for almost five decades became, through their spatial resonances, an important perceptual register for residents of the region, a register charged with “geographic, social, psychological, and emotional energy” (LaBelle 2010, xvi). I was able to corroborate this fact when a visitor to the installation at the MMAM, an aged woman inhabitant of Zaruma, told me how intensively the installation brought back her memories of the sounds she used to hear as a youth living in Zaruma. This gratifying comment captured the main aspects that oriented my attention at the abandoned industrial complex, as well as that lead me to affirm the relevance of adopting these procedures that are, in fact, common in the field of sound art.

The performances realized at the abandoned Portovelo industrial complex consisted mainly in knocking and scratching the metallic surfaces of devices (particularly surfaces of part of the foundry crushers and the cyanide plant) that were central to the region’s mining processes. In these sonic exercises, I played with the resistance and plasticity of materials found at the site (wood, stone, rubble), as if these were applied to giant musical instruments, and following at times some rhythmic patterns that resemble operating machines. (This latter rhythmic intention was deepened within the space of the MMAM installation, where visitors listened to the reproduction of two identical tracks with a noticeable delay between them, which intensified a machinistic repetition). The noises I produced were made by sounding these objects, and intermingled with sounds proceeding from the water flow of the Amarillo River passing close-by, and from the activities taking place on the surrounding noisy urban area. The exploration of the sounds buried in machinery now in a condition as rubble disaggregation, thus indexed information within the site’s environment. Through this process, my intention was “to

craft a presence of sound charged with locational sensitivity," a form of sonorous presence that emphasizes "the conditions through which listening […] *takes place*" (LaBelle 2006, 33).

The metallic phantoms present at the abandoned Portovelo industrial complex—which have literally become food for predatory birds—mobilize a series of discussions among inhabitants on different issues about the future of the mining district. These discussions account for the plurality of points of view about the mining activities taking place in the increasingly fragile situation of the environment of the region. Moreover, the SADCO industrial complex can be seen as a prevalent place regarding the extended public interest in the region by giving value to the district's mining legacy. In this regard, projects and individual initiatives are easy to find and attend to auditorally in Portovelo and Zaruma. These become endeavors in which disputes resound about the past, and above-all, the relevance of the work of memory resounds to open up alternatives, critiquing the sociocultural and environmental effects of a dominant set of values associated with the perception of gold as a means for reaching rapid prosperity.

The sound installation I presented at the MMAM as part of the first MRWE exhibition resounds with the need to overflow a dominant set of values, opening the way for alternative projects regarding the future of the community. In this installation, the material crafting of the presence of sounds charged with "locational sensitivity," attempted to unfold the potency of listening in the production of memory and community, and thus fostered the conditions for emergent modes of connecting amidst public spaces. This aim is congruent with my recent artistic activities, in which my sustained concern

with the subject of cultural difference is expanded, through the production of dialogical and collaborative contexts based on reflexive practices of sounding and listening.

2.7 Conclusions

My examination of the MRWE exhibition project foregrounds the residency in Portovelo and Zaruma held in the Summer of 2015 as a situational encounter, where the collaborative and dialogic theoretical underpinnings that oriented the project's process, and modelled its artistic outputs, unfolded. For Grant Kester, an aesthetic of collaborative interactions and dialogic exchanges teaches us to see the identities of participants as being produced through situational encounters, where listening is brought into being. The analysis of the artworks produced for the MRWE exhibitions evidences the artists' disposition to listen, and thus "to lie with, to gather in, to receive," a disposition emerging from the multiple interactions and exchanges raised during the residency. The artistic elaboration of the contextual elements incorporated in their various artworks echoes extended public perceptions about the lingering sociocultural and environmental effects of mining in the region, while addressing a reflection on their own artistic and cultural identities. The analysis of the artworks thus evidences that by bringing into being what has been 'the other' side of language in Western societies, situational encounters become a powerful means of subjective transformation addressed to the recognition of difference.

The resounding link between listening and difference proposed throughout this chapter—as a fundamental blueprint of an aesthetic of collaborative interactions and dialogic exchanges—situates the role art can play in opposing the political, sociocultural and environmental effects resulting from the intensification of neoliberal politics. In a situation where the relations with the other and with the self are drastically subsumed to

the terrain of production, we observe a radical negation of the constitutive plurality of the social world, and thus a multiplication of careless manifestations towards “the other.” Listening as a manifestation of the ontological openness constitutive of the subject highlights the consubstantial relationality informing the social worlds, and thus the always open possibility of articulation within and among public spaces. The provision of contexts where listening, openness, and empathy unfolds art capabilities to intervene in the domain of the symbolic, necessarily advances emergent sites of spectatorship and social identification. By providing a situational encounter in a mining context where stories of dispossession, ruination, and adaptation resound, the project MRWE proved through the public placing in resonance of a formidable plurality and multiplicity of sonorities, the capabilities of art to listen again to how the echo of difference is made by making itself heard (Nancy 2007, 22).

Chapter 3

3 Soundcape *Pasochoa*

In this chapter, I reflect on the soundscape *Pasochoa*, a project developed in Ecuador in collaboration with José Sangoquiza, who is a skillful self-taught musician and manufacturer of musical instruments and sound objects. Sangoquiza belongs to the Pasochoa neighborhood in the Amaguaña parish, which is located in the foothills of a dormant volcano of the same name.[58] Our collaborative project, completed during the summer of 2017, was an opportunity to approach key issues in my artistic research from the field of sound practices, issues related to the subject of cultural difference.[59]

Amaguaña is situated 28 Kilometers away from the capital city of Quito, and it is one of the most heavily populated and extensive parishes of the Valle de los Chillos (Chillos Valley).[60] The presence in this valley of large agricultural, livestock and textile haciendas, operating from the eighteenth century through the late 1960s, gave rise to

[58] In 2012, I led a series of artistic activities in the rural parish of Amaguaña, in order to reflect on situations of exclusion and social marginalization in this rural area belonging to the Metropolitan District of Quito. The soundscape *Pasochoa* extends the activities previously developed in this parish.

[59] My approach to the problem of cultural difference is nourished by several recognized perspectives in the field of the post-structuralist thought, perspectives according to which "difference" is always an external constitutive of the localized and contingent condition of the individual and collective identities (Derrida, 1976; Barthes, 1975). These perspectives, largely focused on a dismantling of the metaphysical principles that organize the idea of presence and representation in the Western societies, are useful for an analysis of the politics of identity that underlies the historical projects of colonialism, modernity, and globalization. In the following essay, these perspectives allow to us to consider certain practices and processes through which meanings and values, strongly articulated to the modern category of race, have been adhered to other bodies and spaces in the formation of modernity in countries from the Andean region (Drinot, 2014; D. Poole, 1997).

[60] Amaguaña comprises 32 neighborhoods, and two *comunas* (formally registered indigenous communities). Its population is 31,106 inhabitants, with a territorial extension of 76,14 km^2.

forms of social and territorial division marked by the racialized exploitation of the local labor force. The subsequent crisis of the "precapitalist hacienda" in the 1970s and the displacement of the workforce of indigenous and mestizo groups, produced spatial forms of exclusion and marginalization.[61] The accelerated urbanization and the chaotic expansion at the peripheries of Quito, as well as the almost nonexistent presence of citizen participation and the weakness of local political representation, also accentuated the breakdown of community ties, undermining people's capacities to take action against concurrent problems.

The development of the soundscape *Pasochoa* included field recordings around an extensive area of the Pasochoa volcano, and recordings of specific sites and environments where sounds of wind instruments played by Sangoquiza. Two public events, in which this material was remixed, offered a sonorous environment involving Sangoquiza's performances playing a broad array of instruments. One of these presentations, which took place in the Cultural Center Benjamin Carrión (CCBJ) in Quito, was accompanied by a roundtable where participants discussed the role of sound practices in the production of meaning with regard to cultural difference.[62] Across all these activities, theoretical premises ascribed to soundscape practice provided me with a

[61] Sociologist Andrés Guerrero defines as "precapitalist hacienda," traditional modes of land tenancy common in the Andes that established relations of production based on "the rent in work" (la renta en trabajo). Resident indigenous peasants exchanged their workforce for a subsistence plot of land inside large haciendas. Andrés Guerrero, *La hacienda precapitalista y la clase terrateniente en América Latina y su inserción en el modo de producción capitalista: el caso ecuatoriano* (Universidad Central, Quito, 1975): 2.

[62] This roundtable, whose full title was "Sound practices and their meaning production about Cultural Difference," had the participation of Danilo Arroyo (renowned musician and musical producer), Juan Mullo (ethnomusicologist and director of the magazine *Traversari* of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana), and David Samaniego (filmmaker y producer of the project FusionLab).

set of guiding perspectives for considering the cultural conditions that inform subaltern experiences and potentially establish forms of agency in this area of the Ecuadorian highlands.

3.1 Introduction

In order to lay an appropriate groundwork for engaging the reflexive intentions underlying the soundscape *Pasochoa*, it is important to trace the general orientation of critical perspectives working with and against the legacy of this cultural practice. As noted within the interdisciplinary field of sound studies, theoretical reflections on the practices inherent to producing and/or experiencing soundscapes are greatly enriched by a broad array of positions that foreground the complex imbrication of the aural in the production of social assemblages (Feld 2015, LaBelle 2006, Nancy 2007, Ochoa 2014, Sterne 2012, Wilson 1995). These perspectives push up against a tendency to inscribe this practice into already-established codes of representational meaning (naively analogizing soundscape with "landscape"), and particularly resist a residual metaphysic of presence that permeates earlier conceptions of the *soundscapes* developed by R. Murray Schafer, as part of the *World Soundscape Project* at Simon Fraser University in the late 1960s.[63] The reflexive approaches to discerning, both culturally and historically, localized modes of listening and sound forms which are effective for indexing bodies and spaces, underpin contemporary conceptual and compositional approach to soundscapes. Through these efforts, the modes of acoustic attention inform evolving networking of

[63] Particularly, Schafer's schematic view of the soundscape as "becoming even louder and less tuned to a human(ist) scale," as informing a degraded sequence going from "hi-fi" to "lo-fi', —where "noise" is represented as the enemy of "sound"—, has been called into question. David W Samuels, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and Thomas Porcello. "Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39, (2010): 329-345.

aural relations. Moreover, “the concept of soundscape is itself anchored in a form of listening that became possible only through the development of technological forms of mediation and recording” (Samuels et al. 2010, 331).

The critical revision of problematic aspects found in the pioneering soundscape model elaborated by the Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer, is relevant for more current developments in this practice. In this respect, Schafer’s position “has masked the techno cultural origin of the concept of soundscape,” and it also elucidates his call to avoid the footprints of the recorder as much as possible and to seek to preserve the sounds in danger of extinction. As Ruth Benschop suggestions, Schafer conceives the “splitting of sound from their original context,” through audio technologies, as *schizophonia* (Benschop 2007, 487).[64] His call to preserve the purity and property of sounds as anchored to the originality of the scene, ultimately proposes the idea of a bodiless listener. Current perspectives on the soundscape that look through these and other aspects of the Schaferian legacy, propose, on the contrary, that the modes of acoustic attention to the “landscape” cannot be considered to be disinterested and disembodied, but always presuppose a *re-sounding*.[65]

[64] Ruth Benschop, "Memory Machines Or Musical Instruments?: Soundscapes, Recording Technologies and Reference." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 4 (2007): 485-502.

[65] Throughout this essay and following Jean-Luc Nancy, the notion of resounding names the property of listening to attend to the border between meaning and sound. “To be listening is always to be in the edge of meaning.” To resound “is a *ressentir* (a feeling-oneself-feel), […] it is not only, for the sonorous body, to emit a sound, but it is also to stretch out, to carry itself and be resolved into vibrations that both return it to itself and place it outside itself.” Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007): 7-8.

The creative and experimental approach of soundscapes, filtered out through the "blinking" ears of sound artists, instead of promising a holistic and incontrovertible sonic map of the relevant environment, encourages us to wander through imaginary topographies where the resounding body reverberates within the folds of technologies, stepping inside institutional architectures, and encountering histories of modes of listening. This artistic approach unfolds through the re-inscription of modes of listening to the "landscape" in various audiological media and specific sites, promoting strategic approaches in order that one can confront some of the contemporary challenges inherent to cultural practices. In sound installations, performative events, and radio broadcasting, among other modes, approaches to listening modulated within specific cultural ecologies are re-elaborated. Instead of submitting a listener to an audible mirror where the subject is constituted from the outside, these types of media provide us a setting where properties of sound relations reinvigorate the potencies of perception for multiplying aural "perspectives." I want to suggest that these *escapes through sound* occur across multiple mediations that point to the context of the musical. The lessons of sound art, in particular the decidedly post-formalistic actions developed by artists of Fluxus and the Ongaku group by the mid-20th century (actions based on the appropriation of elements of the context of the musical), expose how in a contemporary cultural situation the sonorous event becomes expressive by spatializing its sociocultural constitutive differences (LaBelle, 2006).[66]

[66] In the musicalized performances of Fluxus and Ongaku—whether a sound is heard or not—modes of listening located in the prehistory of sound art (and related to Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer's concrete music, and John Cage's contextual music) are re-elaborated and expanded into a broader context of music. With respect to the Ongaku group, LaBelle mentions that, "by introducing an alternative

With their eagerness for fostering situated *escapes through sound*, sound artists raise the major challenge of the practice of soundscapes today: to inquire into the place of the *other* regarding the contemporary politics of knowledge. Anthropologist and sound artist Steve Feld suggests that kinds of "inquiry that centralize situated listening in engagements with place and space-time" are forms of relationality; that is, they are modes of inquiry made through relations where what matters "is making otherness into 'significant' form of otherness" (Feld 2015, 15).[67] His statement foregrounds the potencies of sound relationality for underpinning situated listenings as cultural practices charged with political commitments.[68] Feld's relational ontology of listening is invoked here in order to frame the central themes under discussion in this chapter.

In the first part of this chapter, I examine the elaboration of the soundscape *Pasochoa*, highlighting the intent of its authors to inscribe our bodies into the folds of the musical. It also highlights our experimental disposition to expand the performative matrix of the cultural practice of soundscapes towards its amplification and composition. This tension towards the musical, which is inherent to a subject who realizes themself through

instrumentation and its electronic possibilities, inserting the found environment and the body more dramatically into the folds of musical production, its works lead us to question the same context in which the music is produced and received" (LaBelle 2007, 44).

[67] Steven Feld, "acoustemology", in *Keywords in Sound*, eds. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, (London, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015) 19.

[68] Steven Feld articulates these ideas around his notion of *acoustemology*, which unites acoustics with epistemology to investigate sound and listening as knowledge in action: knowledge with and knowledge through the audible. This contextual and experiential knowledge that integrates the practice with the experiment, derives from his research on the "sociability of sound" in the Bosavi rainforest region of Papua New Guinea. Feld mentions that *acoustemology* is a form of relational ontology, conceptual term to state that substantive existence never operates before the relationship (Ibid., 13). He also mentions that a central part in the development of his concept responds to a critical examination of the traditions of "acoustic ecology" and "soundscapes" related to the legacy of the World Soundscape Project by R. Murray Schafer.

listening, transcends "the physical distancing of the agency and perception" to which the conventional vision of the “landscape,”—and, therefore, the residual conceptions of the soundscape—remit us (Feld 2015, 15). In this sense, by underscoring that fundamental gesture of our endeavor, I propose to show how the elaboration of this artistic project participates in approaches to inquiry that are opposed to the logic of place and landscape, a logic that *by putting each subject (sound) in his/her place*, operates in favor of the negation of the relational fabric of the social.[69]

In the second part of this chapter, I show how such emphasis on the sonorous sense allowed us to attune our listening towards a resounding presence within a territory such as the Valley of the Chillos, a space that encompasses a wide diversity of subaltern experiences. In this regard, I briefly approach the socio-spatial conditions present in this valley, accounting for their inherence to lasting hegemonic constituencies operating within *topoi* of national identity. Towards the final segment of this second part, I contend that the productive convergence of perspectives coming from sound art, listening philosophy, and anthropology of sound, open possibilities to conceptualize the soundscape in terms of modes of listening for a resounding presence.

This chapter´s underlying idea, which refers to the potencies of sound to produce space and therefore listeners, is based on Nancy´s insights on the resonance of the noise that produces the body by exposing itself with others through listening. Nancy suggests, “In a body that opens up and closes at the same time, that arranges itself and exposes

[69] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996). D. Harvey argues in this book, following A. N. Whitehead (1920), “that place, like space, has no absolute reality. It is […] only a relation. But relations are not equally present because the concept of place marks the disclosure in sense-awareness of entities in nature known merely by their spatial relations to discerned entities” (Harvey 1996, 261).

itself with others, the noise of its sharing (with itself, with others) resounds" (Nancy 2007, 41). The understanding of listening as a partition of the subject, as "the becoming subject of all subjects of such sharing," is presented here as a central element to promote dialogical processes aimed at auscultating social orders constituted through hegemonic visions of cultural difference—visions that, in certain contexts like Ecuador, have been bolstered within topoi or commonplaces of national identity.[70]

3.2 The process of making the soundscape *Pasochoa*

The collaborative elaboration of the soundscape *Pasochoa* began with walking excursions guided by Sangoquiza with the aim of determining sites for the realization of audio field recordings along a southeast area of the Pasochoa volcano. This area is dominated at one end by the extensive rural territory of the Chillos Valley, and within it are found the central neighborhoods of the Amaguaña parish. Through these excursions, we were attracted by sites in the upper part of the mountain that—in their breadth and impressive situation—seemed to us ideal as places to record a representative filtering of sounds favored by unpredictable wind currents. We were also attracted to smaller scale sites, which, due to their particular topography, we thought would be advantageous to enrich our recordings. They presented complex aural forms, such as echoes, reverberations, delays, among others. When exploring the acoustics of these smaller scale sites, we were surprised by how the sounds of our footsteps and our voices seemed to

[70] Christa J. Olson, *Constitutive Visions: Indigeneity and Commonplaces of National Identity in Republican Ecuador* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014).

possess the power to bring back the sound textures and the vibrational refraction of the materials present in the environment.

This initial approach to the place allowed us to recognize how the modes of listening are organized, as suggested by Brandon LaBelle, in spatial terms (LaBelle 2006, 2010). Being in vast and open places, in tension with the broad aural spectrum of the territory, allowed us to develop a contextual listening. This, in turn, encouraged us to identify how the sounds related to the expansion of industrial activities and the incessant traffic of motorized vehicles were aurally dominant in this rural area that is increasingly subject to urbanization processes. On the other hand, being in partially enclosed places of smaller scale offered us a reduced auditory experience of the environment; in this way, our auditory perspectives were informed by sounds of daily activities taking place in the vicinity of the locality. These two general modes of listening were also informed by the fact that most of the time we were located within the boundaries of private properties, with customary rights of way that the inhabitants of this area have negotiated over time with their owners.

To do the first audio recordings, we built cylindrical-shaped objects made of very thin layers of wood, designed to mask the microphones from the strong mountain wind flows, and also to create a kind of nest where the sound would be self-modulating with its inherent wind energy.[71] The use of these types of sound chambers, located on slopes of the mountainous terrain, resulted in auditory captures of the inertial and interdependent

[71] In building these elements enfolded our common interest in the resonant bodies of musical instruments, interest that partially informed their experimental use to listen the landscape.

flow of insects and herbaceous vegetation. Listening to these micro-ecologies required us to transit between different environmental scales, understanding through this dynamic perceptual experience how specific universes of sound interactions demand different modes of acoustic presence. In addition, we experienced how the immediacy of sound and the use of audiological mediations not only tend to index the peculiarities of bodies and spaces, but also open sites for inscription and aural interactions, where different modes of sociability become possible.

During this initial phase, other experimental activities in closed spaces were also performed that were equally important to explore the logistics of the acoustic implications. For example, we scheduled two sessions to rehearse in spaces that were amplified with a multiplicity of microphones and speakers. In these rehearsals, we used wind and percussion instruments, built by Sangoquiza, as sound generators. Accessing forms of acoustic activity in environments where the generated sounds extended in cumulative scales of feedback became an opportunity to recreate empirically the dynamic and contingent interactions between sound and space. In addition, experimenting in the aforementioned spatial conditions was conducive to providing practical evidence of the concept of *transduction*, a central concept in the field of sound studies, which points to the imbrication, transmutation, and conversion among the technical, the aesthetic and the symbolic in the production of aural cultures, "narrowing the distance between cultural analysis and technical description" (Helmrecih 2015, 222).[72]

[72] Stefan Helmreich, "transduction", in *Keywords in Sound*, eds. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, (London, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 222-231.

Through a contextual and experiential search, we established the conditions to recognize the central place of the resonant body in the production of listening apparatuses. In other words, we recognized how our bodies and ears are always that means of transduction within a complex network of technical devices, sonorous traditions, and processual inputs. Furthermore, this revelation was key to understanding that our attempt to acoustically attend to the landscape and cultural ecology was carried out by unfolding a performative matrix marked by the immediacy that characterizes the sound and informs a cultural practice that is reorganized through multiple mediations that point to the context of the musical. The progressive identification of this main problematic that is implicit in our sonorous work led us to understand the necessity to rehearse more elaborate listening procedures during the second phase of the elaboration of the soundscape *Pasochoa*.

The second phase was comprised mainly of actions and audio recordings of Sangoquiza playing his instruments at specific sites, and particularly in his own workspace located next to his family's house in the Pasochoa neighborhood. The use of Sangoquiza's workshop as an aural scene, as well as the use of his extensive collection of musical instruments and sound objects, tuned our acoustic attention to the broader instrumental textures of the material context. During these acts of listening, the musical instruments Sangoquiza uses in his public presentations became elements that demanded our careful attention. For his part, Sangoquiza observed, grouped, tested and played each of the instruments, giving them an order of auditory appearance in what was ultimately transformed into an expanded temporal composition. Our acoustic presence was modulated by a durational intentionality and also by the frictional resonances produced

by the instruments through their contact with the executing body, with other objects and materials, and in relation to the tasks involved in the creation of their own sounds.

It is important to mention that Sangoquiza's labor as musician and instrument manufacturer is richly informed by vernacular traditions in which the use of contextual materials, for musical purposes, is a common practice. In his collection of instruments, the use of animal skins, bones, hoots, horns, and different types of reeds and trunks of big plants of agave (penco) is prevalent; these materials are present in musical manifestations throughout the Ecuadorian highlands. Moreover, one of the aspects that characterize his artistic identity is his desire to transcend the conventional forms of traditional musical repertoires. When I met him during the art workshops in Amaguaña in 2012, I was struck by the diversity of materials he uses for musical purposes. However, what surprised me the most was his willingness to experiment with his instruments as well as his acquired cultural knowledge. This important characteristic of his musical identity, I have recognized since then, explains to a large extent our extended artistic collaboration. Likewise, this characteristic can be interpreted as a manifestation of how Sangoquiza negotiates and responds to his subordination, as a musician, to the institutional practices mentioned later.

By focusing our acoustic attention on the material context through his musical instruments and sound objects, the actions carried out at Sangoquiza's workshop echoed our underlying intention: engaging in sounding, through situated modes of listening, regarding the sociocultural conditions that modulate subaltern agency in this rural area. Through these actions, we rehearsed ways of listening that activated resonances with hegemonic practices that have shaped the socio-spatial organization of rural parishes in

the Ecuadorian highlands, such as Amaguaña. Notably, the timbre of Sangoquiza's instruments produces a feedback of sonorities loaded with overtones of the local and the vernacular, whose historical ascription within the subcategories of the popular arts and folklore in Ecuador and in other countries of the Andean region, has been key in determining the configuration of the nation's archive.[73] These sonorities are constitutive of musical repertoires that have been assumed as representative of the roots of national identity, and therefore they have been functional, through different forms of institutional capture that act on the place of the ear and the voice, in the reproduction of hegemonic visions about otherness.[74]

During one iteration of our collaborative work, we invited the visual artist and musician Marroquin Yamine Elrhorba to join us by using contact microphones to scrape different surfaces of the site, dramatizing the frictional tones that result from the linking of the resonant body to the instrumental logic of the place. Elrhorba's actions were pertinent to decisively positioning our artistic intention at the antipodes of any representational framework aligned with the conception of sound "as an 'indicator' of how humans live in environments" (Feld 2015, 15). Elrhorba's intervention was integrated into the two public presentations of the soundscape *Pasochoa*.

[73] Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

[74] A related question that exceeds the problematics researched in this essay is about the forms through which the institutional uses of local and vernacular sonorities would currently contribute to updating the linking of bodies and agencies to processes increasingly modulated by the folding of global demands into regional and local economies.

Our first public presentation took place in a colonial-style building located in the traditional neighborhood of San Marcos in the city of Quito, in the context of the "Bienal de Quito" 2017.[75] Due to its major congruence with the conceptual purposes of our endeavor, I will comment more extensively on a second presentation that took place at the Cultural Center Benjamín Carrión (CCBJ), a well-known cultural hub in the city of Quito. It should be noted that this locale, which is part of the legacy of the writer and intellectual Benjamín Carrión (founder of the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamín Carrión), is impregnated with symbolic references to a modern Ecuadorian culture, whose social formations were widely informed by concerns about the position of the indigenous population within the body of the nation. The notion of modern culture proposed by Carrión and his intellectual colleagues and artists is firmly anchored in the illustrated division between fine arts and popular arts, a division that in the colonial contexts of the Andes has been fundamental to reproducing hegemonic visions of the indigenous and subaltern groups as lacking in culture. It could be suggested that, due to the associations produced by the specific timbre of the instruments played by Sangoquiza with respect to the popular musical genre of Andean folklore, the presentation of the soundscape *Pasochoa* at this site resonated with these historical and cultural connotations. As suggested by Ochoa Gautier, the ascription of sonorities belonging to vernacular cultures in the written archive of the nation were not only relevant for the formation of musical categories and languages, but also for configuring modes of

[75] Having a backyard enclosed by stone walls, and located 6 meters below with respect to the main floor where the public was situated, its particular architecture resulted akin for our resounding proposals. Sangoquiza played his instruments situated in this yard, space that was consistent amplified and whose outputs were listened through a series of speakers mounted in the main floor. Interceded by the presence of other bodies, listeners at the main floor received both an electronically mediated sound, and a more complex one emerging from the space's intricate structure and its hard stone refractive materials.

knowledge that underlie the politics of representation of the other (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 210). Our approach to encouraging situated *escapes through sound*, a disposition aligned with the intention of listening to ways of listening that have been fundamental in the production of a subaltern subject in Ecuador, was materialized favorably in this second presentation.

The exploration of the concept of soundscape thus included the exhibition sites. In these sites, the presentations of the soundscape *Pasochoa* were characterized by the auditory densification resulting from the simultaneity of several actions: 1) the sounds produced by Sangoquiza with his instruments; 2) the processing of these sounds through audiological effects as well as the remixing of pre-recorded sounds from the landscape of the Pasochoa volcano (activities that were my responsibility); and 3) the intervention, in certain passages, of Yamine Elrhorba using contact microphones to scratch different surfaces and materials of the site. The audience was exposed to a sonorous experience that was continually reorganized and enhanced by the pulsating body of Sangoquiza, an experience that was referred to by people in the audience as disorienting with respect to sound's sources, as if everything was sounding "all the time, from all sides" (LaBelle 2006, 62). In general, these presentations allowed us to emphasize how the attention to the sonorous sense adds to the acoustic the experience of sociability, thus expanding the dynamic interactions between sound and space towards the production of emergent sites of spectatorship.

3.3 The soundscape as a listener of difference

The act of walking, with the intentionality of looking for resonant sites within the mountainous landscape, offered occasions for situated conversations. Biographical

memories arose as we crossed the marginal neighborhoods located in the foothills of the volcano. The narrow roads stitched between the strict parcels of land—used mainly for grazing—which continue to the rocky summit, contributed to reminders of our respective family ties with this type of rural territory. Likewise, these experiences helped to remind us that the socio-spatial circumscriptions, and the marginal situation of a large part of the inhabitants of the Valley of the Chillos, can be seen as consequences of the long history of land ownership, which is an emblematic model of the traditional highland haciendas. [76] Acting as the host of this ascendant wandering, Sangoquiza referred to the story of his early life as largely determined by his parents' dependence on the *hacendados*, traditional large landowners. His memories reverberated with stories of the exploitation of the workforce of peasants, insistently pointing to his current precarious labor situation as a musician and maker of musical instruments.

Throughout our conversations, Sangoquiza referred with a tone of frustration to his precarious situation as a musician and instrument maker as being worsened by the practices of the local government. A skilled musician, whose musical repertoire and instruments are seen as representative of Andean folklore, he is frequently summoned by cultural mediators who act on behalf of local and municipal authorities, to participate in festivals aimed at reinforcing the ostensible identities of the rural parishes (commonly

[76] The traditional model of hacienda is characterized by instituting relations of production based on the exploitation of the workforce of *huasipungueros*, who were resident peasants that "exchange their labor on *hacienda* lands for access to a subsistence plot" (Clark 1998, 376). The hacienda model expanded colonial forms of exploitation, and was a relevant instance in the reproduction of racial ideologies consubstantial to the formation of the Ecuadorian nation-state.

referred as "ruralidades").[77] These annual meetings of music, dance, theater, and other artistic and cultural demonstrations are part of a broader institutional agenda, in which the preservation and promotion of the diversity of ancestral manifestations present in the province of Pichincha stands out. Not only is the remuneration for such creative work inadequate, but the conscripted artists are exposed to the non-compliance of payments and other agreements. His disappointment with what can be identified at first glance as the personal decisions and actions of individual people should be understood, however, as part of more institutionalized extended practices of provincial and municipal governments regarding the realization of their cultural agendas in rural parishes. These practices, which the term "ruralidades" tends to expose in itself, point to a broader logic of labor exploitation determined by racialized ideologies that harken to historical

[77] This agenda promoted by the Pichincha Provincial Government, and the Metropolitan Municipality of Quito began in 1993, and comprises the realization of itinerant events that convoke the participation of musicians belonging to the different rural parishes of the Pichincha province. For ethnomusicologist Juan Mullo, the realization of these events, which usually have place in stadiums where the provision of sanitary services is inadequate, and where what domain the interactions among public and artists is the big platform and the big speakers, communicates a general sense of disdain for the cultural manifestations present in rural parishes. Particularly, the use of the big platform and the sound amplification anticipate a nullifying of the conditions for a specific kind of attention required by an expected diversity of artistic and cultural manifestations. This imposing spatial arrangement results attuned with insubstantial and inconsistent programs that include artistic presentations limited to represent very conventional aspects of what is colloquially termed as ‘Indian’ music or dance. For J. Sangoquiza, participating in these events is a waste of time since these hardly contribute to his interests as musician, and implies to be subdued to cultural mediators that define in advance what must be showed as representative of the diversity of identities present in rural parishes. What tends to prevail in such spectacle of loudness, which seems to be understood by the promoters as the medium for convoking a larger audience, are stereotyped vision of the cultural difference. Musicians and dancers are ‘placed in scene’ for a spectator avid of seeing in them the survival of the roots of national identity, in accord most of the times with residual narratives that situate such roots in the pre-Columbian Incan world. For Juan Mullo, among the detrimental consequences that result from the actions of institutional agents, is the disassemblage of vernacular sonorities from symbolic forms that explain the relevance of surviving ancestral manifestations regarding the transmission of local culture and memory.

processes through which a racialized "other" has been incorporated into the specific projects of the nation-state in Ecuador.

Being located in Pasochoa, and more specifically in the parish of Amaguaña, where the previous existence of the traditional haciendas substantially inflects the current sociocultural spaces, our listening resonated with a logic of labor exploitation that is consubstantial to the foundational ideologies of the Ecuadorian state. As in other countries of the Andean region, in which there is a widespread indigenous population, the original myth of Ecuadorian identity appeals to the symbolic function of the image of the indigenous peasant integrated to the land of the nation, land that is represented alternatively as cultivated/uncultivated land (Olson 2015, 11). A cultural manifestation of the symbolic force of this foundational image, and above all of its enduring effects, is the common sense of indigenous and subaltern groups lacking in "cultivation." The "Indian problem"—the indigenous people's deficits in cultural formation understood as education— has produced the general perception that those groups are anchored in a traditional world, and therefore are a burden on the fulfillment of the ideals of progress praised by modern nations. As Kim Clark notes in her study of the agrarian debates in Ecuador during the 1930s and 1940s, this perception explains the difficulties that indigenous peasants experienced in accessing the management and ownership of productive lands administered by the State in those years.[78] Having historically faced

[78] Kim Clark. "Racial Ideologies and the Quest for National Development: Debating the Agrarian Problem in Ecuador (1930-50)," in *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30, no. 2 (1998): 373-393. Furthermore, this perception would underlie the paternalistic strategy that, in one way or another, has marked the policies, processes and agencies aimed at the incorporation of indigenous and subaltern groups into the body of the Ecuadorian nation. This author suggests that mestizos and white-mestizos historically assumed the role of educating "Illiterate Indians […] considered to be dead weights on national progress

difficulties in accessing productive lands, mainly due to the racialized perception indicated (and in accordance with the programs of freeing of the labor force that marked the economic crisis of haciendas during the 1960s), the indigenous peasants became implicated as the principal group within the accelerated formation of territories of marginality, in the largest cities of the country and in rural areas—a group available for contingent forms of labor exploitation and precariousness.

This historical process suggests that the perception of the indigenous population's "backwardness" is functional within the imaginary of "the other," a concept required for the protection of the state's elites and necessary for promoting the tutelage of the mestizos (and, by extension, a perception that the canonical institution of the hacienda in highland Ecuador largely contributed to reproducing). The most important haciendas located near the parish of Amaguaña, whose modes of production were based on pre-modern labor relations (*huasipungo*), contributed to promoting this hegemonic vision. In this regard, an important tool used by the traditional landowning class in its intended exploitation of the peasant workforce, consisted in the submission of *huasipungeros* and other workers dependent on the hacienda to religious doctrines adopted as the guiding force in programs of primary education. The submission to *obedience* as one of the imperatives of Christian morality was thus intended to model a servile subject for whom the discipline of work would be the key to becoming a "citizen." The haciendas played an important role in disciplining the bodies of the subaltern subjects in accord with the fulfillment of the rigors of work. From this perspective, the hacienda contributed to

and 'passive' elements not participating in the national polity, given that full citizenship required literacy" (Clark 1998, 383).

informing the experience of a subaltern subject, adaptable to the currents of the economy during the period coinciding with the formation of the space of modernity in Ecuador (1860-1950).

The types of sociocultural *spatialities* constituted through this historical process deeply shape the contemporary conditions for the agency of subaltern groups in the Valley of the Chillos. The situation of marginalization and exclusion faced by a large segment of the inhabitants, and, consequently, the adverse conditions faced by cultural actors to articulate their activities through broader performativity within the public domain, cannot be separated from the historical strategies linking indigenous groups to the centrality of the state. It is important to emphasize that the nucleus of the practices of domination that inform this process is situated in the domain of a symbolic constitution of Ecuadorian identity, based on the imaginary of the land of the nation as indigenous. This fact necessarily leads us to inquiries within the field of arts and culture, where the fundamental substrate of the constitutive materials of a sense of *Ecuadorianess* have been historically elaborated. Likewise, it directs our attention towards institutional practices that affirmed as inexhaustible the symbolic forces within common understandings of national identity that reproduce relations of subordination and domination.

The prevalent frequency of our conversational interactions revolved around institutional interventions, such as the aforementioned program of “ruralidades,” which privilege lasting "common visions" of otherness. Sangoquiza´s musical identity responds to forms of domination in which the ideas about “the urban” and “the rural,” "the white-mestizos" and “the indigenous," that translate the ambivalent trope of the progressive and

the traditional, are predominantly active.[79] Consequently, his performance is subjected to broader interventions that tend to normalize the cultural manifestations of subaltern groups by regulating their consubstantial diversity and denying their symbolic density. What is institutionally pursued as the recognition of the manifestations of historically excluded groups has, as a result, adverse effects when translating their performance "into economic or legal policies of recognition and accountability" (Ochoa Gautier, 2014).

Our listening disposition within a cultural landscape such as the Valley of the Chillos resounded with the echo of a difference, which was tempered by the historical production of "the others" marked by their lack of agency in culture. Listening to the borders of a sound in this cultural setting, reenacting and expanding the performative matrix of the concept of soundscape (particularly through the above-mentioned procedure endorsed at Sangoquiza's workshop), led us to identify how current institutional practices in the field of culture are not at odds with the lasting perception of "Indians" as uncultivated. Moreover, such attention towards the sonorous sense fostered in us an increasing attentiveness towards the pivotal role of technologies of listening in shaping the ear and the voice as privileged sites of strategic operation aimed at producing "future citizens," and thus in informing experiences of subalternity that can be considered as continuous with other contexts of the Andean region.[80]

[79] Paulo Drinot, *The Allure of Labor. Workers, Race, and the Making of the Peruvian State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

[80] A.M. Ochoa Gautier suggests that the "production of the social" in a postcolonial Andean country such as Colombia, has broadly acted on the ear and the voice as fundamental sites for demarking the space of citizenship. For this author, the incisive attention to the accent, tone, spectrum, timbre, and so on, resounding in the oral/aural traditions of vernacular groups during the early process of formation of Colombia's nation-sate, advanced strategies of governmentality that acted in regards of the material ambiguity of the voice/sound, ambiguity that would explain in part the elites' anxieties for fulfilling

The exploration of the concept of soundscape through the development of our artistic project allowed us to attune our listening towards a resounding presence within a landscape of difference. This perceptual "tune in," as it is exposed in the first part, unfolded through the production of experiential interactions organized in relation to the audible. For Nancy, the attention to the sonorous sense installs a space of transmission in which the subjects "respond to an impulse, to a call of sense, that sounds beyond the meaning" (Nancy 2007, 34). In this kind of space, "the voice is listened deeper than what it is heard," giving rise to a form of presence and present that is not a "being (at least not in the intransitive, stable and consistent sense of the word). The sonorous event situates us in the present of an access to the *itself* of the relationship" (Nancy 2007, 12-13).

According to Nancy, auscultating the edges of sense that emerge between a sound and its listening involves an access to a reality that is "indissociably 'mine' and 'other,' 'singular' and 'plural,' as much as it is 'material' and 'spiritual' and 'signifying' and 'a-signifying'" (Nancy 2007, 12). This access—the attuning of our listening to the noise that produces the body at exposing itself with others—opens the possibility to situated forms of interaction. The artist Pauline Oliveros reminds us through her practice of contextual or environmental listening, defined as *deep listening*, that "the body is the fundamental site of social control and oppression, which operates by severing its primordial ties with the world. Without the sentient body and experience, words are literally disembodied and

centralized forms of control and submission. For this author, the adscription of vernacular auralities into the written form of the nation archive were deeply shaped by technologies of listening that were constituted along the colonial debate on the distinction between *bíos* and *zóe*. Building on Fabián Ludeña's arguments, Ochoa Gautier mentions that "the voice was understood by Creoles and European colonizer as a fundamental means to distinguish between the human and nonhuman in order to direct the human animal in its becoming man" (Ochoa Gautier 2013, 9).

become more and more abstract" (Oliveros 2007, 393). Therefore, any meaningful form of "transformation and change" should engage a consciousness of the implications of the body's situatedness within the social world.

The contemporary practice of soundscapes activates our perception of the cultural ecology through a performative matrix marked by "the physical energy of sound to index its social immediacy" (LaBelle 2006, 62). The unfolding of this matrix towards the context of the musical—transgressing the guidelines of representational meaning that would limit the soundscape to function as a background sound for mirroring a transcendental being—can be oriented to rehabilitate the relational tessiture of knowing, and thus making possible a knowing with "the other." Situated modes of listening for a resonant presence can be defined as the tension with an experience of equality echoing agency and positionality. Happening all the time, from all the sides, the placing in resonance of the resounding body with the most diverse *spatialities,* the becoming subject of such sharing through the experiment and experience of the audible, positions us within the contingent nature of the heterogeneous (Feld 2015: 15).

3.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I argued that the elaboration of soundscape *Pasochoa* accounts for situated modes of listening that promote dialogical processes oriented to questioning a social order constituted on hegemonic visions of cultural difference. Listening as dedicated to a resounding presence within a territory that informs an extended diversity of experiences of subalternity in the Valley of the Chillos, was key for setting a process in place where a sense of equality, and thus of difference, was tested and experienced. Through the discussion, I comment on the experimental attitude that guided our

endeavors, stretching sound's immediacy towards its musical unfolding, and thus toward the conception of sounding procedures that became akin to calling into question symbolic and spatial orders constituted on the blind spot of cultural difference. I explain how giving acoustic attention to the material constituencies of sounding instruments used by Sangoquiza in his public performances, inserted into specific environments, was a consistent procedure in producing consciousness about modes of acoustic attention for broader quotidian instrumentalities, including involving the body through its resounding condition as sonorous object.

In this chapter, I also provided a general context for understanding a series of historical and cultural processes that have produced the socio-spatial conditions present in the Valley of the Chillos nowadays. To do this, I referenced Kim Clark's analysis of how the agrarian debates during the decades of 1930s and 1940s in Ecuador were enacted on the basis of racialized assumptions about the indigenous population. Her scholarship helps us to discern the effects that a hegemonic vision of indigenous as uncultivated (uncultured) had on the formation of social constituencies that acted on behalf of *non-Indian* forms of land tenancy. A series of meanings attached to "the other" bolstered within commonplaces of national identity are highlighted, regarding their enduring presence in institutional cultural practices that determine the performance of subaltern subjects in Ecuadorian highland rural parish nowadays.

Finally, I analyzed the critical productivity of making the soundscape *Pasochoa*, stressing the relevance of the acoustics of subaltern cultural ecologies for reaffirming relational modes of knowing as conditions for emergent sites of spectatorship. I suggested that modes of listening in connection with place, and space/time, position the

subject in an advantaged situation to question the conventionality of social orders, illuminating the always open possibility of a counter-hegemonic re-articulation of these orders. Listening—a cultural practice, contextually and historically conditioned—is presented in this essay as informing a pivotal field of reflexivity within artistic practices committed to broadening the spaces of autonomy and self-determination of subaltern agencies in local contexts in the Andean region.

4 Conclusions

Throughout this thesis, I developed a set of theories and practices on sound and listening as a means of opening renewed perspectives on my sustained interest on the subject of cultural difference. This line of research, built upon longstanding reflection and ascertained during my doctoral studies at Western University, highlights—through the projects I examined—the always emerging political valence of cultural difference, with special regards to collaborative interactions and dialogic exchanges in artistic practices and cultural production (Kester, 2009, 2004; Mouffe, 2014, 2009).

The critical perspectives I presented on collaborative and dialogic art practices suggest, on the one hand, these practices risk submitting to a self-exploitative neoliberal logic, and thus reproducing a hegemonic order of relations based on the vision of the others as lacking in cultivation (or, as needing to free their creative potential) (McRobbie, 2009). On the other hand, such perspectives stress on these practices' capability for provoking a necessary subjective transformation, regarding the effects of neoliberalization manifested in the multiplication of sites of sociocultural conflict and environmental crisis.

The extended discussion on the "production of the social" in the Andes as realized through the constitution of a racialized subject, suggests that neoliberal strategies of domination predominantly act on the site of race. Having as theoretical background specific practices and historical process constitutive of the meaning of otherness, mainly in Ecuador, served thus to the proposal of exposing the problem of cultural difference as

central to the expansive politics of modern capitalism and economic globalization. Furthermore, this theoretical context situated the commitments crucial to the art projects examined in this thesis; particularly, the commitment to inquiring on constitutive visions of difference by adopting reflexive tools aimed at examining modern figurations of nature elaborated within the field of contemporary art.

The concept of landscape resounds throughout this thesis in order to reflect on such figurations, manifested in the impulse central to modern knowledge of imposing order on a disordered nature and human nature. By rhetorically adopting this concept, the perception of "the others" as lacking in cultivation are exposed in relation to different kind of operations of domination that comprises socially situated agents, and that unfold through the enactment of myths of national identity (i.e. topoi of Land-Indigeneity). The creation of the Portovelo camp as a "place-making project", and the shaping of socio-spatial conditions that determine the subaltern cultural production in the Valle of the Chillos, are thus proposed as differentiated though interrelated manifestations of hegemonic operations inherent to the formation of postcolonial Andean nations, and affirmed on the dispositive of race.

Analytical tools addressed to questioning a hegemonic order of relations built upon the blind spot of difference, central in this thesis the relevance contemporary art practices have by opposing the neoliberal submission of life to the terrain of production. Through the chapters in which I analyzed art projects involved in my doctoral studies, I demonstrated that one of my fundamental endeavors was bringing listening into being as a component of collaborative and dialogic situations. I also suggest the function of listening in configuring situations where the experience of equality is exercised, favors

the recognition of difference and opens the conditions for emergent sites of social identification and spectatorship. In this respect, my use of theories and practices of sound and listening highlighted the resonant consistence of a bodily presence and the public nature of the sonorous event. The relevance of dimensioning the capabilities of listening for enabling an access to a common reality (indissociably mine and other, material and spiritual, signifying and a-signifying) situated the place of “the other” regarding the complexities that knowing entails (Nancy, 2007; LaBelle, 2010; Ochoa Gautier, 2012; Feld, 2015).

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Second Section—Artist Dossier

This section involving the presentation of my practice dossier includes documentation of the art projects and activities carried out during my doctoral studies at Western University's Visual Arts Department. It begins with *Mountains and Rivers without End*, a project that evolved early in my studies that was key to establishing a reflexive approach to the main subjects of my research. Addressed to the examination of the sociocultural, environmental and historical effects of mining in a region in Ecuador, MRWE allowed me to focus on the subjects of collaboration, listening, and cultural difference, understood as background processes leading to the production of the space of modernity in my country. The visual material centred on the artworks produced by artists from Canada and Ecuador, which resulted from a dynamic process that involved the realization of a residency in Portovelo and Zaruma, where a multiplicity of interactions leading to the presentation of exhibitions in both countries took place. Subsequently, this section includes the documentation of the soundscape *Pasochoa,* a collaborative project developed with Jose Sangoquiza. The making of this sound work led me to deepen the approaches of collaboration and listening as means of inquiry into the conditions for subaltern cultural production in an area charged with stories of power, in Ecuador. The concise visual material resulting from the process of making and presenting the soundscape *Pasochoa* is expanded upon on my thesis website, where a series of audio works regarding that production and presentation are displayed. Finally, this dossier provides documentation of the activities I carried out while being part of the research team of *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador*. The visual documentation of those activities is accompanied by a brief discussion of the conceptual lines developed as part of my involvement in the project, since the fall of 2016; a collaborative and interdisciplinary initiative addressed to *listening* to Salvadoran refugee stories.

Mountains and Rivers without End

Photo courtesy of Andrés Villar

View of Zaruma (at the foreground), and Portovelo (at the background)

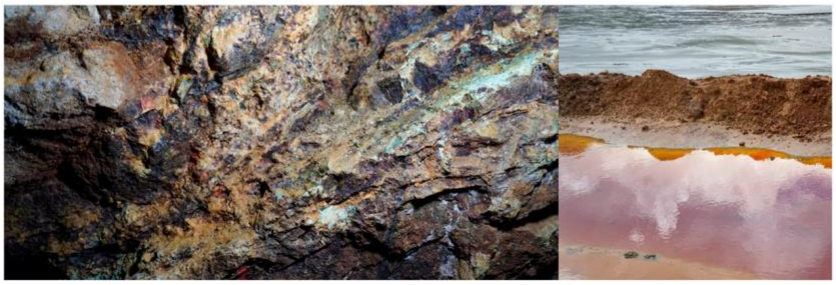
Documentation of *Mountains and Rivers without End*

The following subsection shows the artworks produced by the participant artists in the MRWE project, and their manner of display within the exhibitions presented in Ecuador and Canada during 2016. The documentation presents the images of these artworks following the same order they are discussed in the Chapter Two of this thesis. After the artworks' visual presentations, the subsection incorporates a series of archiving photographs of the Portovelo camp, provided courtesy of local researchers Martha Romero, Roy Sigüenza and Rodrigo Murrillo Carrión. This subsection also includes a visual memory of activities held during the residency in Portovelo and Zaruma in the summer of 2015, as well as, other relevant documents such as the invitations of the MRWE's exhibitions and conferences, and a catalog issued as part of the first exhibition presented at the Municipal Modern Museum of Cuenca. An additional documentation, which included texts produced by scholars Andrea Carrión and Andrés Villar, and elements presented within what was organized as a *referential room* complementary to the exhibitions at the MMAM (Cuenca) and Contemporary Art Center (Quito), is displayed on my thesis website: https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/

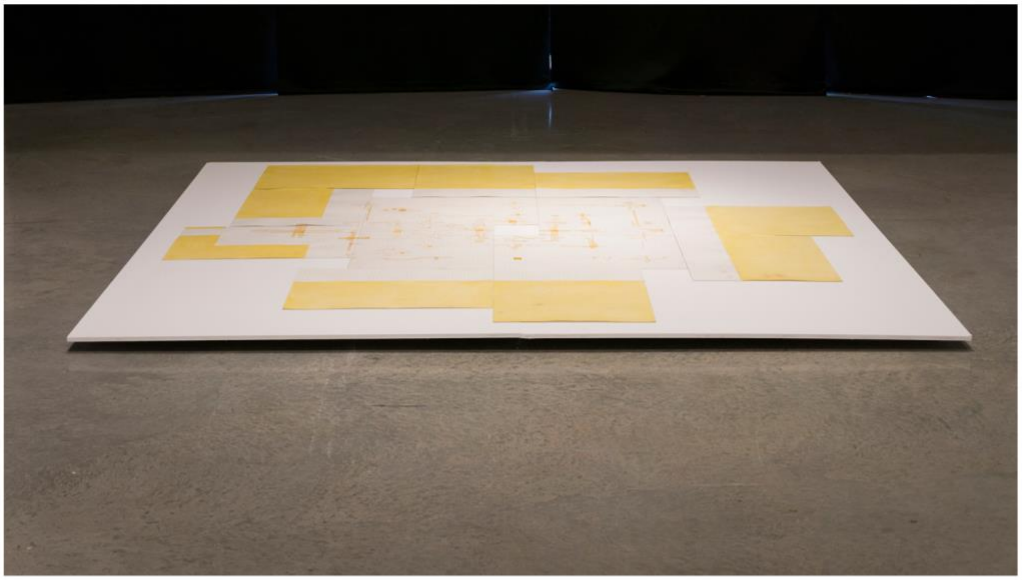
Jenny Jaramillo
Tea at Five O'clock
Series of 9 different sized collages, 2015

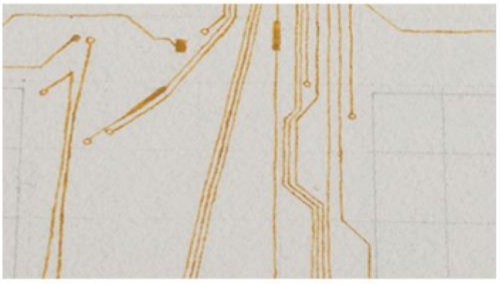
S/t video performance
7' 18", 2015

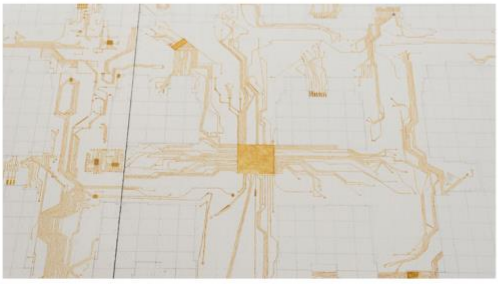
Patrick Mahon
Ascending and Descending: Water Works/Mountains
Installation, 2015



Gu Xiong
Water
Installation, 2015





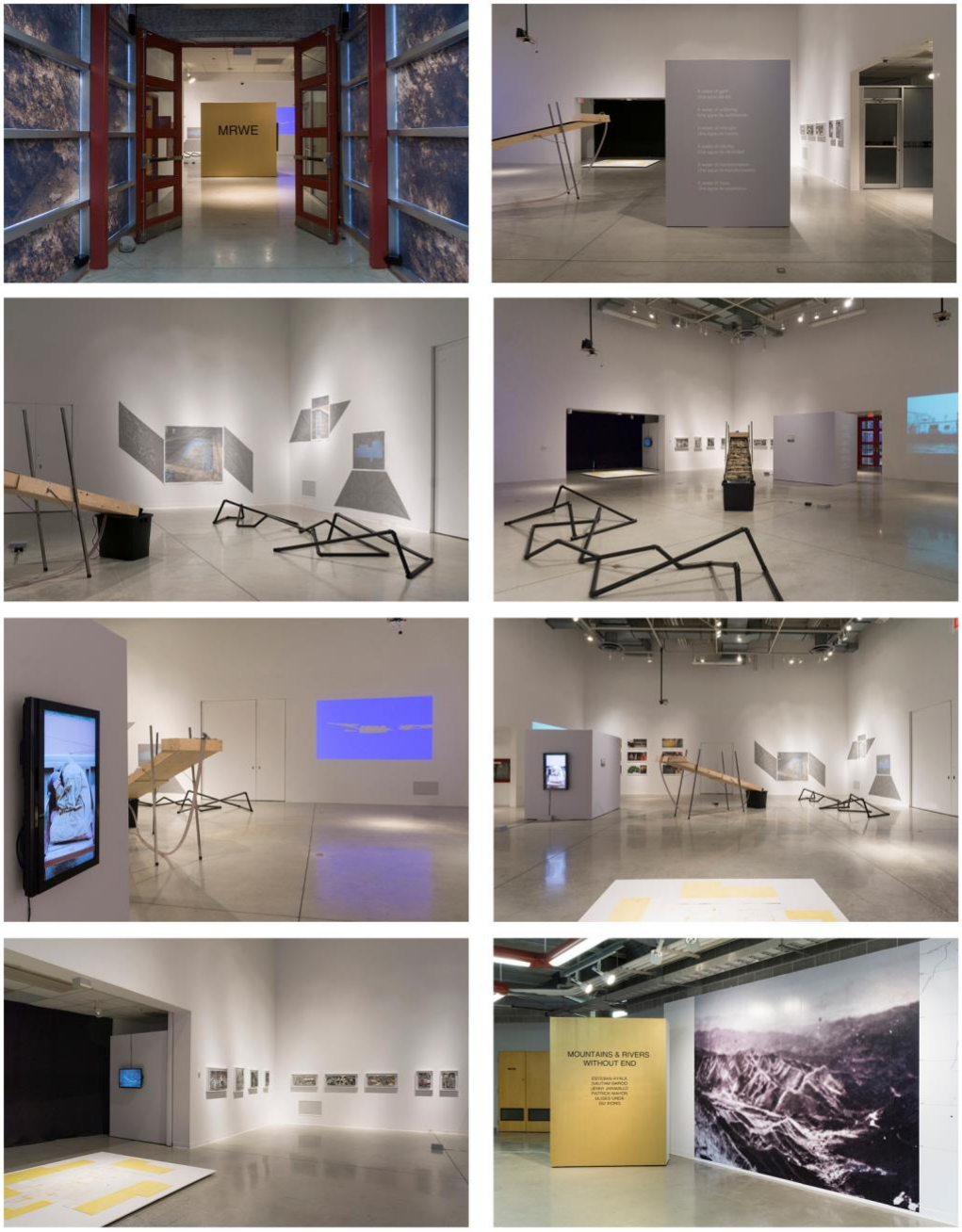


Gautam Garoo
3°42'48.5"S 79°36'48.8"W
Drawing, 2015

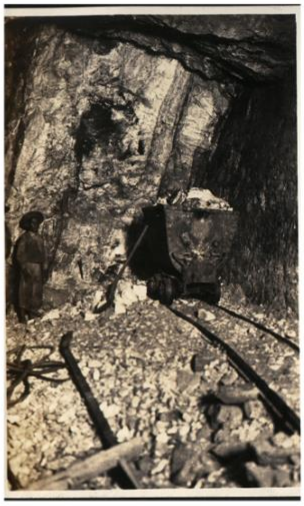
3°42'48.5"S 79°36'48.8"W
Video, 59", 2015

Esteban Ayala
The Gold Has Never Really Been Seen by Anyone
Installation, 2015

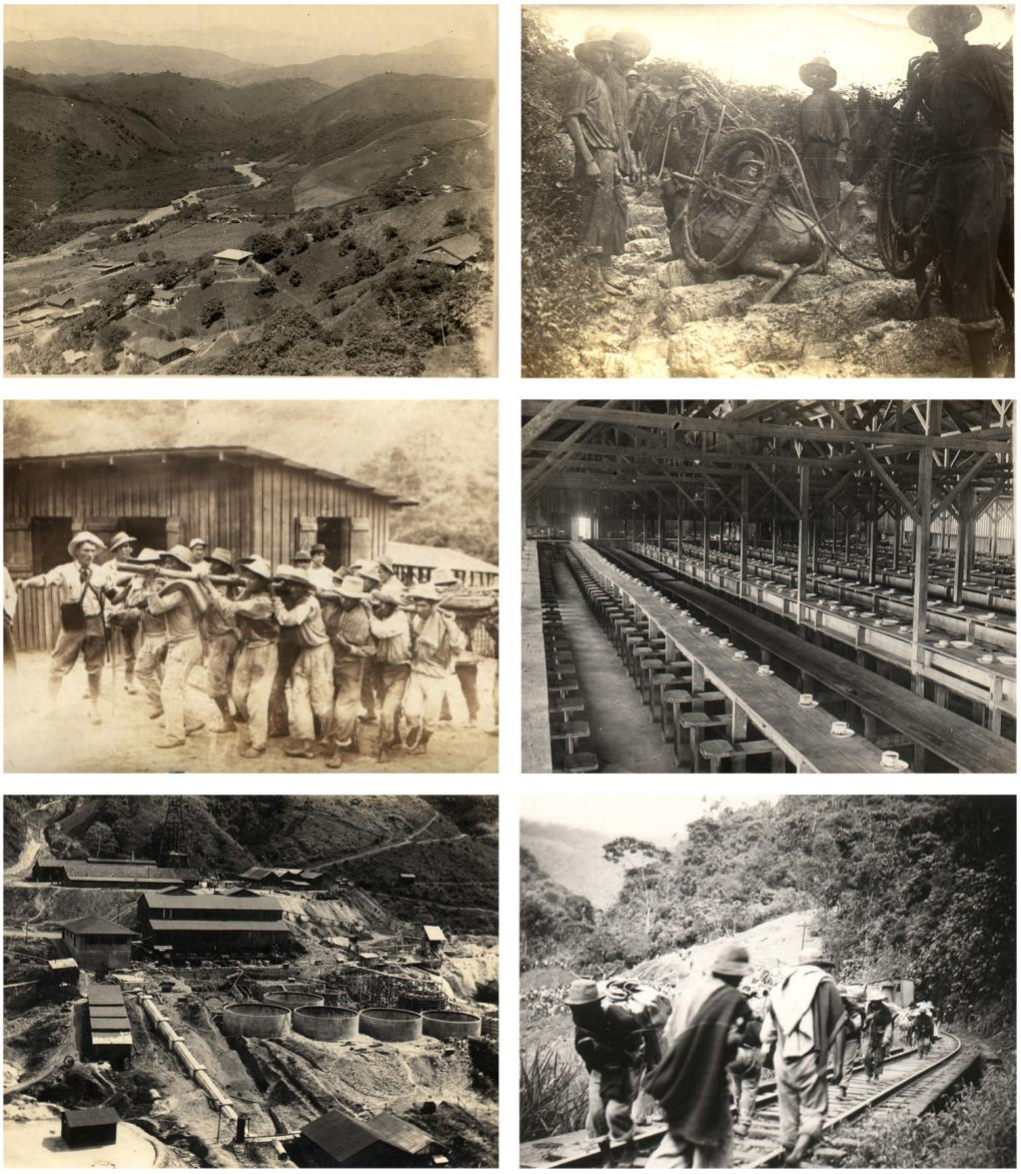
Ulises Unda
Sonorous exercises at the industrial ruins of Portovelo
Sound Installation, 2015



View of *Mountains and Rivers without End* exhibition, ArtLab. Visual Arts at Western University, Nov. 2016.



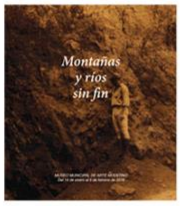
Photos of Portovelo camp
Collection Elizabeth Tweedy Sykes



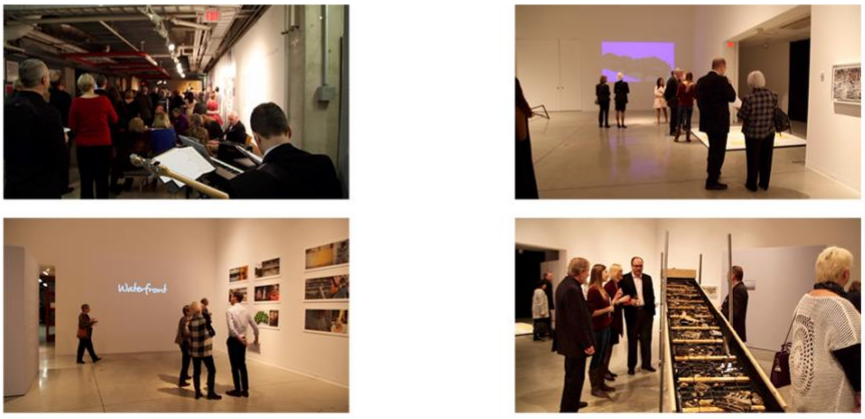
Photos of Portovelo camp
Collection Elizabeth Tweedy Sykes

Photos of the residency at Portovelo and Zaruma, June, 2015

Mountains and Rivers without End invitations



Catalog of *Mountains and Rivers without End*
available at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.



Western University's reception, November, 2016

Additional documentation of *Mountains and Rivers without End*
displayed at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/

Soundscape *Pasochoa*

José Sangoquiza and Ulises Unda at the Pasochoa volcano. View of the Valley of the Chillos

Documentation of the soundscape *Pasochoa*

This part provides a series of images about the making of the soundscape *Pasochoa*, and also of the performances that were presented both in the alternative venue of the Bienal de Quito, and in the Cultural Center Benjamín Carrión. The images register a collaborative process developed during the summer of 2017, which started with field recordings in an area of the Pasochoa Volcano, Pichincha province, Ecuador. This process involved at its core the sounding of instruments built by José Sangoquiza, which he uses in his public presentations as a musician. The documentation of this project is expanded on my thesis website, where a series of videos and sounds are available, including recordings of the above-mentioned performances of J. Sangoquiza playing his instruments in different settings of the Pasochoa neighborhood, and of the "landscape" of the region. On the website is also displayed the performance's invitations as well as information and images about the roundtable, "Sound practices and their meaning production about Cultural Difference," which accompanied the second presentation of the soundscape Pasochoa at the Cultural Center Benjamín Carrión.

Making the soundscape *Pasochoa*
Audiovisual documentation available at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/

Presentation of the soundscape *Pasochoa* at the Bienal de Quito, bar Sirka, July, 2017

Presentation of the soundscape *Pasochoa* at the Cultural Center Benjamín Carrión, August, 2017
Audiovisual documentation available at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/

Listening to Salvadoran Refugee Stories

The photograph was taken at our "Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador" refugee memory workshops in Copapayo in April 2018, and shows part of an exhibition of archival images taken by aid workers and journalists in La Virtud and Mesa Grande refugee camps in the 1980s. Left and right photos: courtesy of Meyer Brownstone; centre photo, courtesy of Linda Hess Miller.

Documentation of *Listening to Salvadoran Refugee Stories*

The documentation tracing the activities developed as part of my involvement in the project *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador*, includes images of a Community Curation workshop I guided in Suchitoto (Centro de Arte por la Paz, October 2017). Also, it includes images of a workshop dedicated to the production of soundscapes that I led in the community of Copapayo (April 2018), as well as, images of the exhibition *Silenced Memories*, which I presented in London, Ontario (Satellite gallery, August 2018). The documentation and the brief introductory text to these activities evidences a process through which my concerns about the subject of listening resounded with the collaborative and participatory aims and methodologies underlying the project "Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador". The opportunity of being part of the research team of this project, led by Western University professor Amanda Grzyb, allowed me to reflect on the relevance of using cultural materials, such as images and sounds, in fostering dialogical interactions within a context marked by trauma, specifically regarding Salvadoran state violence. The documented activities, in which the public dimension of the sonorous event is meant to be attuned to the urgency of listening to untold stories of the Salvadoran civil war, were important for expanding upon theories of sound and listening that inform the analytical core of my thesis. The activities carried on in El Salvador have not been subject to an extended analysis developed in the longer essays in the first section, essays organized on the background of specific issues related to Ecuador and the Andean culture. Instead, I have accompanied the documentation of these activities with introductory passages that help to situate their conceptual orientations.

Listening to Salvadoran Refugee Stories

In the fall of 2016, I joined the research team of "Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador," a collaborative, interdisciplinary, SSHRC-funded research initiative led by Western University professor, Amanda Grzyb. As stated in its description, the aim of this initiative is to "accompany former refugees, internally displaced civilians, and massacre survivors in the documentation of their experiences during the Salvadoran Civil War (1979-1992)." To meet its objectives, the team has mounted photo exhibitions in repopulated communities of El Salvador and worked with community partners to build bottom-up participative methodologies. The photographs included in the exhibitions were originally taken by international aid workers, peace delegates, and journalists during the 1980s, in the refugee camps of Mesa Grande, La Virtud, and Colomancagua, all located across the border in Honduras.[81]

The opportunity the join the team of "Refugees and Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador" has allowed me to witness and understand to the responses of former refugees and other members of campesino communities to this archival material. The photo-exhibition presented in El Salvador bring to the present the wartime experiences of violent repression, massacres, and forced exile by the US-backed Salvadoran military, recalling for us that the traumatic effects of the war extended to every level of the society.

[81] La Virtud and Mesa Grande photo credits: Meyer Brownstone, Oxfam Canada, Steve Cagan, and Adam Kufeld. Curator of Mesa Grande children's drawings: Linda Dale.

The exhibitions encourage acts of memory that are potentially healing. As observed by Mieke Bal, acts of memory enabled by the mediation of cultural materials such as photographs, call "for political and cultural solidarity in recognizing the traumatic party's predicament, and generate narratives that 'make sense'" (Acts of Memory, Cultural Recall in the Preset, x, 1999).

The documentation of the activities I fulfilled in El Salvador during my doctoral studies, accounts for their relevance regarding the development of theoretical perspectives, particularly on the subject of listening, elaborated in my thesis. These activities allowed me to reflect on a particular disposition to listening enabled by the photo-exhibition among the members of Salvadorans campesinos communities. I believe such disposition arises from 'performative acts of memory', generates a space in the community that allow the subjects of trauma to listen to their stories of solidarity, struggle, and dignity, thus opposing the deletion of memory and the dearth of material evidence of Salvadoran state violence, which fills one of the chapters in the United Nations 1993 final report from the *Truth Commission for El Salvador*.

Community Curation workshop

In October 2017, I guided a three-day community curation workshop in Suchitoto at the Centro Arte para la Paz. Ten representatives of several repopulated communities of the Suchitoto province participated in a process addressed to select 45 photographs out of more than 500 lent to the project's collection. The selected images compose the community book *Memoria Viva: Photographs and Testimonies About Life in La Virtud and Mesa Grande Refugee Camps, 1980-1992.*

A first experience in the community of Milingo (January, 2017), where I observed the photo-exhibition fosters a shared feeling of commonality, was relevant for defining the guiding lines of the process followed in the curatorial workshop. During this workshop, the installation of the photo-exhibition was the first step of a series of activities that included photo narratives, which expanded upon the notion of images as

stories to be listened to, attuned with Salvadorans campesinos oral modes of communication.

My role as facilitator was oriented to stimulate in the participants the space for large and small group discussions about the progressive decisions and criteria for selection and organization of the images. The participants engaged in a process that involved including and excluding images, and composing successive new arrangements and spatial disposition, while sharing and arguing for their decisions at every new turn. The curatorial workshop demonstrated that the photo-exhibition, as a participatory endeavor, provides an expeditious cultural frame for the decided affirmation of performative acts of memory. The above-mentioned photobook *Memoria Viva…*, reveals the relevance of this participatory endeavor in contributing "to recover former refugees, internally displaced civilians, and massacre survivors´ unheard stories of wartime displacement and state-sponsored massacres" (Notes on SSHRC´s proposal Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador).

Community curators: José Esteban Rivas, Leonidas Hernández Hernández, Ángela Velasco, Kenia Mariela Orellana Cruz, Sonia Isabel González Castellani, Reina Elizabeth Coreas Gómez, José Orlando Torres, Francisco Madria Recinos, Francisco García, Tránsito Joaquín Hernández.

Soundscapes workshop

In April of 2018, I led a workshop focused on the production of soundscapes in the repopulated community of Copapayo. For its realization, I collaborated with Beatriz Juárez, Western University PhD student in Anthropology and a member of the research team. In conceiving the workshop, I reflected on my observations of the photo-exhibition as a form of participatory endeavor oriented to breaking historic silences and make public the survivors and former refugees´ wartime memories. Furthermore, I reflected on the young people's relationships to the visual archive material, and thus in its function regarding the promotion of the intergenerational knowledge of political struggle in El Salvador, which is one of the main aims of the project Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador.

The soundscape workshop posed to participants, mainly youths of this community, the task of tensing their ears towards the spaces of sociality of the locality, and to re-know these spaces through activities of sounding and listening. A further complication of this task was to conceive of these spaces, informed by aural relationships, as *places* where former refugees wartime stories may resound. The initial segment of the workshop involved the participation of former refugees who are now older women and younger participants, in building photo-narratives, and in mapping cultural sites to shelter the former refugees' narratives. The mapping provided the younger participants with a set of significant community and cultural sites where, during the following two days, more specific sounding activities were advanced.

Among the places of sociality for the locals, there is a spaded space located under a group of huge mangoes trees. Under these trees, formal and informal gatherings, such as beddings, assemblies, community meetings, daily card games, take place. The simultaneous action of throwing up mangoes that were found already on the ground, and in which what mattered was to give a concentrated listening to the falling instant when mangos hit the ground again, was a mode of experiencing different modes of listening— from a contextual to a detailed listening— and the changes of positions and relations implied in them. The sound of mangoes hitting the ground was referred by the participants as a resonant or tuned sound that connected them together to their memories of the place. It could be said that the sound of the mangos hitting the ground "multiplied and expanded the space, and thus generates listeners and a multiplicity of acoustic points of view" (LaBelle 2006, p. x). As in every site where the workshop unfolded, the activities carried on at the 'mangoes trees' were preceded by an exercise of collective

listening. This collective and contextual mode of listening in the open air led the participants to be strained to all the community sounds, *as if every sound mattered*, while aurally identifying sets of spatial relationships.

More elaborated activities were carried on the third and final day of the workshop, which took place in the Cinquera Eco-Park in the department of Cabañas. At this site, participants were convoked by the proposal of recounting and listening to the stories they previously listened of the older women on the first workshop day. As mentioned by the participants, Cinquera is a relevant place for the community and for the cultural memory about the 1980s civil war. In its forested ecosystem and mountainous terrain, the *guerrillas campesinas* fought and resisted the incessant and destructive attacks by the Salvadorean army. Cinquera is also connected in the memories of the inhabitants of close by repopulated communities, such as Copapayo, with several massacres that have become recognized just in recent years by the Salvadoran state. By recounting the listened stories of the aging women at this place, participants were moved by the symbolic intention of making a space for former refugees and massacre survivors voices.

Using materials found in the site such as wood, stones, plastic bottles, cans, and their own bodies, the participants reenacted sounds of combat situations. They made sounds of firearms, of rattlesnake fighting guerrillas used to do to persuade the enemy, of broken bones, of running in position of attack or retreat, among others. Another activity carried on in Cinquera consisted in the reenactment of a *guinda.* Participants walking in line, from a defined point to other of the park, recounted one after other the abovementioned stories they listened of the former refuges women. This latter activity, in particular, which was done with an affirmative and concentrated disposition of listening

speaks of a productive identification with civil war cultural memory. The making of a significant space for the stories of former refugees and massacre survivors, the central proposal of being at Cinquera, was experienced by the workshop participants as a form of relationality that happens among the bodies.

The workshop's underlying endeavor of generating a communitarian echo chamber where acts of memory resound is an urgent matter for the war victims' claims of social justice and reparation. A community of listeners, made of second generation witness, have a relevant role in this proposal, by being involved in the participatory documentation of war victims' stories, and thus by being involved in the promotion of the intergenerational knowledge of political struggle in El Salvador.

Workshop Participants: Carmen Valencia, Ángela Santa Castellano, Ángela Rivas, Julia Casco, Marcelino Acosta, Marlon Barrera, Yessica Barrera, Israel, Numa Beltrán, Oscar Mejía, Cristián Sorto.

Video documentation available at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/

Exhibition *Silenced Memories*

Satellite gallery, London-ON, August 6-12, 2018

Fleeing government repression, 43,000 Salvadoran campesinos arrived in refugee camps in Honduras during the Salvadoran Civil War (1979-1992). In this exhibition, former refugees, massacre survivors, and their younger relatives tell us about their wartime experiences of violent repression, massacres, and forced exile by the US-backed Salvadoran military.

This exhibition complements a series of collaborative endeavors presented during my PhD studies in the Department of Visual Arts at Western University, and reflects on the political intentionality of listening. In this reflection, listening with/in the body is assumed as a mode of knowing in relation with others, and is thus capable of crafting resonant public spaces where the return of subaltern and silenced voices becomes possible.

The conceptualization of *Silenced Memories* has grown from my involvement with "Refugees and Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador," a collaborative, interdisciplinary research initiative led by Dr. Amanda Grzyb, associate professor of Information and Media Studies at Western University. This research project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Faculty of Information and Media Studies and the Office of the Vice-President (Research) at Western University.

The photo-narratives and soundtracks included in *Silenced Memories* were produced during a community curation workshop (October 2017), and a soundscape workshop (April 2018) that I led in Suchitoto and Copapayo, El Salvador, respectively. These expand upon my commitment to address conceptual approaches to sound practices that inform the analytical core of my doctoral research while contributing to the production of material memory. Such processes can assist Salvadoran war victims in their still unmet calls for justice, reparation, and reconciliation.

La Virtud and Mesa Grande photo credits: Meyer Brownstone, Oxfam Canada, Steve Cagan, and Adam Kufeld. Curator of Mesa Grande children's drawings: Linda Dale.

Video documentation available at https://ulises-unda-phd.squarespace.com/

Curriculum Vitae

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