CHAPTER 8

# Thinking-with Sounds: Spatial and Epistemic Configurations

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Écoutez autour de vous avant de lire cette phrase.
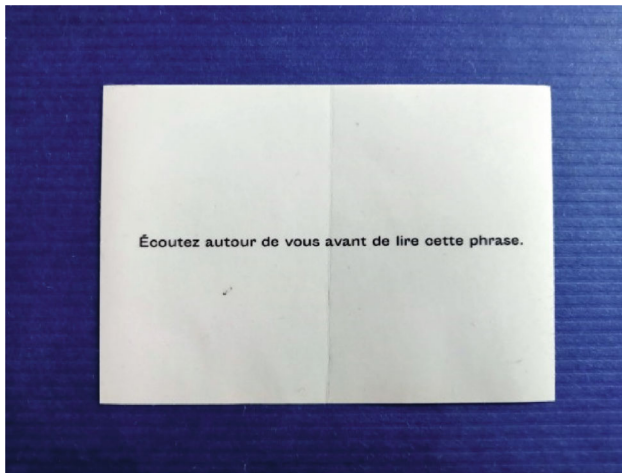
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Sticker from a Max Neuhaus exhibition catalogue, photograph taken by the author.

## Thinking-with Sounds
## and the Com-Position of Space

'Listen around you before reading this statement'.[1] This instruction is both a Magrittean paradox, and a confession about the overwhelming presence of the eye (the I) in experiencing, observing, and taking part in the world. It is also—and perhaps above all—an invitation to listen to our surroundings, to pay attention to the 'sonic milieu' taking place (Solomos, 2023, p. 28). It is a gentle reminder, perhaps, that sounding and listening practices, in their unfoldings, have always been spatial at their core. The very existence of sound depends on the milieu in which it may propagate. Without resistance, without friction, no sound can be heard. Even more so, sound is as much 'place-making' as it is taking place. As sound studies scholar Brandon LaBelle notes, 'A place is generated by the temporality of the auditory' (LaBelle, 2010, p. xvii): an envelope shaping space as it shapes sound, from attack to decay and then to silence—gaining in volume, regaining space, reclaiming its place. More an event, an emergence, than an object, sound creates territories as *ritournelles* (Deleuze and Guattari). Sounds produce space (Lefebvre, 2000): birds with their territorial songs, street musicians, protestors with their saucepans.[2] Likewise, the sound of a siren, of a bomb, and after deafening silence, the sound of cries, of lamentations and judgements. Sound, in its immediacy, in its vibrant materiality (Bennett, 2010), draws and combines, distorts and destroys, pushes and pulls. It moves; bodies become loudspeakers, or as theorist Kodwo Eshun puts it, they become 'not censors, but sensors' (Eshun, 1998, p. 001). Sound is an unavoidable materiality that co-configures the social and its space.

With the rise, in past decades, of both sound art and philosophies which question the place of the human subject and its relationship to the non-human, the status of what sound is or could become has also shifted. As already mentioned, from a clearly defined sound object—as it was first defined by researcher, composer and 'inventor' of *musique concrète* Pierre Schaeffer (2002)—sound became part of a continuum, a flux, as streams of intensities being individuated into sound events (Solomos, 2013). In sound studies, the move was not only ontological,

but epistemological in nature: not only asking how to think *about* sound, but how to think in, with and through it (Herzogenrath, 2017; Schulze, 2018; Voegelin, 2019). From this emerges a sonic thinking, or thinking-with sounds, which questions practices of sounding and listening, and challenges conceptions of experience and knowledge production, wherein *aisthesis*, the sensible,[3] would play a central role (Bocquillon, 2022).

In this chapter, I would like to argue that this thinking-with sounds can be—and is already being—practised as the production and distribution of knowledges, expressed in a multiplicity of modes (Montebello, 2015), or to put it differently, as epistemic practices with and through sound. Moreover, the chapter is also intended as an exploration of the extent to which the spatiality of the sonic event could lead to an understanding of those particular practices as place-making, placing, or spatialising.[4] This raises questions: firstly, of how practices of thinking-with sounds contribute to the exploration of 'placing' (with and through sound) as methods for knowledge formation, and secondly, how they challenge methods of 'place-making', through their ontological and epistemological implications. In doing so, I hope to illustrate how those practices—in their singularities, in their histories—shape a polyrhythmic and polymorphic understanding of what knowledge can be, thus challenging Western, 'modern', rational, euro- and androcentric conceptions, which retain a hegemonic character in academia.

A note of warning however: this chapter should not be considered a blueprint for applying the described practices in a renewed sociology, philosophy, or sound studies. It is not an analysis of the resulting knowledges' content—in an attempt to explain, translate, or interpret and extract what is being done or said and why. It is merely a presentation of how those practices engage with sound, space and place, in a multiplicity of modes. In what follows, three sets of practices will be introduced, each of them belonging to different, sometimes incommensurable, modes of placing as knowledge production through sound. The first case focuses on the sound art of Maryanne Amacher, and remains within the locus of an academic and Western understanding of knowledge and aesthetics—an understanding which partly informs my own positionality and practice. The practices described in the final two cases exceed and/or predate the first, becoming 'more-than-aesthetics' (Robinson, 2020) or 'more-than-knowledge'. The second case concerns 'Songlines' or 'Dreaming Tracks', as part of Indigenous knowledges in Australia, and presents the deep entanglement of knowledge with sound and land. In the third case,

thinking-with sounds takes the form of artistic, legal, and community-based work for the empowerment of Black communities in Philadelphia. As law, as healing, as sacred modes of relationship with non-human and more-than-human beings in contested spaces, these practices have been and remain threatened by forms of colonial violence and discriminatory politics. They should therefore be considered with attention and respect. To analyse and present them in a book chapter is to risk reducing or essentialising them—and to integrate them into a methodological proposal would be to reproduce such forms of violence, even if only on an epistemological level. As scholar and artist Dylan Robinson advises in *Hungry Listening* (2020), one should be careful when entering a 'sound territory', where typical Western positionalities often display 'hungry' modes of listening, based on consumption and extraction. As Robinson notes, it might be imperative to adopt another posture, acknowledging a 'guest' status in sound territories, which itself constitutes a practice of placing in relation to sounding, listening, and knowing:

> Critical listening positionality thus understands that in entering Indigenous sound territories as guests, those who are not members of the Indigenous community from which these legal orders derive may always be unable to hear these specific assertions of Indigenous sovereignty, which is not to be understood as a lack that needs to be remedied but merely an incommensurability that needs to be recognized. (Robinson, 2020, p. 53)

It is the incomplete and unknowing mode of the guest that I wish to take as a guide for this chapter.[5] I hope that the telling of those practices will act as an invitation to consider what 'listening' constitutes, within sociology, philosophy, and sound studies—and how one might work towards other modes of engagement with knowledge and sound. Again, this is not a process of applying recipes, or of extracting and consuming other knowledge formats or aesthetic (and more-than-aesthetic) practices, but a process of experimentation from the singular positionalities one might occupy. Within the necessary development of a 'critical listening positionality', how can novel ways of 'thinking-with sounds' be proposed and practised?

Firstly, I will explore how space has been 'activated' in sound art and music. I will demonstrate how the spatial gained (or regained) a central role, not only in composition, but also in the very practices of sounding

and listening, becoming a 'thinking-with sounds'—in space. In particular, I will present two works by composer and sound artist Maryanne Amacher, in order to illustrate how her practice can be considered a place-making or 'placing' through sound. I will further argue that placing and knowing through sound also exceed Western aesthetic and epistemic practices as they are understood in sound art and music. To do so, I will echo Margo Neale's and Lynn Kelly's exploration of 'Songlines' or 'Dreaming Tracks', which delivers an insight in the eponymous epistemic practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia (Neale & Kelly, 2020). In the third part, I will try to answer Neale's and Kelly's invitation to re-think the archive, and thus knowledge-making, through new practices, by looking at *Black Quantum Futurism*, a queer and feminist Afrofuturist project, which develops a set of place-making practices in Philadelphia. In conclusion, I will argue that those examples constitute propositions to challenge epistemic practices relating to space and place, through sound and aesthetics, and thus to work towards new modes of knowledge generation.

## Activation of Space in Music and Sound Art

The relationship between sound and space in music and sound art is not as homogeneous as one might think. For sound to exist, for vibrations to propagate and disseminate, a medium is necessary. However, taking that medium—as space—into account as part of the compositional or performative process was not always a given, at least not in Western music. As musicologist Makis Solomos argues, in its broadest (and perhaps most reductive) sense, traditional music seemed to have a much stronger understanding of space, mainly due to the function it fulfilled within social and religious rituals, and through a located practice linked to specific places. For Solomos, music's autonomy as an art form, rather than as a function of rituals (in particular in chamber music) led to its deterritorialisation. Music's existence, or rather, its composition, was less dependent on place (except perhaps the stage, but not necessarily a specific stage), than its inscription, as music, onto the score (Solomos, 2013).[6] As Solomos explains, it is only during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the sound-space relationship became relevant and constitutive again in Western music, leading towards the notion of spatial composition and sound installations (in situ). However, this does not mean that music itself (as an ordering of sonic events, or simply as the

practice of playing music) was not spatial, only that the dominant forms of composition, and thus modes of thinking about music, did not directly account for space. As music began to free itself from meter and from equal-tempered systems, the materiality and spatiality of sound became more prominent, not only in time, but in space. This trend can also be observed through the increasing use of the term 'sound art' to describe practices that were sometimes more in space than in time.[7] Coming back to the notion of a sonic object, *musique concrète* and acousmatic composition also contributed to challenging this spatiality of sound, detaching sound from its source, de- and re-territorialising music into new spaces. But it is also the inclusion of electronic devices, both in the making of sounds (e.g. tapes, oscillators, and later on, computers) and their diffusion through speakers (from multi-speaker systems on stage or at home to headphones carried everywhere) that also re-configured the spatiality of music, shaping it in completely new ways.

In particular, the practice of field recording in music, made easier by ever more affordable and portable recording devices, strongly modified the relationship between sound and space, serving to imprint sonic environments onto the musical. By adding sonic atmospheres, or recordings of 'non-musical' sounds, to instrumental sounds, new and unheard soundscapes were created (Lane & Carlyle, 2016; Schafer, 1993), mixing the here and the there, while locating the listener somewhere in between.[8] Coming back to the introduction, the practice of field recording, while important for research (not only in acoustic ecology and ethnography, but also in musical composition) nonetheless manifests a certain extractive character, where particular places become repurposed into a music made for contemplation and consumption (Robinson, 2020). This new 'ease of use' everywhere and anywhere leads to a set of ethical questions concerning the places recorded, the way those recordings are framed and how their sonic character is modified. Even if presented without further sonic modification, without much editing or additional instrumentation, the recorded places are reconfigured, becoming sonic heterotopias,[9] *other spaces* (Foucault, 1999). If, as Robinson argues, one's first step towards a critical listening positionality should be to become the guest in a sonic territory, what does field recording become? What does the practice imply and impose?

The relationship between sound and space of course exceeds the practice of field recording, and can take many forms, wherever space is shaped through, and with, sound. Consequently, this chapter is not intended as

an exhaustive history of music or sound art in relation to space. The main point is rather that in those practices, space is being activated by sound, or at least presents the potential for such an activation. Drawing from the work of Rob Shields and Jim Morrow,[10] activating space means to re-purpose vacant urban spaces, with communities at the heart of what such re-purposing or improvement might mean. I would argue that in the practice of sound art, spaces may be activated, in the sense that sound proposes new experiences of a particular place. Such practices can therefore be thought of as practices of placing. According to Brandon LaBelle, it might be precisely what defines sound art:

> […] for sound and space in particular have a dynamic relationship. This no doubt stands at the core of the very practice of sound art — the activation of the existing relation between sound and space. (LaBelle, 2010, p. xii)

For example, the practice of composer and architect Iannis Xenakis is thoroughly spatial: from his background in architecture to his graphical compositional techniques (a sort of sonic topology) and his granular approach to sound events as 'micro-sounds' (Roads, 2001, 2015). In his practice, architecture and music often co-compose each other, as in his collaborations with Le Corbusier: 'Concret PH' (1958) for the Philips Pavilion, in its ensemble of lines and curves shaping the movement of sound, and in the Couvent Sainte-Marie de la Tourette, itself a highly rhythmic construction demonstrating how concrete, glass and colours form sonic patterns (Solomos, 2013). In these examples, space is activated both by sound and with sound, in the configuration of place.

Perhaps the best illustration, however, of the possibilities for activating and (re-)configuring space is the practice of composer Maryanne Amacher, particularly her work during the late 1960s and 1970s.[11] Although Amacher's experimentation with space and the spatiality of sound exceeds those decades, it is in that time that she de- and re-territorialises both the sonic and the aesthetic in the city, through what she called 'long distance music'. For instance, in 1967, Amacher proposed a twenty-eight-hour radio broadcast, *City-Links, WBFO, Buffalo*, in which 'she mixed eight live feeds from remote locations in the city [of Buffalo]' (Cimini, 2021, p. 85) with pre-recorded sounds from earlier pieces, as well as *In City, Buffalo, 1967*, a sort of festival across the city featuring 'concerts, projections, collaborative performances, and sound environments' (p. 94). As musicologist Amy Cimini notes, both works

'developed conceptual and mediatic approaches to audible entanglements and durational overlap among iconic, though contested, city sites' (p. 52). Through radio broadcast and in situ events, Amacher produced a spatial engagement with particular places within the city of Buffalo over time, places with contested histories, activated through a variety of sonic modes. The broadcast, including live feeds from several locations in Buffalo, folds the city back onto itself: 'Tuning in on a car radio, home stereo, or commercial public address systems would feed Amacher's mix back into the city's sound world, where it could be hypothetically transmitted back to WBFO via one or more remote links' (Cimini, 2021, pp. 91–92). The piece becomes a feedback loop reconfiguring the city, placing through radio, translated and expanded through photographs and descriptions of the piece, presented in the program booklet issued by the WBFO station. *In City* also activates spaces, possibly through a more performative lens, but still sounding and (re-)placing the city over a weekend, re-folding the radio broadcast with delay, in another mode, and relayed through schedules printed in local newspapers or announced over radio broadcasts. In short, those two works seem foundational as methods for placing the city, with sound, in a feedback loop, and in dynamic ways, thus curating and contributing to a sonic experimentation with the city. It is not a contemplative soundscape, it is an active practice of shaping through sound. More than 'methods for placing', the works become themselves practices of 'placing as method' in generating knowledge about, with and from the city, across sonic modes and practices of spatialisation (Shields, 2013). In this, Amacher's works come even closer to an activation of space as re-purposing, because they re-configure already existing places through sound. Perhaps unlike Xenakis's designs mentioned above, where sound was present all along, Amacher's works re-configure places which at first did not necessarily count sound as a building material.

However, even though sound art led to redefine the place of the spatial within aesthetic practices—thus producing knowledge about space, or in space, through the sonic experience—they rarely did so in fields beyond the realm of artistic or academic production. Even Amacher's work, while directly embedded in the city and its contested spaces, remains a musical production. Nevertheless, such works, through their understanding of the sensory experience and the englobing, spatial character of sound, could be—and sometimes are—related to theoretical and conceptual thinking in philosophy, social sciences and humanities (or even architecture, and urban and environmental studies.) In this, sound art in its broadest

sense constitutes a particular thinking-with sounds and a singular mode of producing and distributing knowledge. It could potentially become part of research methods in those fields, beyond artistic productions. It is for instance what 'research-creation' (Manning & Massumi, 2018; Loveless, 2019) or 'artistic research' attempts to achieve. As a practice, 'research-creation' is therefore not limited to the artistic representation of scientific inquiry, nor to the scientific analysis of artworks. Rather, it invites a combination, a co-composition stemming from overlaps between scientific inquiry and (or as) aesthetic practices.

## Knowledge in Sound, Knowledge in 'Country'

It would be a severe oversight to limit the modes of knowledge production with and through sound to the established or part-academic art practices of the 'global West'. As mentioned in the introduction, practices of knowledge production, even more so using sound, are multiple. They are no less valuable or valid, even if they are not considered scientific or 'intellectualised' modes (Bocquillon, 2022; Montebello, 2015; Schulze, 2020). They sometimes exceed notions of production—and thus of reception and consumption—of knowledge. However, they remain threatened by what Robinson (2020) calls 'hungry listening', that takes place in extractive and exploitative modes. To consider 'hungry listening' and the forms of epistemological violence stemming from it is to imply a critical engagement with the positioning and situatedness of academic practices that determine what is considered Truth, and who is considered the thinking and knowing subject (Haraway, 1988). We may also shift our understanding of what knowledge is altogether, from evaluation and analysis, to value-generation and a thickening of the real. It might become *more-than* or *other-than* knowledge (Robinson), existing, for instance, as law or being constitutive to one's relations with other humans and non-humans, including sacred beings. A redefinition which leads to confrontation, challenging those situations of alienation and exploitation.

One example of the particular relations between sound, space, and knowledge would be the 'Songlines' or 'Dreaming Tracks' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, dating back thousands of years, they are still carried out today as a knowledge system which survived colonisation as best it could. As Margo Neale and Lynne Kelly explain, the 'Songlines' are 'archives' in the land, knowledge imprinted onto the landmarks and sung across generations. They are maps of the land being sung,

itineraries (lines) remembered as songs, linking the histories of places and the histories of the human and non-human beings inhabiting them. It is a multilevel and embodied knowledge system, which can contain information about events from thousands of years ago, animal and plant classifications to the smallest difference, and family lineage (Neale & Kelly, 2020). It is a dynamic relationship between the landmarks as 'key points' (Simondon, 2012) and the content of the knowledge itself. This content even depends on those landmarks, and through singing the land, the country becomes the main actor, which also helps to locate places 'previously unknown by the singer' (Neale & Kelly, 2020, p. 42). In this, the 'Songlines' are a thinking-with sounds always in movement, a mapping actualised through practices of walking, but also becoming more-than-knowledge, becoming law involving ancestry and belonging, as well a communication device and a sacred link to the land. In short, they can't be reduced to mere orality.[12]

> As a set of complex arterial connections, the Songlines comprise an organic network of lines crisscrossing the continent along distributed nodes of concentrated knowledge often referred to as sites of significance (places) and also known as story places. (Neale & Kelly, 2020, p. 40)

Because the land itself is so intricately bound to knowledge, one can see how its preservation becomes central. As Kelly and Neale argue, when the settlers came, taking the land also meant taking the archive, destroying the relationship to the land and its history. The taking-place as alienation, as exploitation, became a destruction of knowledge accumulated over centuries. When the landmarks disappear, or are not accessible anymore, the knowledge dies with them. This also underlines the very open understanding as to who is actually participating in preserving and co-creating knowledge, as humans appear to be 'equal with all things animate and inanimate' (Neale & Kelly, 2020, p. 35) while the land itself becomes 'more-than-human', thus exceeding the very Westernised separation between subject and object based on Reason.

However, the name 'Songlines' itself is questionable as a definition of the practice. Being popularised by English writer Bruce Chatwin in the eponymous novel of 1987, the term remains an English Western translation, and even when used very broadly, it can be considered limiting and even 'simplistic', essentialising under one denomination, a multiplicity of located and differentiated practices.[13] As Neale and Kelly argue, there is

an indescribable aspect to the Songlines, something that refuses simple naming or indexicality. Put differently, Dreaming Tracks or Songlines are so deeply linked to practices that they cannot entirely be considered a unified substantive, and thus, cannot be classified according to Western knowledge standards. As the authors note in their introduction to the book series to which *Songlines* belongs: 'The English language can't effectively describe the many new ideas you will encounter in First Knowledges series' (Neale & Kelly, 2020, p. 12). This brings us back to Robinson's 'hungry listening', and the importance of the guest listener positionality in acknowledging and accepting the incapacity to understand what such practices, in their totality, might encompass—that is: 'more-than-knowledge'.

From this 'guest' perspective, the importance of those practices as making place through sound, can also remind one of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1980) last plateau, *Le lisse et le strié*, in which the smooth space is occupied by 'intensities, winds and noises, forces, tactile and auditory qualities'.[14] As they explain, in the smooth space, the line is a vector, a direction, and not a dimension or a metric divide. The point is between two lines, whereas in the striated space, it is the line which is stuck between two points. This is also what the Songlines might be: vectors against the maps of the colonisers which striate space and knowledge, disturbing the smoothness of the land, as ripples on the water. From smooth to striated, the Western Man is as subtle as a stone thrown into a lake.

However, even if the so-called 'intellectualised mode of knowledge production' tended, in that particular case, to striate the smooth space of the Songlines (striating the space being a form of hungry listening, of dividing up, cutting, slicing, mapping, collecting, classifying, totalising, abstracting, reducing, essentialising, alienating, exploiting) both Neale and Kelly are quite confident about the possibilities for their continued use as a knowledge system, even in current and Western practices. For them, the practice becomes, or has to become, methodology. Not only do they argue for a quite universal understanding of oral histories, practices that in the West have been forgotten, devalued, erased, and even hunted down with the evolution of 'Modern Science' (Stengers, 2011), they also encourage the use of those techniques in everyday practices as well as in research methods, in order to learn and know differently. This therefore moves towards reshaping what it means to do research, and thus what knowledge can become.

For the authors, this process of changing our habits in knowing mainly happens through art, which, at the core of the Songlines, 'has an immediacy that books do not, and art can excite an emotional response at first sighting' (Neale & Kelly, 2020, p. 121). Unafraid of cultural appropriation, Neale and Kelly therefore argue for the construction of a 'third archive' in a movement between smooth and striated spaces, combining classical methods and the Songlines, in the mode of aesthetic practices. In doing so, their proposal is almost a manifesto, a field guide to challenge the relations of power inherent to practices of knowledge production and distribution. Through the third archive, there is the possibility of regaining control over the narrative, to shift back from the position of the alienated object to the active subject. Or better, to challenge the divide altogether. It is no longer a question of knowledge *about* art as it is practised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, but *with* it, *through* it, even *from* it. As a way to let that knowledge survive and evolve beyond the dusty libraries and museums of the victorious colonizer, which would only remain objectified de-territorialisations. It represents a third way, in-between the impetus of reconciliation (too often initiated by settler governments only according to their terms) or its refusal (Robinson, 2020). In this—at least for Neale and Kelly—the Songlines could smoothen again our deeply striated space. Vectors as directions rather than divides along a meter.

## Black Quantum Futurism and the Building of Third Archives

In considering this 'in-betweenness' of knowledge production as a third archive, in-between Western academic and other modes—including Indigenous knowledges, common sense (Stengers, 2020), aesthetics, and other practices defined as non-scientific—a particular movement is being initiated that might, at first, seem paradoxical. Indeed, the archive is the space of data storage, the library, the hard drive, a place made for knowledge to rest. It implies categorisation, classification, collection, and accumulation, for future retrieval. But as presented above, it also exists in the land, in 'Country', across Songlines and Dreaming Tracks, the archive thus becoming 'more-than-knowledge'. In both modes, archiving is the externalisation of memory onto mnemonic devices; it is linked to technicity (Stiegler, 1994). However, as we have seen, the techniques

of the archive do not solely exist within—to use Robinson's wording again—'hungry' modes.

Moreover, within the techniques of the archive, there is always a relationship to place and localisation. Archiving itself, as a practice, localises. It places knowledge production and distribution. Even in dematerialised worlds (the cloud is still somewhere) there is a place where knowledge resides, in all its materiality. The landmarks evoked in Songlines, as well as the actual songs sung across the land, are also places where knowledge resides. In other words, practices linked to the creation of 'third archives' seem to oscillate between: placing as methods of knowledge-keeping and more-than-knowledge relations, and methods of placing and/or place-making through sound and aisthesis.

It is in that third archive movement—between methods-as-placing and placing-as-methods—that the work of *Black Quantum Futurism*, as carried out by Rasheedah Phillips and Camae Ayewa in Philadelphia, may be presented. Inspired by other Afrofuturist space explorers such as Sun Ra, *Black Quantum Futurism* is an entanglement of artistic and speculative practices that raise awareness, build alternative support structures and take control over narratives, while mixing up art, time travel, quantum physics, housing politics, past wisdoms, and future stories. As Phillips (2020) notes, they define themselves against linear definitions of time in which 'the past is fixed and the future is inaccessible until it passes through the present' (Phillips, 2020). Their practice is the creation of another song along other lines. It works against gentrification and the deterritorialization of bodies, against housing issues and displacement. Creatives and community attorneys develop strategies together, through the hosting of workshops and the creation of open spaces 'to bring innovation and art as a component of social justice to strengthen [the Black] community' (Phillips, 2020, p. 6).

The practices of *Black Quantum Futurism* are configuring space, practising place from within the North Philadelphia community, reshaping narratives. One of their adventures is the Community Futures Lab, a pop-up space providing 'tools for how to break linear constructs in communities', 'archiving [their] past, present, and future stories, and discovering creative ways to document the changes' (Phillips, 2020, pp. 8–9). It is clear that a third archive is being built here, one that exceeds 'hungry modes' of extraction and exploitation; rather, it resists them. Furthermore, this archive does not remain within past knowledges laid to rest, but becomes a feed-forward[15] (rather than feedback)

technology, of re-definition, creation, and community support, another understanding of what 'more-than-knowledge' might mean.

It would seem that Sun Ra's motto 'space is the place', which he presented in both music and film, and which is still being carried out today by his *Arkestra*, also resonates with the work of *Black Quantum Futurism*. It expresses Afrofuturist practices as place-making. Travels through outer-space and time, the re-definition of 'affective spacetimes' (McCormack, 2008) through art and science fiction imaginaries, reconfigure narratives and create knowledge as placing. Through poetry and fiction (Eshun, 1998; Schulze, 2020), they propose narratives which challenge epistemologies and their inherent power structures, but also notions of linear time (as mentioned above), questioning the past, shaping the present, imagining futures. They invite and invoke multiple voices and histories. In short, they re-map and re-tell, to the point where it becomes another knowledge, another theory embodied through artistic practice. But it does not remain an archive as repository, somewhat left behind. Through the building of a community space—a gallery, a zine library, a recording booth—they are creating the spaces within which those narratives can be told and re-imagined. In both cases, they provide toolboxes against hegemonies and hierarchies of thought, in multiple modes, in a variety of practices of place-making. If the Songlines are the smooth space in its raw form, the practices of *Black Quantum Futurism* as third archive are something else. Unlike Amacher's works in Buffalo, these practices are located not only within the already striated space of the Philadelphia 'grid', but also within the smooth space of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the 'Integrated World Capitalism', a strong force of de-territorialisation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980; Guattari, 2018). Through them, we can read the practices of *Black Quantum Futurism* as a retaliation, an answer, combining smooth and striated, narrating the city, almost against the city itself. They are reclaiming practices of mapping and collecting stories, reclaiming power through knowledge, with sound taking place.

## Thinking-With Sounds: Thinking-Space/Thinking-Place

The practices presented in this chapter, in their histories, geographies, topologies, unfold in ways that are incommensurable. Their singularities should therefore not be reduced—placed—under the umbrella of

a unified 'thinking-with sounds', as they all engage with sound, space, place, and knowledge, in different ways. To repeat the warning from the introduction, this chapter is not about defining a blueprint or an overarching methodology to be applied to various areas of research. Presenting this multiplicity of 'place-makings' through sound should rather be seen—or heard—as an invitation, a proposition towards the figure of the listening guest, asking for the possibility of a 'critical listening positionality' (Robinson, 2020). This positionality itself *places* knowing, or rather, it challenges the placing of knowing. Entertaining these possibilities is to invite further speculative work, as practices yet to come, as might-becomes or might-have-beens. This feeds forward the importance of knowing according to multiple modes and therefore the importance of sounding in knowing. But even the openness of the invitation is to be considered carefully, because of how those practices of sounding and knowing are themselves placing: they are spatialisations defining, binding, naming and showing portions of space (Shields, 2013), possibly striating the smooth spaces of aesthetic experience. The risk, then, would be to define something akin to 'configuration files' for research programs, to be executed in pre-defined and finite sequences: an iteration of instructions for knowing placing and placing knowing.

How then can one make a sonic sociology? This is the main question that persists and continues to drive my own practice. Authors like Christoph Cox, Marcel Cobussen, and Salomé Voegelin, use the term 'sonic materialism', which 'investigates, stimulates, and advocates alternative ways of encountering and knowing the world' (Cobussen, 2022, p. 22), because of the very nature of sound, because 'sound is attached less to its source as to the networks it lets vibrate, whether these networks are themselves audible or not' (p. 19). For the same reason also, this paper only offers limited descriptions of the encountered practices. Writing about them, and trying to depict what knowledge is actually gained through sound, remains only a commentary, a reduction. It is the sound installation itself, it is the practice, in situ, that generates knowledge about place, but also in some cases, more-than-knowledge or other-than-knowledge.

The year 2023 would have seen the 90th birthday of Pauline Oliveros, a revolutionary composer, sound artist, and feminist thinker who challenged what it means to sound, and what it means to listen. Oliveros did so in particular through *Deep Listening* (2005) which, being more than a simple meditative practice, grounds listening, ritualises it, shapes it as a

mode of experiencing and knowing. In this way, Oliveros challenged the position of the subject in the world, but also in the fabric of experience. As an active way of listening, it actually activates space, it modulates 'affective spacetimes' (McCormack, 2008). In a celebration of her work and legacy, the Centre For Deep Listening invited artists, scholars, and listeners to craft scores for deep listening, one for each day, leading up to Oliveros' birthday on May 30th.[16] A long distance, one-year-long ensemble of listenings, which expressed the variety of modes of listening, of knowing and place-making through sounding. Below, and in place of a conclusion, is the score I was able to contribute to the project, and which appeared as day 360 under the title *Eavesdropping* (Bocquillon, 2025). Another invitation to sound and to listen. Another placing through sound:

> *Eavesdropping*
> Find a surface, on the ground, somewhere outside.
> Lie down. It doesn't matter how, but try to have your ear touch the ground. Make it as comfortable as possible.
> Listen. Closely, attentively. Can you focus your listening? How far into the Earth does it go? What do you hear? For how long can you listen?
> Pay attention to the rhythms of your body (breathing, heartbeats, etc.). Can they be attuned to your listening? To other rhythms?

## Notes

1. Statement presented as a 'legal mention' for the *Max Feed* exhibition centred around the work of sound artist Max Neuhaus, proposed by the Frac (regional collection of contemporary art) Franche-Comté. This statement was also given as a sticker in the exhibition catalogue. See https://www.frac-franche-comte.fr/fr/max-feed.
2. Beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting (and comical) to note the change in the status of saucepans during the protests against the pension reform in France. In one particular case, an absurd prefectoral order was issued in order to limit the use of saucepans, which apparently became a 'portable sound device'. See https://www.francetvinfo.fr/politique/emmanuel-macron/concerts-de-casseroles-un-arrete-interdit-les-dispositifs-sonores-portatifs-lors-de-la-visite-d-emmanuel-macron-dans-l-herault_5782304.html.

3. In what follows, the mentions of aesthetic practices refer to the original definition of 'aisthesis' as the sensible, rather than the more Kantian understanding of aesthetics as judgement of Beauty.

4. I am thereby following the definition of 'spatialisation' proposed by Shields (2013), as practices which localise, (de-/re-)locate, identify, construct and configure portions of space into something else, something defined within the indefiniteness of space.

5. As it will become clear in what follows, this is why, in the particular cases of *Songlines* and *Black Quantum Futurism*, I will focus only on certain publications, which could work as mediators within those sound territories.

6. Although Solomos does not express it in those terms, the 'defunctionalisation' of music as another expression of the mind, less dependent on the materiality of space, reminds of the predominance and reign of an autonomous Reason, displayed in the works of philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Kant.

7. However, this distinction between sound art and music remains challenged both by practitioners and theorists (Kelly, 2011) and without satisfying conclusions. For example, the composer Max Neuhaus, who is considered by many to be one of the most important creators of sound installations and sound art—notably through his renowned installation *Times Square*—was very critical of the term 'sound art'. He wrote for instance in 2000: 'Much of what has been called "Sound Art" has not much to do with either sound or art' (Neuhaus, 2011, p. 73). In this chapter, and following Brandon LaBelle (2015), I will myself settle on using the term 'sound art' when implying a greater engagement with space, as will become clear in what follows.

8. To quote only one example, Luc Ferrari's album *Presque Rien* shows precisely this kind of 'mélange' between field recordings and synthesis.

9. The concept of heterotopia, developed by Michel Foucault in *Other Spaces* mostly refers to places with particular 'rules of entry', rhythms, where time flows at a specific pace (such as cemeteries). I would argue that field recordings do present such spatial "otherness", de-territorialised onto tape, or other storage media, and reformulated through speakers and headphones as places only being heard. The flow of time within it is being re-shaped by the recording and its editing, thus reordering the boundaries of that

place. One could argue that the field recording might even exceed the heterotopia, and therefore come closer to the utopia (both as non-place and perfected/abstract place).

10. See their *Field Guide for Activating Space*: https://www.spacea ndculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Activating-Space-Field-Guide-Vertical.pdf.

11. For brevity's and clarity's sake, I will focus only on two particular works performed in 1967, but one could also include her other 'long distance music' from 1970–1976. See (Cimini, 2021) for greater detail.

12. The very use of orality in Walter Ong's book, or its expression in an auditive versus a visual space in Marshall McLuhan's work, should be considered carefully. They not only limit what knowledge actually is, or what it can do, but also tend to locate the practices of its production in an opposition between a pre-Modern, archaic system, and a Modern understanding of knowledge, reproducing a form of epistemological violence towards modes not considered 'Modern'. As Lynn Kelly also notes in a personal statement introducing the book *Songlines*: 'But what Ong and other orality researchers did not tell me about was the land. There was no mention of Dreamings or Songlines'. (Neale & Kelly, p. 14).

13. Those practices bear many names. For instance, Neale and Kelly cite three in their second chapter: '*Tjukurpa, Altyerre, Kujika*' (Neale & Kelly, p. 33).

14. 'C'est pourquoi ce qui occupe l'espace lisse, ce sont les intensités, les vents et les bruits, les forces et les qualités tactiles et sonores, comme dans le désert, la steppe ou les glaces'. (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 598).

15. 'Feed-forward' (Manning & Massumi, 2018) here refers to the potential for knowledge—as archive, or as Manning puts it, 'anarchive'—to be productive within new iterations along different modes. In this understanding, the archive can be re-activated, into the practices themselves rather than remaining inert traces. Relationships towards the archive as 'feed-forward' become therefore a speculative practice, challenging how kept knowledge is engaged with and used later on, in yet undefined ways.

16. See https://www.deeplistening.rpi.edu/ayodl/.

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