

Conclusion

Not a book about sound

Sound Formations is not a work about sound. It is not a work about the »formation« of sound, even if it deals with sound as »in-formation«. It is a work made with sound and through sound. It has been proposed as a »thinking|doing« within which sounding and listening are as generative as the practices of reading, thinking, writing, observing, analysing etc. It is a work of sociology, and about sociology as experimental practice, as »research« (Latour, 1999). In the fashion of Callon's sociology of translations, I started with a simple but still valid controversy that motivated the work: the alienation of knowledge from its materiality. I argued that through a combination of new materialisms, speculative philosophy, radical empiricism and sonic thinking, other modalities of knowledge production could be pursued, modalities which intensify the importance of experience, and which consider knowledge production itself as a very material practice thus challenging the hegemony of practices deemed »scientific« in spite of others, denied and declassed. As a possible (but not exclusive) path to follow, I argued that practices of sounding and listening could play a central part in this venture, not only in their scientific character, either illustrative (data sonification) or as a tool for inquiry, but in the very aesthetic force and potentials of the sonic flux questioning the subject/object and nature/culture dualisms. Not as the symbol for a regained materiality, i.e. the materiality of sound moving bodies, against the immaterial knowledge kept silent in (quite material) books, but as a vector of production itself inviting a

multiplicity of actors. Sonic thinking not as metaphor but as research practice in sociology.

To do so, a particular posture more than an overview of methods has been introduced and developed. A posture that acknowledges situatedness, but also the need for engaging with other modes of knowledge production: a political and ecological urgency that should not only be addressed within sociology, itself remaining an object of inquiry, but as what moves the researcher and is of undeniable importance. Matters of concern at the heart of what it is that sociologists do. It is a critical posture infusing in practices of »doing sociology« to which the aesthetic play also becomes central as thinking-with sounds. Sociology as Empiraterei, as ethico-aesthetic, as sonic thinking. In this, *Sound Formations* is a proposition, a combination of philosophical thought, sociological theory and aesthetic practices merging into something else, something not yet defined. An entanglement of thinking|doing, an intensification of experience through the sensible. It surely is an epistemological questioning of research practices, but beyond that, it is a way of becoming with that is critical and radical. The alienation of knowledge from materiality is also an alienation of knowledges struggling for legitimacy, and of bodies producing and conveying those knowledges. The alienation of the discarded, the displaced, the undocumented, the objectified bodies disappearing at borders. But also the alienation of non-human bodies, terrestrial, earthlings and critters, kept silent. Thinking-with sounds is a thinking-with others. The few sounding experiments conducted throughout this project, in all their imperfections, might at least show this: the multiplicity of actors involved. Impacts creating contacts, remodelling experience and inviting to slow down and be careful. A process made of trials and errors, still in becoming, in formation.

Bringing back magic

Thinking-with sounds, in what it sets into motion, in the sonic activation of space, in its intimate shaping of experience, is therefore *magical*. Not a mystical occult conjuration, however. Not only a return to the original

magical phase either, of which a glimpse through the aesthetic thought seems possible, a phase of »unity« in the sense of Simondon, where no a priori distinction between subjects and objects had been made. It is in its combinatory exploration that *thinking-with sounds* is magical, an alchemy not seeking transmutation as *solve et coagula*, but co-creation, playing with a magma of intensities between philosophy, science and art. It takes seriously the enchantment »of the world«, not in the sense of Weber, i.e. as something left behind, only meant in its denial: enchantment as what Modernity extinguished, disenchantment. Instead, it is here meant in the sense of Jane Bennett (2001, 2010), as something to look for, to listen for, to compose with, not only in the mystical and natural ideal of an archaic fairy world, but also in the technical and the scientific. Enchantment in the vibrant materiality of the reality we are plunged into.

In other words, the magical is here also a question of knowledge, of how it is being constructed, but also how it is being presented and performed. Somehow resonating with Sha's »exercise of philosophy in the mode of art« (Sha, 2013, p. 1). Consequently, if indeed — as Vinciane Despret shows — knowledge is to be understood as an addition to reality rather than an explanation, every experiment, every bit of knowledge production might be considered as magical, a speculative moment of proposing other narratives and various versions of the world. A thickening, an addition to the real. Through aesthetic thought and research. A way of bringing other actors to speak and sound, to shift and to impact on our experience of the real, to co-create »alternate worlds« (Debaise, 2015b). As Haraway puts it, a way to stay with the trouble: SF as speculative fabulation, science fiction, speculative feminism, *sonic fiction*, *sound formations*. *Thinking-with sounds* as theory making, an already generative incantation not necessarily subjected to the written explanation. Or rather, conceiving writing itself as becoming, part of the process, as a generative sonic fiction (Schulze and Kodwo Eshun) as speculative fiction (Haraway thinking-with Ursula Le Guin).

Sociology to come?

Thinking-with sounds as a magical practice, an ethico-aesthetic ecosophical engagement. A very personal and defining conviction moving the writing and sounding composing this work, gathered as a collection of impacts moving me, and also moving back through recoil and feedback. It is not the delivering of something better, a solution »clé en main« to explain and comprehend the world, but an experiment, a genuine *what if, en somme*.

In his new book *La musique à venir* (2020), the composer and director of the *Groupe de Recherches Musicales* (founded in 1958 by Pierre Schaeffer) François Bonnet also proposes to think about possibles. In his case, he asks what the music to come might be. Beyond tools and territories, music might still not have yet become, or rather is still becoming. Positioned at the threshold of meta-stability, on the verge of saturation, Bonnet speculates onto which paths new individuations of music, of the sonic flux, will set us? An uncertainty, an unsettling not-yet. Isn't it already what it is, when one wishes to stay with the trouble? Attentive and careful about what is to come? Reflecting on the »could have been«, but not because of a nostalgic deception, desperation. An openness rather, to what is unsaid and undone. Isn't it what Haraway also calls for when she asks us to be response-able: a careful look at what is becoming, beyond our own experience and existence, but in the multiplicity of actors entangled?

Echoing Bonnet's question, I feel drawn to also ask myself what the sociologies to come might look like, possibly even to consider *Sound Formations* as an analogous proposition to Bonnet's manifesto: sociology is itself yet to come, itself still becoming. *Thinking-with sounds* as sociological practice might therefore only be that: a reflection on its own individuation, a speculative ad-venture in what it might mean to do sociology. I believe this is already of value. I ended the first chapter by stating that without those questions, without those thoughts to think-with — and even though they might often aim beyond sociological practice as a »day job« and move towards more personal inclinations — I could not »do« sociology seriously. At this point, now closing this work, I am convinced

that this reflection was necessary, itself working as an impact. It made me consider what I do under a quite different light, feeling that *thinking-with sounds* might lead, seriously and within the trouble, to a very playful sociology. An opening.

