

Une écoute atmosphérique des milieux de vie

*Atmospheric Listening to Life Worlds*

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## atmospheric listening

- \*a regime of attention that enables
    - to be sensitive to the precariousness,  
the composition  
and the transformation of life worlds
  - \*irreducible to a landscape listening in terms of soundscape
    - to a musical listening in strictly aesthetic terms
    - to an environmental listening in acoustic terms
- > develop a sensitivity to current ecological issues

under the double sign of:

\*Phonocene (Donna Haraway)

-> to pay attention to the sounds of the Earth

-> to go beyond a strictly anthropocentric perspective

\*Phonotope (Peter Sloterdijk)

-> ordinary sound embedded in forms of social life

-> to understand how sound permeates everyday life

already many proposals

that explore ecological issues with sound

- the world of *biophony* and the sound universe of animals  
cf. Bernie Krause

- development of *sonification* and *audification* devices  
that make audible phenomena  
that are otherwise beyond the reach of the ear

- the emergence of an *eco-acoustics*  
at the crossroads of artistic practices  
environmental sciences and social sciences

-> another suggestion with *atmospheric listening*

## A case study: Barão de Mauá

- \* a fieldwork in Brazil / 2015 / Mauá – 30 kms from São Paulo

*Ambiance of Risk.*

*Investigation of the diffuse experience  
of contamination risks in Barão de Mauá*

-> vulnerability of inhabitants to a contaminated area

- \* a team of Brazilian & French investigators
- \* investigating vulnerability according to ambiance
- \* the role of sound in such a precarious context
- \* pointing out a few results from this research

## Situation of *Barão de Mauá*

*a condominium built on a contaminated ground*



between a favela...



Condominium under a hill



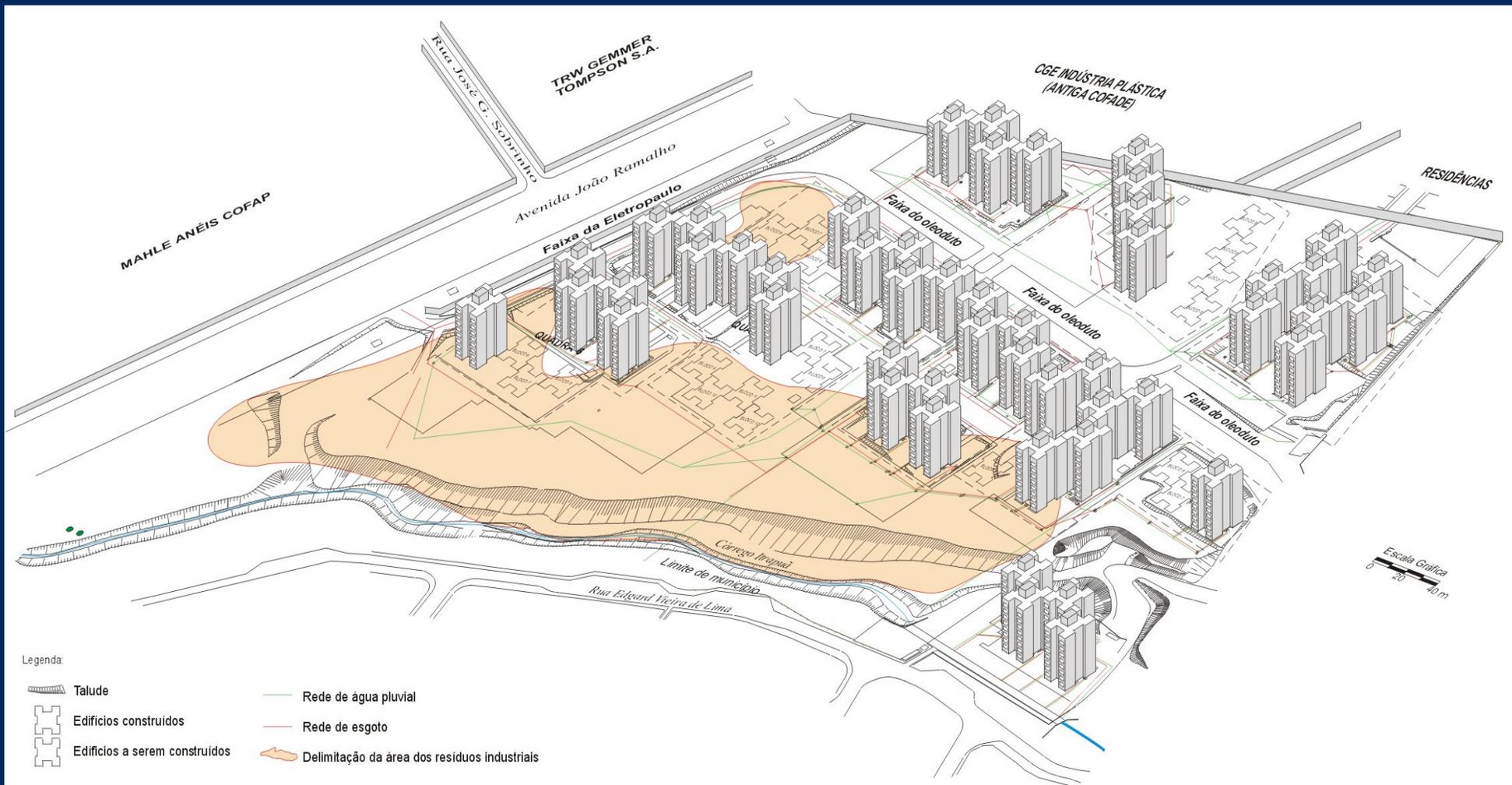
...and a petrochemical complex

## a brief story of Barão de Mauá

- \* a condominium of **1800 families**  
7000 people
- \* **built in 1996** – 54 buildings housing  
(not all finished – gost buildings)
- \* April 2000: **a traumatic event**  
explosion during maintenance work  
-> stop construction



-> **residents exposed to contamination by carcinogenic substances  
and other potential explosions**



contaminated area

a residential complex built on solid industrial waste

## The first impressions

The gost buildings

Unusual odors

A strange silence?

*enigma: a strange silence of Barão de Mauá*



Listening: based on **uncertainty** and **curiosity**

\***uncertainty: a sense of reality that is challenged**

what do we hear? which source? where does it come from?

-> starting with a common enigma about silence in Mauà

\***curiosity: an impulse to explore, to better understand**

to give sense to what is heard

sound invites to open up possibilities

-> a need to investigate: how about *this* silence in Mauà?

-> **in situ investigation and a joint logbook**

## Polyglott recomposition of excerpts from the joint logbook

### the silence of absence

...a risk territory cannot be considered solely from the angle of risk... there are inhabitants, there are people living and it is a **living environment**... therefore it also means care given to the place where we live...

... yes, but we don't hear it... I barely heard **any voices**... I heard very very **few inhabitants**...

... indeed... I noticed the very very **calm** dimension of the neighbourhood... at the beginning it was a peaceful quiet... and then as I walked I noticed something "**between the peaceful quiet and the silence of desolation**"...

... Anali says that it's the second time she comes here, and that she also has this sensation that... uh, the people... **it's lacking some people**...

### birds and planes

... I was very attentive to the **transition between interior and exterior**, which happened for me with the soundscape and the **birds**...

... I'd just add the... the **planes** in the landscape, they are really present...

### noiseless interior

... it depends a lot on the trips that are made and there is... it's true, there's much **less noise inside** the condominium than outside...

... when we came down... we walked along the stream and there is another neighbourhood... there are small houses with fencing at the entrance, and at this point there is a lot of noise... **it's much more lively**, we found noise, barking dogs, people speaking loudly, music... we found a lot livelier, a lot louder... just like we expected... **the condominium is still much more silent than the average**...

### static and lifeless

... here inside, it's **rather static**... In São Paulo, in a Condomínio, you can hear the TV, smell food... here, you know that dwellers live here because you can see clothes, but it's static... there **are no children's voice**...

... when you enter the apartments, you start to see life... but **outside, no**...

... the first impression, that's the buildings... abandoned... after talking to the manager... today, of course, there's the rain... but it's **lacking a welcoming place** for people, you see...

... outside, a lot of movement... **here... silence**...

### absence of garden

### vacant apartments?

... there's still some... there is **a lot of vacancy** still... which means that the buildings that are inhabitable are not completely full...

... some people are gone, you know... **some are gone**, and others have leased again...

... which could explain in part the silence...

### the 2000 explosion

... we were with a dweller from step 4... that's exactly where the accident happened... his name is Elton... and so **he was there at the time of the explosion**... he was at his place when he heard a... boom! ... the explosion... and because there's the petrochemical hub (not far) there're always explosions... and so he first thought that it was the petrochemical hub... and then he saw the two people that they... that were injured... he saw **a few people screaming**... and then he went down to see and found **the one that was completely burned**...

### everything is stuck

...**everything here is stuck**... for example they wanted to build a place for parties, but they can't because it's stuck... they can't improve the buildings because everything is stuck...

... there is a problem because she wanted the approval from CETESB (Environmental Agency of the State of São Paulo) to build a garage... It's the CETESB that has to give its approval, but the thing is that we can't perforate... indeed there's always the threat of explosion, but, well, since **we don't dare perforating, drilling**...

### a place without rhythm

... there were several people who were coming by car, were repairing their cars, two young girls who were playing in the play area and whose phone were used as speakers for music... so, all I'm talking about has **a sound dimension**...

... here, it was... even with the sound, it was **super silent and quiet** and we couldn't hear the city in the background... I mean, in fact, it really feels like there's a **rhythm set by the city nearby** and like on site we have the sounds of punctual events, but there's no rhythm to this place...

### paralysis effect

... and so if I understand correctly, once more, since everything seems impossible... **the paralysis effect** we mentioned yesterday... this paralysis effect we mentioned yesterday about sensory experiences... here is translated similarly in the possibilities of dwelling actions, are we clear?

... yes, this isn't simply the impression given by being conscious of the risks, but objectively there's a **paralysis of any development**... and that paralysis, it can't not have an effect on people's state of mind, on mentalities, all of that... yes, so this statement is very interesting...

... for example, there are children, there are women who are doing stuff, there are young girls who are playing... that's what should punctuate the condominium... there a **life that should... that we should be able to hear**...

... there's also an **abandoned basketball court** because it was in the condominium that stopped...

### the outside rhythm

*few human voices*

*absence of common meeting spaces*



*weak sonic presence of children*



**enigmatic silence**  
*voiceless*



*lack of collective gardens*

*unoccupied apartments*



*closed playgrounds*

*prohibition of digging and tinkering*



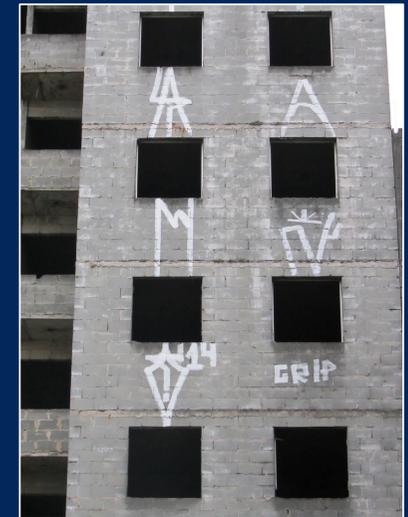
*a dwelling place under control*



**enigmatic silence**

*some forbidden paths*

*static*



*a paralysis of any development*

*rhythm given by the city in the distance*



*sounds coming from outside  
- favela, road, industrial complex -*



**enigmatic silence**  
***inconsistent***

*birds above in the sky*

*overwhelming feeling  
of airplanes flying very low*

*acoustic horizon from afar*

*strong echo of the buildings*



*inside noise of the Geoklock site*

*a trauma that persists*



*memory of the explosion in 2000*

**enigmatic silence**  
*in waiting*

*vivid auditive traces*

*hyper-vigilance to sounds  
(risk of new explosion)*

*an attention to what could happen*

Feelings of strangeness and homelessness of inhabitants

- between attachment and dispossession -

**O BARÃO DE MAUÁ  
PEDE SOCORRO!**



# An atmospheric listening?

1- Exercising of **floating listening**

-> atmospheric listening involves a movement of **letting go**

2- On **the consistency** of a sonic environment

-> atmospheric listening deals with the **coalescence of sounds**

3- A sensitivity to **affective tonality**

-> atmospheric listening tests **the vitality of a world**

4- The sonic dimension of **ontological security**

-> atmospheric listening questions the **taken for granted of perception**

5- The powers of **atmospheric impregnation**

-> atmospheric listening attunes to **infra-perception**