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Ambiance and Relational Architectures: Resounding Spaces as an evolving method for co-creative practices

Ambiências e Arquiteturas Relacionais: Espaços Ressonantes como um método em evolução para práticas co-criativas

Ambiencias y Arquitecturas Relacionales: Espacios Resonantes como un método en evolución para prácticas cocreativas

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Evangelia Paxinou é arquiteta e engenheira (A.U.Th.), com um DEA em Ambiances Architecturales et Urbaines (ENSA Grenoble) e doutorado em Arquitetura (A.U.Th.). É pesquisadora associada no CRESSON, Laboratório AAU (Université Grenoble Alpes). Sua prática arquitetônica concentra-se no projeto de espaços públicos e edifícios. Unindo teoria e prática, seu trabalho explora a ambiência como uma força — envolvendo som, percepção e materialidade como agentes ativos na criação arquitetônica. Por meio de projetos como Sympathy Radio, Resounding Ruins e The Sonic Long Table, desenvolve a noção de arquiteturas relacionais, promovendo abordagens mais coletivas, sensíveis e empáticas ao design e ao ambiente construído.

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Petros K. Flampouris is a freelance architect based in Greece. He studied Applied Arts and Architecture in Greece and Scotland (BArch, MSc, MArch) and is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Thessaly (SD+BE Lab). His research focuses on sound environments and their relation to architectural design. Combining academic inquiry and artistic practice, he explores the intersections between space, sound, and technology. A long-time DIY audio electronics enthusiast, he develops non-standard acoustic measurement tools to analyze built environments and to promote new, inclusive approaches to architectural design attentive to beings, things, and their shared ambiances.

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Resumo

Este artigo investiga a ambiência como meio de pesquisa e força geradora no projeto arquitetônico, propondo uma transição da composição formal para arquiteturas relacionais baseadas na ressonância, na sintonia e na co-criação. Diante da fragilidade ecológica e da complexidade social contemporânea, a arquitetura é chamada a compreender a ambiência não como pano de fundo, mas como um campo ativo de interação entre humanos, não humanos, materiais e ambientes. A pesquisa desenvolve-se a partir do projeto *Resounding of Ruins*, realizado no antigo sanatório do Monte Pélion, na Grécia, onde o som foi utilizado como ferramenta metodológica para explorar as relações afetivas entre o lugar, o corpo e a atmosfera. Por meio de improvisações in situ e gestos ressonantes, os participantes transformaram as ruínas em um campo sonoro coletivo. Essa abordagem foi posteriormente estendida ao Lago Karla, uma paisagem úmida reconstruída na Tessália, onde gravadores de sons da fauna, mesas sonoras participativas e experimentações multissensoriais permitiram rastrear como a água, os juncos, as bombas e as aves compõem redes vivas de actantes. Essas práticas sonoras, informadas pelas teorias da ambiência (Thibaud, Augoyard), pela estética da simpatia (Spuybroek), pelos modos de existência de Souriau e pela teoria ator-rede de Latour, redefinem a escuta como forma de invenção espacial. O estudo conclui que os métodos baseados na ambiência expandem a prática arquitetônica em direção a modos de criação ecológicos e mais-que-humanos, nos quais o projeto emerge de processos de escuta co-criativa e de ressonância ambiental.

Palavras-chave: Ambiência. Arquiteturas relacionais. Som. Criação. Design mais-que-humano.

Abstract

*This article explores ambiance as both a medium of inquiry and a generative force in architectural design, proposing a shift from formal composition toward relational architectures based on resonance, attunement, and co-creation. Faced with ecological fragility and social complexity, architecture must engage with ambiance not as background but as an active field of interaction among humans, non-humans, materials, and environments. The research develops from the project *Resounding Ruins* at the abandoned sanatorium of Mount Pelion, Greece, where sound acted as a methodological tool to explore the affective relations between site, body, and atmosphere. Through in-situ improvisations and resonant gestures, participants transformed the ruins into a collective sonic field. This approach was later extended to Lake Karla, a reconstructed wetland in Thessaly, using wildlife recorders, participatory sound tables, and multi-sensory experiments to trace how water, reeds, pumps, and birds compose living networks of actants. These sonic practices, informed by ambiance theory (Thibaud, Augoyard), the aesthetics of sympathy (Spuybroek), Souriau's modes of existence, and Latour's actor-network theory, redefine listening as a form of spatial invention. The study concludes that ambiance-based methods expand architectural practice toward ecological and more-than-human modes of creation, where design emerges through processes of co-creative listening and environmental resonance.*

Keywords: Ambiance. Relational architectures. Sound. Creation. More than human design.

Resumen

Este artículo investiga la noción de ambiente como medio de investigación y como fuerza generativa en la creación arquitectónica, proponiendo un desplazamiento desde la composición formal hacia arquitecturas relacionales basadas en la resonancia, la sintonía y la co-creación del espacio. Frente a la fragilidad ecológica, los cambios climáticos y la complejidad social contemporánea, la arquitectura es comprendida aquí no como una disciplina que organiza objetos, sino como una práctica que se inscribe en un campo activo donde humanos, no humanos, materiales y entornos interactúan configurando espacios dinámicos y sensibles. La investigación se apoya en prácticas experimentales desarrolladas en el proyecto *Resounding of Ruins*, llevado a cabo en el antiguo sanatorio del Monte Pelión (Grecia), donde el sonido se utilizó como herramienta metodológica para explorar las relaciones afectivas entre sitio, cuerpo y atmósfera. Mediante improvisaciones in situ y gestos resonantes, los participantes transformaron las ruinas en un campo sonoro colectivo. Esta aproximación se amplió luego al contexto del Lago Karla, en Tesalia, una zona ecológicamente frágil reconstruida a partir de un antiguo lago. Allí, grabadores de fauna, mesas sonoras participativas y experimentos multisensoriales permitieron revelar cómo olas, juncos, aves, bombas y canales conforman redes vivas de actantes. Estas prácticas se inscriben dentro de los estudios de la ambiencia (Thibaud, Augoyard), la estética de la simpatía (Spuybroek), los modos de existencia de Souriau y la teoría del actor-red de Latour, integrando la escucha como acto creativo y modo de indagación espacial. Los resultados muestran que los métodos orientados por la ambiencia abren la arquitectura hacia procesos evolutivos en los que escuchar se convierte en una forma de invención. En este sentido, la ambiencia actúa como una herramienta conceptual y metodológica que amplía el campo de la arquitectura y el urbanismo hacia prácticas co-creativas y más-que-humanas del espacio.

Palabras clave: Ambiencia. Arquitecturas relacionales. Sonido. Creación. Diseño más-que-humano.

Ambiance as Listening Architecture

Architecture today is increasingly challenged to engage with conditions of uncertainty, ecological fragility, and social complexity. Numerous and increasingly catastrophic climatic phenomena (forest fires, floods, violent winds) confront humans with their limits and fundamentally question their place in the built environment and within an increasingly destructive nature. In this context, architecture can no longer be seen merely as a technical response to functional needs, but as a way of negotiating with the natural and social forces that shape our lives.

This situation requires new forms of reflection and participation. It is not only planners and decision-makers who are involved, but also vulnerable populations, whose everyday practices and local knowledge make them crucial actors in imagining and co-creating the living environments of tomorrow. This broader view of design shifts the focus away from fixed solutions, toward open processes of collaboration, adaptation, and correspondence.

In order to support this shift, we are increasingly interested in exploring ways to heighten our sensitivity to the diverse natural and artificial phenomena that surround us. Architecture, in this sense, is not limited to its material forms but extends into the sphere of ambiance: the perceptual, affective, and relational dimensions of space that are constantly in transformation. These immaterial aspects, atmospheres, sounds, movements, have fluid boundaries that bring forward the relational processes through which architecture emerges. Seen in this way, ambiance becomes not only an object of attention but also a methodological tool, allowing us to imagine architectures that take shape through interaction, resonance, and collective participation.

This article explores how ambiance-oriented methods can contribute to such relational architectures, building on the experimental work of Resounding Ruins¹ and extending it toward co-creative practices in lake Karla, both field works in Thessaly Region in mainland Greece.

The Resounding Ruins project was originally developed as a site-specific sonic exploration in the ruins of a sanatorium on Mount Pelion. Vulnerable, abandoned, and collapsed contemporary buildings, where organic processes unfold slowly over time, this field work is constituting ideal contexts for exploring how human and non-human agencies, in Latour's terms (2007), intertwine as networks of aesthetic co-creation and inclusive cohabitation. We have to shift from the notion of inert matter to that of animated agencies, from a world of objects to a world of processes in which all beings, human and nonhuman, participate in the shaping of a common world (Latour, 1999).

Too often, creators approach these sites through visual satisfaction and distant contemplation (for example, by taking photographs), while paying less attention to their sensible qualities and to how these might inspire new ways of inhabiting. Sound, by contrast, with its immaterial nature, opens possibilities for experimentation and improvisation in these fragile, even hostile environments, without endangering either their cultural value or their decayed materiality. It reveals connections between surroundings and perception, showing, as Augoyard noted, how even ordinary sonic events can shift experience and create new ambiances. Everyday sounds are not mere background phenomena; they constantly reorganize our perception of space and time. A small sonic event may transform the whole ambiance of a place (Augoyard, 2005).

Working with ruins in this way loosens rigid forms of knowledge, enabling in situ practices that attune to its slow organic and material processes. Such practices open

¹ A preliminary version of this research has been presented at the 5th International Congress on Ambiances (Rio de Janeiro-Lisbon, 2024).

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the way for an architecture of ambiance improvisation, where encounters between sounds, spaces, human and material bodies, reconfigure listening in unexpected ways.



FIGURE 1 – Forms of coexistence of nature and building materials, Sanatorium site, Pilio Mountain, Greece

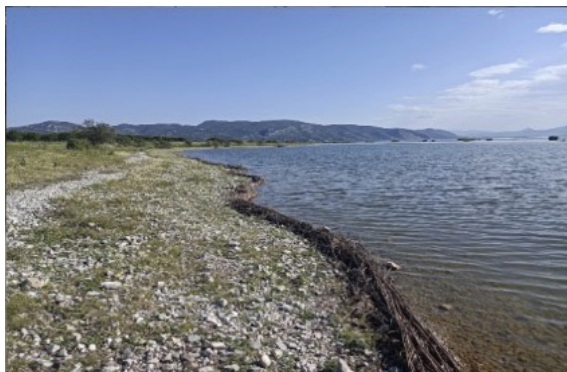
Sources: Christos Schoinas, May 2024.

The present article extends this work by applying these methods to new contexts, notably Lake Karla in Thessaly, a landscape marked by ecological fragility and historical transformation. Once drained in the 1960s and only partially restored decades later, the lake dramatically re-emerged after the floods of 2023, reshaping both its environment and its communities. We do not approach this as a simple return to a lost past, but as an ecological ruin where water, vegetation, and human infrastructures weave a shifting ambiance. In this context, it became all the more important to take time to listen patiently to understand how the lake and its inhabitants, human and non-human alike, gradually recompose their existence.

FIGURE 2 – Fragile interaction of reeds and shorelines, Lake Karla, Thessaly Region, Greece.

Sources: Authors, February 2025.

Listening with such patience also draws attention to the smallest of details. As an example, the wave, observed in its fragile interaction with reeds and shorelines, became a starting point for reflecting on the notion of actants as elements whose agency unfolds in relation to others. Striking against a small barrier of cut reeds, naturally arranged like a twig structure, this delicate formation shows the resilience of the lake and its ability to hold the forces of wind and water. These living reeds host, protect, and nourish part of the lake's fish population. From this detail unfolds a whole network of actants that exceeds the frame of the recording, linking the lake's ecology to villages, farmland, the surrounding forest, and both human and non-human presences. In this sense, the wave opens a way of perceiving ambiance through fragile interconnections of beings and things.



This attention to the fragile interconnections brings us to Thibaud's understanding of ambiance. As Thibaud argues, ambiance is not an object of perception but the very medium of perception, opening the world to sight, hearing, smell, touch, and

movement. Ambiance is not an object of perception, as a spectacle or a landscape might be, but the very condition of perception itself. In other words, we do not strictly perceive an ambiance; rather, we perceive through it. Ambiance is what makes perception possible, that from which perception unfolds (Thibaud, 2002).

The aim of this article is to explore new ways of engaging with ambiance as both medium and method, not as a passive reception but as an evolving, creative practice of listening that reshapes how we inhabit and co-create environments. This shift requires rethinking how listening has been framed within architectural and environmental discourse, moving beyond static notions of the soundscape toward more relational, material, and participatory forms of engagement. From this perspective, listening becomes inseparable from the tools and gestures that make it possible, as devices, practices, and *dérives* that mediate our relations with places, technologies, and the more-than-human.

Field work approach, a methodological Dérive

In relational architectures, devices are not neutral instruments but mediators that shape interactions between humans, technologies, and environments. They invite experimentation and participation, turning technical making into a mode of inquiry. This fieldwork approach unfolds as a methodological *dérive*, a process of drifting, sensing, and reconfiguring relations, where tools become agents of exploration, enabling new ways of listening, engaging, and co-creating with place.

What is a Device for Relation architectures?

A device is not merely a functional instrument but a relational mediator between people, technologies, and environments. Unlike appliances, which fulfil practical and predetermined purposes, devices operate within a more speculative and critical field: they are designed to provoke thought, to reveal hidden relations, and to reconfigure our ways of engaging with technology. When developed through a “DIY ethos”², a device becomes both tool and method. It’s an artifact created, adapted, or hacked by individuals rather than standardized through industrial production. It embodies a mode of inquiry grounded in experimentation, creativity, and learning through making. Within this perspective, devices are not end-products but processes of exploration, in which repurposed electronics, open-source software, and handmade sensors acquire new meanings through their interaction with sites and bodies. Drawing from Dunne’s notion of the critical device (Dunne A. and Fiona Raby, 2013) and Latour’s actor-network theory (Latour B., 2005), such tools act as mediators that give voice to non-human actants and reveal the ecological entanglements of design. Situated within a critical and relational framework, such tools question how technology shapes our relation to the environment while enabling non-human actants to “speak,” integrating their signals into shared negotiations of space. Site-specific DIY tools for environmental sensing, ambiance exploration, and participatory design, such as sound installations translating environmental data into dynamic electroacoustic compositions, demonstrate how these practices transform measurement into discovery, foster situated engagement with place, and reveal the subtle interdependencies between humans, devices, and ecosystems. In our research, they thus operate as instruments of relational architecture, where technological practice itself becomes a mode of listening and co-creation.

² The notion of a DIY ethos is further developed by Petros Flampouris in his doctoral research and architectural practice, where it becomes a central conceptual and methodological framework (Flampouris, 2026).

DIY for Environmental Engagement and relation architecture

DIY and environmental engagement intersect as a practice of situated creativity, care, and resistance, where individuals and communities reclaim agency over the tools and methods through which environmental knowledge is produced. Within environmental research and design, DIY functions as both a technical and philosophical stance, one that transforms observation into participation, measurement into dialogue, and data collection into a shared cultural act. By constructing low-cost, open-source tools such as homemade sensors, modified microphones, or hacked environmental probes, participants learn to sense, record, and interpret phenomena that are typically invisible: air quality, soil moisture, electromagnetic waves, or acoustic ecologies. These devices not only capture data but also foster embodied understanding, connecting people to their environments through processes of making and listening.

Through this process, environmental engagement becomes a form of co-creation, an ethical and aesthetic negotiation between humans and non-humans. When a community builds its own devices to monitor water quality, for example, it also builds relationships with the lake, its life, its currents, and its weather patterns, allowing these entities to “speak” through the instruments that humans have crafted. This aligns with Bruno Latour’s notion of a collective world-making process, where humans and non-humans share agency in shaping a common world. In this framework, DIY becomes an act of environmental diplomacy: an effort to translate the voices of the more-than-human into comprehensible, relational signals that can inform collective decisions.

Building upon these methodological Dérive and DIY relational practices, the next section shifts focus from devices and site-specific tools toward the sensory and experiential dimension of listening itself. If the first part explored how architectural inquiry can emerge through situated making and technological mediation, the following section examines how these processes unfold through the act of creative listening. Moving from the material fabrication of devices to the immaterial resonance of bodies and spaces, this transition reframes sound not as data to be measured, but as a relational field through which ambiances are co-created.

From Soundscape to Creative Listening

Contemporary approaches consider the soundscapes as something “out there” waiting for us to tune in. Tim Ingold in “Against Soundscape” (Ingold, 2007) argues that this objectifies sound rather than treating it as experiential. The concept of soundscape objectifies sound, treating it as though it were a kind of surface that we perceive from a distance. But sound, I argue, is not the object of perception; it is our immersion in, and commingling with, the world in which we find ourselves (Ingold, 2007).

In other words, listening enhances our bodily capacity to engage with the ambience of a place, rather than remaining still or merely attempting to harmonize with it. When we respond to the affordances of a place, the place in turn responds to us, often in unexpected ways, drawing us into sympathy with our surroundings. As Spuybroek (2011) suggests, it is through sympathy that architecture attunes its aesthetics to dynamic processes. The beauty of things arises in the sensing of the forces that flow between them, within the transparent, life-sustaining medium of atmosphere in which we are, and have always been, immersed.

We approach ambiances not as outcomes of perception but as modes of grasping the world. This requires a multidisciplinary framework that brings scientific inquiry, architectural design, and the sensory experience of place into a shared field of

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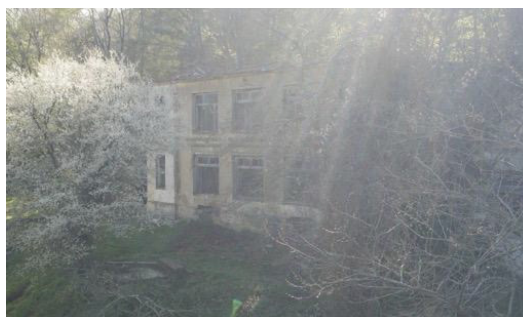
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attention. Attentive listening to the back-plan (ex. the wind, the water flow) and the resounding of the sound events activated by the participants, both beings and things, can inspire improvisation and the ambiance creation of places (Thibaud, 2022, Paxinou, 2017). What particularly draws our attention is the exploration of creative methods to stimulate hypersensitivity in architecture. Inspired by Bernhard Leitner's 1970s experiments³ on how sound configurations and body postures generate sensation in empty spaces, this research explores in situ the minimal bodily or sonic actions that activate atmospheres and bring body and space into sympathy. Unlike conventional notions of soundscape or passive immersion, creative listening encourages participants to shape resonances and connections with their surroundings.

The Resounding Ruins work began in 2024 at the ruins of the Mount Pelion Sanatorium. Founded in 1907 and expanded in 1915, the sanatorium was once a modern complex of stone and concrete with terraces open to the sun, now, in 2024, standing in decay, its roofs collapsed and its walls absorbed into the surrounding forest.

FIGURE 3 – The Abandoned building of Sanatorium in Pilio Mountain (left) and "Open Mic" Resonant Gesture (right), Thessaly Region, Greece.

Sources: Christos Schoinas, May -2024.



Within this fragile setting, sound walks with Sympathy Radio (Paxinou et al., 2023) and binaural microphones connected body, sound, and place through invisible radio waves and movement, allowing participants to perceive otherwise inaudible sounds and link distant or inaccessible areas. In this process, the whole body became an extension of antenna and microphone, engaging in listening through walking, bending, wandering, or running. Participants positioned microphones in non-human perspectives (stones, leaves, walls), diffused pre-recorded sounds through portable speakers, and played with the acoustic field by amplifying, masking, filtering, and mixing. Each of these actions functioned as a resonant gesture, unsettling the ordinary relation between back-plan and sound events and allowing new atmospheres to emerge. In other words, participants engaged their listening and their actions in different minimal resonant gestures to make the space resound through them.

In 2025, this spatial and architectural fragility extended at Lake Karla, a reconstructed ecosystem (in 2000 after being drained in 1960), where wildlife intersects with reservoirs, irrigation channels, dams and agricultural practices. There, the interplay of human and non-human actants carries ambiance-oriented methods from abandoned architectures to living, dynamic landscapes. Wildlife recorders were placed at selected locations to continuously capture the sounds of the site, day and night, for long periods, in the absence of researchers. Because our presence, even when discreet, always disturbs the site's fragile balance, leaving the microphone alone for a long time allows another kind of listening, letting the place 'speak' without our intervention. These recordings were later revisited outside the site's context, not as mere documentation, but as compositional material.

In the first two images, the wildlife recorder placed to capture the site's sonic life has, over time, become part of the ecosystem: a spider has woven its web on it, turning

³ LÓPEZ, Oscar. Bernhard Leitner: Sound Spaces, ArchDaily, 23 septembre 2011.

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FIGURE 4 – Network of actants
in Lake Karla, Thessaly Region,
Greece.

Sources: Authors, February
2025.

it into a structure for catching insects and feeding itself. The recorder thus enters a network of actants, as Latour argues, where sound provides access to an infinite play of relations. The third image shows cattle descending toward the channel, where the concrete construction and the morphology of the dam amplify every detail, like even the slightest variations in the clinking of cowbells or the faint sound of a tail striking the water, as if the cows had chosen the perfect place to 'give their concert.

These encounters illustrate how fragile interactions can inspire architectural thinking, suggesting ways to design for atmospheres that emerge from relations rather than from fixed forms. This architecture depends on an expanded sensibility, not only to the audible effects of sound but also to its subtle infra-perceptions.

Moving away from conventional soundscape labels such as 'Pollination'⁴ or 'Rainy Day'⁵, the focus shifts instead toward frequencies, vibrations, unexpected sonic events like the faint creaking of irrigation pipes with temperature changes, or the call of a frog repeating in a loop. These we call "subtle modes of existence" because they colour the ambiance and reveal its polyphonic character. In this way, creative listening unfolds as a collective practice that transforms place, re-connecting body, sound, and space in a dynamic and living act.

Relation Architectures

Resounding ruins performance involves a change in sound posture, not only by attending to existing sounds but also by becoming aware of the consequences of one's minimal gestures. This commitment unites participants, sites, living beings, materials, and technical devices in a condition of polyphony, where no sound event is pre-established as dominant, but all coexist and resonate together. The central question is: how can minimal resonant gestures give rise to relational architectures? In music, a gesture is any physical or imaginary movement. Translated into architectural practice, these resonant gestures are shared and improvised, creating a relational sound space where participants, equipment, and environment co-produce atmospheres. Numerous experiments are made until an atmosphere is established in the performance.

⁴ Pollination is a field recording made in the spring of 2025 capturing the pollination work of hundreds of bees visiting the almond blossoms. [<https://on.soundcloud.com/MHUc3bG1gTevJO71zM>]

⁵ Rainy Day is a field recording made inside a shrub whose roots are submerged in the lake, right along its edge. [<https://on.soundcloud.com/VWUVMvZ0mdsW2Lwiej>]. These recordings are also available on a live-streaming radio channel [<https://sp.streams.ovh/8010/stream>]

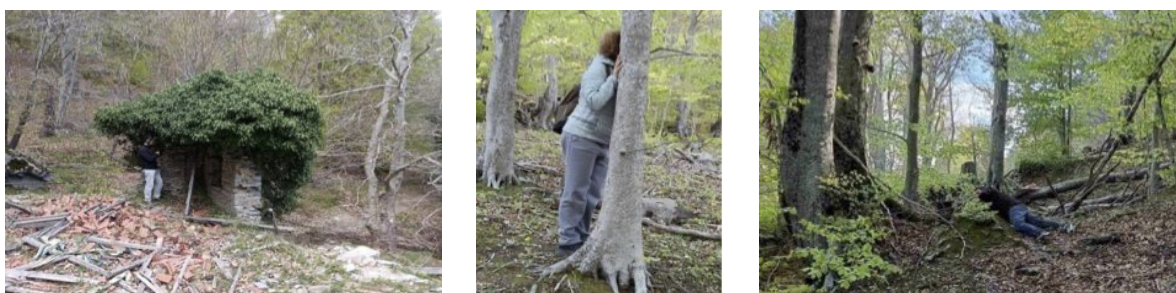
Against Soundscape - understanding the back plan

The first action taken at the sanatorium ruin was to select an abandoned windowsill and leave a recorder running until its battery expired. The resulting track captured the dominant sound of the river alongside subtler presences of birds, wind, insects, and small movements of matter. Yet the significance lay less in the recording itself than in the gesture of pressing 'record', a withdrawal of human presence that allowed other forces to inscribe themselves. This gesture resonates with the wildlife recorders placed at Lake Karla. Left unattended for days and nights, they did not merely document but actively materialised relational architecture, mediating between temporalities, species, and environments. These recordings provided the raw material to imagine and inspire relational architectures, as in the Sonic Long Table presented below.

A similar resonant gesture was the performance of sound walks with binaural headphone microphones, first carried out inside and around the ruins. The moving listening body revealed the acoustic qualities of the space: soil on the floor, collapsed walls, broken windows, thick stone walls, the depth of silence, the diffusion of human sounds. Participants adopted postures that transformed listening, like lying down to attune to what unfolded in the roots of a tree, embracing a trunk to sense the vibrations within it, or transmitting the sounds captured from the bush that had overrun the ruins. Each of these bodily gestures extended listening, allowing the site itself to resonate through human presence.

FIGURE 5 – Authors performing resonant gestures in the Sanatorium, Pilio

Sources: Christos Schoinas, May 2024.



Later, sound walks were carried out on the lake, attempting to 'catch' its sonic atmosphere. On the dam, participants experienced the crunch of gravel underfoot, the wind, and the transition from the sonic presence of water on one side to the desiccated landscape on the other. These sound walks resonate with the logic of Sympathy Radio, where listening bodies are no longer isolated perceivers but co-creators of atmosphere. Whether through the intimate passage across ruins or along the dam, relational architectures unfold between humans, non-humans, materials, and technologies. Space here is not simply inhabited but continually generated through the body's movements and senses.



FIGURE 6 – Authors performing resonant gestures on the lake Karla dam and canals, Thessaly Region, Greece.

Sources: Authors, May 2024.

Ambiance and Relational Architectures: Resounding Spaces as an evolving method for co-creative practices

Ambiências e Arquiteturas Relacionais: Espaços Ressonantes como um método em evolução para práticas co-criativas

Ambiencias y Arquitecturas Relacionales: Espacios Resonantes como un método en evolución para prácticas cocreativas

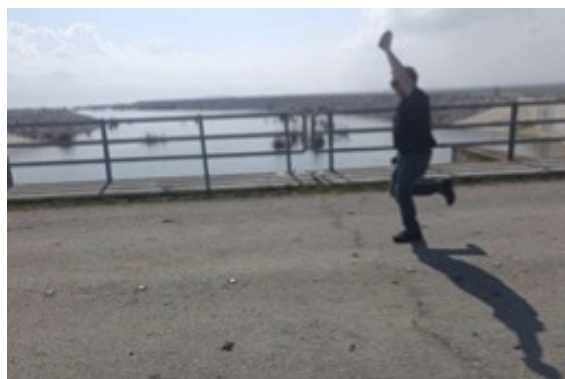


FIGURE 6 (cont.) – Authors performing resonant gestures on the lake Karla dam and canals, Thessaly Region, Greece.

Sources: Authors, May 2024.

Lying down, sitting on the sloping embankment, or unfolding an improvisational dance, participants become choreographed by the site itself, opening to its resonances and allowing subtle atmospheres to emerge. In the same way, soundscapes are not passively consumed but collectively composed together with beings and things. This shift from consumption to co-creation transforms each site into a participatory sound platform where human and non-human voices interact and resonate in polyphony.

Against Immersion - Sensing sympathy between events and back plan

It is precisely this participatory field that prepares the ground for the Against Immersion phase: once listening becomes a shared and generative act, participants can begin to test resonant gestures that unsettle the ordinary back plan, experimenting with infra-ordinary and extraordinary, where new atmospheres of sympathy emerge. Stepping out of a situation that begins to 'haunt' them (such as the seemingly infinite sound of the river) allows them to perceive the subtle frequencies, shifts, and intensities hidden within its flow. From there, different experiments unfold selecting microphones of different sensitivities, amplifying or filtering sounds, streaming them elsewhere, or positioning microphones in improbable places like inside stones, leaves, trees, or bricks, where the human ear could not normally reach.

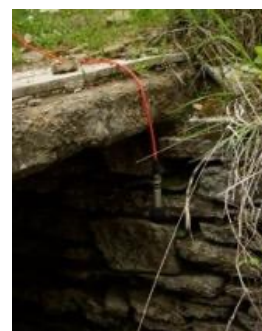


FIGURE 7 – Wired microphones in several positions and ready to be plugged in Sanatorium musical improvisation.

Sources: Christos Schoinas, May 2024.

Such gestures ask what it means to hear from a non-human perspective. These improbable positions open the way to creative listening. They emit sounds close to the microphone (Ex. rustling of leaves, cracking of small pieces of wood, noise of impact between 2 different materials, rolling of a mixture of sand and gravel, etc.), which the system amplifies so that all can hear and improvise in response to rhythm, texture, and flow.

Ambiance and Relational Architectures: Resounding Spaces as an evolving method for co-creative practices

Ambiências e Arquiteturas Relacionais: Espaços Ressonantes como um método em evolução para práticas co-criativas

Ambiencias y Arquitecturas Relacionales: Espacios Ressonantes como un método en evolución para prácticas co-creativas

FIGURE 8 – Resonant gestures for resounding ruins

Sources: Christos Schoinas,
May 2024.

In this process, the listening body shows its capacity to step out of the 'natural' atmosphere (against immersion), creating a perceptible distance. The challenge then is to sustain this body and the perception in a state of heightened sensitivity. Another resonant gesture is the diffusion in a loop of a pre-recorded contemporary cello piece, with a portable Bluetooth speaker connected to a smartphone, while the participants are trying to select the position of the portable loudspeakers (position, intensity, orientation), to amplify the sounds and to improvise with gestures, responding to the music. Many sounds are "transducted" (Helmreich, 2010) i-e recorded, transformed and transmitted. The sounds are mixed up (sound effects) and play the role of sound transducers of one space to another, of a source and its receivers whether they are living beings or objects. Stefan Helmreich refers to "against immersion" for sounds that can be converted into another energy (from sound waves to electricity), transmitted somewhere else, to make them audible or sensible again (from electricity to waves), like the transmission of a music piece played from a mobile sound source (Bluetooth speaker).

Live streaming of these plugged and unplugged sounds is essential in the general process of the listening. Technology is experimented in situ and is used to engage creative listening. Technical limitations are not explicit at the beginning for the participants. Position of the microphone, of the loudspeakers, length of the cable, sensibility of the mics, associated with several positions of the body are the participant's palette for a free improvisation. It's like learning how to play an instrument. The learning phase is part of the creative process. There is no beginning or end but a time of lived and shared experience.

This year, we extend this approach with the sonic participative table, the sonic long table V1.0⁶, where diverse sensors (humidity, light, touch, temperature, and others) allow participants to shape live compositions. On the table, a series of ten sensors were connected to the playback of these fragments. They invite participants to compose their own activation or reactivation of Lake Karla. Each sensor corresponds to a resonant gesture: these gestures operate as micro-transformations of the site's atmosphere. They trigger subtle modifications of the background sound, highlight or erase the emergence of events, and thus endlessly expand the ambient potential of the installation.

⁶ The Sonic Longue Table V1.0 draws direct inspiration from co-design and inclusive techniques developed by numerous architectural offices and collectives, in which an urban or neighbourhood masterplan is displayed on a large table for everyone to annotate, discuss, and reshape collaboratively. In this version, however, we invite the participants of the exhibition to engage through listening to attune to the polyphonies of the lake and to intervene locally within the site's sound environment, composing in real time with its environmental variables [<https://on.soundcloud.com/QimlRrHSqOibB03ej>]

Ambiance and Relational Architectures: Resounding Spaces as an evolving method for co-creative practices

Ambiências e Arquiteturas Relacionais: Espaços Ressonantes como um método em evolução para práticas co-criativas

Ambiencias y Arquitecturas Relacionales: Espacios Resonantes como un método en evolución para prácticas cocreativas

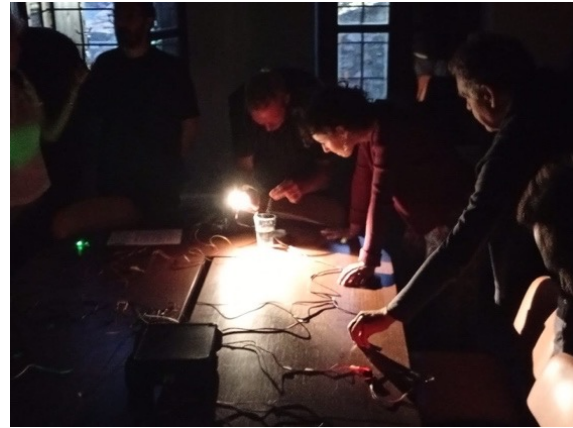


FIGURE 9 – Resonant gestures by participant of the the Sonic Long Table V1.0 in Paou Monastery, International Workshop on Theory and Sounds 2025, “Waves”

Sources: Evangelia Paxinou (left) and Giorgos Samantas (right), August 2025.

Today, the installation carries and resonates with the sounds of Lake Karla, yet it was conceived from the outset as a tool made available to the community. It can therefore be adapted to other fields of study, natural, urban, or hybrid. Its raw material is based on very long-duration recordings, made in the winter and spring of 2025 at five different points across the site, day and night. These sound fragments are integrated into the installation and played back in random sequences, creating a polyphony that constantly shifts and evolves.

Such practices show how sound extends beyond representation or immersion: while soundscape reduces sound to the Symbolic (as representation), and immersion dissolves it into the Imaginary (as undifferentiated atmosphere), our method reactivates both through a new Real, compositional events that re-knot these registers in creative ways.

In this sense, these two sonic creations that result are not reproductions of atmosphere, but reactivations and transformations: unrepeatable fragments of the world turned into shared, living events, and thus resources for architectural thought and practice. In this way, architecture becomes a relational structure in which listening itself becomes a mode of invention.

Weaving Ambiance: from musicalisation to Epiphanies

At the sanatorium ruins, the actions of participants and the technical systems deployed in situ generate a hybrid environment: human gestures, non-human beings, architectural traces, and “transducted” sounds all contribute to improvisation. The process finishes when participants sense that all sources resonate in sympathy or, as Helmreich describes, when natural, live-streamed, and transducted sounds produce a “sense of effortless presence.” The soundtrack *All That Is Solid Decays Into Air*⁷ (Flampouris and al., original sound creation, 2024), performed and recorded on-site, bears witness to this moment. The resulting sympathy sound effect describes this harmonious interaction between participants, and their satisfaction in experiencing it. Here, sympathy functions as the thread that holds heterogeneous elements (sounds, lights, materials, movements, and non-human presences) together without erasing their differences, much like the literary epiphany where disparate voices of humans, non-humans, and materials crystallize into an experience that is both felt and understood, without necessarily being reduced to a single meaning.

⁷ Available on SoundCloud at the <https://on.soundcloud.com/TDkBP6TvGh8NPvjTgA>

Distinct layers bird calls, water ripples, wind, radio hums resonate through rhythm, counterpoint, and polyphony. Rhythm emerges most clearly in variations of sound intensity, movements across space, and temporal pauses that let the environment “speak” on its own, much like literary epiphanies. Counterpoint allows independent sonic lines to remain distinct while interacting an approach tested in Resounding Ruins and expanded through Sympathy Radio, where diverse sources and participants create tension and interplay rather than fusion. Polyphony at Lake Karla expands this further, layering multiple presences at once, as explored in the Sonic Long Table, so that the ambiance becomes a living texture both heterogeneous and coherent. In this way, sympathy becomes the structural principle that transforms the experience into an epiphanic weave rather than a homogenized whole.

The move from the Sanatorium ruins to Lake Karla carries these methods into an ecological context, where fragility and resilience reframe what ambiance can do. What began in the ruins has expanded toward ecological and civic contexts, showing how ambiance can support co-creative, participatory, and more-than-human engagements. This approach shifts architecture away from technical objects such as infrastructures or ruins, toward ambiance as a design methodology, a way of generating spaces through listening, resonance, and participation.

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