From Casting to Translocal

An Email Interview with Tetsuo Kogawa

by Jan Philip Müller

Radiophonics

Question: If we think about radiophonics in terms of a specific connection between the transmission of radio waves and sound (speech, noise, music, etc.), what differences does or can radiophonics make?

You have started with "radiophonics" which is, by your definition, "a specific connection between the transmission of radio waves and sound", but I have to discuss about some prerequisites that even "radiophonics" is based on.

In my understanding, radio doesn't always need sounds. Radio is first and foremost electromagnetic **radiation**. It is not limited to radiophonics using AM, FM, DMB and so on. Radio means all sorts of radiation from artificial radio-transmission to natural thunder, from human brain waves to catfish's electricity, from microwave oven to car's electromagnetic noises and so forth. Radio influences the human body and various sorts of natural beings and natural environments. It can heal them as well as it can disturb and destroy. Radio could construct itself as a killing weapon. At the same time, it could heal our body and feeling. It could **polymorphously** synchronize each different person. The devices for this have been changing from time to time. Future radio would not be the same as the present radio nor the computer.

Radiophonics still relies upon the concept of **casting** in which a radio station broad**casts** its transmission with the contents (sounds) toward the marginal area. The concept of radiophonics presupposes that it covers all marginal areas with the same contents without qualitative difference of sound. But this idea had to become irrelevant now.

As the diversification of culture and society was going on, such a broad**casting** had to diverse itself with multiple contents by genres, favorites, ages, genders, areas, languages, idiosyncrasies and so on. In any case, the contents are **cast** to the audience. This doesn't make a difference in narrow**casting** such as community radio and micro-radio. Narrowcasting can provide diverse units for the audience and the listening community, but doesn't stop **casting** the contents. Of course, there is "interactive" communication even in these **broad/narrow-casting** such as phone-in, open-door-policy of a local station to the audience who could become a broadcaster when they visit the station. Mobile phones and social media make it more easily. But the essence of these communications is still centrifugally or centripetally **casting** between the center and the margin.

Presumably, the internet technology is expected to finally enable the real "interactive" radio. It gets rid of the technological difference between the sender and the receiver. But the internet technology usually does not care of its real function of the **post-casting** media. Actually, in the net, new types of radio appear now. Even mobile phone is a kind of radio in this context. The concept of **casting** is no more relevant in this situation. However, just as one of the popular new-type communication is called "Twit**Casting**", it is still fettered by the older usage even if it is only by word.

In the reality, however, every unit of radio in the newer condition of radio technology is **local** and at the same time global: in my term "**translocal**." Communication itself has

changed from **casting** to **translocal**. Even conventional casting media is now reconstructed by the new concept of **translocalism**. Although the casting media seem to be declining and the internet-oriented media is taking over the former, the fact is that both are collaborating, twisting, and complicating each other. The problem is that this complication contributes to the control in socio-cultural politics rather than to facilitate creating and emancipating.

Collectives

Question: In what ways does radiophonics allow to think about (or deal with; experiment with) relations between individuals and collectives (or individualizing and assembling, separations and connections, listeners and producers, citizens and states or societies, minorities and majorities, private and political or public spheres, etc..)?

In my argument, the set concepts of "individual" and "collectives" can't cover the present reality anymore. Our personality has been more and more multiple (I prefer to say **polymorphous**) and the collectivity of different individuals can't work without forced discipline and control. Even every individual has to maintain her/his "identity" by some compelling and curing formats. The micro and **molecular** level of our body can't act in alignment with such an irrelevant concept of "identity" as it hardly worked in the modernist forms and values at the cost of mental diseases and social tragedies.

As for how radio changed such a conventional set concept radically, I already talked a lot in the example of Mini FM (ex. "Toward Polymorphous Radio"[1]). I found that in Mini FM—a

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[1] [Cf. Tetsuo Kogawa: Toward Polymorphous Radio. In: Daina Augaitis u. a. (Hrsg.): Radio Rethink. Art, Sound, and Transmission. Banff, Alberta 1994, p. 287–300; online: https://anarchy.translocal.jp/non-japanese/radiorethink.html (21-12-2017), jpm].

very low power radio without physical partition between the sender and the receiver—the participants experienced (with some "*Verfremdungseffekt*"[2]) a kind of continuity and contradictions between the "individual" and society and even between the own "selves." This has nothing to do with a religious experience. Mini FM temporarily enabled the participants to realize that without any intentional effort, control or instruction, they could feel some sort of emancipating or deconstructed person-to-person relationship just by taking a microphone. It could be explained by "conviviality"[3] (Ivan Illich) and "structural coupling"[4] (Francisco J. Varela and Humberto R. Maturana).

My experience in Mini FM let me know that the contents of radiophonics didn't change the audience but the forms of transmission and transmitting space did. The form includes the power range of transmission, how to use it with the audio and other facilities. The space means not only physical space such as radio studio or gathering space but also conceptual and virtual space. Therefore, depending upon these conditions, your radio is different. This

[2] German in the original, jpm.

[3] [Cf. Ivan Illich: Tools for Conviviality, 1975; for example p. 24: "The crisis can be solved only if we learn to invert the present deep structure of tools; if we give people tools that guarantee their right to work with high, independent efficiency, thus simultaneously eliminating the need for either slaves or masters and enhancing each person's range of freedom. […] I choose the term 'conviviality' to designate the opposite of industrial productivity. I intend it to mean autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by others, and by a man-made environment." jpm]

[4] [Cf. for example Maturana/Varela: The Tree of Knowledge, p. 75: „Every ontogeny occurs within an environment; we, as observers, can describe both as having a particular structure such as diffusion, secretion, temperature. In describing autopoietic unity as having a particular structure, it will become clear to us that the interactions (as long as they are recurrent) between unity and environment will consist of reciprocal perturbations. In these interactions, the structure of the environment only triggers structural changes in the autopoietic unities (it does not specify or direct them), and vice versa for the environment. The result will be a history of mutual congruent structural changes as long as the autopoietic unity and its containing environment do not disintegrate: there will be a structural coupling." jpm]

is the point that we have to discuss about: the difference between airwaves-radio and streaming radio, too. You can receive the "same" contents over the both media, but you could feel something different in each media. This trivial difference should be the very area that **radioart** (no letter space: differentiating from "radio art") starts. In such a triviality, I have been working my radioart experiments.

Radioart is an unlimited way of dealing and playing[5] (*spielen*) with radiation. However, given the history of arts, radioart has to be conscious of existent art-forms especially such as sound art, media art, and all of what are usually called "radio art" (two words in English). Critical, deconstructing and hyperizing approach to the existent art-forms by radioart cannot remain in the field of "aesthetics" any more. It has to be involved in micro-politics philosophy of technology, and ecology too.

Futures

Question: What have been the promises of a future radio and what kind of critique of the present made that possible? And if this has changed, what is the future of radiophonics now?

Future is not the theme of prediction but the theme of practice. What will you want, what will you expect, what will you imagine and what will you create? I myself really expect the end of casting media. **Translocal** media could respect every **local** (topologically rather than geographically) unit (especially body and nerve cell) as well as globally remote relationship of such units.

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[5] [German in the original, jpm.]

Given the ongoing situation of communication technology and socio-economic needs, radio, telephone, television and the internet would be combined. Although the popular distinction of "analogue" and "digital" is nonsense, every medium will be interweavingly reorganized by the digital system, that is the computer-oriented technology and logistics.

The problem is that this technology makes our physical space less and less. In other words, our body is reconstructed and invaded by this technology until ultimately becoming an android or a cyborg with luck (cyborg still has its body elements). Body is the **local** place where we are here at/against home. An android has no **locality**. That's why it can be virtually anywhere. For the electromagnetic technology, this aspect of **utopos** (no-place) is the "utopia".

Transmission is full of conflicts and reactions from the level of social institutions to personal lives. As far as radio concerns, this situation would let radio become an environment: mobile phone is already a kind of an environment; WiFi and Bluetooth transmission too. Usually, radio would not be conscious of it. Already a symptom of this situation appears: you have not to take a recording by yourself because a surveillance system on the street, in the housing, and even in the taxi automatically records you and stores up as the data even if it is not always analyzed nor used.

My question is where we can find the place of art in this situation. Forgetting our body would be the easiest way. When we conceive something, an AI system creates the art work? It should be possible and probable. However, for a tacky artist who has been obsessed by my own body aspect and hands-on technology, this trend lets me remain behind.

Without any "Blade Runner", we can differentiate the human body from an android in the point that our body has some redundancy and contingency. Given this "Urdoxa"[6], I argue that hands are the last islands of our body. While various automatic system from voice control to telepathic control is increasingly advancing, our hands and digits would remain the last island of tacky redundancy and contingency of our body. This is only my choice and my own field of radioart. The future is for everybody and you can find new radio in various ways.

October 12, 2016, Tokyo

Follow up Questions

Perceptibilities and Imperceptibilities

Question: Please allow me to come back to the relation between radio waves and sound in radiophonics. What I would be interested in – to put it more general – are the relations between perceptibility and imperceptibility: Although electromagnetic radiation can have effects on human bodies it cannot be heard with human ears, unlike sound. Then there is also noise that one maybe "hears" but one still doesn't perceive it as part of a sound as

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[6] Cf. Edmund Husserl: Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Erstes Buch. Erster Halbband, Husserliana Bd III/1, Neu hrsg. von Karl Schuhmann, Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff 1976, S. 241 [§ 104, 216f.]). „Glaubensgewißheit ist Glaube schlechthin, in prägnantem Sinne. Sie hat nach unseren Analysen in der Tat eine höchst merkwürdige Sonderstellung in der Mannigfaltigkeit von Akten, die alle unter dem Titel Glaube – oder ‚Urteil', wie vielfach aber in sehr unpassender Weise gefragt wird – begriffen werden. Es bedarf eines eigenen Ausdrucks, der dieser Sonderstellung Rechnung trägt und jede Erinnerung an die übliche Gleichstellung der Gewißheit und der anderen Glaubensmodi auslöscht. Wir führen den Terminus U r g l a u b e oder U r d o x a ein, womit sich die von uns herausgestellte intentionale Rückbezogenheit aller ‚Glaubensmodalitäten' angemessen ausprägt."

transmitted content. Last but not least, the "receiver" in conventional broadcasting is defined by being silent, unhearable, imperceptible. Dissenting voices are – so to say – silenced even before they can be uttered and/or heard. So, I would be interested if and how such relationships between perceptibilities and imperceptibilies play a role in your understanding (and practice) of radio. Concerning the aspect of perceptibilities then, how is sound involved in your experimentation with radioart?

I would say that every perception is not reception but transmission, to beam some signals to an object which by itself transmits something, too. This mutual transmission creates a resonance in which multiple signals act and react together. In a sense, "listener" or "receiver" are in the midst of such a resonance field. In order to perceive, you have to transmit something.

Sounds and airwaves are not different in their nature. The difference is that every being has its own frequency range. The point is how and where the being sets its intrinsic and idiosyncratic horizons in the air. Human beings have a certain range of audible, visible, touching and smelling frequencies. Even thinking has a range of horizons of logic and language.[7] If the audible frequency for a typical young person as 20 to 20000Hz and the visible frequency as 430 to 770 THz, what is the frequency spectrum of thinking? I think you could calculate it by the frequency range of neurotransmitters. Presumably, it would be much higher than the visible light.

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[7] By "horizon" I refer especially to how Edmund Husserl argued this concept in his later work *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*. See §8. Die Horizonstruktur der Erfahrung; typische Vorbekanntheit jedes einzelnen Gegenstandes der Erfahrung. Hamburg: Classen Verlag, 1964, S. 26ff.

This explanation might sound too "mechanistic", but through a – flexible and viable – expansion of Whiteheads notion of ""vibration"[8] we could reach an agreement. At least, I would like to bring a conceptual attention to transmission and transmitter to arrange horizons of every perception without which no phenomenon appears to our perception.

In fact, our perception is always a precept over the "vibrating" or oscillating horizons. Audible frequency has its infinite multitude of harmonic resonance over itself toward visual lights and thinking oscillation of brain. So, it is difficult to draw a line between sound art and radioart. Even if you make a single (audible) sound, it makes radio waves by the harmonics too.

So, as far as transmission is concerned, at least for me, even sound is not for communicating nor harmonizing but for transmitting-radiating. I bring on the concept of horizon because it can explain that our perception depends on anticipation (referring to Kantian-Husserlian "Antizipation") with the horizons. Just as we don't think that at the far end of the sea horizon we don't think nothing exists, we always perceive something beyond our perception. Signals on the eardrum and retina are only the part of the transmission. The point is not whether audible/visible or not, but is to reveal various horizons that our continuous

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[8] [Cf. – for example – Alfred North Whitehead: Science and the Modern World, p. 134-135: "[I]n the organic theory, a pattern need not endure in undifferentiated sameness through time. The pattern may be essentially one of aesthetic contrast requiring a lapse of time for its unfolding. A tune is an example of such a pattern. Thus the endurance of the pattern now means the reiteration of its succession of contrasts. This is obviously the most general notion of endurance on the organic theory, and 'reiteration' is perhaps the word which expresses it with most directness. But when we translate this notion into the abstractions of physics, it at once becomes the technical notion of 'vibration.'" or: Alfred North Whitehead: Process and Reality, p. 151: "The creative process is rhythmic: it swings from the publicity of many things to the individual privacy; and it swings back from the private individual to the publicity of the objectified individual. The former swing is dominated by the final cause, which is the ideal; and the latter swing is dominated by the efficient cause, which is actual." jpm]

perception and preposition hide. So my radioart operation is to shift such horizons as polymorphously as possible.

Forms, Spaces

Question: What are the most important aspects of the "forms of transmission and transmitting space" that you have written about? The spaces or spatialities you mention – "audio facilities", "physical spaces" ("radio studio", " gathering space") and also "conceptual" and "virtual space" – they seem to be very different in kind. Could you outline how they are involved in a 'radio situation'? How do they connect, merge or intertwine? You describe how radio is becoming an "environment" – that is: a certain spatial configuration – which in your example of being recorded automatically is linked to an increased surveillance and processing of personal data. In regard to spatiality the relationship between the body and technology also comes into play: you talk about the locality of the body and non-localized utopia of electromagnetic technologies. Is it that the heterogeneous configurations of place and space allow to counter control by the production of new and unforeseen moments?

When radio is considered as radiation, radio exists everywhere even if you don't have a radio transmitter or a receiver. Every field and space could be understood from the perspective of the electromagnetic field, which is not only monopolized by physics such as Super String Theory but also should be approached by philosophy and arts.

The artificial form of transmission and receiving by the electric circuit is only an explicit way of radiation. Also, radiation is not only for carrying meaningful signals and information from one place to another. Broadcasting and surveilling can work only within the meaningful context. Radioart and sound art might have been balancing with such an artificial distortion

and imbalance. Of course, they fail to balance. As radiation is boosted heavier and stronger, the penetration goes deeply. Thus, protecting and shielding becomes in greater scale. By nature radiation never ceases to penetrate into the depth of everything.

Is there any adequate level of radiation? What can it decide? Our body should have a key for it. The relationship between our body and electromagnetic radiation is delicate as well as dangerous.

Hands-on: radioart, Experiment, Circuits

Question: I would be curious to learn more about the relationship between the "body aspect and hands-on technology". The practice of designing, soldering and manipulation of electronic radio circuits seem to become a more autonomous activity: From doing it in order to transmit something else (contents) to an experimentation with the circuits and their radiation themselves. In this regard, could you explain a little bit more why you consider the body to be more contingent than the technology in this context? Because I had thought of this kind of experimentation precisely as provoking the contingency of concrete radio technology and thus as a practice of exploration of radio and its technologies. Maybe if you could give a sketch of how you proceed in your radioart work? What are the things that you pay most attention to in this process? How do the circuits, the radio waves, the hands (and the ears?) enter into relations among each other?

Hands reveal by themselves what our body is. Maurice-Merleau Ponty convincingly explained it inspired by Edmund Husserl's comment on hands in *Ideen II*. Let me quote his passage:

> Quand ma main droite touche ma main gauche, je la sens comme une « chose physique », mais au même moment, si je veux, un événement extraordinaire se produit : voici que ma main gauche aussi se met à sentir ma main droite, *es wird Leib*, es empfindet. La chose physique s'anime, - ou plus exactement elle reste ce qu'elle était, l'événement ne l'enrichit pas, mais une puissance exploratrice vient se poser sur elle ou l'habiter. Donc je me touche touchant, mon

corps accomplit « une sorte de réflexion ». En lui, par lui, il n'y a pas seulement rapport à sens unique de celui qui sent à ce qu'il sent : le rapport se renverse, la main touchée devient touchante, et je suis obligé de dire que le toucher ici est répandu dans le corps, que le corps est « chose sentante », « sujet-objet ».

(Le Philosophe et son Ombre, in *Éloge de la philosophie*, pp. 256)

This "reflection" is not of the brain's contemplation, but is involved in the physical movements. The hand's movements especially the fingers' seem to be "independent" in the function in comparison with the other limbs which move just as an interlocking mechanism. And they seem as if they are thinking and feeling. However, hands "think" as differently as the brain does. Although every nerve is considered as centralized by the brain, the truth might be that they work independently from the central control of the brain and even lead the brain.

Problems of technology happen when a brain forces to control the hands or the mutual relationship is broken down. Hands don't see nor listen to but can act more directly and more holistically to the airwaves. In my performance, I have been trying to arrange such a condition to my hands with the micro transmitters. High power transmission neglects where and how our body reacts: there is no choice but to shield and turn-off. In order to let our hands "think", our hands have to move themselves minimally and delicately.

Radioart and Dissent

Question: My last question would be concerned with how this move to radioart can be understood against the background of your history with community radio and Mini-FM — especially how your concept of radioart relates to strategies of political dissent and resistance. You mention that radioart goes beyond "aesthetics" and "has to be involved in micro-politics, philosophy of technology, and ecology too". Is this move to radioart then

comparable to the one you have described from the content to the forms and spaces of transmission?

Looking back my past, it seems to be that I have been involved in everything by chance, not by any intentional will nor mission nor view. Since I was too young for the old leftism in the late 50s and a bit too old for the new-leftism in the early 70s in Japan, I was, politically, much influenced by the late hippy movement in the mid-60s from the US. So a kind of zero-work, paroxysm, anarchism, intuitionism... were very familiar with me rather than establishing a collective, group, organization and needless to say a political party (except wine party or radioparty). In this sense, the Autonomia movement in Italy blended everything of my experience, assumption and knowledge viably toward my further activities. I just skimmed the ideas and examples, though. The movement itself was very complicated in chaos and diversity.

In the 70s on, I was involved in writing as a allegedly "progressive" media critic in journalism. And I thought I was fighting with the system by my papers. But without the lucky encounter with my unique students, I would have been only a paper activist. S/he were artists or activists or persons with the mental/physical problems. They had their own working/playing fields and brought me into them. My irresponsible introduction of "radical" notions and their a bit desperate and naive curiosity were a creative combination in the period of the breakup of new-leftism and of the rising neoliberalism in the early 80s in Japan. My interest in free radio and community radio which could be understood as a message-oriented radio was changing when we re-defined our free radio to Mini FM. It was a transitional medium along with the electronic bulletin board and old-type mail before the internet became gradually popular after the mid-90s.

The internet let me understand that our Mini FM had not to play a role of message deliverer anymore. As I told you before, I had found an another aspect of Mini FM, which is non message-oriented, but more therapeutic and minimalistically artistic. The internet gave me a chance to concentrate myself into this aspect and simultaneously enabled us to leave our message-oriented communication to the internet radio. In this situation, Net Radio Home Run and Radio Kinesonus started.

In the meanwhile, the internet has turned to establishing the socio-economic structure. Even our alternative net radio became considered as mainstream sub-system. The technological condition became stable and enabled us the easy way to internationally broadcast even by our cheap DIY system. We could not any more utilize the paradoxical "troubles" such as congestion and delay of streaming for some artistic form. I thought this is the chance to say goodbye to the message-oriented radio and to put my mind to the lesser and modest levels of our society, our body and our environments through my radio activity.

This should be a backward from the real politics which seemingly needs something "militant". But I am now finding, feeling and inspired a lot in the lesser and modest world of my hands especially with various electromagnetic fields. Adorno might allow me to consider it as a political strategy of hibernation to the new no-exit situation.[9]

December 15, 2017, Tokyo

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[9] [Cf. Tetsuo Kogawa: Adorno's "Strategy of Hibernation"., in: Telos 1980, S. 147–153, online: http://anarchy.translocal.jp/non-japanese/adorno.html, jpm]