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Sound-Mediated Environmentalisms in Contemporary Tuscany: towards Eco-ethnomusicological Frameworks in Central Italy

Thesis presented by

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for the degree of

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Abstract

The environmental crisis is one of the most pressing issues of our time. While many stakeholders focus on scientific and economic solutions, research concerning cultural responses remains limited—specifically, the role that music and sound may play in contributing to environmentalism. Given that the world's largest polluters are developed nations, research in these contexts is crucial for understanding how music can help address environmental challenges.

This study focuses on a series of music and sound-based events in Tuscany, Italy, where my personal and professional connections as a native and artist offer unique insights into the region's human–nature relationships. Through applied ethnomusicological research, combined with my own artistic practice, I investigated the interplay between musicians, their local environments, and the ways in which performances can address the cultural component of the environmental crisis. Fieldwork was conducted with a diverse group of participants, including musicians, sound artists, event organizers, biologists, ornithologists, and attendees. The aim was to explore the potential of music and sound-based activities to raise environmental awareness and inspire the social change necessary to confront the crisis.

Using this blended methodology, I documented a series of local events and festivals in Tuscany that incorporated music to emphasize the interdependent relationship between humans and nature, raise environmental awareness, promote non-consumptive experiences in natural areas, and educate about sustainability. Adopting a post-humanist approach, I also examined human reactions to sounds produced by non-human entities, conducting fieldwork among sound-walk participants to create a comprehensive view of the various sonic interactions related to the environmental crisis.

After outlining the key research questions and framing this study within ecomusicological theory and practice—as well as the Sustainable Development Goals—in the introduction, Chapter 2 details the fieldwork, including event sampling, participant selection, and the crafting of performances and compositions to which I contributed.

Chapter 3 focuses on the role of listening in fostering environmental awareness, highlighting soundwalking as a practice that blends environmental and musical sounds. Chapter 4 presents case studies of music and sound-based practices in ecotourism, enhancing public understanding of local environmental features and concerns. Still within the ecotourism frame, Chapter 5 explores a series of music videos featuring Baroque musicians performing in a nature park, questioning whether such performances qualify as ecotourism and considering their implications for human–nature relationships in virtual spaces.

In Chapter 6, I document how music festivals and events are used to educate participants about sustainability, inspire interest in environmental issues, and promote pro-environmental behaviours. Chapter 7 investigates how certain music and sound-based events can encourage a non-dualistic understanding of nature, challenging the cultural divide between humans and the natural world. The concluding chapter synthesizes these findings, outlines future research directions, and reflects on the role of music and music studies in fostering environmentalism and an ecocentric worldview.

Though different countries have adopted diverse strategies to promote ecological consciousness, this Italian case study offers valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of the specific approaches examined. It also provides a model that can inform future eco/ethnomusicological research and policy interventions on a broader scale, contributing to the use of cultural practices in facilitating the transition toward a more ecocentric society.

Sommario

La crisi ambientale è una delle questioni più urgenti del nostro tempo. Sebbene molti attori ed istituzioni si concentrino sul ricerare soluzioni scientifiche ed economiche, la ricerca sul ruolo della cultura, ed in particolare della musica nel rispondere a questa crisi rimane limitata. Poiché le nazioni sviluppate sono tra i maggiori inquinatori del pianeta, la ricerca in questi contesti è cruciale per comprendere come la musica possa contribuire ad affrontare le sfide ambientali. Questo studio si focalizza su una serie di eventi musicali e sonori nella regione Toscana, in Italia, dove le mie preesistenti connessioni personali e professionali come artista e nativo del luogo offrono una prospettiva unica sulle relazioni tra l'uomo e la natura in questa regione.

Tramite uno studio di etnomusicologia applicata, combinato con la mia pratica artistica, ho esplorato l'interazione tra musicisti e l'ambiente naturale, e il modo in cui la musica e le performance sonore possono accrescere la consapevolezza ambientale. Ho condotto ricerche sul campo con un gruppo eterogeneo di partecipanti, tra cui musicisti, artisti sonori, organizzatori di eventi, biologi, ornitologi e il pubblico partecipante a questi eventi, con l'obbiettivo di esaminare, interrogare e valutare il potenziale della musica e delle attività basate sul suono per ispirare un cambiamento sociale verso una maggiore sostenibilità ambientale. Utilizzando questa metodologia mista, ho documentato una serie di eventi e festival locali in Toscana, in cui la musica è stata utilizzata per sottolineare il rapporto interdipendente tra uomo e natura, promuovendo al contempo la sostenibilità ambientale. La mia ricerca ha evidenziato come questi eventi contribuiscano a sviluppare idee di tutela ambientale, instaurare legami di natura ecologica con il territorio, sviluppando consapevolezza riguardo ai rischi legati al degrado ecologico. Adottando un approccio postumanista, ho anche esaminato le reazioni umane ai suoni prodotti da entità non umane, conducendo ricerche sul campo tra i partecipanti a passeggiate sonore, al fine di fornire una visione completa delle varie interazioni sonore legate alla crisi ecologica.

Dopo aver presentato le principali domande di ricerca e aver inquadrato questo studio all'interno della teoria e della pratica ecomusicologica, nonché degli obiettivi di

sviluppo sostenibile nell'Introduzione, il Capitolo 2 descrive metodologia in dettaglio, incluso il lavoro di ricerca sul campo, fornendo dettagli riguardo alla selezione degli eventi, dei partecipanti e la creazione delle performance e composizioni con le quali ho contribuito ad alcuni degli eventi esaminati. Il Capitolo 3 si concentra sul ruolo dell'ascolto nella sensibilizzazione ambientale, evidenziando la pratica della passeggiata sonora come attività che unisce i suoni dell'ambiente con elementi musicali. Il Capitolo 4 presenta una serie di casi studio su pratiche musicali e sonore utilizzate come forme di ecoturismo, migliorando la comprensione pubblica delle sfide e delle caratteristiche ambientali locali. Sempre nell'ambito dell'ecoturismo, il Capitolo 5 esplora una serie di video musicali in cui musicisti barocchi si esibiscono in un parco naturale, interrogandosi su come tali performance possano essere considerate ecoturismo e riflettendo sulle implicazioni per le relazioni uomo-natura negli spazi virtuali. Nel Capitolo 6 documento come festival ed eventi musicali vengano utilizzati per educare i partecipanti a comportamenti sostenibili, stimolare l'interesse per le questioni ambientali e promuovere conversazioni su ecologia e sostenibilità. Il Capitolo 7 indaga come certi eventi musicali e sonori possano promuovere una comprensione non dualistica della natura, mettendo in discussione la separazione culturale tra umanità e mondo naturale. Il capitolo conclusivo sintetizza questi risultati e suggerisce nuove direzioni per la ricerca futura, riflettendo al contempo sul ruolo della musica e degli studi musicali nella più ampia transizione ecologica della società. Questo studio dimostra come la musica possa agire come un potente strumento di educazione e sensibilizzazione ambientale, suggerendo che essa abbia il potenziale di promuovere relazioni più sostenibili tra l'uomo e il suo ambiente.

Sebbene diversi paesi abbiano adottato strategie differenti per promuovere la consapevolezza ecologica, questo caso di studio italiano offre spunti preziosi sui punti di forza e le limitazioni degli approcci specifici analizzati. Inoltre, fornisce un modello che può informare future ricerche eco/etnomusicologiche e interventi politici su scala più ampia, contribuendo all'uso delle pratiche culturali per facilitare la transizione ecologica globale.

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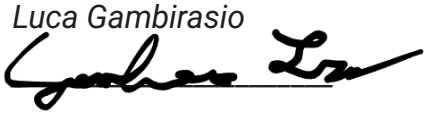
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Declaration

Cork, 17/09/2024

I, Luca Gambirasio, hereby certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. All contributions from interviewees are quoted and acknowledged within the text. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism and intellectual property.

Luca Gambirasio



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May many beings benefit from the outcomes of this work.

Chapter 1

Introduction

As the sun sets slowly behind the lake, my boat swifts placidly over the calm water's surface. Around me, there are floating islands covered in reeds and sawgrass. On a branch, a purple heron rests, unbothered by the noise of the boat's electric engine and the voice of Andreas, my guide. It is mid-August, and I am surprised by the absence of mosquitoes in the area, as anywhere else the cool breeze of the summer evenings would accompany swarms of hungry, biting mosquitoes. I was told that the fish of the lake eat most of the larvae—a balance in the local ecosystem that made my experience more enjoyable. My guide was taking me to a floating, plastic platform anchored to the bottom of the lake in front of a wooden shack, a hide for ornithologists and amateur birdwatchers to watch the various bird species that call that lake their home—or that spend a season there, to nest, mate, and recharge before the next migration. That night, whoever was going to be inside the wooden hide was not going to see, or *hear,* any birds though.

As we are approaching the platform, Andreas ties the boat to a pole. I start unloading the bags that occupied most of the space on the boat and organising them on the platform. I mentally tick off things from the list of the gear that I was supposed to bring with me that night. Guitar. Check. Portable, battery-powered amplifier. Check. Aux cable. Check. Spare batteries. Check. Picks. Check. I set up the stage, plug the instrument, check the technology, and warm up my hands on the fretboard while Andreas hides the boat out of sight. I connect my phone to the amplifier, ready to play the recording of birdsongs that I had previously downloaded. We wait, silently, listening to the gentle breeze between the reeds, and the occasional *pop* of a fish jumping out of the water to eat an insect above the surface. From the distance, I hear suffused voices and the sound of footsteps on the wooden board path that takes to the hide. The audience is coming.

I press play, and the song of a nightingale comes out of the speaker. I raise the volume of the guitar, and as soon as I see the audience displaying themselves in silence along the rail within the wooden hide, I drop my fingers on the fretboard. I decide to respond to the birdsong with some percussive sounds, muting the strings and picking them fast. Then a scale, and some quartal arpeggios. Clusters of notes played close to each other, not to imitate, but rather to answer, as if the recording posed questions. The nightingale is followed by the low-pitched call of a bittern and the chatty chirping of a warbler. I adapt the register in which I'm playing accordingly, trying to get more and more melodious as I approach the end of the performance as if I am trying to reconcile with my music and the audience with the odd intervals of the non-human melodies that I am jamming along with. I finish the improvisation with a ninth chord that echoes, suspended over the water. The audience leaves, in silence, while another group approaches, and I prepare myself to play again.

This happened in 2023, a year in which Italy—and much of the rest of the world—was hit by several natural disasters, including extensive floods in Emilia-Romagna (Arrighi and Domeneghetti 2024) and excessive peak temperatures in the summer (Balmer 2023). A year in which we acknowledged the loss of more than 60% of wildlife in 50 years (WWF and Zoological Society of London 2023) and many natural wild areas around the world. A moment in time in which we, as a species, urgently need to start to take action to engage with climate change and the environmental crisis, and face the fact that many people are either not aware or in complete denial of what science is telling us. In this period of loss, grief, denial, and important changes, I often questioned myself, what can I do? How can I, as a musician and an artist, try to play a positive role in this? Holding a music degree, I must admit that I have often felt helpless in this regard. But while I was asking myself these questions, the answer came to me, also facilitated by my studies in ethnomusicology. In fact, looking around me, in the land where I am from, I saw many possible answers. I saw musicians singing about environmental issues and playing with recycled instruments, I saw environmentalist and conservation organizations using music—as well as listening to the sounds of nature—as a way to get people interested in their important activities, raising awareness among them and funds for the organisation. And ultimately, I observed how musicians, artists, and holistic facilitators used music

and sound to make people feel closer to nature, trying to convey a message of hope, unity, and life.

Moved by these experiences, and by my personal sense of care and advocacy for both my native land and for the Earth as a whole, I chose to step in and not be just an observer, or the proverbial fly on the wall. I embraced my guitar and tried to find ways to make music that was meaningful for me, for other people, and for other living beings. I spoke with ornithologists and experts in wildlife conservation to understand how to craft musical performances and compositions that could somehow help them in their endeavours. Among other things, I ended up on the floating platform described in this introduction, trying to use music to make people stop, listen, look around, and be aware of the immense beauty that surrounds them, trying to communicate the love that I feel for this planet and its life to them. While doing all this, I kept asking the same question to myself and the people encountered on my path, a sort of interrogative mantra that accompanied my quest and research: what roles can music performances, and listening to music and sounds, have in addressing the current environmental crisis? This dissertation is an account of these experiences, including the points of view of an observer, as well as of the performers and the several people involved in such activities, from the organisers to the audience. It is, ultimately, an account of my endeavours in answering this question.

Context: the Environmental Crisis and our Anthropocentric Worldview

Environmental crisis is a term commonly used to define all the environmental problems that we are facing today, including climate change, the greenhouse effect, deforestation, waste management, pollution, and so on (Park 2012). This is “the defining issue of our time” (Guterres 2018), as the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said when urging the world’s governments to act in response to climate change. Five years later, Guterres claimed that “climate change is here. It is terrifying” and that “the era of global boiling has begun” (2023). In the decade 2011-2020 global average surface temperature was 1.09°C above what was measured in 1850-1900 (Calvin et al. 2023, 4).

In fact, the environmental crisis has been observed to affect everything and everyone on Earth (Arora et al. 2018, 1). To cite some examples, it impacts negatively wildlife (Sattar et al. 2021), increases soil erosion (Özşahin 2023), affects water quality (Barbieri et al. 2023), affects people's mental health (Chen et al. 2020), increases displacement and forced migration (Marotzke, Semmann, and Milinski 2020; Kaczan and Orgill-Meyer 2020), an so on. In Italy, the environmental crisis manifested itself, for example, through increased intensity and frequency of floods (Lionello et al. 2021; Francipane et al. 2021; Arrighi and Domeneghetti 2024) and droughts (Bo et al. 2020; Balacco, Alfio, and Fidelibus 2022; Bonaldo et al. 2023).

Human activities, including greenhouse emissions, unsustainable energy use, land use, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production have unequivocally caused the current environmental crisis (Calvin et al. 2023, 4). Our destructive approach to the adaptation of the landscape to our needs has left an impact on Earth that is comparable to that of the ice ages, thus suggesting that we are living now in the Anthropocene, the geological epoch shaped by human activities (Crutzen 2006; Zalasiewicz et al. 2008; S. L. Lewis and Maslin 2015). Harmful human activities are but a symptom of our wrong understanding of nature, our lack of acceptance that we are in fact part of nature, as well as materially dependent on it (Washington 2013, 1-4). The environmental crisis has deep cultural and intellectual roots (Ferkiss 1993), as it is the product of "ideas, dreams, and ethical systems [that are] out of sync with the material world of nature" (Worster 1993, 27). In this, the worldview that is dominant in our society has played an important role. A worldview is "the collection of values, beliefs, habits, and norms which forms the frame of reference for a collectivity of people, such as a nation" (Devall and Sessions 1985, 42). Our worldview is flawed, deceiving, and anthropocentric (ibid.), as it is based on the belief that humans are inherently distinct from all other living beings and hold greater importance (D. R. Keller 2010). In this worldview, humans have extractivist and managerial control over other forms of life and the Earth (Kortetmäki 2013) and believe that their economic interests are more important than the health of the ecosystem (Passmore 1980; Norton 2003).

Music Studies Response to the Ecological Crisis: Ecomusicology, Eco-ethnomusicology, and Applied Ecomusicology

The ecological crisis is then not a crisis of science and intellectual understandings of the world, but first and foremost a crisis of our ethics and relationship with the world and all living beings, a "failure of culture" (Allen 2011a, 414) that resulted in the mistaken worldview described above. In this sense, and considering the multidimensional nature of the environmental crisis, we need an approach that reflects all these aspects, that is interdisciplinary, and that addresses the cultural component of the problem.

Due to this context, this research is situated within the interdisciplinary field of ecomusicology, that bridges the arts with the sciences, thus addressing the the cultural problem at the basis of our wrongly assumed worldview (Allen, Titon, and Von Glahn 2014). Ecomusicology is the study of the relationship between music, culture, and nature (Allen 2013b) in a "time of environmental crisis" (Titon 2013, 9). Ecomusicology aims to expand from a *dyadic* approach to music and culture that is proper of musicology and ethnomusicology to a *"triad* that adds concern for the non-sounding, non-human, planetary contexts that make musical and sonic cultures possible" (Allen 2024, 135-136, original emphasis). The three key terms of the field—music, culture, and nature—are to be intended in all their complexities (Allen 2013b), as they are "immensely complex words that are rich with contextual meanings" (Allen 2011, 392). In this sense, and considering that nature is a culturally constructed idea[1] (Soper 1995; Ingold 2000a; Descola 2013a; 2013b; Staid 2022), ecomusicology is a

> socially engaged musicology that seeks to understand not just music, musicians, and/or musical communities, but also their interconnections in the world, both natural and socially constructed (Allen 2011b, 393).

[1] See Chapter 7 for a throughout discussion of the human/nature dualism.

Ecomusicology fosters ecocentric approaches to music and the environment (Allen and Titon 2019; Allen 2020b).[2] Opposite to anthropocentrism, ecocentrism considers humans—and therefore, their material and cultural products—all interrelated parts of Earth's ecosystem, without hierarchies of power and importance and without exploitative, profit-based, relationships (Kortetmäki 2013). Based on Jeff Todd Titon's sound commons theory, which sees the relationships within the sonic environment as a metaphor and analogy of the possibility and potentiality of harmonious ecological relationships between living beings[3] (Titon 2012; Allen et al. 2023), ecomusicology acknowledges that humans and their musicking are but a part of environmental groupings (Allen and Titon 2019, 5). Ecomusicologists often study not only the musical subject matter but include in their enquiries the environments that enable people to make music (Allen 2020a; 2020b), and the relationship between music and those environments "for the sake of the environment" (Allen and Titon 2019, 5). This includes studies on the relationship between musical instruments and the environment (Dawe 2016; Allen 2020a; 2023), the materiality of the music industry (Devine 2019a; Brennan and Devine 2020), the infrastructure of music (Brennan et al. 2019; Brennan 2021), and so on.

Ecomusicology gathers scholars and scholarship from all sound and music studies fields, including but not limited to acoustic and soundscape ecology (e.g. Guyette and Post 2016), popular music studies (e.g. Størvold 2023), musicology (e.g. Von Glahn 2013) music education studies (e.g. Shevock 2018), and ethnomusicology (e.g. Silvers 2018). In ethnomusicology, specifically, scholars have been reflecting on the meaning of the suffix *eco-* that offers the opportunity to adopt ecocentric perspectives and contribute to the discourse about the environmental crisis (Titon 2020, 198-199), resulting in a turn to a more holistic eco-ethnomusicology, a hybrid term coined by Jennifer Post to define research that is focused on the sound-mediated relationship between people and places

[2] In this sense, ecomusicology can be viewed as an application of Aldo Leopold's Land Ethics to music studies. A strong advocate of ecocentrism, Leopold argued that while ethics normally regulates relationships between individuals, and individuals and society, we need to extend ethics toward the environment too (Leopold 2010).

[3] See Chapter 3 for a more exaustive analysis of the sound common theory.

(see Guyette and Post 2016; Post and Pijanowski 2018; Post 2023). Jeff Titon expanded this definition claiming that:

> [p]utting "eco" first emphasizes the ecocentric, ecological, eco-philosophical, and eco-experiential aspects of this hybrid, eco-ethnomusicology, a field that seeks to have as its central aim not only people making music but also all beings making sound (Titon 2023, 124).

Within ecomusicology, eco-ethnomusicology is then an ethnomusicology that opposites the anthropocentric focus of the discipline to consider all the sounds, and how living beings relate to them, from an ecocentric perspective (see Titon 2015c; Feld 2017), which may include the expressivity of sonic communication of non-human animal species (Silvers 2020; Titon 2023).

Other fields outside of ecomusicology deal with non-humans' sounds more in detail, such as the fields of bioacoustics, the study of animal sonic communication (Fletcher 2007) and zoomusicology (Martinelli 2008; Keller 2012; Doolittle and Gingras 2015), the study of the musical-like aspects of such communication. Outside these fields, Rachel Mundy has proposed the study of the *animanities*, meaning the study of the culture of non-human animals, including their musicalities (2018). Furthermore, the remarkable work of David Rothenberg has explored the musical aspects of non-human sound communication too. See Chapter 2 for a thorough discussion of Rothenberg's work. Regarding the study of sonic communication in plants, the work and hypotheses of biologist Monica Gagliano are worth noticing (Gagliano, Mancuso, and Robert 2012; Gagliano 2013).

Due to its interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature, ecomusicology is not intended as a field with methodological rigour that follows a singular, canonised approach (Allen, Titon, and Von Glahn 2014). Instead, it embraces diverse lines of inquiry and a plurality of ecomusicologies (Allen and Dawe 2016). The plural form of the noun is intentional and emphasises that ecomusicology includes a range of diverse approaches concerning music, sound, and environmental sustainability, often in cooperation with the environmental sciences and sustainability studies (Allen and Dawe 2016; Allen 2021; Pedelty et al. 2022; Allen and Titon 2023). This plurality is evident all around the field and its body of work produced so far, which to this point has engaged with diverse forms of

environmentalism (Borland, McDowell, and Tuohy 2021) entangled with equally diverse ecologies (Allen and Titon 2023). The plural noun "environmentalisms" included within the title of this dissertation is intended to respect this approach, which encompasses various and diverse practices rooted in the relationship between the three concepts described above, applied to the subject themes of this research.

Ecomusicology "combines scholarship, creative work, and environmental activism" (Titon 2020, 198) resulting in a diverse range of academic enquiries that can be situated on a continuum "from poetic to practical" (Allen 2021, 104). According to Allen, poetic approaches are those that engage

> with what is aesthetic and/or interesting [to] provide intellectual understanding for human-nature relationships as mediated by sound and music [in which] metaphor is often important. These poetic approaches include ideas that demonstrate music as reflective of nature, place influencing music, and composers engaging the pastoral (ibid.).

Conversely, the practical approaches are those that are those concerned with

> what is activist and/or advocating [to] provide political understanding for sound and music in relation to environmental and sustainability issues. The subject matter may be implicitly or explicitly activist or advocating of particular agendas, and the reality of the physical world is often important. These practical approaches pursue ideas that show the impacts of sound and music on nature/environment and vice versa, and they may problematize the role of a composer or author particularly in relation to nature, the pastoral, and place (ibid.).

Practical approaches are often applied (ibid.). In applied ethnomusicology, music and community-centred interventions (Titon 2015a, 4) deal "with solving problems and enhancing quality of life" (Harrison 2016, 8). Similarly, applied projects in ecomusicology have been looking at improving the quality of relationships within local ecosystems and multispecies communities through music and sound-based interventions rooted in environmental advocacy, activism, and ecocentric approaches to human/nature relationships (Allen et al. 2023). The work of Mark Pedelty is exemplary in this sense, as

he has been part of an environmental-activist band documenting the process and the outcomes (2012), realised an online platform for environmentalist music[4] and produced environmentalist music videos and documentaries including original music (2017; 2020; Pedelty et al. 2020). The influence of Pedelty's work on this research is thoroughly discussed in the next chapter.

Ecomusicology has been criticized to just constitute another turn in music studies, that appropriates pre-existing scholarship on music and nature gathering it under an umbrella term (Størvold 2023, 147-148), in which the strong ongoing effort employed to define what the field is may "limit the prospects of what ecomusicology might *do*" (Devine 2019, 128, original emphasis). This research project shows that ecomusicology is not only a theoretical effort to find common pathways within the study of music, culture, and nature but rather a practical way of facing and engaging the current environmental crisis. It does so from the point of view of music and sound scholars and practitioners, whose artistic and research practices are not limited, but rather enriched and shaped by the definition and the discussion offered by ongoing conversation on ecomusicological theory. While other means of fostering change certainly exist (Allen 2020c), ecomusicology is a tool to give us, musicians, artists, and music and sound scholars, a purpose and agency in responding to the current environmental crisis.

Aims and Contributions

While undoubtedly all ecomusicological scholarship is activist and impactful towards addressing the environmental crisis to some extent (Torvinen 2022; Allen 2021), what is missing is further research on how music and sound-based activities can practically contribute to establishing and developing a more just relationship with the environment and its non-human inhabitants, especially during these challenging times. Rooted in the ethnography of music and its contextual factors, in this study, I focus on how musicking impacts individuals' and communities's relationship with nature, the environment, and non-human others, and how musicking impacts people's perception of the ongoing risks

[4] https://www.ecosong.band, accessed on 25 June 2024.

represented by the environmental crisis and willingness to react. I chose to employ Christopher Small's concept of musicking (1998)—rather than separately discussing the practices of listening and/or performing in isolation—as this approach allowed me to consider music performances, soundwalks, soundscape compositions, festivals, and other events holistically. It enabled me to view all contributing elements—such as music, environmental sounds, audience, performers, organizers, settings, and the environment—not as separate components, but as parts of the same integrated occurrence. I will further discuss and elaborate on this concept in Chapter 6.

This research is positioned towards the practical end of the spectrum of ecomusicology's enquiries that I previously quoted from Allen. In doing this I focused on the relationships between human animals (and their culture), non-human animals, and the environment, within—and mediated by—the sound commons. I therefore did not focus entirely on anthropogenic sound (including music), but I also considered the relationship that people involved in such activities had with the other sounds within the soundscape. Moreover, I focused on the contextual effect of listening to music and sound, observing how they bring people together enabling conversations about sustainability while questioning the current extractionist worldview and paradigms of our relationship—practical and intellectual—with nature.

The overarching goal of this research is then to advance the understanding of music and sound-based activities as tools to address the current environmental crisis. This project specifically aims to investigate various contemporary musical expressions employed by cultural, environmentalist, and conservation organizations, as well as individual artists and performance groups, in their ecological efforts in Tuscany, Italy. This study focuses on how music, new music, music-making activities—regardless of the genre—and listening to local soundscapes can foster meaningful connections to places, challenge extractivist worldviews, educate about sustainable behaviours and lifestyles, and ultimately promote understandings of mutual and interrelated relationships with the environment. Additionally, it examines the role of music and sound-based activities around ideas of rootedness and place-making, helping environmentalist organizations in their conservation activities, promoting sustainable ecotourism within nature parks and protected areas, and hypothesizing ways to share spaces sustainably with non-human beings, changing our relationship with nature as a whole.

This project will advance the state of the field of eco-ethnomusicology providing a European case study including a comprehensive ethnomusicological account of the current relationship between society, sound and nature in Tuscany. Considering that the ecological crisis has been caused by the so-called developed countries and the wealthier part of the population—especially the richer 1% of the human population (Roston, Kaufman, and Warren 2022)—research in these settings is of fundamental importance to understand how to tackle the environmental issue from a cultural perspective. In fact, while there are extended ecomusicological accounts of new music and sound practices in North America (e.g. Ingram 2006; 2010; Rosenthal 2006b; Von Glahn 2013; Pedelty 2012; 2016); in Europe such accounts are limited to a few sparse and localized case studies. Examples of such scholarship focus on specific localized genres (Colmeiro 2009; Sweers 2020), events (Ramnarine 2009), compositions (Torvinen 2022; Torvinen and Välimäki 2023), and local instrument-making practices (Dawe 2016; Allen 2020a)[5], and place-music relationships (Ramnarine 2020; Hall 2020). To date, Iceland seems to be the European country that has received the most attention from scholars examining the connections between music, nature, and culture. This includes studies on environmentalism in popular music (Dibben 2017) and Tore Størvold's ecocritical approach to musical representations of Iceland in popular genres and culture (2023). What we lack is research on the ways new European sound practices are inspiring awareness of the environmental challenge that faces us and proposing solutions to the cultural habits that have caused it, which is what this research is about.

Italian scholarship concerning environmental humanities has seen considerable growth in recent years. Serenella Iovino has been exploring the connections between the culture of this Mediterranean country and its environment through the lenses of literary ecocriticism (Iovino 2017), ultimately contributing to shaping an Italian framework for environmental humanities (Iovino, Cesaretti, and Past 2018). Other volumes examined the topic through the perspectives of literary ecocriticism (Verdicchio 2016), film studies (Amberson and Past 2014), or a combination of the two (Benvegnù et al. 2024). To this point, music and sound seem to have been left behind, with the notable exception of ar

[5] The materiality of musical instruments is a focal topic in ecomusicological scholarship, and several authors have explored this issue in other countries (see for example J. Martínez-Reyes 2015; J. E. Martínez-Reyes 2021; Yamada 2017; Dirksen 2019; Waugh-Quasebarth 2023; Post 2024).

a chapter by soundscape ecologist Almo Farina in the aforementioned edited volume (Farina 2018), concerning the soundscape of Lunigiana. To this point, environmental humanities "have yet to encompass considerations of music, sound, and performance that comprise a significant portion of studies of expressive culture" (Allen 2021, 106). While a recent collection of essays explored Italian environmental imagination within new art practices in various disciplines, including mainly literature, but also film and sculpture, among others (Benvegnù and Gilebbi 2022), its scope did not include new environmentalist music and sound art, which remains extremely underrepresented in contemporary scholarship (Gambirasio 2024). Explicit ecomusicological studies about Italy are in fact rare and are mainly concerned with ecocriticism and landscape representations within art music and opera (Senici 2005; Allen 2016), and the political ecology of related musical instruments (Allen 2012; 2020a).

In the literature other studies employ an ecocentric approach, thus falling—implicitly rather than explicitly—under the ecomusicological area of interest. Exemplar in this sense is the work of Nicola Scaldaferri, who employing Steven Feld's acoustemology approach[6] (2001; 2017) (and often collaborating with him), has analysed holistically traditional cultural practices in southern Italy emphasizing the relationship between the community and its natural environment, including other living beings such as plants and animals (Scaldaferri and Feld 2019; Scaldaferri 2023). New music has been used by ethnomusicologist and composer Christian Ferlaino, to explore bells-mediated relationships between cultural practices and non-human animals in Calabria (2023). Despite the author's statement about the low environmental impact of the project and it being ecomusicological to some extent, his methodology is questionably anthropocentric as it fails to acknowledge animals' agency and impose on them a sound that could have a potential adverse effect, resulting in an anthropocentric approach that does not belong to ecocentric ecomusicological praxis.

In Tuscany and central Italy, humans' relationship with the environment has been explored mainly within traditional and folk music, and in relation to traditional cultural practices that include music. The song *Maremma Amara* is probably one of the most

[6] Acoustemology is the merging of the words *acoustics* and *epistemology*. It is the social study of sound as a mean of experiential knowing (Feld 2015).

popular examples in this sense, as it is a poignant reflection of the harshness of life close to the malaria-infested swamp and marshes in Maremma before they were reclaimed and allocated to agriculture (Fornari 1972). Another example is the *ottava rima*[7] sung poem *Il lamento del carbonaio,* which depicts the hardship of those who from Tuscany emigrated to Corse in order to make charcoal in the thick forest of the island (Cavaillé and Bencistà 2017). A final example is the *canto del Maggio,* the itinerant, performative, celebration of spring that brings groups of singers singing door by door in the countryside in the south of the region over the night between the 30th of April and 1st of May (Fresta 1983; Barontini 2002). Geographer Stefania Benetti has recently briefly documented some ecocritical content within mainstream Italian pop music (Benetti 2023) and pondered the use of a music festival in Piemonte's Alps to inspire the development of a more sustainable relationship with the natural area (Benetti and Cerutti 2024). While Benetti does not explore the festival and its impact in detail, her hypothesis about the role that music can play within natural areas by encouraging sustainable tourism and raising environmental awareness highlights the need for this and further future research in this direction.

Further developing recent trends in the field, this research also aims to contribute towards a holistic approach to the subject via an ethnomusicology that embraces all aspects of life musically (Pilzer 2021; 2023); in which "music is a perspective, not an object of study," (Pilzer 2023, 15). This is an ethnomusicology that sometimes can be "without music" (ibid.)[8], meaning that this type of ethnomusicological enquiry often reveals "much about expressive and social life even in the absence of musical objects" (ibid.). In this sense, in this research I explored all the case studies in a way that focuses beyond the musical objects per se, considering the contexts of the music-making and the relationships between living beings thus enabled, rather than focusing on strictly musical parameters of the documented performances. This is also motivated by the fact that previous research has shown that environmentalist music does not imply specific music genres or styles, but it is rather enabled by all the "complex negotiations" between performers, audience, organisers, organisations, and so on (Pedelty 2016, 216).

[7] Traditional style of improvised sung poetry of central Italy (See Agamennone 2017; Ghirardini 2020).
[8] See also also Allen (2024) and the conclusion of this dissertation for other discussions of this idea.

This holistic approach to musicking goes hand in hand with the ecocentric perspective suggested by ecomusicological theory so far, which includes a post-humanist perspective to consider multispecies and environmental sounds and humans' responses to them. As ethnomusicologists, to consider the non-human is important because musicking affects them, and "because music's effect on the non-human in turn affects musical meaning and relationships between music and society" (Silvers 2020, 205) and therefore the relationship with the environment. To acknowledge the non-human in ethnomusicological enquiries is therefore a way to understand "the multispecies coconstructedness of our world" (ibid., 215), especially in this time of crisis. While this research is not specifically about non-human beings and their means of sound communication and musicalities, I do acknowledge and consider them in my enquiry, through a variety of means. Firstly, I employ an ecocentric approach to sound that implies that there are no hierarchies of importance within the soundscape. If humans are but a part of the ecosystem, then music is but a part of the soundscape, and to think ecocentrically we must consider music only as an element in relation to other sounds and beings within the complexity of Earth's ecosystem. Secondly, some of the events that I examined were focused on listening to the soundscape in its entirety—including the sounds produced by non-human beings. Lastly, in the performances that I devised, the merging of music and non-human sound was the central theme. I will talk more about this in the following chapter. Building on these approaches this research also includes ethnomusicological accounts of human listening activities, including soundwalks (see Westerkamp 2007), thus contributing to the ethnographic literature of a phenomenon that is largely underrepresented outside its native field of sound studies and acoustic ecology.

As anticipated, in parts of this study, I employed my own artistic practice to facilitate interactions with research participants and document first-hand impressions of what it means to be an environmentalist musician, and what are the challenges of organising a music and sound-based performance for environmentalist purposes. In this sense, this research contributes towards the body of work regarding the employment of art practice as a research methodology in ethnomusicology (see McKerrel 2022). Contributing to the study of environmentalism within musical performances, my own perspective as an environmentalist musician will contribute to the body of literature

exploring "what it means to be human and placing the performance of expressive culture at the centre of humanity's responses to the crisis of the moment" (Borland, McDowell, and Tuohy 2021, 1). I will further expand on this methodological approach in Chapter 2. Ultimately, this ethnomusicology of the interdependent relationship between all living creatures and their sound commons, including the engagement in practical projects, and problems affecting today's world, will constitute a body of knowledge that will engage with current ethnomusicological concerns towards times of trouble (see Rice 2014), going well beyond the boundaries of this field, providing practical case studies of the contribution that music and music scholarship have in confronting global crisis.

Mapping this Research to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Ethnomusicologists have approached sustainability often under its cultural dimension (e.g. Schippers and Grant 2016; Cooley 2019), arguing that sustaining music cultures contributes to sustaining the people who perform and enable it (Titon 2009a, 6). In some of these ethnomusicological examples, the sustainability of music cultures is treated as separate from environmental concerns (Allen 2017b). However, the environment enables music and sound, which in turn affects the environment, meaning that people, music, sound, and the environment and deeply interconnected (Allen 2020b; Allen and Titon 2023). This indicates that all efforts towards sustaining music can also contribute to efforts to sustain the natural environment (and vice versa), and to the co-existence of all living beings within it. Within the sonic realm—or the sound commons —cultural and environmental sustainability are then inextricably linked (Allen 2019, 53-54).

Working towards cultural and/or environmental sustainability implies resilience and stewardship (Titon 2015b). In the ecological sciences, resilience is the capacity for a system to bounce back in the face of disturbances and to respond to a crisis (Zolli and Healy 2012). In a way, the music and sound-based practices explored in this dissertation are a way for us, musicians and music scholars but first and foremost citizens of this planet, to respond with resilience to the current environmental crisis. Environmental stewardship is the "responsible use and protection of the natural environment through

conservation and sustainable practices" (Chapin et al. 2010, 241). Following this principle, the music and sound-based practices explored in this research are a way for artists, performers, facilitators, and organisations, to take care of our planet. Aaron Allen suggested understanding sustainability as a process and as a "framework to analyze the situation (ask questions) and suggest future actions (pose answers)" (2019, 51). This is the ultimate goal of this research: to investigate the role of sound and music in response to the ecological crisis while supporting people, their art, and their environment, and consequently suggesting a line of action, a series of practices that can be used to deal with the challenge represented by the multiple aspects of this crisis.

To emphasize the contribution of this research to sustainability, in this section, I align it with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[9] Although music and music studies are not specifically referenced in the SDGs, a few UN-aligned projects[10] hinted that this is a possibility. Grant et al. have demonstrated how these fields can actively support the attainment of several goals through creative and innovative approaches. (Grant et al. 2022; 2024). This research aims to expand the body of work regarding music and the SDGs providing examples of music and sound-based interventions whose impact is aligned with targets included in SDGs 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns), and 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact) (see Figure 1.1).

Target 11.4 – Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.	Music and sound-based activities in nature are used by environmentalists and conservation organisations to promote areas of naturalistic interest, raise funding for conservation activities, and educate about the ecological importance of caring for and preserving the biota at both local and global levels. Moreover,

[9] https://sdgs.un.org/#goal_section, accessed on 28 June 2024.
[10] A few but sparse examples are: Sounds Right (https://www.museumfortheunitednations.com/sounds-right, accessed on 16 April 2025), REVERB (www.reverb.org, accessed on 16 April 2025), and Shan Shapiro Center for Music Ecosystem (Shapiro 2021)shap

	controlled-impact public performances in natural areas attract public and private sources of funding for preservation and conservation activities, in compliance with SDGs indicator 11.4.1 (United Nations 2024).
Target 12.8 – By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.	Music and sound-based activities are effective in raising environmental awareness, encouraging sustainable behaviours, and promoting ecological and sustainable relationships with nature. Additionally, listening to music and environmental sounds in a natural setting can deepen our understanding of ecological interrelationships within ecosystems, enhancing our connection with both human and non-human life.
Target 13.3 – Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.	Music and sound-based activities in natural settings effectively raise awareness about environmental health and educate the public on sustainable lifestyles that can address and mitigate the causes and effects of climate change.

Figure 1.1 Relevant SDGs targets and expected contributions.

Additionally, through the study of music and sound-based activities in support of environmentalist and conservation organizations—such as Legambiente and LIPU, this research aims to produce a set of examples of creative practices and events that can indirectly contribute towards the achievement of SDGs 14 (Conserve and sustainably use

the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development), and 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystem, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss).

This research alignment with the SDGs has been mapped following University College Cork's guidelines and self-evaluation tool (see Figure 1.2, left).[11] Moreover, the same tool positioned this research in relation to the three dimensions of sustainable development—economic, social and environmental (United Nations 2015). In the graph, the relevance of this research project can be observed, particularly for the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability (see Figure 1.2, right).

[11] https://www.ucc.ie/en/sdg-toolkit/teaching/tool/interactive-mapping/mapping-research/, accessed on 28 June 2024.

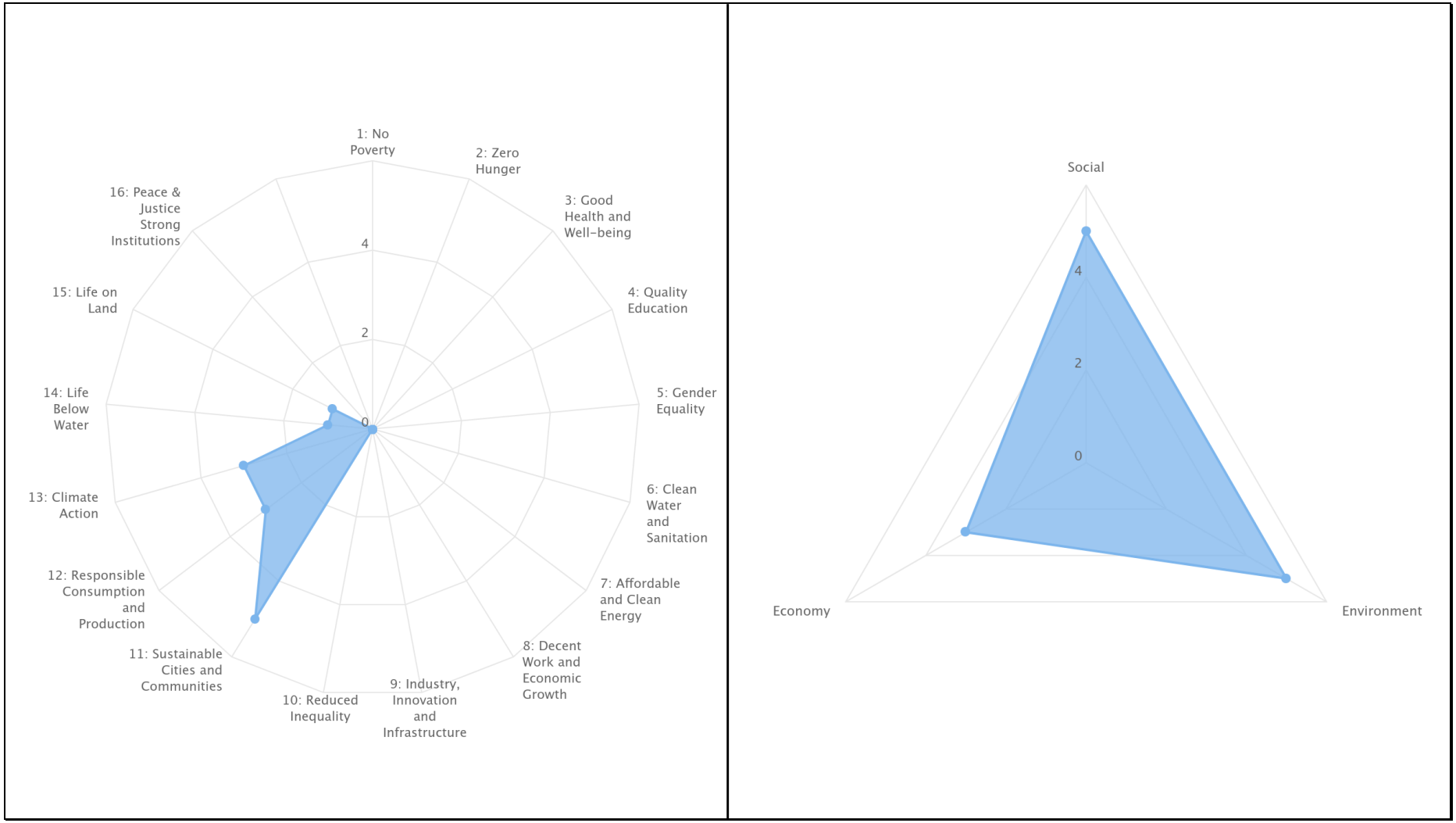


Figure 1.2 Map of this research in relation to the SDGs (left) and the pillars of sustainable development (right). Source: UCC Website

Notes on Terminology: Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

Throughout this thesis, I make large use of some key terms and concepts, including some problematic words. In this section, I'll explain some key terms that will come up throughout this dissertation, especially in the context of ecomusicology. By defining these terms early on, my aim is to create a clear understanding of the concepts I will be exploring over the following chapters, and help set the stage for the analysis and discussions to come. I hereby start with the definition of the word "environment," to proceed with the explanation of key concepts such as "sustainability" and "environmentalism," to finish with the main topic of this dissertation, "sound-mediated environmentalism." Although the English word "nature" is very complex and problematic too (Allen 2011b, 392), its meaning will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 7, as it is integral to the discussion of the specific topic covered there.

Sustainability is defined as "the long-term viability of a community, set of social institution or societal practice"

Environment

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word environment as follows. "The area surrounding a place or things; the environs, surroundings, or physical context" (2023). In this sense, the environment is not an absolute concept, it is the world that "exists and takes on meaning" only in relation to a subject and it unfolds along with subjective experiences (Ingold 2000, 20). Within ecomusicological literature, the understanding of the word has been based on the English and French word "environs" (Allen and Titon 2019, 1), meaning "one's surroundings" (Oxford English Dictionary 2023b), and it is:

> the context for someone, some thing, or some place. The environment constitutes the physical surroundings that contribute to the person, thing, or place's existence, characteristics, and growth (or lack thereof). [...] For humans, the Earth is our environment, and the Earth contains countless environments and relationships between them (Allen and Titon 2019, 1).

In this research I will use this relational, holistic, understanding of the word environment that does not necessarily imply *nature*, as in the expression *natural environment*, but rather all the surroundings without discrimination and/or hierarchies.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a complex and often overused term that lacks consistent definitions, despite playing a central role in discussions across environmental science, policy, and development. The term has been used to denote a set of criteria for human action, a goal for humankind, an object of study, and an approach (Salas-Zapata and Ortiz-Muñoz 2019). Sustainability is typically divided into pillars or dimensions. While the environmental, economic, and social dimensions are most commonly cited in the literature (Purvis, Mao, and Robinson 2019), the number and nature of these dimensions vary across sources. Additional dimensions such as cultural (Soini and Birkeland 2014), governance (Jitmaneeroj 2016), political and corporate (Greenland et al. 2022), have also been proposed, highlighting the lack of consensus regarding what should be included in sustainability discourse. That is, because the dimensions are strictly correlated and interconnected, and this is reflected in this study, where the social, cultural, and environmental dimension (but also economic, political, etc) are inextricably connected to each other.[1]

Sustainability is a paradoxical term that at the same time indicates the need to maintain (sustain) a certain element, while advocating for change in order to achieve a state of balance between the elements of a given ecosystem (Zolli and Healy 2012; Allen 2019). Sustainability is not a goal, but rather an ongoing social action (Cooley 2019, xxiii) involved in the process of changing and adapting human behaviours to maintain this balance, a state of balance that necessarily includes change (Allen 2019).

Environmentalism

[1] For example, ecomusicology demostrates that the cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainability in the domains of music and sound are interconnected (Allen 2019).

This dissertation deals with the sonic dimensions of environmentalism. Environmentalism is a social, political, and ethical movement (Elliott 2025) that "seeks to protect cherished habitats, protest against their degradation and prescribe less destructive lifestyles" (Guha 2000, 3). Environmentalism "dwells on the paradoxical relationship between [humans] prosperity and nature loving" (Peterson del Mar 2013, 3), with the goal of promoting the protection of the environment (Torsello 2016) and raising awareness about and controlling the damage that humans beings have been perpetrating to the planet (Giddens 2003, 274-276).

Sound-mediated Environmentalism

Several ecocritical studies demonstrated that music in Western contexts—such as the one in which this research is situated—has historically engaged with the natural environment (e.g. Ingram 2007; 2010; Von Glahn 2023), and used in support of environmental advocacy and/or activism (Ingram 2008; Rickwood 2014; Pieslak 2014; Pedelty 2016; Sweers 2020; Little and Przybylski 2022). Mark Pedelty, employing a dual perspective as both an environmentalist performer and a scholar of environmentalist music, explores the role of music beyond ecocriticism and into practical environmentalism, aiming to educate, rally, advocate, and inspire reflection on environmental exploitation (Pedelty 2012; 2016). Music is a tool for environmental education projects (O'Rourke, Irwin, and Straker 2011a; Cermak 2012; Publicover et al. 2018b) and holds great potential to influence environment-related beliefs and behaviours (Prior 2022a), both core aspects of environmentalism.

Environmental sound[2] is a multispecies means of communication that may informs listeners of the relationality of elements within any given ecosystem (Titon 2015d; Katopodis 2019; Allen et al. 2023). Listening to environmental sounds has been often connected to the appreciation of the ecology of a place (Pijanowski, Villanueva-Rivera, et al. 2011a; Farina 2014), facilitating the acknowledgement of the non-humans (Braulik et al. 2023) and their conservation (Jenkins 2021; Staddon et al. 2023). For these reasons,

[2] Including any sound percieved by a being in a certain environment. See Chapter 3 for a thorough discussion of human approaches to sounds from an ecological perspective and the importance of holistic approaches to sound in the context of this research.

listening to environmental sound also constitutes a tool for environmental education projects (Allen 2013a; Gambirasio 2022b; Tan 2023). Similarly to music, environmental sound art is often intended to educate and serve as a form of environmental activism (Gilmurray 2016a; Bullit 2016; Galloway 2014a; 2020).

Therefore, a sound-mediated form of environmentalism is a sound-centered social act that engages with the cultural dimensions of the environmental crisis through the means described above. Through various modes of sonic engagement—such as listening to environmental sounds and musicking—this approach seeks to foster embodied reflection on the paradoxical relationship between humans and nature. At the same time, it supports habitat protection, mitigates environmental degradation, promotes ecological and sustainability education, and challenges anthropocentric thinking and the perceived divide between humanity and the rest of the world.

Structure of the thesis

Beyond this introductory chapter that included an overview of this research's background, context, aims, goals and its academic and non-academic positioning, this dissertation unfolds over the next seven chapters. The next chapter (2) focuses on the methodological approaches included in this research; the following five chapters (3-7) include an ethnographic account of various case studies, and are followed by a last and conclusive chapter (8). Each chapter spanning from 3 to 7 highlights and explores a particular theme, although due to the focus of this research, there are some recurrent patterns that emerge throughout the whole dissertation. These patterns will be explored in detail in the conclusion.

Chapter 2 is a methodological overview of this research. There, I position myself as a researcher and explain the geographical area covered and the rationale behind its choice, explaining in detail the fieldwork that I undertook for this study. This chapter includes the number of events that I attended and the people that I interviewed, with a discussion of the inclusion and exclusion criteria for each of the categories. I discuss my interview approach thoroughly as well as all the ethical considerations of the case. In this

chapter, I also discuss my choice to employ my artistic practice as a method of enquiry, which enabled me to get closer to environmentalist organisations and musicians.

Chapter 3 focuses on listening and soundwalking. It includes a discussion of the literature on soundscape and listening to environmental sounds, arguing for an eco-ethnomusicology that comprehends all sonic phenomena. I also discuss the definition of soundwalking within sound studies and analyse four case studies of various types of soundwalking. In conclusion, I propose that soundwalking may include listening to music, and I make the case for three types of this broader definition of soundwalking to aid environmental sustainability.

Chapter 4 centers on ecotourism. Following a review of ecotourism definitions and related literature, including global (musical) and local (Italian) case studies, the focus shifts to exploring music and ecotourism within the framework of ethnomusicological tourism literature. The chapter analyzes four case studies of organizations that use music to draw visitors and foster meaningful experiences in natural environments. I examine these case studies in depth and argue that incorporating music performances into ecotourism activities can effectively create meaningful and educational experiences in nature.

Chapter 5 delves into virtual tourism, focusing on a singular case study involving a series of music videos released by a natural park authority in the southern region during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter connects with existing literature on music's role during the pandemic in the country, emphasizing how these videos provided solace by allowing viewers to virtually travel to another place amidst restrictions. Additionally, the chapter argues that the portrayal of nature in the videos serves as a metaphor for sustainable relationships of co-presence within natural areas.

Chapter 6 centres on the use of music to foster environmental awareness and promote sustainable behaviours. After defining these key issues, the chapter explores five varied case studies, encompassing events and artistic initiatives by two distinct groups of performers. It argues that participation in these activities can stimulate interest in sustainability and ecology, potentially influencing daily behaviours. Specifically, the chapter utilizes Christopher Small's musicking theory (1998) to emphasize how non-musical elements contribute to achieving the goals of these diverse events.

Chapter 7 directs its focus towards non-dualism. Beginning with a critique of the concept of nature within Western society, the chapter defines dualistic and non-dualistic approaches to ecology. Drawing on anthropological literature on rituals and liminality as a theoretical framework, it analyzes three distinct cases of music aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of our relationship with nature. The chapter argues that music has the capacity to facilitate liminal experiences where dualistic perceptions of the world dissolve, revealing interconnectedness and fostering a heightened awareness of our relationship with the environment.

Chapter 8 is the conclusory chapter of this dissertation. In there, I summarise the findings and discuss their implications for the fields of ecomusicology and ecomusicology, briefly outlining three potential directions for further applied research. All the chapters collectively contribute to a comprehensive exploration of the intersections between music, sound, and environmental sustainability, providing insights into their roles in contemporary Italian society, ultimately suggesting a role for musicians, sound artists, and music and sound scholars to face the current environmental crisis and play a role in the necessary transition toward a more just society grounded in ecological values.

Chapter 2

Fieldwork

Research Overview

This research is an ethnographic study of music and sound-based environmentalist activities in Tuscany, an administrative region situated on the western coast of central Italy. The data collected for this research derives from a combination of field notes and interviews collected between two main phases of research fieldwork, one being in August and September 2022, and the other spanning from March to September 2023, plus several follow-up questions, reflections, and interviews conducted at distance, online and via phone, from Ireland, in the timeframe between the two fieldwork phases and in the subsequent period. During the circa nine months of research fieldwork in situ, I attended twenty-eight relevant events in person located in different parts of the region (See Figure 2.1), and I documented six more events that, due to issues related to the distance, costs, timetable, and other limitations, I could not attend personally. One further event was held asynchronously online only. Other participants unrelated to any of the events documented were interviewed, and several other people contributed with hints, suggestions, thoughts, and ideas, to this research.

In this research, I was interested in events that included music and/or sound that aimed to:

- promote a particular natural park or area of naturalistic interest;[1]
- raise awareness about local environmental issues;

[1] See Chapter 4 for a classification of these areas in Italy.

- raise awareness about the features of the local biodiversity;
- educate about environmental sustainability;
- elicit sustainable behaviours in the general public;
- facilitate an intimate connection between people and the environment.

Due to space constraints, only twenty of the thirty-five documented events have been included in this dissertation. Events were excluded based on their overall relevance. In some cases, the data collected was insufficient to provide significant evidence. In others, the themes they represented were better illustrated by other events, making their inclusion redundant. Additionally, some events were associated with themes that, due to space limitations, could not be addressed in this dissertation. Appendix A contains a comprehensive list of all the events I documented, along with the specific reasons for excluding some of them.

In this study, I documented some of the sonic niches of environmentalism in this area. A sonic niche merges the message of the sound with its context in the most favourable moment(s) and place(s) (Augoyard and Torgue 2005, 78-84). Benjamin Tausig, In his study of the variegated sonic dimensions of political protests in Bangkok, expanded on Augoyard and Torgue's psychoacoustics definition of sonic niches to understand them as "clusters of sounds, space, and meaning" that behave like "local, audible adaptations within a broad ecology of political expression" (Tausig 2019, 1). Similarly to Tausig, during fieldwork, I explored different sonic niches, including not only artistic performances of various natures, but also several other events that had a prominent aural component, such as dissemination events, protests, excursions, sound walks, sound bath rituals, recreational events, and so on.

Three of the events included in this body of work were co-organised by me along with the members of local organisations and included either a sound-art installation or a musical performance that I crafted appositely for that particular event. I will talk more about these events later on in this chapter and chapters 4, 6, and 7. Despite the number of events covered, this research does not aim to be a complete representation of environmentalist music in the area (Tuscany) or of the approach to environmentalism of all its population (people of central Italy). This research is rather aimed at giving a detailed description of music and sound-based practices that are used for the purposes

described above, thus constituting an ethnographic “partial truth” (Clifford 1986, 7), which partiality is co-determined by my subjective experiences, history, skills, and interests, especially regarding the part of my life that I lived in Tuscany.

As a consequence, the rationale behind the geographical choice of limiting this study to this region is purely subjective and arbitrary, and it is based on the fact that I am a native of that area. I profoundly care for the areas, themes, and issues explored during research fieldwork, and this fueled my motivation and artistic creativity and supported and enabled me to relate more intimately and empathetically with all the people who chose to contribute with their time, observations, suggestions, and accounts of their experiences to this study. As a native of this area, I could rely on a small but existing network of "positive relationships” (Gilman and Fenn 2019, 17), including a few previous acquaintances who pointed me towards fruitful directions. Moreover, as a researcher doing fieldwork at home (see Stock and Chiener 2008) I did not need to spend time doing preliminary activities such as building a working knowledge of places, organisations, and vernacular language, and rather relied on previously gathered knowledge that I gathered during the previous part my life. With that said, I had never been active as an environmentalist musician before this research fieldwork, and all my activities as described in this dissertation were specifically crafted as informed by my previous ethnomusicological and ecomusicological studies, which also influenced and shaped my relationship with the place thereafter (Gambirasio 2022a).

During research fieldwork, I was then at the same time an insider, sharing some common, relatable, socio-cultural elements with the researched community, and an outsider, because I was still pursuing a research agenda for a foreign institution. This is evident in my relationship with the organisations and charities that I contacted to conduct this study. While I could relate to their activities in terms of localities, actions, plans, goals and ideals, I was not a member of any of them. On one hand, my insidership facilitated everyday interactions with research participants and informants; while on the other hand, my outsidership provided me with a sort of professional and formal agenda and persona that helped me in carrying on this study and in some ways supported my hypothesis and actions: for example, many organisations were pleased to speak with me and answer my questions—and some even offered free tickets to some of their events—especially after I told them I was a researcher working for a foreign university.

Using Google My Maps, I created a map of all the events that I attended in person, to give a definite geographical dimension to the study (see Figure 2.1), where each blue marker locates one of the events that I attended, observed and documented (or more than one, as indicated by the marker situated on the lake of Santa Luce, South East of Livorno).[2] Of these events, I chose the eighteen most relevant ones to be included in this dissertation, choosing them according to the themes of each of the next five case studies chapters, divided as follows: five in Chapter 3, four in Chapter 4, one in Chapter 5, five in Chapter 6, and three in Chapter 7. Each event has been thoroughly documented through the use of field notes containing my personal observations; and for each event, festival, or performance, I aimed to interview at least one key individual directly involved with the performances or the organisation of the activities. In the three events where I was featured as an artist, I also interviewed several members of the audience, to gauge the potential impact that the musical performances included within those particular events had on them. Events and research participants have prevalently been found online (see later this chapter) and through word of mouth from pre-existing contacts on the field and other participants.

[2] An online, resizeable, and zoomable, version of the map is also available at the following link: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1vlxUBQsE5vKjWoSulf9C4FzL5BVHUMA&usp=sharing, accessed on 13 June 2024.

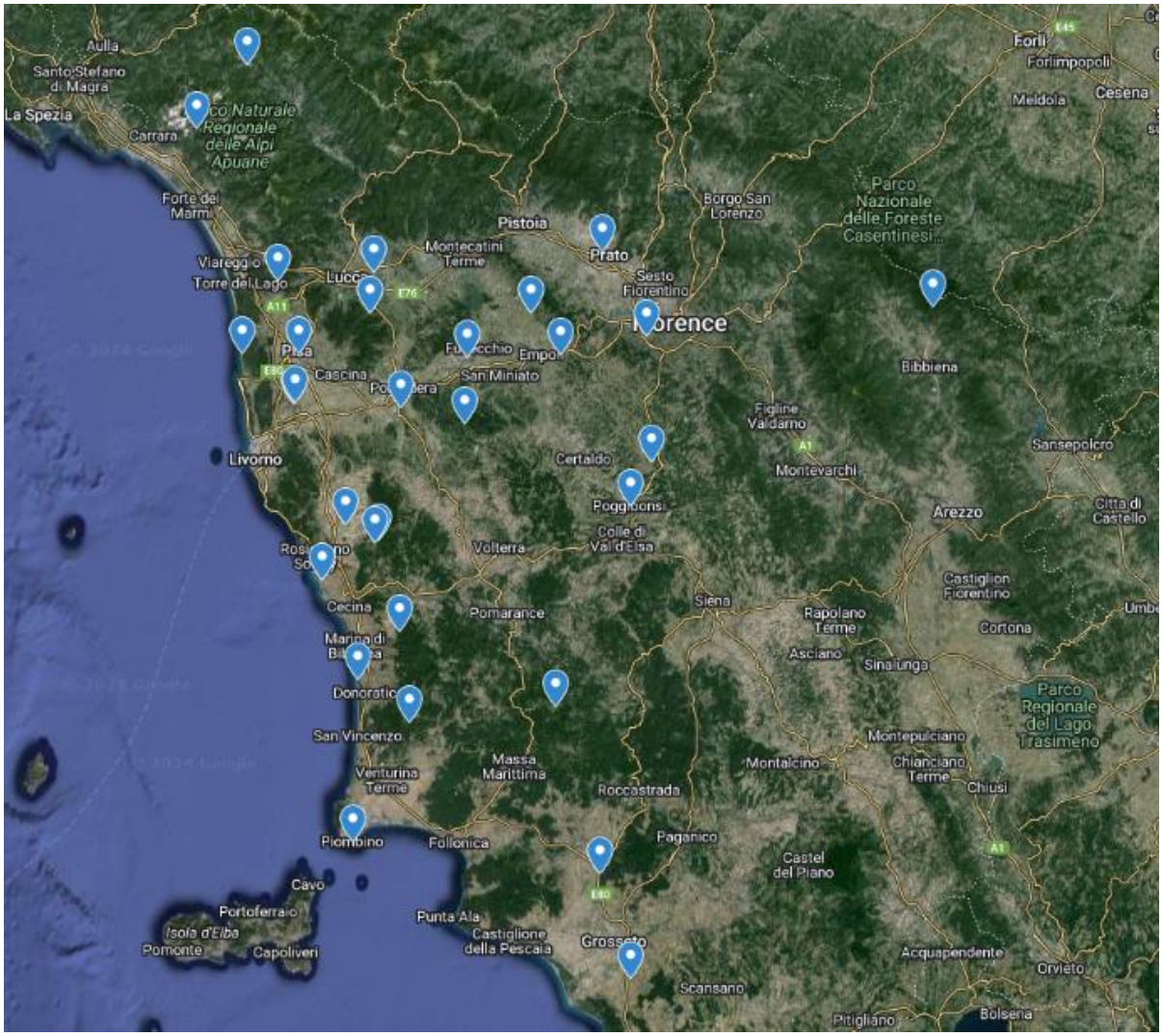


Figure 2.1 Map of Tuscany, including the events that I attended and documented for this research. Source: Google My Maps.

Interviews

In this research, I conducted interviews in order to understand "what it is like for a person [...] to make and to know music as lived experience" (Titon 2008, 25). In this sense, my goal was to interview people who have been participating in events where music and/or sound were used for a multiplicity of means in support of the environmental cause. Building on Christopher Small's inclusive definition of the verb "to music," that is "to take part, in any capacity in a musical performance" (Small 1998, 9), I was interested in a variegated range of research participants, covering different roles in relation to the documented events.

Firstly, I wanted to meet and interview those performers, musicians, sound artists and facilitators who were directly involved in delivering sonic content to audiences with the goal of communicating an environmentalist message. However, in this research, I did not categorize these performers as part of a unified music culture or tradition, nor did I attempt to establish a "cultural average" (Stock 2001, 8) of environmental musicians based on parameters such as genre, instrumentation, impact, or agency. Instead, in this attempt to represent music and sound-mediated environmentalism in this area, I considered the performers as distinct "Individual music cultures" (Slobin 1993, ix), and valorised and celebrated the uniqueness of their artistic and activist individualities and approaches (Ruskin and Rice 2012, 308). In doing this, I sought to highlight the interviewees' "mosaic of individual decisions" (Stock 2001, 10) that led to diverse approaches to the key issues presented at the events, festivals, and performances documented in this study.

Secondly, I also wanted to include in my enquiry the organisers of the events, representatives of the authorities of the natural parks and areas where some of the events took place, and some trekking guides operating within those areas, whose role was to take the audience across the natural area to reach the place of the performance(s). Furthermore, as ecomusicology thrives at the meeting of musical and non-musical disciplines (Allen and Dawe 2016), I also interviewed and asked opinions—and in some cases worked closely with—specialised professionals such as biologists, ornithologists, and agronomists. Last but not least, I was interested in the opinions and thoughts of those who were on the other end of the musical performance and were the recipients of the sonic material, the audience.

For this research, I conducted formal non-anonymous unstructured interviews with thirty-five artists, event organisers and other professionals and anonymous unstructured interviews with 20 of the audience members who attended the three events in which I was featured as an artist (i.e. *Riciclare ad Arte*, *Il Canto del Lago*, and *Il Parco delle Stelle*). Some other potential research participants were contacted, with no success. Several other people contributed, informally, with their thoughts, insights, and experiences, and helped me to shape the ideas that guided me in my line of enquiry. For some of the main (non-anonymous) research participants, the interview was not a one-off event aimed to extract information, but rather an ongoing process of sharing thoughts and ideas that

resulted in several recorded conversations. To express my gratitude to the research participants for their invaluable contributions, I frequently shared insights and advice—based on my expertise and observations from other events—on how to enhance the execution of their events and performances, but only when requested. In doing so I aimed to transform the interviews into bi-directional conversations where each party tried to help the other to the best of their knowledge and capacity.

Interviews have been conducted in person and/or on the phone, with the exception of a few that were conducted via Microsoft Teams, due to the location of the participants or of myself, when I was in Ireland. Interviews have been recorded with a portable recorder (Zoom h1n) and/or with my smartphone using offline recording apps. Recording of the interviews has been securely stored, the original file deleted from the recording device or app, and manually transcribed on Microsoft Word without the assistance of any external transcribing software. All interviews have been conducted in Italian, and the relevant parts that are included in this dissertation—together with all the other relevant content in Italian, obtained, for instance, from the various organisations' websites and social media profiles and channels—have been translated in English by the author. Titles in Italian have not been capitalised, unless when capitalisation was part of their original appearances in flyers, social media posts, etc. Whenever the quoted interviews' syntax might sound odd or unfamiliar in the English language, that is because interviews have intentionally been translated as literally as possible to preserve the original flux of ideas as presented by the research participants. However, I also edited these quoted sections for grammar, adding conjunctions and contextual words to enhance intelligibility. These author's edits are enclosed in square brackets.

Each individual who contributed to this research has participated willingly, and each of them has read the information sheet and consent form provided. Every person who has been interviewed for this research project has provided explicit, written or oral, consent, given prior to the interview, following the guidelines for this study as agreed with the University College Cork's Social Research Committee in August 2022. For some of the research participants, consent has been an ongoing process that has been confirmed multiple times throughout the interview process and after. In a few cases, when possible, the research participants have read the part of the dissertation concerning their work and

experiences, in order to confirm that what I reported was in line with their views and not altered during the processes of translation, transcription, coding, and data elaboration.

While the interviews were all unstructured, questions often revolved around similar themes. During fieldwork, I was particularly interested in learning about people's impressions of singular events, their personal thoughts in relation to nature, sound, and music, and the cultural roots of the environmental crisis. When interviewing the artists, I focused on learning about their craft, particularly the aesthetic and conceptual choices shaping their performances and artworks. With the event organizers, I aimed to understand the logistics and challenges of organizing such events, including their rationale and their views on using music and sound in alignment with the themes, goals, and objectives of the organizations involved. In speaking with other professionals, I was interested in their perspectives on the events they participated in or conducted, as well as their views on the study's central topic—the sonic dimension of environmentalism—through the lens of their specific occupations and fields. Finally, when interviewing the audience, I wanted to explore the impact that environmental music-making had on them and their thoughts on the relationship between music and nature.

With the exception of 1-2 follow-up interviews, interviews were transcribed in their entirety using the original language between September and December 2023. Only the relevant parts were translated into English and incorporated into the main body of the text. Not all the material collected through the interviews made it to the final version of this dissertation though, and I chose only the more relevant interviews according to each chapter's themes and events described— for similar reasons to the ones that determined the choice of events to be included here, including pertinence to the themes, quantity and quality of data, and redundancy. I used the data collected from 21 of the 36 main interviewees. While some interviews are extensively quoted and form the core of the text, others, though not directly quoted, have significantly contributed to the development of the ideas and efforts underpinning this research. The exclusion criteria regarding interviews are included in Appendix B of this dissertation.

Online Preliminary Research of Events and Participants

While the majority of the research fieldwork was conducted in person,[3] I employed some virtual means for a variety of tasks. For instance, I used my personal profiles on Meta's social networks—namely, Instagram and Facebook—to subscribe to and follow several relevant local groups and communities themed around ecology, the environment, the conservation and restoration of nature, trekking and experiences in nature, music events, and holistic/spiritual events. Furthermore, I followed pages and subscribed to groups managed by local, national and international environmental organizations,[4] to stay updated with their activities in the area. I also followed various pages that spread some news about environmental issues in the area and those run by the management of the various natural parks and areas in the region, to learn about isolated events and initiatives. Both Facebook and Instagram have been used to reach out to single individuals in order to arrange interviews and sort out other practicalities with the research participants. Instant message service Telegram has been used to join the groups of the local branches of activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Friday For Future, to stay updated about relevant actions and protests happening in the area organised by the two groups.

Practice as Research methodology in Eco-ethnomusicology

In three particular cases, during the events *Riciclare ad Arte* (described in Chapter 6), *Il Canto del Lago* (described in Chapters 4 and 7), and *Il Parco delle Stelle* (described in Chapter 4), I made use of my artistic practice as a research methodology, in order to gain a first-person perspective on what it means to be an environmentalist musician and what are the issues of organising events revolving around these themes. A fourth performance was planned but was eventually cancelled due to various issues (see Chapter 4 for a detailed account of this instance). Since Mantle Hood's stress on the concept of bi-

[3] Of all the events documented, only one was entirely online, to which Chapter 5 is dedicated.
[4] I also followed the pages and subscribed to the local Facebook groups run by WWF (World Wildlife Foundation), Legambiente (national environmentalist organisation), and LIPU (Italian bird conservation organisation).

musicality (1960), performing has been an important tool for ethnomusicological fieldwork that can enable relationships within the field, access to relevant events, and provide a deeper understanding of the music studied (Baily 2001; 2008; Witzleben 2010). Performing as part of research is an important part of ethnographic participant observation (Nettl 2005, 141,147,173), and recent scholarship has highlighted the roles of the researcher approaching the field building on their pre-existing musical skills, for example in the study of music traditions (Balosso-Bardin 2022), environmental activism (Pedelty 2012), and economic crisis (Tsioulakis 2021).

Ethnomusicologists often find themselves as outsiders in the field (Nettl 2005, 149-154; Rice 2008, 50-51). Being a musician in the field implies a constant re-negotiation of the researcher's role, shifting between and moving beyond the insider/outsider binary (Wong 2008). The same applies to this case, where, despite being a native of the area, I approached the field with the agency of an outsider, and my insidership was partially earned thanks to my active involvement in some of the performances. In this research, I embraced and experienced what Timothy Rice calls the hermeneutical arc (2008, 60-61), a process that led me from initial unfamiliarity with the cultural aspects under investigation to a deeper understanding through close collaboration with participants, and ultimately once again to a position of distance, necessary for reflecting on the fieldwork and completing the writing process. In doing this I was aided by my previous experience as a musician that helped me to perform as part of a few of the events studied. A participating musician can give important insider insights into the research subjects and objects (Burnim 1985), thus being a performer and ethnographer at the same time allows the researcher to switch fluidly between emic and etic perspectives (Balosso-Bardin 2022).

With this in mind, I approached communities of interest and practice from this double role and entered the field as both a musician and ethnomusicologist. Similarly to what was described by Cassandre Balosso-Bardin (2022), my artistic practice was not the research object per se, but rather a means to build relationships with organisations and potential research participants, and generally negotiate my presence within the field. Rather than being a form of phenomenologically-informed practice-based artistic research that populates other art-focused disciplines (McKerrel 2022), my artistic

practice was then a way to gather non-musical knowledge about all the complexities of using music and sound-based practices to achieve various environmentalist goals.

In his recent analysis of practice research in ethnomusicology, Simon McKerrel argues that there might be two types of practice research within ethnomusicology that are, practice research for translational ethnomusicology, and practice research in ethnomusicology (2022). The first is a research methodology aimed to create knowledge about a performative music tradition. In the first category, translation implies using practice to communicate the artistic process to the research community that is outside that musical tradition. In the second category, the author defines practice research in ethnomusicology as

> [holding] the possibility for ethnomusicologists working with communities of practice to produce new music and dance performances that flow from insiders' values and aesthetics, but act as research through the clearly communicated and documented knowledge of new musical forms and performances in and of themselves (McKerrel 2022, 22).

This performance practice must be aimed at the production of knowledge, to differentiate itself from what the author defines as normal, vocational, practice (ibid.). Following McKerrel's definition, I contextualise the new music composed and performed during this ethnomusicological study as practice research in ethnomusicology. If many ethnomusicologists take on music performance to learn and conduct research within a pre-existent genre or music tradition (Witzleben 2010), in this study creating new music was motivated by the fact that there is no such thing as an environmentalist music genre, and rather the music used in these circumstances is constituted by a variety of genres, ensembles, instruments, that in common have the intention to support the cause, and share the same context (Pedelty 2016, 235-258). I therefore crafted the musical performances and sound-art installations mentioned in this research based on my pre-existing music skills, musical taste, and personal aesthetic.

To enter the field as a musician and performer I largely took inspiration from the foundational volume in ecomusicological scholarship, authored by anthropologist Mark Pedelty and named after this field, that at the time of the publication was emerging: *Ecomusicology: Rock, Folk, and the Environment* (2012). In exploring the relationship

between the popular music industry and its "ecological potential" (ibid., 6)—in an environmentalist sense—the author includes an account of his hands-on perspective of eight years as an environmentalist musician in the United States, performing in and around Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Orcas Island, Washington. During his ethnographic study, Pedelty "learned an instrument, composed music, recorded CDs, and performed for local audiences [...] in order to gain backstage access and a stage-eye view of the problem" (ibid., 8), and to get "a richer sense of the challenges and potential of popular music as an environmental force [and] phenomenon" (ibid., 141). Together with other faculty and students of the University of Minneapolis, Pedelty founded the Hypoxic Punks, a band performing "hybrid folk rock with punk tinge" (ibid., 138).[5] The repertoire was entirely composed by Pedelty, who wrote "the melodies, lyrics, and chords," (ibid., 138) and provided a rough demo recording to the other band members who contributed by writing arrangements etc. turning it into a song. While the author states that he had to learn a new instrument, over the course of the volume he clarifies that he had some pre-existent basilar musical skills to rely upon, but he significantly improved them through practice in order to be able to play the rhythmic guitar and the harmonica for the band. The lyrics of the first album (which is the one performed in the fieldwork described in this volume) cover a series of local and general environmental themes, and while some listeners have perceived some accusatory stances within the lyrics, Pedelty assures that the content is mostly personal, and "word and music pouring directly from the singer's heart" (ibid. 143).

Pedelty chose the hybrid combination of folk and punk of his band following (also) his personal taste and experiences. Similarly, in choosing the type of music that I was going to perform as part of my research fieldwork I relied on my musical education, taste, and experience as a performer. I have been playing guitar for the last seventeen years or so, focusing mainly on a choice of modern repertoires, styles, and genres, from rock to jazz. I pursued formal education in Jazz guitar, from which I graduated in 2015. While I admittedly have never been a competitive jazz player, I have always had a strong interest in composition and developed a love for improvisation on this instrument—these remain

[5] A statement on Pedelty's website (https://www.ecosong.band/the-hypoxic-punks) indicates that the band is not active anymore. However, the three albums recorded by the band are available at https://hypoxicpunks.bandcamp.com/. Both websites were acccessed on 16 September 2024.

key aspects of my musical practice today. During the last 10 years, I have also been experimenting with electronic music, gaining some experience as a rap beat producer, especially with a local underground rap artist with whom I am still collaborating. Thanks to this production experience, I have a working knowledge of the Digital Audio Workstation Ableton Live that I use on a regular basis to compose beats and other pieces. Over the last few years, I have also been experimenting with soundscape recording, using field recordings as a creative material that I use to develop compositions and frame improvisational performances. The three performances that I devised for this research were built upon a combination of improvisational skills and familiarity with soundscapes and field recording techniques, using my music production skills to craft products at a reasonable quality level.

In performing while doing ethnomusicological fieldwork, I was conscious that on the one hand, the double role that I undertook could open doors and make me more relatable to fellow performers and musicians (Balosso-Bardin 2022). On the other hand, I needed to acknowledge that my agency and those of the research participants were, in the end, quite different. My stewardship for the places in question and support for the multiple nuances of the environmentalist cause as supported by the various organisations are sincere and deeply heartfelt, and I intend to continue my collaboration with the people that I met during this research over the following years (and in some ways I'm already doing so). However, at the end of the research fieldwork, I had to leave, to go back to my home institution in Ireland and thus discontinue—at least for the moment—my artistic support to the people and organisations that supported me throughout this research.[6] For this reason, I tried to shape my practice in a way that could suit, first of all, the interest of the research participants and their organisations. Inspired by Balosso-Bardin I then asked each organisation "to decide *how* [I] will become useful" (Balosso-Bardin 2022, 139, original emphasis), in order to avoid any risk of pursuing only the research's and researcher's interests at their disadvantage.

With my personal involvement in the issue, my aim with these performances was then beyond the creation of data to validate this doctoral research's hypothesis. What I

[6] After completing my fieldwork, I was invited to perform again at the "Il Parco delle Stelle" event (see Chapter 4 and below) in 2024, with the possibility of participating in future editions of the festival as well.

hoped instead was to give this ethnographic study a performative effect that could eventually result in social change of some sort, and this was possible solely through the "viewpoint of immersion" (Wong 2008, 88) from which I am writing, which, as Deborah Wong remarks in consideration of her study of Japanese Aiko drumming in the United States, necessarily includes some extent of autoethnography (ibid.) that permeates from the whole work.

In this research, I approached environmentalist organisations with this double role. Being a performer as well as a researcher resulted in "a number of social advantages for the researcher [as it provided me] with an understandable role and status in the community" (Baily 2001, 95), and as I approached other performers and event organisers as a performer I got access to "an immediate and large area of common experience with people to whom I was a complete stranger," (ibid, 96). Specifically, through the creation of some musical performances, my aim was to get closer to organisations that were organising relevant events that I wished to observe. The contexts in which music and sound were part could be studied by being part of them, as a performer. Moreover, being a performer made me closer to other performers and event organisers, enabling me to ask specific questions motivated by a double interest as an external researcher, and as somebody who could be a colleague or be potentially included in the event roster for them, having then a double emic and etic perspective while documenting the event. Ultimately, being a performer made me more relatable to the audience when I happened to interview them, being then familiar with my professional figure already.

What follows is a description of the three performances that I devised for the three events in which I participated as an artist to gather a deeper understanding of the phenomena studied. Here I will focus on the technical and critical aspects of the performances only. For a thorough analytical ethnographic account of the events themselves, please see the Chapters that include them (4, 6, and 7).

Castellina Marittima, RinnovArte: *Riciclare ad Arte*

My first attempt to participate as an environmentalist musician in the events that are the subject of this research dates back to 2022. In March of that year, I came to know through

some friends about a festival centred on promoting sustainable behaviours such as recycling and upcycling through art. The event was planned for two weekends at the end of the summer in Castellina Marittima, a town 40km south of Pisa. The event was mainly intended as an art exhibition, and no sound or music was planned to be part of it. With this in mind, I approached the organisers several months before the event to suggest my ideas to introduce a sonic dimension to it. Samuela Nati, one of the organisers, was enthusiastic about it. She confessed that they wanted to involve some musicians, but that the budget was very tight and they weren't sure what would have constituted an appropriate musical act for this event.[7] My first idea was that I could have been in charge of seeking musicians for them and finding performers that could fit within the theme of the festival, but this quickly turned into not being an easy task. Firstly, during Spring 2022 I had to complete my PhD coursework obligations in Cork, and I could not travel straight away to find some musicians in Italy. Secondly, since my research was just at the beginning at that time, my network of people in the field was yet to be developed. I then had a second idea, that could work despite the distance and perhaps result in a productive experience for everyone. I proposed to curate the entire sonic aspect of the event myself, as a composer, drawing inspiration from the environmentalist musicians I was listening to at the time.

For this occasion, I decided to use some field recordings of local everyday sounds, interpreting them creatively in order to make something that could provide a soundscape background to the art exhibition. The connection with the theme of the event was very straightforward: as the other participating artists would have used everyday unimportant materials to create paintings and sculptures, I would have *recycled* everyday sounds from that area to make a series of compositions. To do so, I was inspired by a recent work by Italian musician, composer, and producer Max Casacci, *Earthphonia*.[8] This work is constituted by eight tracks and a book and is co-created with geologist and science communicator Mario Tozzi, including contributions by and interviews with other

[7] Samuela Nati, personal communication, 26 April 2022, and 06 July 2022.
[8] To better understand Max's compositional process, I tried to get in touch with him, with no success. His manager responded to my explorative email, stating that Max was very busy in that period, but that I could provide some written questions. I sent the questions to him, but I received no answer, neither from the manager nor from Max.

musicians and scientists. The eight pieces are constituted by re-elaborations of field recordings of soundscapes and non-human sounds, from a variety of sources: bees, whales, roots, and volcanoes' sounds are re-sampled and transformed by Max Casacci to make melodies and harmonies (Casacci and Tozzi 2020). Following John Cage's aesthetic to treat any sonic material as music (Pritchett 1993; Wrightson 1999) many artists and composers have used environmental sounds to create music compositions (Truax 1996). Compositional work in which environmental sounds constitute "the medium, material, and/or the subject matter" is defined as environmental sound art[9] (Gilmurray 2016, xix). Recorded environmental sound "acquires its meaning both in terms of its own properties and in terms of its relation to context" (ibid 52) thus it has been widely used to advocate for environmental sustainability and raise environmental awareness (Galloway 2014b; Gilmurray 2017; Bates et al. 2020; Truax 2020). Working with environmental sounds raises some ethical concerns. Firstly, the fetishism for clean, hi-fi sounds risks exacerbating the divide between ideas of nature and culture, romanticizing an idealised nature against the noisy human society (McCartney 2016). Secondly, as pointed out above, sound's meaning is highly contextual and therefore subject to misinterpretation and weaponisation according to the composer's agency (Galloway 2022). When sound is extracted from its original source, non-human agents have no control over the ways in which "their sound, acoustic communication, and bodies are used by artists" (ibid127). Thirdly, environmental sound art has a material cost and consequent environmental impact. Kyle Devine pointed out that streaming services failed to reduce the impact of recorded music because digital music has still a high cost and impact in terms of energy consumption and storage necessary for digital music circulation, production, and consumption (Devine 2019a, 129-164). The same applies to sound art and soundscape recording, storing, and consumption, which all have a material cost and impact (Galloway 2022, 127).

[9] The boundaries between sound art and music are sometimes very blurred. Electroacustic composer Jonathan Gilmurray argues that "prior to the term gaining currency in the late 1990s, works that would now be considered sound art were generally categorized as *experimental music*. Today, the distinction between the two often depends upon one's individual understanding of the terminology, and it might thus be proposed that it should ultimately be left to the individual to interpret works in whatever way proves most conducive to the ability to receive, understand, and appreciate them on their own terms" (Gilmurray 2016, xx).

Aware of these problematic fallacies in making environmental sound art, I decided to make some sound art compositions for the event *Riciclare ad Arte* nonetheless. My aim in this was not to research sustainable innovation within the artistic practice itself, but rather to use the artistic practice to develop connections within the field, observe the organisation of such event from within, and become relatable to the audience of that particular event and interview them about it. As I wanted to make some site-specific compositions, I asked some previous acquaintances in the area to send me some recordings of sounds that they thought were interesting and/or somehow meaningful for them, and I ended with a series of samples that I manipulated and transformed to make some compositions. Each piece is based on a single field recording, which is audible at the beginning and at the end of each composition, while the sample is being transformed into something different in the middle. I ended up presenting eight compositions originating from eight different sounds including non-human sounds such as those produced by cicadas, crickets, and horseflies, the geophony of water and wind, and more anthropogenic sounds such as the soundscape of a port, human voices chattering in a bar, and the grinding mechanical noise of a mechanic olive-oil mill.[10]

During the two weekends of the festival, my compositions were played in a loop throughout the day through some speakers, while a video that I prepared to showcase the paintings and the sculptures to which each composition was connected was played on a screen. Since the music was played—rather than performed live—I was free to interact with the audience, asking them questions and interviewing some of them. The audience was curious and enthusiastic, and some of them were rather inspired by the theme of the event and by how it was represented through artistic means. The organisers were very happy with my work, and my direct involvement in the event enabled me to develop a deep working relationship with them that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. I was able to interview Samuela several times throughout the course of the event and after, to learn about the organisation's details. For instance, I learnt about the conflict that they had with a local cultural organisation that saw this event as a threat to their monopoly as

[10] The eight compositions have been subsequently published under the name *Paesaggi sonori delle colline Pisane*, and are available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_mEKzT41_x_hSwrXuJeuZYLlh7qq3aicds. Accessed on 17 June 2024.

the town's main event organisers, and how many local citizens were sceptic, about a newcomer organising events in their town, and therefore refused to visit the exhibition altogether. This event is described in detail in Chapter 6.

LIPU Santa Luce: *Il Canto del Lago*

Satisfied by my first experience as an environmentalist musician, I decided that I wanted to develop a live performance, to observe the difference with the more passive listening experience that I devised for the first event. In March 2023 I went to Italy with the plan to conduct some more in-depth research fieldwork, and I got in touch with the local branches of the conservation organisation LIPU. LIPU is a national bird conservation organisation that counts more than twenty protected areas in Italy and a few wildlife recovery centres.[11] Two of their protected areas—named Oases—are situated in Tuscany, and I reached out to both of them to test the waters for potential collaborations. To do this, I had to develop an appropriate repertoire of music to perform, and I had to figure out how to employ my musical skills to serve the organisation's goals.

I took inspiration from clarinettist and philosopher David Rothenberg, who collected several experiences over the years in making music—often improvised, as a consequence of his jazz skills—with non-human animals, such as birds (2005; 2019), whales (2008; 2023), cicadas and other insects (2014), and, more recently, tinier creatures dwelling in ponds (2024). This practice is defined by Rothenberg himself as *interspecies improvisation* (2016) and re-defined by ethnomusicologist Robin Ryan as *multispecies musicking*, expanding Christopher Small's idea of comprehensive music performance (1998) to include the more-than-human (Ryan 2020). In this practice:

> the musical actor is musically energized to take up fragments of more-than-human sound codes and develop them into tunes. The network is situationally defined by the parameters of pace, space, time, and agency. Sound might arrive from a multiplicity of topographical points. If an audience is present, the sonic experience will be governed by their location (ibid., 172).

[11] For a better description of LIPU's activities, see Chapter 4.

To David Rothenberg, the key to this practice is just to listen. Firstly, to the place, as this is a deeply site-specific practice (Rothenberg 2002). This is in itself an exercise of appreciation of nature, trying to find one's place in it, without overpowering the other species' sounds and trying to find ways to live in harmony (both musical and metaphorical) within our environment (Rothenberg 2016). In this way, even though this practice can include the use of recorded sound (Ryan 2020), the sounds are never just extracted, but rather the artist tries to find a communication with them, a dialogue (Rothenberg 2016).

With this in mind, I created a small portfolio of improvisations featuring me playing along with some of the bird species of the region, in order to have some material to attach to the proposal that I wanted to send to the conservation organisation. For these recordings, and the consequent performances, I chose to employ an acoustic guitar, to follow my personal taste and because I thought it would suit best the scope of the project: as Mark Pedelty notes, "acoustic instrumentation more easily signals environmental intent" (Pedelty 2012, 51-52). To develop the portfolio, I contacted David Rothenberg himself. I first sent him three attempts of multispecies improvisation, including my interaction with the recorded birdsongs of some local species found via the open-access creative-commons online wildlife sound library *Xeno-canto.*[12] David Rothenberg appreciated the effort and said that the track in which I was leaving more space for the bird was the way to follow.[13] In fact, giving space is key in this type of performance, and the risk of covering the other living being's sound with a showoff of musical skills is high (Rothenberg 2016).

Once the portfolio was ready,[14] I approached firstly the smallest oasis, the one situated at the lake of Santa Luce, where Silvia Mascagni, the oasis manager, listened to the tracks and then invited me to an initial meeting, to know each other better and see how my work could meet their needs. Silvia and her team were not new to this kind of initiative, as they organised in the past other events with artists and holistic facilitators,

[12] https://xeno-canto.org, accessed on 18 June 2024.
[13] David Rothenberg, personal email communication with the author, 13 February 2023.
[14] The portfolio since then has been subsequently developed and then released online as a 15 tracks album named '*Tuscany birdsongs'*, that can be listened at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_kVxWdyrf0kuRtodI6IwACzzjoIUNCo-_w

meant to attract a diverse audience that engages with the area via the medium of the musical experience. They were enthusiastic about my proposal and gave me the freedom to wander around the protected area to find a place that could be suitable for what I had in mind. My initial idea for the event was to improvise along recorded birdsongs, similar to what I have done in the recorded portfolio. Silvia instead suggested that I should work together with a friend of hers who organises sound-based meditation sessions in natural areas and that we should not employ recordings, but rather try to engage with the live wildlife. That seemed to me a reasonable compromise: they were giving me space and support, and in exchange wanted to have a say about what the event should look like.

I thoroughly consulted with Silvia to understand all potential risks and negative impacts that organising such an event could have on the area and on the non-human animals and proceeded with the event once established that there were none. In fact, we were not causing any harm to the wildlife and the flora of the protected area, as we were going to carefully avoid nesting spots and grass areas that were either important or peculiar for their biological connotations. The number of people attending the event was going to be limited to a maximum number to be decided (again, in order to minimize the disruption to wildlife activities) and, on a sonic level, we relied on a set-up including only a small, portable amplifier, to increase the otherwise feeble guitar sound. Conscious of the environmental impact of live music (see Pedelty 2012, 1-3; Brennan and Devine 2020; Brennan 2021), I tried to keep mine to the minimum. Despite a car being available to bring equipment from one side to the other of the oasis, I carried my guitar, amplifier, and other amenities on my shoulders for the 2 km of trails separating the gate from the performance site, with the aid of a big travel backpack. To power the portable amplifier I used six rechargeable AA batteries, while to power the guitar preamp I used a single, rechargeable, lithium, 9v battery. While I am aware of some of the environmental consequences of manufacturing these batteries, I thought it was still better than employing disposable ones. The event in question is described in detail in Chapters 4, and 7 of this dissertation.

LIPU Massaciuccoli: *Il Parco delle Stelle*

I reached out to this branch of the organisation in March 2023 providing again my portfolio of guitar improvisations along with birdsongs. I was put in touch with Luigi d'Alessandro, a volunteer in charge of the artistic organisation of a festival happening in August, who enthusiastically wanted to include my performance in it. During our first phone meeting, Luigi asked how much I would have wanted to be paid, and I said that I didn't want to charge any fee and take only reimbursement for the fuel expenses to travel to that area, if possible. In exchange for my performance instead, I asked their permission to document the event in depth, including its impact on the audience, interview the organisers and the other performers after the festival, and maybe shoot a video of my performance if possible.

Permission granted, I met with Andrea Fontanelli, the ornithologist manager of the oasis for the last thirty years or so. Andrea took me to where I was going to perform: a floating platform in front of a wooden hide in the middle of the wetland. The plan was that the visitors were going to stop at the hide as part of their excursion and watch me play through its openings. After the inspection of the place, I asked Andrea to suggest some bird species typical of the area, whose characteristic voices could have been included in my performance to make it sound as accurate as possible. In fact, while for my previous performance, I improvised along live birds, here that was not possible, as I had to replicate the performance for four groups of visitors each evening – for a total of eight sets, and we were sure that the birds would have had something better to do for all that time.

I then re-crafted the performance to include three high-quality recordings of local birds, including a nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*), a Eurasian bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), and a moustached warbler (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*).[15] At the same time, I tried to find a way to interview the audience. As I was going to be the performer, interacting with the audience during the event was almost impossible, and in this case, even harder considering that I was going to be stuck on a floating platform until the end

[15] The video of the performance is available at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p50HnJUS7Ls

of the evening when a boat would have come to collect me (see Figure 2.2). Again, the impact on the area was carefully assessed by ornithologist Andrea Fontanelli, and the event was organised with no foreseen risk or negative outcome for the wildlife and the local ecosystem. Even on this occasion, the environmental impact was kept to a minimum. I only used my guitar and a portable amplifier to reach the desired loudness, powering both with rechargeable batteries. To reach the platform the guide used a boat pushed by a small, electric engine, to avoid pollution derived from the fumes and accidental fuel leaks of normal combustion engines and to minimize disturbances to the lake's ecosystem.



Figure 2.2 Set up for my performance at LIPU's Oasis in Massaciuccoli. Photo by Gabriele Carboni, 12 August 2023.

My initial idea was to give the visitors a QR code to redirect them to an online questionnaire, but Andrea and Luigi were somehow uneasy with this plan, as it would have disrupted the flow and the atmosphere of the event. We then decided to contact all the participants after the event, asking them for their consent to be interviewed and to contribute with their experiences, opinions, and impressions, to the study of that particular event. The event had a cap limit of 120 people, that were contacted by the organisation through the email that they left for the reservation. Each booking was made for a group of 1+ people, as many brought family and friends around. I managed to

interview seven of the people who booked for the event, covering a total of 20 members of the audience who came along with them.

Ethical Considerations

In this research, my particular role as an activist artist-researcher conducting research fieldwork at home in the context of the environmental crisis resulted in a series of carefully thought ethical considerations that guided my actions before, during, and after research fieldwork. My reflections on employing my artistic practice are outlined in the previous sections of this chapter and in the conclusions of this dissertation. While my insider-outsider status has been declared above, I will expand on it in the following paragraphs. That is followed by further reflection concerning potential biases resulting from doing research in familiar environments and in performances where the roles of performer and researcher coincide. This section ends with reflections regarding doing eco-ethnomusicological research in a time of environmental crisis.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, this research was facilitated by my insider status. As a native of the area examined in this study, I knew the local language, geography, and key organizations operating in the region already. However, since my involvement with environmental activism developed alongside the research itself, I had no prior contact with any of the participants who directly or indirectly contributed to this study. Before conducting the research, I was only familiar with major festivals such as Festambiente and prominent organizations like Legambiente and LIPU. While I was certainly a cultural insider, I had to learn the subject matter and its contexts almost from scratch, which positioned me as an outsider in the domain where music performance, ecotourism, wildlife conservation, and habitat protection intersect in Tuscany. I was also unaware of the extent of environmental degradation and resource extractivism occurring in certain areas, such as the Apuan Alps and Lake Santa Luce. Ultimately, although I had a general awareness of the aforementioned organizations, I was largely unfamiliar with the specifics of their local operations prior to beginning fieldwork.

Operating on behalf of a foreign research institute, my presence in the field was often met with a mix of deference and curiosity. Introducing myself as a researcher

affiliated with an Irish university elicited an unexpected—and unsolicited—sense of respect from interviewees. On one hand, participants could easily relate to me as a native of the area: I understood the local dialect, sense of humor, and cultural, geographical, social, and political references (se also Stock and Chiener 2008). We shared a general sense of place and belonging with regard to Tuscany. On the other hand, the fact that I had come from abroad to study these issues seemed to lend an air of professionalism to my research role and persona. Interviewees often showed respect for this role by inviting me behind the scenes at events or offering me free tickets to performances. I frequently wondered whether I would have received the same treatment had I been working for an Italian university instead of a foreign one. Certain of my interlocutors responded with initial condescension toward my interest in music or my identity as an ethnomusicologist, and looked with scepticism to my interest in topics such as ecology and sustainability. In those moments, I found myself trying to reassure my interlocutors that my engagement went beyond music and art alone—that it stemmed from a sincere desire to contribute meaningfully to broader conversations in respect of such "harder" sciences. Despite this, none of the potential research participants refused to be included in the research for this reason.

This combination of insider and outsider positions in relation to the field helped me to maintain a research balance and emotional detachment from some aspects of my research practice. On the one hand, I was deeply emotionally involved with the issues described in this dissertation. Here, I talk about music, a form of art with which I have been engaging nearly all my life, as a listener and performer. At the same time, I am talking about Tuscany, my land, my home. While I am writing this paragraph from my home in Cork, Ireland, I can close my eyes and immediately picture the fields, the forests, the sea, the smell of the flowers in spring, the sounds of the countryside in the various seasons in the village where I grew up. Working for a foreign institution helped me not to maintain objectivity, which I believe is unrealistic in ethnomusicological research, but to put my subjectivity in the right perspective without being overwhelmed by my personal sense of attachment to the field, thus overcoming potential bias derived from my attachment to the subject matter of this research. Coming back to Ireland after fieldwork in 2023 served to establish a precise boundary between what constituted a period of time specifically designed to gather data and the time when I started to reflect on such data. Otherwise, I

would have kept being involved in some of the events, fueled by my activism and love for my homeland.

This research has been motivated by the belief that music and sound have an important role in the transition towards more sustainable societirs. While this is proven true by several other studies (see Introduction), I was also aware of the potential confirmation bias resulting from interviewing musicians only. As a musician interviewing another musician, we would have likely agreed upon the fact that music is very important in relation to this topic. For this reason, as outlined earlier in this chapter, I recruited a series of non-musical research participants—meaning individuals who do not actively engage with the production of music on an everyday basis. The situations that were most at risk of bias were, of course, those in which I was included as a performer. To mitigate this risk, in those three events, I very carefully included members of the audience as research participants. These were all individuals with whom I had no previous relationship whatsoever; they knew me only as the performer in that particular event, and I knew them only as members of the audience at that particular event.

Some broader ethical considerations were made in accordance with the Society for Ethnomusicology ethics statement and guidelines (2018). My obligations were first and foremost towards the individuals who took part in this research. In no way did this research put any of them at risk, and their inclusion in this study was done with their informed consent (as outlined in the "Interviews" subsection of this chapter). Prior to this, all potential research participants and organizations included in this study were informed of my research goals, aims, objectives, and future outputs, as well as my individual agency, and were given details concerning the research institution that hosted this study. Their intellectual property has been respected, and their contributions have been acknowledged throughout the writing of this thesis. For the artists involved in the research, permission was requested to describe their performances and/or include fragments of their song lyrics when necessary.

Particular consideration was given to my actions during research fieldwork, given the delicate topic of this thesis. The SEM guidelines mentioned above urge fieldworkers to be environmentally responsible by considering the environmental impact of research fieldwork and dissemination practices (ibid.). In fact, many activities related to research fieldwork and dissemination such as flying have a significant environmental impact that

may outweigh the benefits associated with the research (Grant 2018). For this reason, I chose to conduct fieldwork in a geographically limited area, so that I could easily access it by travelling overland from my home in Tuscany. At the same time, I reduced air travel related to research duties to a minimum, travelling between Ireland and Italy only when strictly necessary. While I had initially planned to begin the 2023 fieldwork period by travelling from Ireland to Italy via land and sea, the cost of such travel eventually led me to opt for a flight that was ten times cheaper. Unfortunately, many of the events and performances described in this dissertation were located in remote areas not accessible by public transportation, which resulted in my using a personal car. Sometimes, as Jeff Titon observes, the agency of research participants and the environmental justice perspective of the fieldworker may differ, resulting in ethical conflicts (Titon 2022). On the one hand, research participants must be protected, as they have gifted us their time, insights, and experiences. On the other hand, in an activist study that advocates for ecocentrism—such as this one—a line must be drawn between useful practices and potentially harmful ones. In such cases, my ethical commitment and moral obligation led me to prioritize the planet and the ecosystem over individuals and organizations. When necessary, I have critically examined in this dissertation those practices that may be harmful to the environment and damaging to ecosystems, tending more toward greenwashing than genuine environmentalism.

As the SEM ethics statement denotes, the principle of not to harm while conducting research fieldwork (2018, 4), ought to be extended to flora and fauna and to the environment as a whole. This is part of my personal life ethics too and I thoroughly employed this principle in this research.

Summary of the Methodology

To summarise, this is an eco-ethnomusicological research conducted within the place of provenience of the researcher (Tuscany, Italy). The focus is to understand the extent of music and sound-based practices used for the varied nuances of environmentalist purposes in this area. The research fieldwork was carried out in 2022 and 2023 employing

a blended methodology, including participant observation and ethnography, as typically done within this discipline relying heavily on interviews with performers, event organisers, non-musical professionals, and audience. This study also included the creation of new music and sound art in order to get access to environmentalist and conservation organisations that organise events in which such sonic practices take place —and get deeper insights about the latter. Over the following five chapters, I describe in detail all the events that constitute the case studies of this research.

Chapter 3

Of Sounds and Footsteps: Soundwalking within Tuscany's Sound Commons

The events, concerts, and performances observed and described in this dissertation were in large part organised by the various organisations and artists to be set outdoors. Many were held within nature parks and/or areas of naturalistic interest that have in common relevance for conservation and contribute to the environmental well-being of local communities. For these events, a temporary stage—or performance area—had to be delimited, and the performers, the organisers, and the audience had to travel to the selected location, crossing the natural park. The journey often occurred on foot, with the audience immersing themselves into the area before and during the performance, opening their senses, and allowing them to be receptive during and after the walk. On other occasions, walking itself was a central element of the event, as the trail was populated with musical performances and/or moments of deep and attentive listening to environmental sounds, whether they were emitted by human animals, non-human animals, the weather, or any other source.

In this chapter I begin with a critique of the fetishization of environmental sounds by classical acoustic ecology's definitions of soundscape and soundwalking, arguing that eco-ethnomusicology is a tool that can contribute to a more holistic understanding of the practice that includes all sounds and connects listening to other ways to experience the ecosystem, such as walking. As a sound-centred activity where

participants (audience) actively listen to and engage with the sounds produced by multiple agents, I henceforth consider soundwalking as musicking (Small 1998), and therefore a more than appropriate subject for eco-ethnomusicological enquiries.

Although soundwalking is a common research and artistic practice in acoustic ecology (Westerkamp 2007; Behrendt 2019), a combination of walking and listening to all the elements of the soundscape also has enormous potential as an ecological practice that allows participants to develop strong connections with the non-human world and the landscape. Building on interviews with key practitioners and descriptions of ethnographic encounters, this chapter is aimed at providing an expanded definition of soundwalking from an eco-ethnomusicological perspective, including its role in building networks of ecological relationships between human beings and their environment. As the classical definition of soundwalking as an excursion to listen to environmental sounds (Westerkamp 2007) is somewhat a generic concept, the reader will find that the case studies included in this chapter vary from each other and are different in terms of location, organisation, goals, participants, and types of sounds involved. Despite that, they all share the same fundamental purpose of creating a meaningful connection to a place.

With these thoughts in mind, I also decided to consider as soundwalks all those excursions aimed at listening to human-made music in a natural area, as this is a recurring theme observable in several other case studies throughout this dissertation. I hereby aim to justify my stance, ultimately, proposing a model of ecomusicological soundwalking that encompasses musicking too and comprises three overlapping levels that contribute towards people's environmental well-being, ecosystem restoration, and wildlife conservation.

The Soundscape and the Romanticization of Natural Sounds

Based on the word *landscape*, and so emphasizing its relation with physical space, the word *soundscape* is a problematic and contentious term which is now found in multiple, overlapping fields of enquiry, including music studies, composition, sound studies, environmental geography, bioacoustics, and architecture (Kay and Noudelmann 2018;

Sterne 2013; Porteus and Mastin 1985). It is within the latter field that this word was first coined to define the sonic environment of North American cities as perceived by its people, with the intention to develop methodologies through which it could be observed, measured, and potentially improved (Southworth 1969), but the concept of acoustic environment and speculations on its importance for people and communities has definitely been *in the air* far longer–the first academic literature on the impact of noise as an occupational hazard dates back to the 1880s (Barr 1886). Ideas about the importance of the acoustic part of the landscape were also advanced in the fields of geography, where they were used to describe people's perceptions of the landscape and its changes (J. G. Granö 1997 [1928]; Ohlson 1976).

The term grew in popularity with the seminal book written by Canadian composer Raymond Murray Schafer entitled *Our Sonic Environment and the Soundscape: The Tuning of The World* (1977). Schafer defined the soundscape as "any acoustic field of study" (ibid., 8) including for example musical compositions, radio programs, or a specific acoustic environment that can be observed and studied "just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape" (ibid.). The parallelism with landscapes continues throughout the volume: the composer differentiates between the two, arguing that while the landscape consists of objects *seen*, "the soundscape consists of events *heard"* (ibid., 8, original emphasis). Schafer's theories inspired work conducted by the World Soundscape Project (WSP) in the 1970s, mostly in Canada, a group primarily trained in acoustic and electroacoustic music production who collected entire archives of recordings and further contributed to the development of theories and methodologies for the study of the soundscape (Truax 2019). WSP's work has seen a notable continuation in the research project *Acoustic Environments in Change*, which ethnographically explored the changes in the soundscape of six European villages (including Cembra, in Trentino) between 1975 and 2000 (Järviluoma et al. 2009). The work of WSP eventually resulted in the foundation of the field of acoustic ecology, the study of the "interrelationship between sound, nature and society" (Westerkamp 2002, 52), that espouses the values of the importance that listening and the quality of the soundscape have for human culture and wellbeing (Wrightson 1999, 13).

While Schafer's foundational theory idea has profoundly impacted generations of field recordists, sound artists, sound scholars, and composers, it has also been

criticised. Even though in the *Tuning of the World*, it is stated that all sounds are part of the soundscape, including the anthropogenic ones (see above), the author divides categories of sound's quality and sources, prevalently through the use of two terms: hi-fi and lo-fi soundscapes:

> The hi-fi soundscape is one in which discrete sounds can be heard clearly because of the low ambient noise level. The country is generally more hi-fi than the city; night more than day; ancient times more than modern. In the hi-fi soundscape, sounds overlap less frequently; there is perspective – foreground and background. [...] The quiet ambiance of the hi-fi soundscape allows the listener to hear farther into the distance just as the countryside exercises long-range viewing. The city abbreviates this facility for distant hearing (and seeing) marking one of the more important changes in the history of perception. In a lo-fi soundscape individual acoustic signals are obscured in an overdense population of sounds (Schafer 1977, 43).

In this division of sonic realms, the author seems to be in favour of one type of soundscape rather than the other, valorising idyllic pastoral sounds, such as those produced by "winds, water, birds, animals, [and] thunder" (Schafer 1969, 6), rather than those of anthropogenic nature. His work exudes a nostalgic stance for the soundscapes of the pre-electronic, pre-industrial world (Toop 1995, 253). Schafer's soundscape is thus built on a debatable and idealised romantic ideology of nature (Parmar 2018, 9,16) that sees nature as a source of idyllic beauty somehow distinct from humanity, and as a state to which we should aim to return.

Acoustic ecology seems to share these fundamental views in part. Barry Truax (one of the members of the WSP) positioned the sound, the environment, and the listener in a triangular relationship where each element influences the others: sound acts as a carrier of information between the environment and the listeners, and this acoustic experience —the act of listening—shapes and influences the relationship that the listeners have with the environment (Truax 1984, 11; see upper triangle in Figure 3.1). A readaptation of this triangle of double-ended relationships has been published by Kendall Wrightson in an essay that aimed to introduce sound and music scholars to the field of acoustic ecology. Wrightson proposes that sound is the medium of acoustic information between

human listeners and the environment, but while the environment defined by Truax was of a generic nature, the one included here is specifically constituted of sounds produced by the non-anthropogenic part of the landscape, such as the weather and the non-human animals. Meanwhile, the base of Truax's triangular relationship was the connection between the listener and the environment, but Wrightson's version does not place any such relationship at its base (Wrightson 1999, 12)—indicating a significant divide between nature and human beings (see Figure. 3.1).

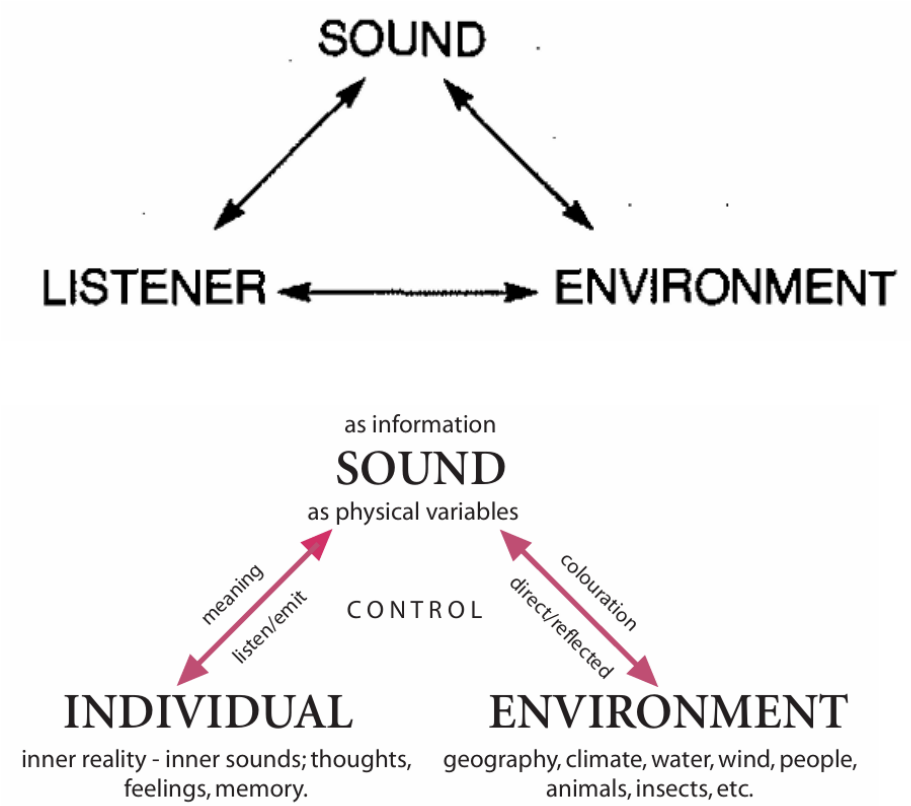


Figure 3.1 At the top, Barry Truax's model of the relationship between listeners, sound and environment (1984, 11), and at the bottom, Kendall Wrightson's adaptation of it (1999, 12).

This fetishization of non-anthropogenic sounds brought a sort of criminalisation to all sounds emitted by humans, including music and broadcasting, which were defined by Wrightson as an acoustic gimmick devised by the developed world to cover undesirable, lo-fi, sounds:

> Music—the virtual soundscape—is, in this context, used as a means to control the sonic environment rather than as a natural expression of it. Broadcast speech

> and music provide the same opportunity for control, turning the sonic environment into a commodity (Wrightson 1999, 12).

In part, this statement may appear logical. If we consider music as sound organised by human beings to cover a series of social functions (see Blacking 1973), the human agency is undeniable. On the other hand, such an approach that separates sound and music, and considers one better than the other, may only result in a widening of the cultural gap between human beings and the rest of the planet.

From the Soundscape to the Sound Commons

While acoustic ecology seems to divide sounds into categories of natural or human-made, the field of soundscape ecology has taken a more inclusive—and ecocentric—perspective (Allen et al. 2023). This field builds upon a later and more inclusive definition of soundscape proposed by bioacoustician Bernie Krause. Krause defined the soundscape as all the sounds present in the environment, emitted from any possible source (Krause 2002), which he divides into three categories:

- Geophony: nonbiological natural sounds, such as the sounds of the weather and geological phenomena.
- Biophony: sounds originating from nonhuman, nondomestic biological sources, such as those generated by non-human animals.
- Anthrophony: human-generated sounds (Krause 2012, 80).

Krause's soundscape subdivision is still problematic, however, as it still evidences a rupture between human-generated sounds and the sounds generated by all the rest of living beings and inanimate objects, albeit this in-part anthropocentric focus offers some important considerations about the sounds produced by human animals. As Krause states:

> Anthrophony comprises four basic types of human-generated sound: electromechanical sound, physiological sound, controlled sound, and incidental sound. Electromechanical noises are produced by our means of transportation

> and the loud tools of various trades, including aircraft, pile drivers, snowmobiles, leaf blowers, automobile and truck sound systems, motorcycles, generators, cell phones, TVs, boom boxes, refrigerators, pencil sharpeners, dishwashers, air conditioners, microwave ovens, and many other complex technologies —such as the relentless clicking of the keyboard on which this book is being written or the faint continuous whisper of my laptop's cooling fan (although most current ones are inaudible beyond a few inches from the source). Physiological sounds — coughing, breathing, body sounds, sneezing, and talking, for example—tend to be much more subdued and localized. With a bit of mindfulness and consideration, we can manage our controlled sound, such as live or recorded music or theatrical performances, particularly when it comes in conflict with a sensitive biophony. Incidental sounds are made up of noises such as footsteps or clothes rustling and scratching; these, too, are controllable and localized (Krause 2012, 157).

Conversely to acoustic ecology's understanding of soundscape, Krause's definition does not indicate a hierarchy in which certain sets of sounds are deemed more positive than others, and the three *-phonies* stand at the same level of importance. Other definitions of the term agree on all the sounds to be included in the soundscape (Farina 2006, 39; Pijanowski, Villanueva-Rivera, et al. 2011, 208; Pijanowski 2024, 7-8). Soundscape ecology is then a field that aims to employ a socioecological systems approach (Pijanowski, Villanueva-Rivera, et al. 2011, 204) to integrate the anthropocentric focus of acoustic ecology with bioacoustics, psychoacoustics and spatial ecology in order to study the interactions between anthrophony, geophony and biophony (Pijanowski, Farina, et al. 2011).

In his description of anthrophony, Krause observes that human sounds often constitute noise[1] that negatively impacts the sonic dimension of wildlife (Krause 2012, 162), and the harmful impact of anthropogenic sound has been widely documented in various animal species. The noise produced as a consequence of jet exercises in Labrador, Québec, and Alaska has been observed to disrupt caribou's traditional calving

[1] The word noise is a complex term that is often used to define sounds that are undesired or unwanted (Fink 2019). Noise is a relational concept that even though being inherently present in all sounds (even the musical and environmental ones), it is bounded to a binary understanding of aurality that separates between wanted and unwanted sounds (Novak 2015).

behavioural patterns (Harrington 2003), and the noise of whale-watching boats harass the same animals that they claim to protect and disrupt echolocation of food sources (Pedelty 2020). High levels of undesired noise have been proven to negatively impact the health and behaviour of human animals too, as documented within communities constantly exposed to jet noise in Japan (Cox and Hiramatsu 2012), and considering human and non-human communities are not separated, noise affects both of them (Pedelty 2021). Yet evolutionary change made some species adapt to local anthrophonies. While birds living in urbanised areas are also negatively impacted by noise (Slabbekoorn 2013), some species have adapted to anthropogenic sound modifying their songs and changing their pitch and loudness (see Moseley et al. 2018; Halfwerk, Lohr, and Slabbekoorn 2018; Bermúdez-Cuamatzin et al. 2009).

As the three *-phonies* described by Krause are so interconnected, overlapped, and interdependent, the soundscape is then a realm comprehending a complex system of signals, waves and interrelationships not easily downgradable or divisible into hierarchies of good and bad sounds, and anthrophony in all its forms—music included—is a part of it. Rather than identifying positive and negative sounds, it is more helpful to think of how biophony, geophony, and anthrophony interact with each other in an environment, and how this interaction signals species coexistence within any ecosystem. Borrowed from the fields of bioacoustics and ecoacoustics, the Acoustic Niche Hypothesis (ANH) is based on the observation of the spectral analysis of localised soundscapes and formulates that all species inhabiting any given environment have their own aural niche (Krause 1993). According to the ANH, the soundscape is parted in niches to minimise sonic interference between species (Eldridge and Kiefer 2018). Building on this idea, ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon theorised sound as a commons "for all the living creatures" (2012), meaning a:

> soundscape wherein all living beings are able to communicate effectively within their habitats' sonic spaces according to frequency, timbre, duration, timing, and the content of the utterance (Titon, in Allen et al. 2023, 146).

While there are different approaches and conceptualisations of the word 'commons' (Akbulut 2017), the way it is intended here is as a public resource, incapable of being possessed (Titon 2012), that is accessible and utilisable by all (Wall 2014), and that

includes a network of social relationships and collective practices (Akbulut 2017). According to anthropologist Francesco Remotti, a commons can be natural or cultural, material (such as a field or a path) or immaterial (such as a dance, rite, or song), and it is their shared use which gives sense and substance to the life of a collectivity. Sounds share this quality too (Remotti 2022, 18-19).

In this sense, Titon's idea of sound as a commons that belongs to all living beings, such as "the birds, and the crickets as much as you and me" (Titon 2012), enables us to think of the soundscape as a place where all the living beings are not only passive-sound-recipients, but also sound-emitting-actors. One action does not exclude the other, and the soundscape is naturally interconnected with other spheres of existence, as sound should not— and cannot—be separated from the rest of the environment (Ingold 2007). One means through which we can experience such interactivity is the practice of soundwalking.

Soundwalking

This chapter concerns a specific intervention practice that has been part of the applied ecomusicological repertoire of actions since way before the invention of the field itself. A popular technique in acoustic ecology established by the WSP to evaluate qualitatively the features of a soundscape (Truax 2019), soundwalking has become a standard method, along with interviews and questionnaires to study the perception of sounds in a particular area (Brambilla and Fiebig 2023). Attentive listening during a walk was included in various lists of auditory exercises devised by Schafer himself (1992) and several other composers, field recordists, and sound artists over the years (e.g. Oliveros 2005; Parmar 2022, among others). Member of WSP Hildegard Westerkamp has extensively contributed to the framing of the practice, defining a soundwalk as "any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are" (2007, 49). As soundwalking is focused on aural perceptions, participants should not communicate verbally with each other. Other than the main purpose of soundwalking described above, Westerkamp sees no fixed or determining rules for soundwalking. For example:

> [soundwalking] can be done alone or with a friend [or] in small groups, [and it] can furthermore cover a wide area or it can just centre around one particular place. No matter what form a soundwalk takes, its focus is to rediscover and reactivate our sense of hearing. [A] soundwalk can be done anywhere, at any time, and as often as desired (ibid., 49).

Notwithstanding this inclusive attitude, soundwalking still raises problems of accessibility for people with walking disabilities or other types of accessibility requirements such as strollers (McCartney 2014).

As a combination of human mobility with the practice of listening, soundwalking is used in a variety of contexts and fields, from urban planning to artistic research, with an ever-present educational and pedagogical aspect (Behrendt 2019). Soundwalking as an educational tool teaches how to listen (Tinkle 2015) and serves to inform and build empathy toward the environment (Bevington 2001). In ecomusicological practices, it teaches us:

> active listening [to] both to one's self and to one's environment. That environment constitutes everything, not just "nature" but also other people, the built environment, and non-human sounds (Allen 2013b, 14).

Allen's definition returns us to my previous discussion on the soundscape and the inclusion of its biophony, anthrophony, and geophony, all at the same level. Building on these considerations, this chapter conceptualizes eco-soundwalking as the practice of attentive listening to the sound commons without imposing hierarchies of importance or meaning while moving through the physical landscape that hosts those sounds. In the following sections, I will discuss several case studies centred on listening to sounds and/or music which occurred as excursions within areas of natural interest in Tuscany. Where these case studies overlap with topics covered by other chapters I focus here on their soundwalking and listening elements. The examples discussed here derive from a wide range of events and were not necessarily conceived or defined as soundwalks by their organisers. Even so, they included all the elements of soundwalking discussed above and contributed to an expanded understanding and definition of this practice.

To further deepen my characterisation of eco-soundwalking as encountered in the following case studies I will use a poetic/practical continuum similar to the one used by Allen that I described in the Introduction of this dissertation. In this sense, poetic eco-soundwalks are those aimed to impact the cultural and intellectual appreciation of a portion of the landscape, developing empathy for the non-humans and impacting participants' worldview. For practical eco-soundwalkings I consider those soundwalking aimed at achieving precise conservation or environmentalist goals, such as those implied by wildlife monitoring activities and environmental education projects.

Fausto Caricato: Soundwalking in the Pisan Mountains

When I set foot in Tuscany in March 2023 to officially start the main phase of my fieldwork, I already imagined that soundwalking was an important auditory practice that could constitute a means of reconnection with nature that would be significant in this dissertation. As soon as I could, I reached out to the national coordinator of a European professional organisation of sound scholars and acoustic ecologists, Forum Klanglandschaft (FKL),[2] acoustic ecologist Francesco Michi,[3] asking him if he knew of someone who conducts soundwalks in Tuscany. Francesco suggested contacting acoustic ecologist, electronic musician, composer, multi-instrumentalist, and performer Fausto Caricato.[4] While I contacted him straight away, Fausto and I were only able to have occasional talks during the months of my fieldwork, and I managed to interview him only after its completion. I choose to start with Fausto's perspective nonetheless as his highly localised experience informs and contextualises the rest of the progression of case studies in this chapter.

Fausto shared that his interest in environmental sound began during his studies in electronic music. He started exploring how the sounds of his surroundings could inspire a score for his electroacoustic compositions, eventually incorporating them directly into his work, reflecting elements of musique concrète. Around 2019 he focused on field

[2] *Soundscape Forum.* FKL Italia is the italian branch of the organisation. https://www.paesaggiosonoro.it, accessed on 03 April 2024.
[3] https://www.arteco.org, accessed on 03 April 2024.
[4] Francesco Michi, personal communication via email, 09 February 2023.

recording and soundscape composition and soon after started to organise events in Pisa dedicated to sound art and experimental music.[5] After the first lockdown in 2020, Fausto organised his first three soundwalks in the mountains east of the city. Fresh from his academic study, his idea was to:

> Bring back [people's] attention to hearing. [...] There is a need to bring back [people's] attention to hearing, because this is not something that we normally do. I mean analysing the sound, profoundly focusing on sound, nobody does it. This is not a practice that is promoted anywhere, in schools, universities, etc.[6]

As part of these organised soundwalks, Fausto included some exercises that are commonly used within soundwalks and listening practices. For example:

> What is the closest sound that you can hear? What is the most distant one? Can you listen to the breath of someone close to you? [...] What are the most audible sounds that you hear?[7]

While guiding a soundwalk Fausto learnt what sounds to expect and how to focus the experience of the listeners on them and onto their relationship with the physical landscape.

> I know what sounds to expect and where to expect them. I play with the sounds that I know that are present. [...] For example, if there is a barking dog, it's useful to bring attention to the echo of the sound. We often focus on the signal and its meaning, but not on the sonic contour that travels with it, which indicates the landscape and the context in which we are [listening].[...] These are nuances, but to focus on them I believe can help in making people more concentrated and interested [in what surrounds them]. I believe it can help make people better listeners and to understand better our places and habitats. [Soundwalking] is not an experience that is detached from its context, nor it is from a place's history, geography, and situation. The place must be known, and this is a way to reach a

[5] Fausto's compositions are available on his website, https://www.faustocaricato.it, accessed on 03 April 2024.
[6] Fausto Caricato, interview by the author on 22 December 2023.
[7] Ibid.

> comprehension that goes beyond the sensation because the sounds are connected to their places.[8]

The soundscape that Fausto aimed to make people aware of is that of the Pisan Mountains, which separates the cities of Pisa and Lucca. This is an area dear to him, where he often goes to find solace and relief from the noise of the city and its busy airport:[9]

> I choose places with which I have an emotional bond. This adds to the experience, for me, but also for the others[10] because maybe this emotional bonding influences my way of being in that place and interacting with them.[11]
>
> There are other reasons for the choice of the sites for each soundwalk.
>
> Firstly, cleaner air means a cleaner sound. And then I believe that nature, the forest, has its own sacredness that infuses something in the visitors, and that puts the listeners in a contemplatory situation that cannot happen within a city. There are too many distractions, it is an environment almost exclusively anthropogenic. In a forest is easier to have ecological listening. Ecological in the sense that we can analyse and observe the interaction between the various elements. For example, we can listen to the dialogues between the various animals and birds, for hours.[12]

Fausto elaborates on what sounds can symbolise:

> Listening includes a political and social meaning, and also a revolutionary component too. Listening allows us to investigate the health of our habitat and the extent to which our frenetic lifestyle negatively impacts us. [...] We have a military base close to Pisa, and a few days ago I was walking in the city centre, and there was no one around as it was one of the first cold days. It was empty, and the only

[8] Ibid.
[9] Pisa Airport (ICAO: PSA) is the busiest in the region with record average of 3-4,000 flights in the peak months. Source: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1011225/monthly-air-traffic-pisa-international-airport. Accessed on 09 April 2024. All airport activities are audible from the city.
[10] The people participating in the soundwalk.
[11] Fausto Caricato, interview by the author on 22 December 2023.
[12] Ibid.

> thing I could hear was the noise of the jets taking off. I was disturbed by this situation. We are at war, and the sound was delivering that message.[13]

Listening and soundwalking are thus activist practices that help us to reconnect with our physical landscape and ecosystems. Fausto's account expressed how through his soundwalks he tried to communicate and share the love that he holds for the Pisa mountains, thus impacting the ecology of the place somehow. At the same time, through his own mobile listening practice Fausto perceived signals of our current geopolitical situation. Through connecting with our surroundings, we question them, often raising questions about the status of our society. The same is true regarding the status of the environment and its ecosystems. Fausto's soundwalking practice leans more towards the poetic end of the continuum outlined above, while still achieving the practical outcome of guiding people to specific locations. Indeed, eco-soundwalking is a multifaceted practice that can encompass various elements aligned with both poetic and practical dimensions. The following case study presents a soundwalking approach that is primarily oriented towards the practical side of the continuum, yet still retains certain poetic elements.

Soundwalking for Wildlife Conservation and Reconnection with Nature at Santa Luce LIPU Oasis

The following case study is centred on organisations that do not strictly focus on culture or music per se. LIPU, Italian League for Bird Protection,[14] is a non-profit environmental organisation that oversees more than twenty protected areas within the country and several wildlife recovery centres. In this case study, I analyse everyday aural activities carried out by LIPU at one of their protected areas, the *Oasi di Santa Luce*. Their website lists three main activities, one of which is particularly focused on aural interaction with

[13] Ibid.
[14] http://www.lipu.it, accessed on 25 March 2024.

the world: “Encounters: learn to listen to and experience nature through a sustainable approach.”[15]

Listening while walking around the oasis area is central to their activities, according to Silvia Mascagni, the manager of the oasis, who uses it for various means, from everyday conservation activities to environmental education programs.[16] From a conservation perspective, sound is an indicator of biodiversity in a certain area, making listening a monitoring and census tool (Zhao et al. 2019). Silvia continues:

> We always listen, fundamentally. The ear is always ready.[...] Listening is one of those tools that help us to understand the presence or the absence of a species.[17]

This happens especially at particular times of the year according to each species’ behaviour, but it is in spring (March-May) that listening is particularly useful and important. In spring, Silvia monitors the species that migrate from elsewhere to nest in the area, with a second census at the end of the summer to understand what species have hatched chicks during the season. For diurnal species, aural monitoring activities are conducted early at dawn, while for nocturnal species (such as the numerous owls present in the area) monitoring occurs late at night. Other censuses are conducted before and after the migration of some species and in the winter to see what species are staying there all year round. Monitoring enables Silvia to have a clear picture of all species dwelling or moving in and out of the area. Thanks to this technique, changes in migratory patterns and behaviours can be recorded. Due to climate change, some bird species like the scops owl or some types of swallows are now spending the winter there, contrary to their former behaviour.[18]

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[15] [Santa Luce’s’s Oasis], an active industrial water basin transformed into a natural oasis including a lake, wetland and surrounding fields. https://www.oasisantaluce.it, accessed on 25 March 2024. Santa Luce is a village and municipality in Pisa’s province. The oasis lies a few kilometers from the village. The industrial nature of this area will be better described in the next chapter.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid. Listening is also an important part of the environmental education activities in the area. LIPU claims to be one of the first environmental organisations that involved schools in educating about the environment (LIPU 2014b) and regularly carries out school projects and other activities open to people of all ages. Events include excursions and birdwatching and are aimed at making visitors develop values connected to nature stewardship through direct experience of the ecosystem and its biodiversity.

[18] Ibid.

On the 3rd of August 2023, I joined one of the many excursions organised by Silvia and other Oasis volunteers. The event was initially promoted under the name "*Ascoltando i suoni del crepuscolo"* [listening to the sounds of the dusk], but eventually, it was changed into *"In una notte d'estate—escursione"* [on a summer night—excursion].[19] I did not ask the reason for the change. I met Silvia and one of the Oasis volunteers at the meeting point, where soon another eight people joined us. The event was promoted as a 9km trek for people already used to walking long distances and on rough terrains, as we were to ford a stream feeding the lake. After the administrative part was sorted (with Silvia collecting the participation fee from everyone), we set off, following the main road for a while, reaching the bridge, and turning into an unpaved, rural road. Soon we could hear, and see, a bird of prey, most likely of the family *Falconidae* circling above us in its typical hunting pattern. As we proceeded through the field, a family of pheasants (*Phasianus colchicus*) jumped out of the dry yellow hay with a loud cackle. As darkness approached, the insects started imposing their presence in the soundscape, with various species of crickets and grasshoppers leading the chorus from the grass and the bushes at each side of the road. The excursion's rules were to not use any artificial light, and to stay silent as best we could. While I tried to comply with the guidelines, some others did not and I heard chatting and chuckling every now and then. As the night began, we found ourselves walking through tall grass in one of the fields to get on the path taking back to the oasis, but from another side. At this point, we should have heard some of the nocturnal species that are common in the area, especially the owls, such as the tawny owl (*Strix aluco*) and the scops owl (*Otus scops*). But there were none, and Silvia showed a mixture of disappointment and concern. While surely the group was louder than it should have been, the absence of such species was an indicator of the poor health of the surrounding environment, where intensive agriculture impacts the life and behaviour of wildlife species.

The struggle of the visitors to remain silent indicates the level of disconnection many people feel from the natural world. Silvia shared her impressions, drawn from years

[19] No explanation was given for this change. The facebook page of the event is still visible at: https://www.facebook.com/events/1384056302138785?active_tab=about, accessed on 26 March 2024.

of similar activities conducted with people of all ages, including students and groups of adults such as the one described above:

> It's really hard to get the students involved in the listening activity. They can't stay still and silent. They can't. Neither as a game nor as a responsible activity, they can't do it. [...] And the adults get anxious and nervous as if silence were triggering panic, a condition that they can't manage.[20]

Despite these difficulties, Silvia strongly believes in the importance of the environmental education activities that she organises within the oasis:

> I would like people to find respect for nature once again and be grateful to her because the planet gives us the opportunity to be here.[...][These activities] stimulate respectful behaviour and good practices of living in harmony with what surrounds us. That's the goal, we do not aim to teach or make people understand anything, that's pointless. [...] We aim at [stimulating] the emotional side to spark some curiosity, or at stimulating their empathy, because if you can't get them from an emotional point of view, people will never care about anything if they're not interested.[21]

To stimulate visitors' empathy and emotions, and elicit their stewardship towards the environment, Silvia believes that listening plays a crucial role:

> Do you realise that listening is even more powerful [than formal education]? It is more powerful than the senses of smell, sight, and taste. And the Western man is focused only on listening to himself and to inanimate objects. [...] To get out from ourselves and listen to what is outside us is a powerful tool to re-activate the connection with nature, but also with everything and everyone that surrounds us —because we have this behaviour with other humans too.[22]

[20] Silvia Mascagni, interwiew by the author on 20 August 2024.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

At this point, I wanted to understand further the connection with nature that Silvia felt we lost and need to somehow recuperate. She expands on that with an apparently puzzling statement:

> [The connection with nature], in my opinion, is represented by the statement: "I see you. I see you, I know who you are and what you are doing."[23]

I interpreted the statement "I see you" as an utterance of acknowledgement of anything that is more than human. To acknowledge the presence, importance, and right to live and thrive that all living beings have is necessary for wildlife conservation. Most importantly, it is fundamental to an ecocentric worldview. The gap between us and non-human animals appears to be strongly cultural, whereas biologically we are connected already (Brondizio 2021). Silvia continues, expanding on this idea:

> We are bound to each other by the thread of life. I cannot detach myself from nature because we are made of the same atoms, the same matter. The gifts and the presents that nature gives us are impossible not to reciprocate because in nature there is an exchange, to take and to give—and it is focusing only on taking that has brought all of our problems.[24]

According to Silvia, "the void that someone feels inside themself arises when they're detached from nature. For some people, it's enough to see the green, and the stars, breathe the fresh air, and touch the grass."[25]

The work of Silvia and the other Oasis volunteers is of enormous importance, as she advocates for the multiple species that live in Santa Luce Lake. Indefatigably, she tries to convince visitors that that area is not just a park where they can have a stroll but that it is also populated by an extraordinarily diverse number of species, and that the best way to acknowledge their presence and share that space with them is to listen to their voices.

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

"*Cooperativa In Quiete*": Sensorial Experiences in Nature

The *Cooperativa In Quiete* [Quietness Cooperative][26] is a cultural organisation that runs various events in the *Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna*,[27] a national park situated in the mountainous area across the boundary between Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. The events organised by the Cooperative include several trekkings and excursions, but also cultural events, visits to the local monastic sites of Camaldoli and La Verna, and courses. The park is characterised by an extensive forest cover, significant fauna presence and very low population density (Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona, Campigna 2009). The park authority aims to improve the appropriate access to the park, encouraging all activities that valorise and promote local history, art, and culture, without negatively impacting or compromising the health of the natural ecosystem (ibid.).

The Cooperative's activities fall into this category of practices aimed at promoting a balanced and sustainable co-presence of humans (both locals and visitors) and the environment. Sound—including music—is an important component of their activities. In collaboration with other local institutions,[28] they organise a yearly event series named *boschi sonori* [musical forests], consisting of:

> A series of musical excursions organized by the Cooperativa in Quiete in some of the most fascinating and less-known areas of Casentino. To walk… to the pace of music.[29]

Boschi sonori included four events in 2022 and three in 2023. All the excursions are thought of as a means to facilitate encounters with the local culture, history, and landscape through walking and listening to live music. Each excursion program includes some stops where the guide lectures the visitors about the theme of the event and the

[26] https://www.cooperativainquiete.it, accessed on 21 March 2024.
[27] https://www.parcoforestecasentinesi.it, accessed on 22 March 2024.
[28] The Casentino Ecomuseum, and the Casentino Municipalities Union.
[29] From the 2023 edition of the event series, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=672412491589716&set=a.557877373043229, accessed on 22 March 2024. Their ellipsis.

speech is often accompanied by a musical act. Each walk ends with a longer performance,[30] which is arranged by local musical organisations.[31]

The Cooperative's sonic focus does not linger only on musical performances, rather aiming to encompass all sounds in and around the park, promoting the sensorial exploration of the area. Searching on Facebook events for the keywords *escursione sensoriale* [sensorial excursion] results in roughly a hundred of these events organised by the Cooperative between 2016 and 2023,[32] testifying to the enormous effort that the Cooperative has expended in following this idea. Andrea Gambassini is one of the founders of the Cooperative and the one who conceived and currently organises and promotes this particular set of activities. He stresses that the Cooperative organises experiences, not only excursions. Andrea claims that only five per cent out of an average annual calendar of 250 events have the goal of reaching a specific destination, while the vast majority focus on experiences of nature that promote nature-bonding, often following the natural events and processes that punctuate the year. Andrea brings as an example the various events organised during the summer in order to bring visitors to various areas of the park where they could silently observe genera of fireflies (Coleoptera Lampyridae) that illuminate the darkness of the forest with their particular mating ritual. These events can only be organised following a natural biological calendar, meaning that events centred on fireflies could only happen in the summer, and those centred on listening to the bellowing of the deer can only happen during their mating season.

Silence (understood as the absence of anthropogenic sounds) is an omnipresent constant element of the sensorial excursions organised by the Cooperative. Andrea explains:

> What added value do we often try to give to our events? When we enter particularly beautiful forests we want to give [the visitors] the feeling of being alone while walking in the woods. We space them fifteen to twenty meters apart, and each person walks slowly and looks around. Then we stop, and this is something that

[30] https://www.casentinoinforma.it/boschi-sonori-una-serie-di-escursioni-musicali-in-alcuni-dei-luoghi-piu-affascinanti-del-casentino, accessed on 22 March 2024.
[31] https://www.facebook.com/casentinomusica, accessed on 22 March 2024.
[32] https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=escursione%20sensoriale, accessed on 21 March 2024.

> generally happens at most events, and there's a moment when we listen within the forest [...] because nature gives you the most when you are in silence.[33]

The Cooperative's approach notably draws on the historical importance of practices of silence in this area. The park features two historical monastic settlements, the Hermitage of Camaldoli and the Franciscan Sanctuary of La Verna, built between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries C.E. and have been since then a destination for religious pilgrimage while seeking at the same time a sacred and intimate connection with nature (Cavagna and Ciam 2003), meaning that the two sites were chosen because of the sense of remoteness, seclusion and silence characteristic of this landscape (Pungetti, Hughes, and Rackham 2012). Silence had been part of the daily practice of both Franciscan friars and Camaldolese monks (Short 2003), and exercising respectful silence for the area is still encouraged in the forest surrounding the two religious sites (see Figure 3.2).

[33] Andrea Gambassini, interview by the author on 31 July 2023.



Figure 3.2 The sign, situated close to the Camaldoli monastic hermitage, reads: "Respect these places of silence and prayer." Photo by the author, 23 July 2023.

While Andrea does not call himself religious in the strictest sense of the word, he feels drawn towards the mysticism of nature. For him, being alone in the forest, away from every form of visual and auditory conditioning, in silence, listening is a spiritual practice in itself. According to Andrea, this is a form of meditation[34] and a way to perceive the magic of nature and reflect on our experience as human beings.[35] Andrea wants to transmit this feeling to all the people who join the Cooperative's activities.

> We are just trying to make people feel what listening to the forest is like, and feel the emotions that are triggered by it. [...] and when we all are silent there is a concert of millions of birds, while maybe when you talk you notice only two of

[34] Andrea Gambassini, interviewed by the Father Guardian of La Verna Sanctuary. Posted on Andrea's Instagram page. https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn9qhuYDoUy5SGVLIFCJbeaj8iW8pZxm3asR1E0/, accessed on 21/03/2024.
[35] Andrea Gambassini, interview by the author on 31/07/2023.

them. When you are silent you notice the sound of the leaves falling on the ground. These are the little things, the little things that make the magic.[36]

In July 2023 I joined one of these sensorial experiences, a three-hour nocturnal excursion starting from the Camaldoli Hermitage. A group of thirteen participants gathered in front of the monastic building, and from there one of the guides of the Cooperative took us and led us towards the darkening forest. The number of participants was kept low to minimize the human impact of the excursion. While entering the forest, the guide insisted on a fundamental rule for this activity: to be in the present moment. That mandatorily implied silence and to avoid looking at our phones and other activities that could distract us from the walk and potentially frighten the wildlife. This was enunciated as a firm pillar of the activity, subject to the individual sense of responsibility of the group. After some time (it was hard to tell exactly how long had passed, considering that I strictly adhered to the instructions given and had turned my phone off), the guide took us to an area that was chosen for the activity that according to Andrea constituted the focal point of the sensorial experiences. The participants were divided into groups of two or three each and led to different points of this area, where they were told to sit down and wait silently for the guide to come back after forty minutes or so. During this timespan, the participants were encouraged to focus on their senses—especially hearing, by the guide. Our senses, sharpened by the intimidating pitch black of the forest depths started slowly to attune with the place and its inhabitants. The smell of the fir forest and the soil, which had been with us since the beginning, but had somehow remained part of the background during the walk, now came to the fore. Soon, several fireflies appeared, with their intermitting mating dances. And as we focused on hearing, the silence, which was initially overwhelming, became more and more populated by different sounds, produced by some nocturnal deer, a branch falling, a deer walking in the distance. During this activity, the darkness became less and less intimidating, easing in me a sense of closeness with the place.

After the agreed time, the guide gathered us once more and slowly took us outside of the forest conducting us in an opening between the trees close to the hermitage where

[36] Ibid.

a few young deer were placidly grazing on the grass, and we could sit there, around midnight, in silence, *to rebehold the stars*[37] after the experience. Instead of focusing on recognising specific species of non-human animals dwelling in the forest, this soundwalk used listening to make us connect to the place. On one hand, we learnt about the presence (and absence) of the various species on the other, the emotional gap between the forest and the participants in the soundwalk seemed to be reduced after the experience. Despite the darkness, all the participants felt safe towards the end of the walk. The forest welcomed those who could listen to it.

Discovering Nature's Songs

Sometime before that walk, on June 17, I was attracted by an event posted on Facebook, named "*Alla scoperta dei canti della Natura"* [discovering nature's songs] see Figure 3.4).[38] The poster lists the three parts of the event:

> 16:00 h - Singing is not only music. A brief introduction to birdsongs.
> 17.30 h - Discovering the songs. Collective excursion in the pine forest to recognise the songs that surround us in nature.
> 19.00 h - Aperitif.

Intrigued by the first two parts of the event, I decided to attend. The talk was held in Vada, a small coastal town roughly 30km south of the provincial capital Livorno, inside its theatre. The talk was held by Saverio Lubrano,[39] a PhD student specialising in ornithology at Universität Konstanz who was native to the area, as well as my former coursemate during my first—and only—year on a degree in Biology at Pisa University many years ago. The event was set up by a local cultural organization as part of a two-event series aimed at enriching citizens with scientific knowledge. The talk was mainly intended as a general

[37] The extremely low light pollution of the area made possible for us to see the Milky Way. *E quindi uscimmo a riveder le stelle* [Thence we came forth to rebehold the stars] is the final verse of Dante's Inferno (Alighieri 2012). All the three parts of the Divine Comedy end with the word *stelle,* stars (Lamberti 2015).
[38] Retrieved from Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/events/298052089214112/?active_tab=discussion, accessed on 26 March 2024.
[39] https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Saverio-Lubrano, accessed on 26 March 2024.

introduction to birdsongs and sound communication in birds and included several catchy examples to keep the audience entertained and engaged with its content.[40] Examples ranged from the nearly infinite imitation possibilities of the lyrebird (*Menura novaehollandiae*) to the familiar sounds of more local species, such as the great tit (*Parus major*), the hoopoe (*Eurasian hoopoe*), the European bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) and the common swift (*Apus apus*). When talking about the swift and their seasonal appearances, Saverio revealed his emotional connection with birds and how the sounds provoke his reactions, as the swifts' sound reminds him of the summer in that area.

[40] The talk was also streamed live on Facebook, and it is available on YouTube at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsyQV_eejyY, accessed on 26 March 2024.



Figure 3.3 Poster of the event "Discovering Nature's Songs." Source: Facebook.

After the talk, Saverio led the group outside of the theatre, to the portion of a pine forest that often grows along the coastline in that part of the region. Some people left after the talk, and the group that walked towards the next activity included twenty-eight people, plus the guide. The group proceeded slowly, people chatting to each other. Once we reached the forest strip, Saverio started to bring the attention of the group to the voices and species of birds present in the area, aided by his knowledge of the subject and

a specialist app.[41] Unfortunately, the chatter of the participants was so loud that we could hear very little other than that and the only species the app could recognise was *Homo sapiens*.[42]

Saverio talks about the lack of sensitivity toward non-human beings that characterises our society, and how listening to their voices could be a tool to develop this sensitivity and acknowledge other species' presence.

> Birdsongs are omnipresent within the musical landscape of people, in every part of the world. On Manhattan Island, there is one of the biggest colonies of peregrine falcons in the world. But [the sonic] is a landscape that we don't know how to recognise. We can distinguish the sound of an ambulance approaching from behind, but we can't recognise a bird that is singing fifty meters away.[43]

The inability to recognise sounds emitted by other animals is an indicator of our cultural disconnection from nature. According to Saverio, listening is therefore a great tool in building a relationship with other living beings, for three reasons:

> Firstly, [listening] implies the opening of a sense. It gives you a further sense to observe nature. Usually, when you go for a walk in a forest, you bring with you some binoculars if you enjoy birdwatching, and you rely mainly on your sight for it. [Secondly], what initially is only a background noise, becomes a component that you analyse, more or less consciously, while you walk. That natural sound that you hear encompasses many nuances, and not only for birds, but also for frogs, bats, mammals, insects, and so on.
>
> [...] The third reason is that listening is within everyone's reach, especially with apps like the one we have used. [...] You don't even need anymore to spend 200€ for some good binoculars.[44]

[41] The app BirdNet, developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, utilises spectrograph to recognise the song of birdspecies, comparing them with an archive organised by location. https://birdnet.cornell.edu, accessed on 26 March 2024.
[42] While the app is meant to recognise bird species only, it shows *Homo sapiens* when the anthropogenic voice is the main element that populates the soundscape.
[43] Saverio Lubrano, interview by the author on 22 June 2024.
[44] Ibid.

Saverio's hope is that humans acknowledge the presence of birds by listening to their calls and songs.

Living beings use sound as a form of communication (Titon 2012), and these three past case studies focused on that. For the organizations LIPU and *Cooperativa In Quiete*, as well as for ornithologist Saverio Lubrano, soundwalking served as a way to reconnect with the non-human world and the environment on multiple levels, from the rational to the more intimate and emotional. Music, as a form of sound communication, plays a role in this process. The following case study—the last of this chapter—explores the potential for human musicking to be integrated into soundwalking practices to foster interest in specific places. It also examines whether soundwalking can be considered a form of musicking, and how musicking within soundwalking activities can help build connections between humans, animals, the environment, and other living beings, similarly to the other events and experiences explored so far in this chapter.

Dei suoni i passi: From Soundwalking to Musicwalking?

Dei suoni i passi [of the Sounds, the Steps] is the concert series that inspired the name for this chapter. This is a widespread festival taking place along the *Via degli Dei* [the Path of the Gods], a trail connecting the cities of Bologna and Florence across the Apennines, via paths of Etruscan, Roman, and modern origins.[45] The name is thought to derive from the fact that the path passes through mountains and places named after pagan deities.[46] The festival is organised by *Fondazione Fabbrica Europa*, a cultural organisation created in Florence that aims to create a space for contemporary arts with particular attention to their social dimension.

> The Fondazione exists to promote the relationship between creativity and production. It introduces new research processes and works to translate its projects into innovative sources of employment. It makes the contemporary recognisable as the natural development of identity and local tradition. It draws

[45] https://en.viadeglidei.it, accessed on 22 March 2024.
[46] https://camminiditalia.org/perche-si-chiama-via-degli-dei, accessed on 22 March 2024.

> the public closer to the artist and contemporary art forms as a means of investigating a common contemporary identity. In this way, it aims to create an impact that is not solely artistic but also profoundly social. It furthers the cooperation between civic society and institutions in building and implementing cultural politics, and offering services in the area of artistic production and its associated labour market.[47]

The festival has occurred three times so far, in 2018, 2022, and 2023. In this discussion, I primarily compare activities in the first two festivals, since the 2023 festival has evolved to include more indoor concerts.[48] This analysis uses online findings and an interview with one of the artistic directors of the series, Maurizio Busia. Maurizio was interviewed before the plan for the year 2023 was decided, and the events of that edition were not strictly relevant to the points discussed here.

The description of the walking event for the 2018 edition of the festival reads:

> *Dei suoni i passi* is a project that offers the opportunity to cross the Apennines on foot, walking along the legendary *Via degli Dei* (the historic route that connects Bologna with Florence) and listening to excellent music.
> A seven-day walk designed for everyone, even for less trained families, with musical moments and concerts by well-known Italian and international musicians and sound researchers who will restore the essence of the acoustics of churches, ruins or streams.[49]

The concerts happened within a week, from the 25th of June to the 1st of July 2018, and covered the entire route between the two cities, which was divided into seven stages.[50] Each day's plan included three or four stops where the people who joined the walk could enjoy a performance of music and/or prose.

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[47] https://fabbricaeuropa.net/en/fabbrica-europa-foundation, accessed on 22 March 2024.
[48] At the time of the interview (26 April 2023), the curator of the event series Maurizio Busia was concerned that the then recently approved decree against rave parties (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, Anno 163°, Numero 255), that prohibited illegal rallies in places assessed as dangerous by public officers could negatively impact the organisation of large outdoor events in wild areas. The decree was considered highly controversial, and at the time the festival organisers were unsure about how to obtain the necessary authorization for outdoor events.
[49] https://fabbricaeuropa.net/en/dei-suoni-i-passi, accessed on 22 March 2024. The program of the first edition of the festival is available at the same address.
[50] Ibid.

The idea of this project came externally from the cultural organisation *Musica e Nuvole* [Music and Clouds] which had previous experience of staging a music festival spread across the villages of the Appennines in Emilia-Romagna.[51] Cooperating with them, *Fabbrica Europa* decided to create a festival that somehow connected the two areas of interest of the two organizations, following the idea of bringing music to underrepresented areas. Considering that one can travel between the two cities in thirty or forty minutes by high-speed rail, they chose to emphasise the idea of slowness.

> We liked the idea of choosing a slow dimension that would match the [musical] presentation and also offer a type of listening and observation of the environment that stands as an alternative to everything that is somehow mainstream, that mainline being conceptually everything that exists commercially. In this way, [this festival allows participants to] take the time to open an observation point, to freely listen to the balanced interplay between the surrounding environment and the music.[52]

The festival is thus built on a parallel relationship that is part of the organisation's credo. On one hand, the slowness of the pace of the walkers opposes the speed of everyday life's chores and obligations. On the other hand, focused and attentive listening to niche and/or underground bands and performers stands in contrast to the often distracted and rapid consumption of mainstream musical products.

The 2022 edition of the festival was organised differently. Only a few events were organised in outdoor spaces, with just one set on the *Via degli Dei*:

> From Florence to the Tuscan Apennines via the *Via degli Dei*. *Dei suoni i passi*—a project that combines music and the environment—was born in 2018 to connect territories through heterogeneous and quality musical proposals that create unusual paths and let the flavour of landscapes emerge to be experienced at a different speed.[53]

[51] Crinali. https://www.crinalibologna.it, accessed on 22 March 2024.
[52] Maurizio Busia, Interview by the author on 26 April 2023.
[53] https://fabbricaeuropa.net/en/dei-suoni-i-passi-2022, accessed on 25 March 2024.

The most relevant of the events in 2022 was a free concert featuring guitarist and electro-acoustic composer Stefano Pillia,[54] organised on the 25th of June at the Futa Pass, a mountain pass on the Apennines along the *Via degli Dei* (see Figure 3.4).[55] While the concert was set along the trail, this time *Fabbrica Europa* made no effort to organize trekking, leaving it to the audience's discretion, especially in consideration of their possibilities and capabilities. The concert attracted two types of attendees: those who came for the music and discovered the place, and those who found out about the concert whilst they were already hiking or cycling along the trail.



Figure 3.4 Stefano Pilia and Spiralis Aurea Quartet perform at Futa Pass on 25 June 2022. Photo by Monia Pavoni.

Maurizio commented that all these events were organised keeping in mind absolute respect for the places that formed their respective settings:

[54] https://stefanopilia.bandcamp.com/music, accessed on 25 March 2024.
[55] Two videos of this performance are available on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ_92GQuKYw, and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5Ndsl6xj_A. Accessed on 25 March 2024.

> We have tried to be flexible about the events' setup, trying to organise acoustic concerts when possible. When that was impossible we used battery-powered amplification systems and battery-powered lights, being as agile as possible while respecting the environment, and using technology, but strictly only that was deemed to be required after having inspected the areas before the events. [...] We did inspections with the technicians with whom we explored various options and then found a balance for the possibilities. And the technicians, and above all the sound engineers in this case, were a fundamental part of the co-planning. We could not do without the involvement of particularly sensitive and attentive sound engineers.[56]

Dei suoni I passi is intrinsically connected to the landscape, and this is demonstrated by the other concerts of the series too, often organised in towns and areas that are overlooked and underrecognised, especially in comparison to what is offered in the music scenes of the two cities. Here, what characterises the concert series is the particular attention given to the whole network of relationships that are created around each concert, from the attentive planning of the musical performance and choice of the performers to the realisation of the events in close connection with each place and its community. Walking, when present, was an important element of the events. Maurizio speaks of the events as "experiences" rather than "concerts,"[57] as demonstrated by the attention on the context surrounding the music, including audiences' individual experiences of places, where music was both a way to attract and motivate people to embark on the journey to explore a new destination and a tool to stimulate the attention of the listeners towards musical and geographical alternatives. The concerts have thus a two-fold impact, promoting the landscape—either natural or anthropic—while creating a niche for music artists that demand and deserve a particular sensorial attention, a listening practice that is geographically located and physically intertwined with a precise part of the region, in contrast to (and advocating against) all those modern modalities of cultural consumption that threaten cultural and environmental sustainabilities.

[56] Maurizio Busia, Interview by the author on 26 April 2023.
[57] Ibid.

Listening and Walking as Methods to Reconcile with our World

Throughout this chapter, I offered a sequence of case studies in which local organisations and single individuals employ different combinations of listening and movement through a landscape to foster a sense of understanding and care. Listening and walking are two activities through which people acknowledge and learn about landscape and the environment, and feel part of its ecosystems. Several other case studies included in this dissertation include a combination of walking and listening to a combination of (or either/or) environmental sounds and music, to various degrees. However here I include only those where both listening to the soundscape and walking were integral parts of transformative experiences aimed at a cultural and emotional reconnection with the natural habitat. In this sense, this chapter serves also as a contextual lens to better understand some of the following case studies in this dissertation.

Listening and walking makes us feel part of a place. Walking as a group is an "embodied social action" that transforms a place into an experience (Ingold and Vergunst 2008, 172), a way to create knowing while moving and constantly re-negotiate our presence in this world (Ingold 2010, 126). Listening is a subjective perceptual experience (Pedelty 2021, 252) through which sound communicates to us the presence of other beings, making us aware of their activity, movement, and location. Sound, through its waves and vibration informs our understanding of the world, and every time we stop and listen we engage in an epistemological process and action creates a sort of soundwaves-based knowledge about what surrounds us (Katopodis 2019). And this is a mutual experience that puts us and all the other living beings on a similar sonic plan of existence. The sound commons, despite its division into sonic niches, comprises us all, human and non-human animals, and all our activities. And within it "sounds vibrate living beings into a way of knowing that proceeds by interconnection" (Titon 2015, 145), outlining the possibility of a sound presence in the world that is respectful of the network of ecological relationships that surround us in every moment of our lives. Walking, in combination with musicking (listening, singing, playing an instrument, etc.) has been observed elsewhere to contribute to the creation of alternative epistemologies of place (Impey 2018),

resulting in meaningful experiences of being in the moment (Staśko-Mazur 2015, 449) with an augmented understanding of the surroundings.

Walking in outdoor places is a catalyst for deep and mindful connections with nature (Davidsson Bremborg 2013). This connection is intensified by the silence of human participants (Schuling et al. 2018) which also fosters awareness about one's surroundings and inner state (Naor and Mayseless 2020). Intentional silence and selective listening bring to the fore those sounds that are usually confined to one's conceptual background (Johansen 2020). Since absolute silence in nature is not possible (Cage 1960), intentional listening—that emerges from a state of stillness—gives voice back to a nature that has been conveniently labelled as *silent* to fit anthropocentric narratives of human/nature relationships (Manes 1992). In the context of the events explored in this dissertation, silence should then be understood as the absence of anthropogenic sounds, such as human speech or the noise of motorised vehicles. In the soundwalks documented in this Chapter, this form of silence played a crucial role in directing participants' attention toward their surroundings, the environment, and the non-human animals inhabiting it, a sensory openness aimed at hypothetical others dwelling in our proximities, through which we acknowledge their presence, their right to live and to thrive. Quietness, silence, and intentional listening can happen only in a condition of inner quietude, a "means to give voice to silence" (Pilzer 2023, 13)—in this case the one of nature. When immersing themselves into mindful awareness of the surroundings, participants in soundwalks are able to connect to the surroundings, learning about the place and other forms of life. As Silvia noted in relation to her experience at LIPU's Oasis, participants who lacked environmental awareness often appeared disconnected from the place. This disconnection frequently resulted in boredom and, at times, made them difficult to engage during environmental education activities. The experience during the event *I canti della natura* exemplifies—quite comically—the consequences of lack of effort towards the creation of this status of anthropogenic silence and awareness. Since most participants chose to chat with one another rather than actively engage in the listening activity, the bird recognition app revealed that the only audible animals were the participants themselves. This served as an eerie warning of the potential consequences of a continued lack of ecocentric

awareness, as well as a sympton of the current cultural crisis: a planet where human animals simply do not pay attention to their surroundings, or to the other living beings.

The case studies presented in this chapter have explored some of the possibilities offered by epistemological approaches based on sound and movement, and how these can improve our relationship with the environment. Before summarising them, I wish to expand the original definition of soundwalking as proposed by Hildegard Westerkamp into a more holistic form that reflects observations and findings resulting from the considerations explored in this chapter. I define as soundwalk as an epistemological practice based both on walking and a holistic auditory approach towards the relevant soundscapes, including their geophony, biophony, and anthrophony. Music, whether recorded or performed, can be a part of the sounds perceived during a soundwalk. Listening to the soundscapes during a soundwalk is not confined to gathering a better understanding of the soundscape per se but contributes to improving one's knowledge of a particular ecosystem. The reader will find this definition at play in the rest of this dissertation, where many further events include various aspects of eco-soundwalking, meaning any soundwalking aimed to develop an ecocentric appreciation of the environment through listening to any sound—including music—while maintaining the silence among the participants.

The reason to include music as an environmental sound is due to music's contribution to the holistic approach that is needed to consider our ecosystem contextually, as a network of elements, rather than as the sum of the objects that are present in it. Similarly to anthropologist Tim Ingold who argued that the soundscape cannot be separated from the rest of the sensorial outputs derived from the perception of the landscape (Ingold 2007), I believe that music cannot be separated from the rest of the anthrophony and therefore from the rest of the sound commons. According to environmentalist artist Andrea Polli, music and sound differ in listening attitudes, although the two realms can permeate one other, as environmental sounds can be listened to as if they were music, and music is one of the elements that compose the soundscape (Polli 2012, 259-261). The difference lies in three levels: the presentation, the notation/recording, and the perception and interpretation of the sounds. Polli criticizes especially the typically passive and sedentary experience of listening to an orchestra (ibid.). The engagement with the sound source during a soundwalk is dynamic

though, as music and sound are presented at the same level, and visitors show the same level of attention, perception, and interpretation to both a musician performing at their destination, and the song of a sparrow, or the roaring of waves.

The examples of eco-soundwalking presented in this chapter can be grouped into three fluid and overlapping levels of impact, each positioned along the poetic–practical continuum outlined earlier. These categories reflect the activities and events discussed here in terms of their contribution to raising environmental awareness, supporting wildlife conservation, aiding ecological restoration, and promoting environmental sustainability.

1- Conservationist
2- Educational
3- Empathetic and Emotional

Situated at the practical end of the continuum, conservationist soundwalks are those aimed at monitoring the wildlife in a specific area. This category includes the mobile sound-based practices aimed to count, monitor, and analyse specific non-human species in a circumscribed environment in some of the soundwalks, such as the soundwalks conducted by the staff and volunteers of the conservation organisation LIPU, which seek to understand what species of birds are present within the protected area at any given time of the year.

Educational soundwalks aim to foster awareness about a place and its non-human inhabitants. These soundwalks employ listening as a tool for learning about local ecosystems, including organic and non-organic features of the landscape. Some of the soundwalks organised by LIPU and the *In Quiete* co-op fall into this category, especially those targeted at acknowledging the presence of wildlife while walking through the area (some of the ecotouristic activities described in the next chapter fall into this category too). These soundwalks are both poetic and practical, combining subjective, experiential engagement with elements of ecological knowledge.

The third and last category is soundwalks with an emphasis on developing empathetic and emotional connections with the environment. Empathy towards those affected by environmental disasters is completely missing in our approach towards the environmental crisis (Krznaric 2010), and that includes the empathy towards the non-

human beings. This includes all the soundwalks that aim to re-establish a feeling of interconnection between a group of human beings and a specific environment, including its non-human inhabitants. Although all the examples discussed so far fall within this category to some degree, two of them stand out as the most central. Fausto Caricato's soundwalks were designed to foster love and care for the Monti Pisani, while Silvia Mascagni, the manager of Santa Luce LIPU, sought to spark interest—hopefully followed by a sense of care and stewardship—about the lake's inhabitants and its surroundings by offering people direct experiences with the ecosystem. Most interviewees emphasized that the goal of these activities was to foster a deep and meaningful connection between the audience and the place being explored. They noted that sound—including music—played a key role in helping participants acknowledge, feel, and recognize the bond that links people, places, and all the living beings.

Chapter 4

Rediscovering Silent Areas: Music and Ecotourism in Tuscany[1]

At the end of August 2022, when I officially began my fieldwork, I noticed that a longtime acquaintance had posted about an upcoming music performance to promote a section of a natural park near the village of Sassetta.[2] The event was scheduled for the next day at 5:30 PM and involved a one-hour loop walk, followed by a short solo violin concert featuring my friend. It was organized by a local group known for promoting cultural and social activities in the village. A local guide led the group through the forest, highlighting the park's geological history, flora, and fauna. At the end of the walk, the solo violin performance took place in silence[3], with the sounds of birds and wind accompanying the music (see Figure 4.1). While chatting with the organizers afterwards, I learned about a similar event planned a few days later.[4]

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[1] A shortened version of this chapter has been published in the journal *Traditions of Music and Dance* (see Gambirasio 2025). I am thankful to two anonymous reviewers and to the editor of that journal for the helpful feedback and suggestions.

[2] The nature park is the *Anello del Bufalaio*. For more information: https://www.costadeglietruschi.eu/itinerario/anello-del-bufalaio
A video trailer of the event is available on the YouTube Channel of the Livorno Province: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5E7rpAuPZI&list=PLdVyK65L6r4OsbidFwGA5SfAeuo0oRWQ9&index=2, accessed on 21 April 2024.

[3] As in the previous chapter, silence has to be intended here as absence of anthropogenic sounds (such as human talking, traffic and industry noises, etc.). Later in the chapter silence will be intended also metaphorically.

[4] The two events were part of a series of five pilot events co-funded by the Interreg Europe programme and named project "ThreeT – Thematic Trail Trigger," aimed to protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage by creating new trails and improving existing ones. The project involved actions in eight different European Countries, and the Italian pilot action was aimed at the promotion of five natural areas initially named "Silence Areas"(ThreeT 2021)—and then renamed as "Silent Areas" (Spagnoli 2022)—using innovative sustainable ecotourism strategies.



Figure 4.1 "The Sound Of Silence." Photo by the author, 23 August 2022.

This second event focused on a sensory exploration of a coastal pine forest near Marina di Castagneto Carducci, about 20 km west of Sassetta. Before the walk, the organizer gathered the participants and guided us through the forest urging to not talk to each other. Using hand signals, they encouraged us to engage with our senses—drawing attention to the scent of the trees and soil, the texture of the pine bark, the sight of a wild tortoise, and the various sounds around us: wind rustling through the trees, the roar of the sea, cicadas chirping, and seagulls crying.[5] At the end of the trail, a performance space had been set up in a forest clearing by Sabina, a well-known local singer and performer. Sabina, with her extensive experience in promoting well-being and ecological awareness through music,[6] surrounded herself with a variety of instruments. Her performance, drawn from a multicultural repertoire, included singing exercises designed

[5] Again, Livorno's Province YouTube channel published a short video documenting some of the activities included in the event: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkN-zmcWqsw&list=PLdVyK65L6r4OsbidFwGA5SfAeuo0oRWQ9&index=6, accessed on 21 March 2024.
[6] Sabina Manetti, interview by the author on 29 August 2022.

to help participants connect with the environment. The concert lasted for 30 minutes, during which the audience was fully engaged, happily joining in the singing whenever prompted (see Figure 4.2).



Figure 4.2 "The silence and the sounds of the Pine Forest." Photo by the author, 25 August 2022.

In the two events described above, the organizers used music as a way to bring people together at a specific place and time, fostering a respectful connection with the environment. The emphasis on listening and silence served as a metaphor to encourage the attentiveness needed for this relationship. While I attended these events just as a spectator, they prompted some critical questions about the role of music in connecting people with natural environments. Can music bring people to natural areas? Can music performances within natural areas enable sustainable visits to such places? How does music enhance our perception and understanding of ecological spaces? Can musical experiences foster sustainable relationships between individuals, places, and non-human entities? Intrigued by such questions I sought additional events organised with a similar approach—including musical performances to facilitate ecotourism in natural

areas—to understand the role and the extent to which music may constitute an important component of ecotouristic experiences.

In the previous chapter, I focused on how listening and walking are key to events that connect audiences to nature. Here, I explore how music attracts people to natural areas, examining the relationship between music and ecotourism in Tuscany. After defining ecotourism, I will frame musical ecotourism as a niche tourism that supports ecosystems, places, communities, and musical artists. I will then present four case studies of music performances in Tuscan natural areas, employing an eco-ethnomusicological standpoint to analyse how music aids conservation, benefits park management, generates income, attracts visitors, and fosters environmental awareness. Finally, I will argue that integrating music into ecotourism creates a sense of place and stewardship for visitors and locals.

Tourism and Ecotourism

Tourism is a leisure activity (Urry 1990, 2) that is often divided into two opposite modalities of consumption according to the purpose of the travel: mass tourism and niche tourism. Mass tourism is the most conventional type of tourism. It targets a larger number of consumers, and it usually takes place within staged settings. Niche tourism is defined by a focus or stress on a special interest or activity that involves a lower number of visitors (Robinson and Novelli 2005, 9). Tourism niches can be grouped according to macro-themes, such as sustainability (e.g. eco-, inclusive-, agro-tourism) and self-development (e.g. cultural-, educational-tourism) (Bunghez 2021, 2-3).[7]

Ecotourism is a nature-based, experiential, low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented niche of tourism (Fennell 2005, 20-31) that focuses on fostering visitors' ethics, sense of responsibility, and environmental awareness, and that benefits localised actions of conservation and preservation (Donohoe and Needham 2006, 206-207). Ecotourism has also a strong educational component, and ecotouristic activities should

[7] Bunghez identifies several other themes other than the two useful for this research: Experience-economy (e.g. Space-, Sport-, Extreme-, Military-, Film-, Dive-tourism);; Hedonism and Voyeurism (e.g. Armchair-, Drug-, Sex-, Dark-tourism); Consumerism (e.g. Shopping Tourism); Conscious living (e.g. Health-, Medical-, Religious-, Wellness-tourism) (Bunghez 2021).

have as a goal to teach through direct experience about a place's biological and cultural diversity (World Tourism Organisation 2019; Fennell 2005; Donohoe and Needham 2006).

The two definitions of the subject provided by the two main non-academic organisations that deal with this topic, the Global Ecotourism Network[8] and the International Ecotourism Society,[9] both parallelly focus on three major features of ecotourism, in accordance with previous definitions. Ecotourism is then a touristic activity that:

- Aims to environmental conservation.
- Sustains the well-being of local people.
- Educates visitors about local features and issues, often through the delivery of memorable interpretative experiences to visitors. (Global Ecotourism Network 2016; The International Ecotourism Society 2015)

Ecotourism plays a key role in the sustaining of natural parks and other areas of naturalistic interest, and it is a vital tool to sustain conservation organisations and rural communities. As a mechanism to capture revenue, ecotouristic activities help to cover the costs of maintenance and visitor use, including the development of the park's infrastructure (trails, visitor centres), the safeguarding of sites' boundaries with fences, markers, and signs, managing and restoring of the habitats and monuments, educational activities, stipend the guides, and monitoring activities (Brandon 1996). Moreover, ecotourism has been proven to impact positively the conservation of endangered species and the overall protection of natural areas, while also leveraging for conservation behaviours both in destinations and tourists' places of origin, thus deepening feelings of stewardship and environmental ethics among both communities, ultimately influencing local institutions (Stronza, Hunt, and Fitzgerald 2019, 236-237).

Two reviews on the topic highlight that ecotourism experiences can also lead to some unintended negative consequences. Ecotourism might fail to improve income equity among various stakeholders, often perpetuating capitalist exploitation of underdeveloped areas. Nature parks do not necessarily employ workers from

[8] www.globalecotourismnetwork.org, accessed on 12 March 2024.
[9] https://ecotourism.org, accessed on 12 March 2024.

neighbouring communities, and the creation of these parks can displace local residents, thereby increasing inequalities. Additionally, there are frequent conflicts between the interests of park authorities promoting ecotourism and the benefits of biodiversity conservation (Liu and Bao 2004; Das and Chatterjee 2015). No such adverse impacts were observed in this study.

In Italy, studies about ecotourism are often focused on an administrative division like a region, for example, Campania (Mileti et al. 2022), Puglia (Aluculesei and Avram 2020), Sardinia (Ioppolo, Saija, and Salomone 2013), or Lazio (Spasiano and Nardi 2019), on a specific geographical area, like the Mediterranean Islands (Agius, Theuma, and Deidun 2021), the North-East (Tempesta, Visintin, and Marangon 2002), or the Apennines (Poponi et al. 2020); on some single or multiple natural parks (Mondino and Beery 2019; Palli et al. 2023; Montaguti and Mingotto 2015), or a set of trails (Marasco and Marchi 2023).

Several activities contribute to ecotourism experiences in Italy. The appreciation of a place through walking and hiking is an omnipresent activity for people visiting a place situated on the land (Tempesta, Visintin, and Marangon 2002; Montaguti and Mingotto 2015; Mondino and Beery 2019; Palli et al. 2023; Marasco and Marchi 2023). On islands and marine natural parks instead, tourists often engage in various aquatic activities (Agius 2018) and wildlife watching (Agius, Theuma, and Deidun 2021). Cultural activities are often mentioned in papers discussing the ecotourism potential of an area and are usually referred to as some sort of appreciation of the local historical and cultural heritage (Ioppolo, Saija, and Salomone 2013; Agius 2018). Other activities that have been linked to ecotourism in Italy are well-being (Aluculesei and Avram 2020) and food (Antolini and Truglia 2023). How does music fit within ecotourism?

Music, Tourism, and Ecotourism

Music tourism is a form of cultural tourism (Deeke and Walter 2011). It is a niche of tourism that sees visitors whose travels are motivated—in full or at least in some part—by an interest in music in its broadest sense, including music's significance for culture, economics, and identity (Gibson and Connell 2005, 13). Visitors who engage in music

tourism quite often travel to visit a place where there is a performance that they wish to attend, but that is not the only reason. Music-related tourism also motivates travellers to visit places that are mentioned in the lyrics of a song or in the title of a composition, places where a famous artist spent a part of their life, places hosting famous concert venues (like an opera house), or places with a music-themed museum (ibid., 9).

Music and tourism is a topic that seems to have been extensively explored primarily by cultural (Bolderman 2020), economic (Aoyama 2007), human (Su 2011) geographers, and anthropologists (Kaul 2022); while ethnomusicological enquiries on the relationship between music and tourism were considered rare until a decade ago (Krüger and Trandrafoiu 2014). The subdisciplinary category "tourism ethnomusicology" (Stokes 1999, 141) often looked at traditional and folk music tourism (Krüger and Trandrafoiu 2014) and its cultural, social, economic, and environmental impact (Post 2006), to answer questions about nationalism, authenticity, neocolonialism, power relations, heritage, and appropriation (Rommen 2014).

Ecotourism intersects with music by playing a role in connecting communities and their expressive cultural practices with the natural environment (Titon 2021, 165-168). A few studies conducted in Nigeria (Ngodigha and Alagoa 2019), Ethiopia (Fakana, Choudhary, and Mengist 2019), Iceland (Dibben 2017), Hungary (Szente et al. 2021), Nepal (K. C. 2017), Indonesia (Cahyono et al. 2023; Wiranatha 2015), South East Asian countries (Walter 2020; Walter and Reimer 2012) and India (Mahapatra 2011) have highlighted how music and the performing arts can be a part—or the main attraction—of a variegated range of ecotouristic activities, from nature walks to festivals.

In Appalachia, music is marked as one of the main potential attractions of the region, together with the landscape, and in a review of ninety-nine recreational activities listed by their social and environmental impact in the region, Fritsch and Johannsen consider the performing arts at the same level with nature observation and preservation, gardening, and environmental education as socially beneficial and low resource use (2004). Making the case for a music ecotourism activity that goes beyond the consumption of a musical performance, Phil Clark documented the remarkable case of an ecotourism enterprise in the northeast of Australia focused on the manufacturing and learning of didgeridoos—an instrument often associated with unsustainable production practices due to its material sourcing (Ryan 2015). Here, tourists interested in the

instrument travel to the village and are requested to camp in the area, thus bringing the experience of the Arnhem Land environment to the same level as the experience of the music. The visitors have to find the wood used for the making of the instrument themselves, requiring a further personal engagement with the local environment motivated by the music (Clark 2009).

Ecotourism also may involve non-human animals and their sounds. Colonies of bats in Austin, Texas, have simultaneously influenced the music scene and ecotourism activities, prompting a reevaluation of the relationship between humans and non-human species within urban environments (Graper 2018; 2023). In New Zealand, soundscape monitoring has proven to be a valuable tool for both wildlife conservation and ecotourism (Guyette and Post 2016; Post 2023).

Music ecotourism relates to sustainability. For example, Grant et al. explored how localized music and sound-based practices in Indonesia, Vanuatu, and Australia contribute to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals from an ecotouristic perspective. For example, Vanuatu's Ëtëtung water music is used to advocate for climate action and economic resilience, aligning with the principles of ecotourism by attracting tourists while fostering environmental awareness and cultural preservation (Grant et al. 2022; 2024).

Ecotourism in Tuscany

Ecotourism is actively encouraged by the European Union and is one of the points included in the EU Forest Strategy 2030 (European Commission 2021). In Italy, the protection of natural areas is commanded by Article Nine of the Italian constitution. The first sentence reads:

> [The Republic] shall safeguard the natural beauties and the historical and artistic heritage of the nation.[10]

This article has been expanded in February 2022 to add a third sentence:

[10] Italian Constitution, art. 9. An officially edited and translated into English version of the constitution can be found at: https://www.quirinale.it/allegati_statici/costituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf.

> [The Republic] shall safeguard the environment, biodiversity and ecosystems, also in the interest of future generations. State law shall regulate the methods and means of safeguarding animals.[11]

The areas under environmental safeguard cover nearly 12 million hectares (thus covering about 22% of the country's landmass) and are regulated by law 394/91 updated in 2010, resulting in a list of the protected areas published by the Minister of the Environment and Energy Security website. The list includes various categories of parks and areas featuring particular geological or hydrogeological conditions that are subject to protection in order to preserve the unique biodiversity while limiting the anthropogenic presence in the area (Ministro dell'Ambiente e della Sicurezza Energetica).

Fully 10% of Tuscany is comprised of protected natural areas, including three national parks, thirty-five state nature reserves, three regional parks, two provincial parks, forty-seven regional nature reserves, and fifty-three protected natural areas of local interest (Regione Toscana 2023).

In this chapter, I describe some cases of music performances being part of ecotouristic activities. In this study, invaluable has been the support and the information provided by the individuals guiding the groups of visitors participating in the activities. Hiking guides are central to ecotouristic activities in Italy, as they represent the meeting point between visitors, environmental management policies, park managers, local communities, and the natural and cultural landscapes (Poponi et al. 2020; Palli et al. 2023), and they provide "proactive interpretative experiences for tourists with respect to sustainable management of natural resources and forest conservation solutions" (Poponi et al. 2020, 45). In the two studies mentioned, hiking guides play also a key role in determining the environmental impact of ecotourism in Italian protected areas, and they thus constitute one of the ideal research participant roles that facilitates the understanding of any ecotouristic activity, including music and sound-based ones.

[11] Ibid.

Musica sulle Apuane: Music on the Apuan Alps

On May 10, 2023, I travelled north to attend a performance in Forno, a village in the province of Massa and Carrara, nestled in a valley of the Apuan Alps. The event marked the launch of a festival designed to encourage exploration of the mountain range, using music to draw visitors. After seeing the event on Facebook, I became curious: how could music inspire respect for the mountains? With this question in mind, I decided to attend. The event had two parts: a trek to and from a nearby valley and a piano concert in the village. Because the trek required an early start and a long drive, I opted to skip it and travel in the afternoon, focusing solely on the musical performance.

The concert took place in the village's main square, where the organizers anxiously watched the sky, worried about the unusually unstable and rainy weather that marked May 2023 in central Italy, causing torrential rains and floods.[12] Soon after my arrival, the village square was flooded, not with rain, but with a large group of wet and muddy trekkers coming back from the organised excursion. They had faced rain, it seemed. The audience took their seats on plastic chairs set up in the square. A speaker welcomed everyone and introduced the festival. Soon, the artistic director was set to perform a challenging piano repertoire, but the performance was interrupted several times by rain, forcing us to take shelter under the balconies surrounding the square. Despite the weather, the audience remained committed, staying until the end and even joining in when the pianist, Gioia, played the famous Inti-Illimani song *El pueblo unido jamás será vencido*.

'Il festival culturale in quota Musica sulle Apuane' [the cultural festival at altitude Music on the Apuan Alps] is a yearly widespread musical festival including various concerts in several locations on the Apuan Alps,[13] a UNESCO Global Geopark sharp mountain range situated in northern Tuscany included between the Serchio River, the Aulella Stream, and the Versilia plain (UNESCO 2021).

The following is the English translation of an extract from the festival description as published on the festival website:

[12] See the Introduction to this dissertation.
[13] www.musicasulleapuane.it, accessed on 7 November 2024.

> This idea has been established in Trentino for several years now, thanks to the creativity and enthusiasm of the Venetian cellist Mario Brunello, one of the creators of the "I Suoni delle Dolomiti" festival. The echoes of the Dolomites have reached our Dolomites in miniature: the Apuan Alps, still waiting for a tourism that is more aware and respectful, which is the expression of a spontaneous exchange between the beauty of nature and the culture of man, a tourism that music can encourage (CAI Sezione di Massa n.d.).

The other festival referenced is a widespread music festival that has been happening every year for the last twenty-eight years in the northeast of the country, in the Dolomite Mountains, a part of the Alps mountain range.[14] In this unique tourist setting, visitors are asked to join a hike in the mountains that usually concludes with a concert in a place of incredible natural beauty. Both *Musica sulle Apuane* and *I Suoni delle Dolomiti* are free of charge, and everybody can join (Trentino Marketing S.r.l. 2023; CAI Sezione di Massa n.d.), although for the festival on the Apuan Alps, visitors should be members of the local branch of the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) situated in the city of Massa. For the club's membership, a small yearly fee is charged (6€ during the year 2023), and it ensures proper insurance coverage during the trekking activities (CAI Sezione di Massa n.d.).

The 11th edition of *Musica sulle Apuane* included seven concerts, one open-air theatrical performance, and one film screening, in nine different locations within the natural park or in the surrounding areas, and it ran from the 10 of June to the 3 of September 2023. Of the seven concerts, six included a walking excursion of different levels of difficulty. Only one was mandatorily accessible through the hike. In the other five concerts, the hike was optional, and the visitors could choose to reach the concert destination via other forms of transportation. They could choose to either drive to the location or carpool with other visitors. For five of these concerts, guided hikes were scheduled just before the performances. The hikes were carefully planned, either to reach the concert site and temporary stage or as a loop trail starting and ending at the concert location. For one concert, the hike was organised the day after, thus constituting

[14] https://www.visittrentino.info/it/isuonidelledolomiti, accessed on 17 July 2024.

a two-day event. Six out of seven concerts were organised in outdoor locations—weather permitting.

Gioia Giusti is the artistic director of this festival. She is an accomplished pianist performing in several national and international festivals, and a music educator teaching piano in some local music high schools. Gioia confirms the statement found on the website, about having taken inspiration from the festival on the Dolomites, albeit she evidences that the two situations are very different. The main difference is economic. She argues that *I Suoni delle Dolomiti* is a festival promoted by the regional organisation Trentino Marketing, and it is supported by many subjects, institutions and sponsors. For *Musica sulle Apuane,* her effort is the main driving force, and the local branch of the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) constitutes the main financial sponsor. Unfortunately, the regional institution does not offer any support whatsoever. The organisation also self-supports itself, selling t-shirts and other gadgets. Among the other partners and funders are the Apuane Park authority and the institutions of the single municipalities hosting the concerts in their premises, together with Massa's municipality. Considering the economic struggles of the organisation, the musicians that are included in the programme are often asked to perform for a reduced fee. While the Dolomites festival provides shuttle buses to transport the audience to venues, attendees of Musica sulle Apuane must travel to locations on their own. This often leads tourists to prefer concerts on the coastal side of the mountain range, closer to numerous seaside tourist towns, to those organised on the other side, the Garfagnana.[15]

Music, sound and walking are inextricably linked within this festival, as underlined by the following statement on its website:

> Music is the sharing of emotions and empathy between the artist and those who accept it without any reservations, to be led into an unpredictable sound world that arouses individual and collective sensations, capable of making people rejoice, bewilder, upset, and arouse memories. It does not only live in theatres or other 'conventional' places, it is something too large and universal for a single place to make it its own; has always accompanied man. Humans have perceived

[15] The valley of the river Serchio, constituting the North-Eastern and Eastern boundary of the Apuan mountain range.

> it among the stars, among the sounds of the forests, the singing of birds, in the voice of the sea. A trek to listen to a concert is a unique experience for those who love music and the mountains. Musicians and listeners united in a single path, without any separation or architectural barriers, in total sharing. A sharing that does not end with the last note of the concert.[16]

When I ask what is the reason for incorporating musical events in such a context, Gioia says:

> The musical—or theatrical—performance is a medium, not the main purpose, although obviously, it is the highlight of the day, but it is a medium for an environmental experience, to make people spend as much time as possible in the mountains.[17]

Hiking and sightseeing are the predominant parts of the activity, Gioia says, without downplaying the poetic part of the experience:

> Obviously, with the artistic experience, everything is more impressive [to the visitors], and it is not just propaganda. [18]

Musica sulle Apuane plays an important role towards environmental education, and the organisation is particularly critical towards the extraction of marble from the mountains.[19] The Apuan Alps are the natural origin location of the world-renowned Carrara Marble, whose excavation site has been active for at least since Roman times (Prochaska 2023, 3,8) and it constitutes a unique—albeit terribly butchered—landscape (Quagliati 2022, 43). The extraction is supported by the local institutions, and the scarred landscape is promoted on the local online tourism board as a "spectacular and sublime" touristic feature of the area (ibid., 45). The extraction activity is strongly opposed by local citizens, and numerous local organisations have emerged to fight against the environmental damage that the marble industry perpetrates.[20] While her stance is not

[16] https://www.musicasulleapuane.it/il-progetto-2, accessed on 10 April 2024.
[17] Gioia Giusti, interview with the author on 04 July 2023.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] The NO-CAV movement, short for 'No Cave,' meaning 'no quarries' in Italian. This is the unofficial name given by to a conglomerate of organisations and single activists that oppose the extractivist activities in

activist per se, Gioia is very critical of the marble industry. She argues that one of the goals of the festival is to make marble excavation environmental damage and the scars left on the mountains known and seen by more people (see Figure 4.3). Ironically, she recalls that every year the festival management has to produce an acoustic impact assessment for each of the concerts, despite the very loud extraction activities:

> Regretfully, outside of our area, this phenomenon is not very well known. Alright, [for many] these are only the white marble quarries of Michelangelo. [...] Marble is a beautiful thing only if connected to sculpture. Unfortunately, this is not true anymore, because the marble used for sculpture constitutes only a minimum part of what is extracted, compared to what is being ground to be used for less noble goals, like whitener for paper. [...] Also calcium carbonate[21] dust is used for many things, from the cosmetic industry to one-thousand other things, [...] and most of the vans that you see coming down from the mountains, transport that dust.[22]

the area. Two of the organisations involved are: '*Apuane Libere'* [Free Apuans], www.apuanelibere.org, and *'Salviamo le Apuane'* [Save the apuans], www.salviamoleapuane.org. The history of the movement as well as the complete list of the organisations involved can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_Cav.

[21] $CaCo_3$, the mineral constituting the local white marble.

[22] Gioia Giusti, interview with the author on 04 July 2023.



Figure 4.3 Sixtine Chapel's Brass Sextet Performing at the Focolaccia Pass, Tambura Mountain, within an open marble quarry on 23 July 2023. Photo by Carlo Giusti

Gioia started this festival purely out of her love for the mountains and for music. She recalls that once she found a piano in a mountain refuge in the area, and that's how she got the idea for the events. It was the first time she ever tried to organise a festival, and fortunately, she found support in the local Alpine Club. In these events, their organisational support is instrumental. They provide guides with a strong knowledge of the mountains and the hiking trails. The logistics of the concerts are the most difficult part to organise, especially for what concerns the transportation of the instruments (see Figure 4.4). For concerts situated outdoors, the festival management chooses only ensembles of instruments that can be carried on a hike by the performers, but also that can reflect the acoustic features of the place chosen. For a very open location, for example, they choose to deploy a brass sextet, that can produce a high volume of sound.



Figure 4.4 The transportation of the instruments by the members of the cello quartet 'Cello Play Ensemble' in the 2016 edition of the festival. Photo by Michele Ambrogi.

Gioia is very satisfied with the amount of people that the festival reaches, and she is moved by their support. During a crowdfunding campaign part of an online culture award, *Musica sulle Apuane* was supported by hundreds of donors, overcoming the eight-thousand euro threshold by an extra five thousand. Regretfully, the festival organisation never collected feedback and comments from the visitors, but they might in the future.

Musica sulle Apuane combines music with the delivery of a critical understanding of the Apuan Alps Geopark's situation. In this sense, the festival engages with a passive form of environmentalism as it serves to show the damage that the marble industry is doing to the mountains. At the same time, the festival helps in attracting people to this area, using music to help them to develop a sense of care for it, and hopefully, stewardship. While not explicitly framed as an ecotouristic initiative, the festival successfully brings visitors to an area of remarkable natural beauty and historical significance, including the complex history of human–nature interactions. The experiences are carefully designed to minimise anthropogenic impact, while inviting

participants to appreciate the majesty of the mountain range and confront the brutality of marble extraction. Music serves as a powerful draw—it becomes both a destination and a focal point along the hiking trails, motivating hikers to continue on their path, and offering a moment to celebrate the majesty of the landscape at its end.

ViviParco

'ViviParco: incontri musica danza libri' [to live the park: meetings, music, dance, and books] is a series of diverse events that happens every year in the protected natural area named *Parco Naturale di Migliarino, San Rossore, e Massaciuccoli* [Natural Park of Migliarino, San Rossore, and Massaciuccoli]. The 2023 edition is the second edition of this festival, which ran from the 27 of June to the 30 of July, and it included art exhibitions, book presentations, dance and theatre performances, musical performances, a puppet show, and other workshops, excursions and activities. All the festival activities were free of charge. The festival was promoted and supported by local and regional institutions, including the Pisa municipality. The musical performances of the two editions of the festival have been very diverse: some of the musicians featured included local singer-songwriters Bobo Rondelli and Nada, experimental jazz guitarist Paolo Angeli, two members of the classic Italian pop band *Matia Bazar*, but also a classical piano duo, and many others that performed during and outside the festival.

The park is widespread between the provinces of Lucca and Pisa but geographically lies closer to the latter. Established in 1979, it includes several ecosystems, such as beaches, dunes, forests, wetlands, and reclaimed lands (Ente Parco Regionale Migliarino 2019). The park is managed by the Park Authority, which aims to protect the environmental and historic features of the Pisa and Lucca coastline. Their mission also includes running environmental education projects and supporting local economic activities (Ente Parco Regionale Migliarino 2003). The park includes the former presidential estate of San Rossore[23] where the festival takes place. San Rossore is divided into three different areas with different levels of accessibility (Figure 5). The Area 'C' is

[23] Formally donated to the Park Authority in 1999 by the then President of the Republic Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, but part of the protected natural area since 1979.

accessible by everyone every day within opening times. Visitors in this area can circulate anywhere in the area by foot, bicycle, or horse, and with their own vehicle only on the asphalted road. The Area 'B' has limited access. In this area, visitors can circulate freely only on marked trails, and no motor vehicles are allowed. In Area 'A' any unauthorised access is forbidden. Visits are allowed only on special occasions, after the purchase of a special ticket (Parco Regionale Migliarino San Rossore Massaciuccoli 2022).

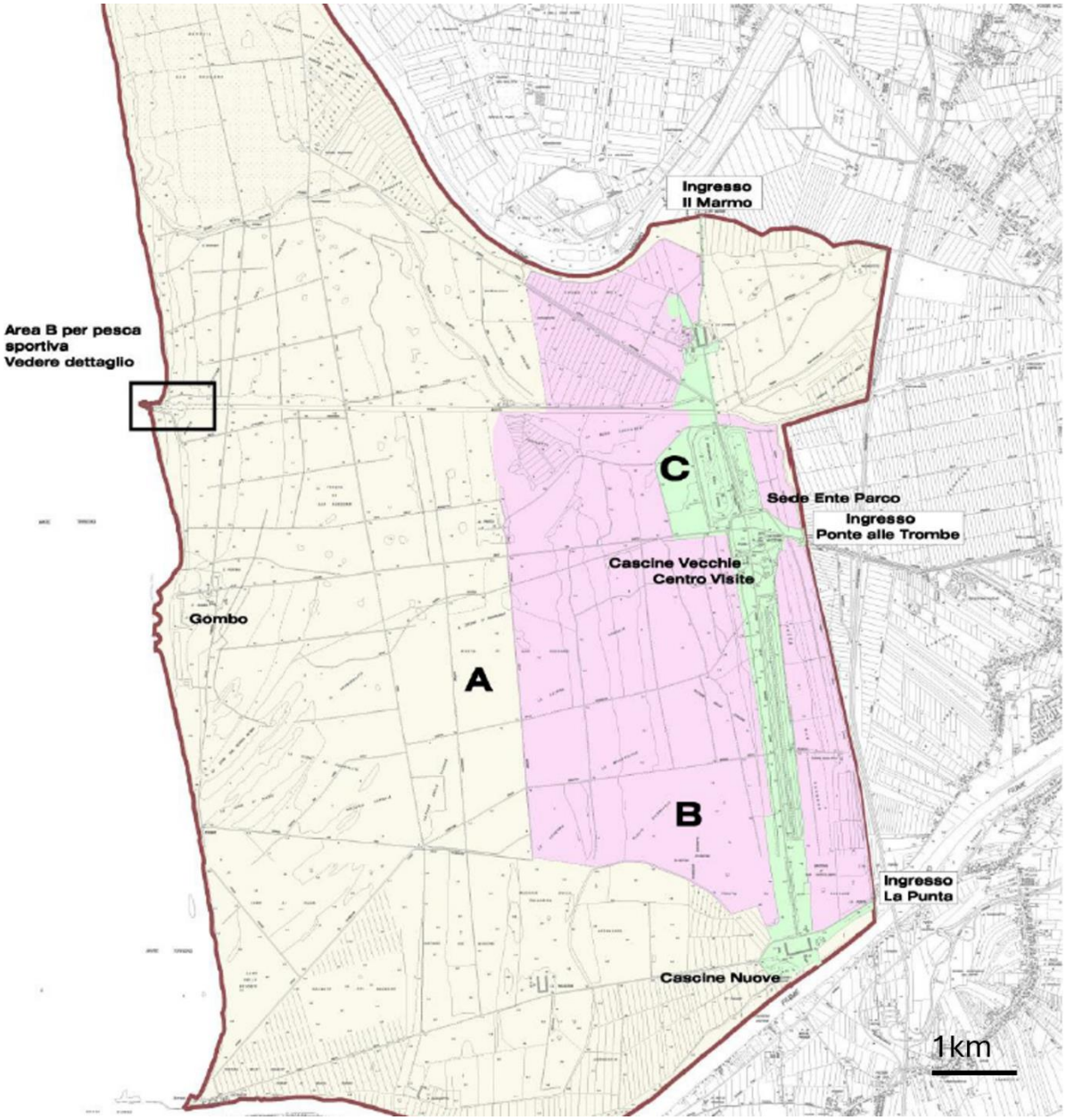


Figure 4.5 Map of the three different accessibility levels within San Rossore Park. The whole cream-coloured "A" area is protected, and access is forbidden to the general public. One of the few chances to visit this area is on the occasion of a musical performance.

The aim of the festival explored earlier in this chapter was to make people aware of the beauty and the tragedy of the current state of the Apuan Alps. Instead, *ViviParco* operates within an area that is already protected and precluded to the public. The festival aims to enable responsible visits within those parts of the park that are usually not accessible to visitors, like the areas included in the Area 'A'. Raffaele Zortea, the designated spokesperson for the Park Authority, explains that access to this area is granted only during special events. These events include concerts and other activities featured in the festival. This approach helps to preserve the area's natural integrity.[24] Visitors have to be part of a guided tour and enjoy the place respectfully, and responsibly. Additionally, shuttle buses were organized to transport people to the various remote areas of the park where the stage was set up. No artificial lights were used and the concert was either acoustic or using a very small amplification system, to limit the noise pollution in the area. Raffaele mentioned that a broader goal of the various park activities is to integrate the concept of natural area with the one of human community, specifically, "to think of a new relationship between humans and nature (in which) nature is not precluded to humans."[25]

The concept of natural park is derived from the Romantic idea of nature as a fragile other that needs to be protected, fenced, isolated and separated from areas in which humans perpetrate their everyday activities, in order to satisfy some various aesthetic needs (Callicott 1994; 2003). *ViviParco* and all its events are included in the park's strategy mentioned by Raffaele, aimed at reinventing the relationship between protected areas and the public. These are not the only cultural and social events organised by the park management. Outside the festival, other concerts are often organised in the spring, but there are also open-to-the-public beach cleaning operations in the coastal area of the park, lectures and small academic conferences that are occasionally organised within the former presidential buildings. The Park Authority strongly believe that a responsible and respectful enjoyment of the natural beauty of the park by the local communities is the key to environmental sustainability. Raffaele argues that:

[24] Raffaele Zortea, Interview with the author on 02 August 2023.
[25] Ibid.

> Nature must be accessible to citizens. Clearly, they must do so in a respectful manner, and respecting the rules that are put in place for the safeguard of the environment, but more so if these beauties are shared with citizens among citizens, how can I say? They learn to love parks more and more, and they learn to take care of them and respect them their general behaviour towards respecting the environment certainly improves. [26]

As shown by the number of events featuring a musical performance in the festival programme, music constitutes a very important part of this strategy. I asked the organiser why music, specifically. This is Raffaele's personal answer:

> Because music is one of the artistic means [that is] humanly more appreciated than others, [it is something] that reaches everybody easily.[27]

The Park Authority believes that these events have an educational impact on the visitors, although the impact itself is hard to measure. Raffaele argues that the events succeeded in attracting visitors to witness the outstanding natural beauty of the area. In so doing the events constitute a message about co-habitation with the natural world. A message that—according to him—is positively received by citizens.

Musical performances during *ViviParco* serve a double goal. Firstly they open up a space normally closed to the public. Secondly, by granting access to protected areas, the festival raises the issue of *being* in nature, proposing an alternative way in which human and non-human beings (including flora and fauna, but also the geological component of the landscape and the local ecosystem in its entirety) can co-exist sustainably. The festival's events represent then specific examples of musical-ecotouristic activities that enable visitors to experience a protected natural area in a sustainable, non-consumptive, and low-impact way. Although theses activities bring visitors in the forest, they are creafted to encourage respect for the forest's natural processes and offer an alternative to the overconsumption typically seen in mass tourism, such as on the overcrowded beaches of the nearby towns of Viareggio, and Tirrenia. Thanks to these events, important

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid

areas like San Rossore are shielded from the neoliberal dynamics of mass tourism, while still remaining accessible for people to enjoy in a mindful and respectful way.

The "Park of the Stars" and "Art in Flight"

This and the next section regard events organised by the Italian conservation organisation LIPU. The acronym stands for *Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli*, [Italian League for the Protection of Birds]. It represents a non-profit organisation that manages twenty-six oases and reserves in the whole country and several first-care and recovery centres for the care of wild animals (LIPU 2014a). While bird protection is one of the main activities of the organisation, birds are also intended to represent an indicator of wider ecological considerations. LIPU promotes wildlife and habitat conservation, safeguarding biodiversity in their protected areas and promoting ecological behaviours through several environmental education activities. The organisation is constituted by a large core of volunteers that together with specialist operators carry on the various nature conservation and park preservation activities aimed at the protection of all wildlife, even though they are mainly recognised for their birds' conservation efforts, as the birds are the symbol of their work, with their "presence, songs, flights, and colours, represent the beautiful hope for a better future" (LIPU 2014a).

In Tuscany, LIPU manages two recovery centres, located in Florence and Livorno, and two oases, located in Massaciuccoli and Santa Luce. '*Riserva Naturale del Chiarone'* [natural reserve of Chiarone] is the official name of the oasis in Massaciuccoli, and it constitutes one of the main parts of the greater Natural Park of Migliarino, San Rossore, and Massaciuccoli (Parco Regionale Migliarino San Rossore Massaciuccoli 2019) described in the previous section of this chapter. This natural reserve is located on the eastern bank of the Massaciuccoli Lake, a large system of ecologically diverse wetlands located on the coast of northern Tuscany (Ramsar 2017). There, every year since 1997, the park manager Andrea Fontanelli organises several events to create engagement and interest among visitors and local communities. The fulcrum of the park's events is the double festival '*Il Parco delle Stelle'* [The Park of the Stars] and '*Arte in volo'* [Art in flight]. The name of the festival derives from the astronomical phenomena with which those days are associated. The 10th of August is San Lorenzo [Saint Lawrence], according to the

Calendar of Saints,[28] and in Italy the night of San Lorenzo is commonly associated with the sight of shooting stars. Despite being addressed as stars, the night sky features the Perseids meteor shower (Wu and Williams 1994), which peaked between the 10th and the 12th of August in the Summer of 2023 (Marra 2023).

The 2023 edition of the festival was from the 10th to the 12th of August. The first part, *Il Parco delle Stelle,* included two days of evening explorations of the park. The second part featured a conclusive party night hosted in the mainland portion of the park, its name (Art in Flight) alluding to the importance of the birds for the festival (see Figure 4.6). The main path across the wetlands is a woodboard trail that for the occasion was populated by artistic performances, where the visitors could enjoy the cool summer night breeze, listen to the nocturnal birds, enjoy the performances, and watch the sky and its astronomical phenomenon from a privileged, low-light polluted area. Most of the performances were of a sonic nature, and the genres featured varied. During the first two days, four groups of fifteen visitors and a few volunteer guides walked through a nocturnal creative path[29] at regular intervals.



Figure 4.6 Flyers of the events 'Parco delle Stelle' (1), and 'Arte in Volo (2) and (3). Source: Facebook.

[28]Retrieved at www.catholicsaints.info/10-august. Accessed on the 07/12/2023.

[29] '*Itinerario Notturno Creativo'* [Nocturnal Creative Path] is the name given by the festival organisers to this particular practice of walking while enjoying artistic performances. The name appears on the flyer of the event (See Figure 4.6).

Such a path included six performances, of which four included musical and sonic elements. In order of appearance, the festival included improvisation on guitar along local birdsongs,[30] free improvisations on a hang drum, live painting accompanied by songs, and a theatrical performance on a text by Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837), including original music.[31] Each group of visitors was guided on a wooden boardwalk across the wetlands at the Eastern shore of the lake. The performers were dispersed at various points of the walk and the visitors could enjoy the brief performances, one after the other. In order to avoid distractions, facilitate immersion in the performances and in the place, and keep the light pollution under control, the visitors were asked to follow some basic rules: all the phones must have been turned off during the whole duration of the walk, and the visitors should have been as silent as possible. Despite the guidelines both the guide and some of the audience member complained about somebody either speaking too loud or trying to use their phone to shed some light on the path—otherwise lightened only by the moonshine and some lanterns carried by the guides—or to shoot some pictures.

In the square at the beginning of the trail (the one that also features the 'Arte in Volo' party featured in Figure 4.7), three telescopes were set up to facilitate the observation of celestial bodies featured in the night sky, including the Moon, Saturn, and others. The telescopes were operated by members of amateur local astronomical organizations who volunteered for the occasion to spread their love for the sky.[32] Most of the lights in the square were turned off to reduce the light impact on the lenses of the telescopes and facilitate the observation, and this helped in creating a dimmed atmosphere that would introduce the creative paths. From this area of the park, at the end of the excursion, the visitors could opt to visit the lake with a boat, to observe the night sky from a point of even less light pollution. The boat operates in partnership with LIPU, and while the option of sailing in the night sky could seem enticing for some, some of the visitors raised concerns

[30] This particular performance was performed by the author. The full video is accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p50HnJUS7Ls, accessed on 4 October 2024.

[31] As on the first two days I was included among the performers, the description of the whole creative paths is obtained by an interview with one of the guides and volunteer for the local LIPU branch, Andreas Rimoldi, interviewed on the phone by the author on 12 October 2023.

[32] https://www.astroversilia.it, accessed on 24 December 2024.

about the sonic and air pollution that sharply contrasted the suffused atmosphere featured and created around the rest of the experience.

This intimate part of the festival has not always been part of the organization's plan though. Andrea Fontanelli, manager of the oasis for more than 20 years, has been working with the local LIPU branch since 1994. The first edition of the festival dates back to 1995, as a one-day festival, usually happening around the 10th of August. At that time the festival was intended as a social event, a gathering for the volunteers and the local community to party and celebrate the summer together, and raise some money for the organisation. The only two elements were the dinner and the concert, and the naturalistic aspect of the festival was pushed into the background. The next year, Andrea recalls,[33] they decided to organise an event with a local amateur astronomers organisation that wanted to benefit from the minor light pollution of the area to observe the sky. [34] The following year (1997), the idea behind the event was born, and they organised the first unofficial *Parco delle Stelle*, followed the next year by a two-day event supported by the park management that liked the idea of seeing the park as an "*island of darkness"*[35] that contrasted with the highly light-polluted surrounding areas. This format had been replicated more or less unchanged for several years, and many local bands were called to perform on the temporary stage. With financial support from the park institution, Andrea recalls that they were able to also afford high-level performers like the folk band Aquaragia Drom.[36]

When the park management stopped funding the event directly, all the funds for the various events were given by LIPU and included in the general budget for the oasis' activities. They then started to select more affordable performers and get the Oasis volunteers more involved in the performances. In 2006 *Parco delle Stelle* was a major but demanding event, especially for the volunteers who were called to cook and serve dinner for more than one hundred people per night. Together with the volunteers they then decided to spread the event over three days, with the first two with a limited number of participants, and the last one a free-entry party that all the volunteers could attend and

[33] Andrea Fontanelli, interview by the author on 31 August 2023.
[34] "Gruppo Astrofili 'AstroVersilia'" https://www.astroversilia.it, accessed on 29 March 2024.
[35] Andrea Fontanelli, interview by the author on 31 August 2023.
[36] https://www.acquaragiadrom.it, accessed on 29 March 2024.

enjoy, which included most of the performances and was financed with the income of the previous nights. *Arte in Volo* was then born, and this format has been repeated year after year until 2020.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the event had to change format again to comply with the new rules in place about social distancing. Andrea and his collaborators put together two of the components of the event, the artistic/musical performances and the astronomic observation of the night sky, but they chose to dilute them in a long nature trail, immersed in the dark, to make the night one of the protagonists—together with art, and nature—of the event. The event was intended with a limited number of participants due to pandemic containment requirements, and this format has been repeated during 2021 too. While in 2022 all the restrictions were over, Andrea and the Massaciuccioli's LIPU Branch decided to keep this more intimate format that better represented their idea of an experiential human-nature relationship. They also chose to re-introduce the crowded social gathering with music, food, and performances that before the pandemic constituted the *Arte in Volo* event.

Arte in Volo is in stark contrast with *Parco delle Stelle*. For the final event, a stage was set up, food was cooked and sold by the reserve volunteers and by some food trucks, and every performance was happening within the premises of the main square of the lake docks in the village of Massaciuccoli, right in front of the house owned by the organisation.



Figure 4.7 The main area at the dock for the last night of the festival 'Arte in Volo,' photographed from the wooden board path leading to the trail where the other performances took place the previous two days. Photo by the author, 12 August 2023.

The music featured on the last day was very different from the more intimate experience that characterised the first two days of the festival. On the final night, the performances were concentrated on a single stage rather than being scattered along the nature trail, and they were best suited to entertain the visitors during the very convivial situation, rather than being an acoustic feature to mediate the immersion in the environment: the two main acts of the 2023 edition of the festival featured a blues trio and a very groovy Brasilian band.

While the visitors could still visit the lake on a boat and watch the stars, during the final event sociality was the focal point. Luigi D'Alessandro, the artistic director of the festival—but also a musician, music enthusiast, and one of the long-term oasis

volunteers—insists that the social aspect is of fundamental importance for this event.[37] According to Luigi:

> The idea is to make the place live in a different way, from some non-obvious perspectives. [...] In this, the role of the art is, I think, to understand the relationship that exists between the management of the natural reserve – or the management of nature, and the fundamental social aspect. That oasis, without the strong social mentality that lives among the volunteers, would not be what it is. That's its strength, the fact that this active volunteerism exists, is committed, and immerses itself in nature, makes everything different and it is an added value.[38]

The last day has a strong impact on the local community too, as it gathers together within the oasis premises the volunteers, workers, citizens of Massaciuccoli and Massarosa, and other visitors. Luigi defines it as "a street party[39] in all respects, still including an artistic aspect, although with a different artistic connotation [than the first two days of the festival]."[40]

On the impact of the festival, both Andrea and Luigi acknowledged that the relationship between the local LIPU branch and the local communities has not always been so bright. When the park was instituted, hunting became suddenly forbidden in an area where it was very popular. The local community took this badly and allegedly tried to find a way to have the organisation expelled from the area. They burned the house used as a base by LIPU personnel and the wooden boards used as a path on the wetland, and sent other intimidatory messages, like the vivid presence of armed hunters within the oasis boundaries.[41] Luigi gives credit to Andrea's diplomatic abilities to have soothed the community, which happened also as a consequence of many volunteers and other people interested in the oasis' activities taking residency in the area:

[37] Luigi D'Alessandro, interview by the author on 28 August 2023.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Luigi describes the last day of the festival as a *festa di piazza* (lit. a 'party in the square'), to underline the sociality and conviviality of the event.
[40] Luigi D'Alessandro, interview by the author on 28 August 2023.
[41] Andrea Fontanelli, interview by the author on 31 August 2023.

> We give back to this territory an idea of an open oasis, where we [the organization and the local community] can meet socially, this is the strength of these events, and I must say that Andrea has had the vision of nurturing this social aspect. In some places, there is no such welcoming and open leadership, and they are closed, and unattractive. [This] oasis from this point of view has the strength to communicate a live sociality, that attracts people.[42]

According to Luigi, the festival had an important role in bridging the conservation organization with the local community too:

> Initially, the festival was like a fair, and the bands chosen did not have any particular impact. After we shifted to a more low-cost idea for the festival, reducing unnecessary costs, and creating a different aesthetic, with just a small wooden stage [for the performers]. We called independent, emerging, local bands, from Massarosa, and the surroundings. Bands that brought people with them, people who learnt about the festival and the organisation, and who eventually decided to do their social service volunteering at the reserve and so on. On a communication level, meaning attracting youth, I believe that the festival helped a lot. Surely it doesn't help to convert the most hardened hunter, but in that sense, we are also doing some more political work.[43]

Even though *Il Parco delle Stelle* and *Arte in Volo* are very different events, both succeed in bringing audiences into protected areas, promoting an idea of nature that doesn't need to be isolated but can instead be a space for meaningful human experiences. In this way, the oases become places where people can engage with their environment through music, in a respectful and mindful manner. Through these two distinct festivals, LIPU attracts numerous visitors each year who are drawn to this unique blend of artistic performance and nature-based experience. This approach offers a way to connect with both the natural environment and LIPU's conservation efforts, while also enjoying entertainment and social interaction. LIPU has thus successfully developed an

[42] Luigi D'Alessandro, interview by the author on 28 August 2023.
[43] Ibid.

ecotouristic, social, and artistic model that allows people to experience protected areas in a low-impact and engaging-but-sustainable way.

The Song of the Lake

Roughly 50km south of Massaciuccoli, and a few kilometres west from the village where I spent part of my childhood, lies the Lake of Santa Luce. The lake is an artificial industrial basin realised in 1960 by the Belgian multinational chemical company Solvay that blocked the river *Fine* with a dam in order to secure hydrological resources required by the various manufacturing and cooling processes during the dry and hot summer months (Cheli and Luzzati 2008). Silvia Mascagni is the manager of the oasis and coordinates all its activities, including the actions taken towards the conservation of the local ecosystem and the monitoring of the wildlife. Silvia also oversees the environmental education activities and the few performances staged within the natural reserve boundaries.

Mostly, the activities organised here are related to birdwatching, but sometimes, Silvia accepts proposals for organising different types of events, especially those that stimulate a holistic engagement with the natural world. I contacted Silvia sometime around February 2023, when I submitted a music portfolio consisting of a few tracks of free improvisation along local birdsongs[44] and asked whether there would be a chance to co-organise an event in the oasis. We agreed on meeting to discuss upon my arrival in Italy. During that initial meeting, I felt that she vetted me somehow, trying to understand what my real intent was, and how my performance would have benefited her work.

Silvia was not new to this type of approach, and she was quite keen to let people do performances in the natural reserve. In the past, she gave space to the most diverse events, dance and yoga workshops, holistic ceremonies and celebrations, and a few performances. An interesting past event was the one named '*Il Canto degli Alberi*' [the song of the trees]. This event, organised a few times in the past, featured a device that used two electrodes placed somewhere on the tree's surface. Some authors and artists have explored acoustic communication in plants more thoroughly, and how they might

[44] See Chapter 2 for a detailed description of this music.

react to the sonic environment, from a bioacoustic (Monica Gagliano, Mancuso, and Robert 2012; M. Gagliano 2013) and artistic (Vélez 2024) standpoints. In this case the device simply converted the surface electric resistance of plants and trees into a midi signal, and then into sound.[45]

Considering my artistic focus on listening and exchanging with the environment from a sonic point of view, Silvia thought of introducing me to her friend Mara Sardi, a practitioner of sound healing and meditation who conducted several events in the oasis,[46] and we thought of organising something together, namely a performance of free improvisation trying to actively engage and respond with some features of the soundscape, especially the birds and their songs and calls. We decided to name the event *'Il Canto del Lago,'* [The Song of the Lake], after the main geological feature of the area. The event lasted about three hours, and Silvia decided that the maximum number of participants would have been around fifteen people, to minimize the impact on the delicate ecosystem. She argued that bigger numbers of people walking in the area are more likely to scare the wildlife or damage wildflowers and weeds while passing by. The performance was very short—about 20 minutes, and it was preceded by moments of birdwatching and a silent walk to attune to the various sounds of the place (see Figure 4.8). The performance was followed by a discussion concerning sound as a means of animal communication, environmental education, and its role within ornithology.

[45] There are various devices like that on the market, but the basic functioning mechanisms seem to be the same. One of the brands, Plant Wave, features on its website a brief explanation of the functioning of this instrument: "(1) [the device] detects slight electrical variations in a plant via two electrodes placed on the leaves. (2) These variations are graphed as a wave, which is translated into pitch messages that determine notes played on musical instruments designed by our team. (3) Other characteristics of the wave related to a plant's activity level change how those instruments are played, including tempo and effects. (4) The result is a continuous stream of pleasing music that gives you a sonic window into the secret life of plants." Retrieved at https://plantwave.com/pages/science. Accessed on 17 January 2024.
[46] I talk more about Mara's sonic practice and relationship with environmental ecology in Chapter 7.



Figure 4.8 The author and Mara Sardi performing during the event "Il Canto Del Lago" at the LIPU Oasis in Santa Luce, on 07 May 2023. Photo by Silvia Mascagni.

Besides getting people closer to the natural environment of the oasis, these events have a very practical purpose, as they serve to get more subscriptions to the newsletter and to the main organisation, LIPU, which mainly relies on donations and subscription fees to fund all the operations within their conservation areas. Income generated by these events also helps to:

> sustain all the costs of ordinary maintenance and environmental education. For example, we need new poles for the panels and signposts, we need to make new information panels, and we need maintenance tools and stationery. [...] We need more plants for the trail, and in case there is a landslide we need to call a company to move the soil.[47]

Individual donations to the organisation are directed to the national LIPU branch and they are re-invested in national projects, and in part divided into the budget of the single conservation oasis and wildlife recovery centres. Every oasis' management has the duty to organise ticketed activities in order to increase the local stream of income, which is necessary to sustain the practical everyday needs of every LIPU branch—such as those

[47] Silvia Mascagni, interview by the author on 14 May 2023.

highlighted by Silvia. The Oasis in Santa Luce is smaller than the one situated in Massaciuccoli, with only one person employed by the organisation, and just a handful of volunteers. The budget is often the main issue faced in the organisation of such events, especially concerning promotion and communication. Silvia reflects on this event, and their budget struggles:

> The problems are always concerning the promotion [of the events]. Without having a budget to pay for the promotion, everything is done freely and everything is done thanks to the kindness of the people, press agencies, and promotion platforms. [...] If we had a budget [we could afford to pay for promotion on] newspapers, regional newspapers between the provinces of Pisa and Livorno, and most importantly, the radio, online newspapers, and on the platforms that promote local tourism online. [...] With 5000€ we could afford to publicise two or three events.[48]

For the promotion of *Il Canto del Lago,* I invested about 70€ in social media advertising, using my presence as an artist on Instagram and Facebook. The event was a success, to the point that we decided to replicate it a few months later in the summer. The new date was set for Saturday the 29th of July 2023. Nobody booked, and we were forced to cancel the event. The Oasis of Santa Luce does not have the budget for massive promotion operations that often characterise events organised in other venues that are solely entertainment-focused, and the summer is a highly competitive season in the area, resulting in the presence of several highly publicised events every night. Getting people there is often a problem too, as its access is located on a road that mainly serves industrial estates and farms.

Despite the cancellation of the second event, the first one remained a success, for me, as a performer, for Silvia, for Mara, and for the audience. *Il Canto del Lago* bridged art and nature, promoting a deeper connection with the environment while supporting LIPU's conservation efforts. Despite challenges, the event highlighted the potential of creative initiatives to inspire both ecological awareness and community engagement.

[48] Ibid.

Through this experience, I directly encountered the challenges of organizing a musical ecotourism event within a natural area protected by a major conservation organization. Every phase—from planning and budgeting to the event itself—provided valuable insight into the complexities involved in such initiatives. While it's true that many of these areas might thrive without human presence, the music-ecotourism events explored so far suggest that people can engage with natural spaces in a non-consumptive, low-impact way, with music playing a meaningful role in shaping that experience. Humans are inherently part of nature, and our activities can be carried out with environmental awareness and care. The landscape of the Santa Luce oasis, for instance, is deeply anthropogenic—highlighting how the division between natural and artificial is an anthropocentric construct, that is not necessarily reflected in the ecosystems themselves. Surely, the birds migrating towards the oasis do not question the nature of the dam, or of the lake, as they are part of the same, natural, environment.

Music Festivals and Events as a Sustainable Ecotourism Practice

In this chapter, I examined four ecotourism events and festivals featuring music performances, which attracted diverse audiences drawn to the unique blend of music, environmentalist agencies, and natural areas. All the events were organised by organisations and people who profoundly care for the places where the performances were staged, and the impact of all the activities was therefore carefully calculated. The organisers of *Musica sulle Apuane* are mountaineers and alpinists, those organising *ViviParco* are stewards protecting one of the last wild areas of the region (and the country), and LIPU is first and foremost a wildlife conservation organisation. All the impact of all activities was then carefully monitored: for the LIPU and *ViviParco* events, the organisation set a limited number of participants for this reason, and while *Musica sulle Apuane* didn’t, they were asked to produce an acoustic impact statement before each season, and the presence of the Alpinist Club’s guides also ensures that all the participants behave well in respect of the place.

Budget is the main issue for these events. In the events observed above I could see the stark contrast between larger organisations that have access to local and regional funding (the San Rossore, Migliarino, and Massaciuccoli Park Authority, and *Musica sulle Apuane*) that could afford to print flyers and advertise their events through various online and offline means and platform, compared with the smaller Santa Luce oasis that struggled to compete on the Summer events market in the area.

During LIPU's *Il Canto del Lago* and *Il Parco delle Stelle*, I also interviewed a few random members of the audience, thanks to the support of the organization's staff. Because I was performing, the interviews were conducted in the days and weeks following the events. Contacts and consent for the interviews were collected at the end of the first event and prior to the beginning of the second one. I conducted phone interviews with three of the people who attended the first event and eight who attended the latter. The three people attended the first event individually, while of the eight interviewees of the second event, one came by themselves and the other was with groups of up to six people of friends and/or relatives. Most of them stated to have discussed with the other members of their group about the event and performances before the interviews.

The three interviewees who attended *Il Canto del Lago* came especially for the performance, because they were interested in either my music or the other performer's sound meditation practice. While all three of them live within 30km of the protected area and have heard about LIPU and their conservation activities in this area, they had never visited this oasis before. All three of them expressed the desire to visit Santa Luce's Oasis again in the future.[49]

The eight people who attended the two nights of the event *Il Parco delle Stelle* in Massaciuccoli responded quite positively too. Five of them said that they and the people with them had never been in the park before, and came there specifically attracted by the advertisements of the musical events found online. All three people who had already been in the oasis before visited it again intentionally on the days of the event to attend the performances. One of them, attracted by the presence of music, was disappointed that

[49] Three anonymous members of the audience that attended the event *Il Canto del Lago* in Santa Luce on 07 May 2023, interviewed by the author on 19 May 2023 and 26 May 2023.

there was no European Classical music included in the event programme and appreciated the organisation but not the genre choice.[50] Cultural geographer Leonieke Bolderman argued that music tourism stimulates the imagination of a place in humans. Music maps a place within one's mythscape (2020), thus influencing the individual affective ties that each of us develops to specific places, a concept known as topophilia (Tuan 1974, 92-93). In this sense, from the interviews, it emerged that those who never visited the oasis before expressed the desire to visit again and learn more about the conservation activities conducted by LIPU.[51]

Transmitting a sense of care for a place is the motive behind the organisation of these events and festivals, as the organisations included here are firstly organisations that protect natural areas and promote sustainable and zero-impact activities. If the organisers' focus was on pure entertainment, and with no personal interest in the ecological care for the place, the situation would be different. For example, the *Jova Beach Party*, the series of summer concerts organised by the Tuscan pop singer Jovanotti on several beaches around the Italian coastline, has been widely criticised by the geologist and ecologist Mario Tozzi, who argued that a festival of that dimension[52] will facilitate coastline erosion and deteriorate the local ecosystem (Tozzi 2022). In that case, entertainment was the sole motive of the performance, and the beach was intended only to be a stage.

In the case of the events organised by LIPU, the musical performances also contributed to securing more funding for the conservation activities, through either the direct sale of tickets or access to a major budget made available by a parent organisation.[53] In the case of *Musica sulle Apuane,* the small insurance fee required by the local guides organisation (CAI) serves to fund all the trail maintenance activities and cover other administrative expenses.

[50] Eight anonymous members of the audience that attended the event *Parco delle Stelle* in Massaciuccoli *on 10-11 August 2023,* interviewed by the author between the 17 August 2023 and 01 September 2023.
[51] Ibid.
[52] The 2022 edition of the tour has seen concerts with more than forty-five thousand people attending. Retreived at: www.vanityfair.it/music/concerti-eventi/2019/07/07/jova-beach-party-jovanotti-festa-concerti-date-polemiche-pulizia. Accessed on 17 January 2024.
[53] Silvia Mascagni, Interview by the author on 20 August 2023.

All the events had strong educational purposes. However, the educational aspect often relied on the personal experiences of the visitors rather than formal instruction from the guides. Visitors learned not only about the geological features of the landscape and the biological elements of the local ecosystems, but they also gained the ability to recognize and assess the irreversible impact of human activities on Earth. Additionally, they could witness some of the great changes of the Anthropocene with their own eyes. *Musica sulle Apuane* successfully attracted visitors to the mountains, helping them appreciate the beauty and history of the area, while also highlighting the profound environmental impact caused by the global demand for marble. *ViviParco* opened up the most protected—and fragile—part of the nature reserve to visitors through music, allowing them to experience a form of responsible coexistence between humans and nature. The two events organized in Massaciuccoli effectively conveyed the importance of conserving the natural lake to local communities, using art and entertainment to foster direct engagement. Finally, *Il Canto del Lago* temporarily transformed an industrial basin into a space for ecological connection between human beings and wildlife, thus questioning the boundaries between natural and artificial spaces and materials.

As the events explored here bridged humans with a specific portion of the natural environment through music, they constitute ecomusicological case studies of events aimed at the sustainable appreciation of the landscape. All the events detailed in this article can be classified as ecotourist activities. In fact, all of them included nature-based, non-consumptive, experiences through which the visitors learnt about places and local biological and geological features as well as conservation and other environmental issues. When present, the revenue from the events served to self-sustain the artistic activities and cover other expenses regarding conservation and maintenance of the areas.

Referring back to the silent areas mentioned in the introduction, the events used music to restore a voice to natural spaces that had been somehow silenced by extractivist and industrial activities, restricted public access, and anthropocentric relationships with nature. Music drew people in and evoked emotional responses to these places. All these events and festivals introduced very particular parts of the Tuscan natural landscape to people who probably would not have visited it otherwise, either for a lack of an element of attraction within the natural areas or for restricted access. Musical

performances opened new spaces in these areas enabling the public to visit them respectfully, creating a unique space where the aesthetic appreciation of the performances and the landscape were intertwined, thus—hopefully— enabling a mindful and not-harmful presence of humans in the natural world.

Chapter 5

‘I Canti della Terra’: Music Videos and Virtual Ecotourism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Environment and the Pandemic, the Double Crisis.

At the end of 2019 the COVID-19 pandemic started spreading, first around China and then in the rest of the world, facilitated by global capitalism and by all the travel of people and goods that capitalism implies (McNeely 2021). A few months before, Greta Thunberg gave her famous speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit, asking for urgent change in global carbon emissions and environmental policies (United Nations 2019). The world found itself inside a double global crisis represented by the impending doom of inevitable climate change and a fast-spreading pandemic (see Giorgetti 2021b). The two crises were (and still are, as the pandemic may be over, while the environmental crisis is surely not) inextricably intersecting (Zang et al. 2021). In Italy, this double crisis and its localised symptoms occurred in the context of an economic and cultural model employed in the country during the preceding seventy-eighty years, which had resulted in the loss of a more conscious human-nature relationship (Giorgetti 2021a).

While in the previous chapter, I described how sustainable music-driven ecotourism can recover this broken relationship, in this chapter I look deeply into what happened to the relationships between human communities and natural areas in

Tuscany during this double crisis, and the role that music has had in it. In order to do this, I will describe a particular and exceptional case study consisting of seven music videos available online on YouTube and Facebook that were the result of local institutions' adaptive management strategy to use music and nature to offer potential solutions to amend the rupture that characterized this period of crisis.

This chapter makes a case for music-driven virtual ecotourism, and while it builds upon the case studies described in the previous one, it also differs from them in three respects. First, while all the other chapters engage and describe events that happened in real-time in a physical location, this chapter focuses on an event that happened asynchronously online—albeit bound to a physical location. Second, this chapter is in neat contrast with the rest of the research fieldwork carried on for this study, which has seen me engaging in person with places and events. In this case, I employed a fully virtual methodology and the totality of the material explored here has been retrieved and engaged with online. Third, while the other case studies regard events that occurred between 2022 and 2023, this one regards events happening mainly in 2020 (with two instalments of the video series published in March 2022).

Music in Italy During the Pandemic

Italy was the first European country hit by the virus and one of those that had to pay the highest toll in terms of casualties, especially during its initial spread (Boccia, Ricciardi, and Ioannidis 2020; Indolfi and Spaccarotella 2020). The pandemic has been divided into several waves related to the virus' variants (Dutta 2022). The first wave occurred between February and April 2020 (Bontempi 2021), and the second began in October 2020 and continued throughout the winter (Istat: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica and Istituto Superiore di Sanità 2022). The Italian government responded to both the waves (and to the rest of the pandemic) with the enactment of a series of restrictive measures initially crafted to control and contain the spread of the virus and successively to prevent further diffusion of the disease[1] (Conteduca et al. 2020). An analysis of the data collected

[1]Ansa, the leading news agency in Italy, has published timeline of the pandemic and government responses at: https://www.ansa.it/canale_saluteebenessere/notizie/sanita/2023/05/05/la-cronologia-

through the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (Hale et al. 2021) has shown that the restrictions in place during the first and second waves of the pandemic in Italy were among the toughest in the world. Such restrictions included the closure of all-but-essential workplaces in the whole country during the first wave, and during the second wave, a zone system that selectively applied different levels of restrictions in different areas of the country (Conteduca 2021).

While the restrictions were intended to prevent people from engaging in inessential activities that could have favoured the spread of the virus, they had an important and destructive impact on music—especially live concerts and events. All concert venues and clubs remained in fact closed throughout all waves of the pandemic (Agamennone, Palma, and Sarno 2023a, 2023b; Dicuonzo, Giomi, and Peroni 2022). With live music venues closed, and people locked inside their own houses, new musical expressions arose, dubbed *coronamusicking* by musicologist Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann, with their repertoire being called *coronamusic* (2023, 193). The most vivid and memorable example of coronamusicking involved the performing of songs, tunes, and entire sets on people's balconies during the first lockdown, a gesture to show vicinity and closeness to the others, telling them that they are not alone (Cook 2023). This practice recalls some descriptions of Florence's bubonic plague pandemic of 1348 as recorded in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, when the wealthy considered making and listening to music as a coping mechanism to cope with the isolation (Buch 2023). Even during the European pandemics of the 16th and 17th centuries, musicking was a powerful tool for mood regulation and social cohesion (Chiu 2020, 8-9). Through these balcony performances people were able to "connect, express and share their emotions, and alleviate the feelings of insecurity and loneliness that were experienced during the time of social isolation" (Antchak, Gorchakova, and Rossetti 2022, 11).

While these balcony performances did not survive the first lockdown (Wald-Fuhrmann 2023), others did, and coronamusicking reached its peak on social media

dellemergenza-covid-in-italia_5a9a9be2-7b79-432e-be2d-2d8903cc11c9.html. All the concerning laws and rules about the restrictions in place in the various phases of the pandemic are available at the online archive of the Ministry of Health: https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/nuovocoronavirus/archivioNormativaNuovoCoronavirus.jsp. Accessed on 31 January 2024.

platforms. For many, social media constituted the "key, and almost sole, site and paradigm of musicking" (Agamennone, Palma, and Sarno 2023b, 5). In fact, the online experience was the only possible musical experience music outside the boundaries of people's homes (Bratus et al. 2023, 178). A 2020 Goldman Sachs report on global music revenue in the first wave of the pandemic noted that views to music videos experienced a surge during the first half of 2020, not only compared to physical sales but also to audio-only streaming. Furthermore, music video-style content grew in global popularity during this period, particularly on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok (Yang et al. 2020).

During the COVID pandemic, there are several accounts of music being streamed or diffused through social media for various purposes. In France, activism took a hybrid format, partially on the balconies, and partially online (Greppi and Schuh 2023). In Mexico, YouTube became a critical space for audiences, performers, and content creators to gather and connect on the chatrooms during the live-streaming of *son* performances (Margolies and Strub 2023). Music performance shifted and thrived online in Italy too, in the form of music videos and livestreams. For example, Sardinian liturgical and traditional music was streamed and published on YouTube and Facebook, increasing its online presence (Lutzu and Macchiarella 2023). Similarly, Sinti and Roma's musical and social lives were displayed and shared through social media platforms, especially Facebook and WhatsApp (Dicuonzo 2023). Other similar accounts of online musicking practices include live music streams organised by the Donizetti theatre in Bergamo, and the online sonic presence of the Holy Trinity shrine in Vallepietra (Bratus et al. 2023). In many of these examples, the preferred platform was YouTube, an already extremely popular digital media platform for sharing and streaming music videos when the pandemic hit (Burgess and Green 2018), which persisted during the pandemic when it contributed to re-imagine the role of musical performances (Bratus et al. 2023, 187).

Tuscany Mining Geopark, the *Cornate e Fosini* Natural Reserve, and the *Festival delle Viole di Gerfalco*

Cornate e Fosini is a regional natural reserve and a *Natura 2000* site[2] divided between the provinces of Grosseto and Siena. It is partially included within the Tuscany Mining Geopark in the Metalliferous Hills, which is one of ten Italian areas part of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network (GGN) in Europe.[3] According to the GGN:

> The Geopark concept arose in the mid-1990s as a response to the need to conserve and enhance the value of areas of geological significance in Earth's history. Landscapes and geological formations are key witnesses to the evolution of our planet and determinants for our future sustainable development. [...] Geoparks adopted a "bottom-up" or community-led approach to ensure that an area's geological significance could be conserved and promoted for science, education and culture, in addition to being used as a sustainable economic asset such as through the development of responsible tourism (Global Geoparks Network 2014).

The park, which is included in the provinces of Grosseto and Livorno, has an area of 1,087 km^2 and has been inhabited since ancient times, with several settlements and mines dating to the Etruscan, Roman and Middle Age periods. The area features several mineral deposits (such as copper, lead, zinc, pyrite, alum, and lignite) and geothermal fields (Casini 2020). The park was founded in 2002, some years after the last mine in the area closed during the mid-1990s. Since the beginning, the park authority has employed the bottom-up approach proper of GGN methodology, developing several initiatives producing sustainable outcomes through the engagement of the community (Magliacani

[2] *Natura 2000* is an European network of special areas of conservation composed of sites that host natural habitats of particular interest for conservation. The network enables "the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range" (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, Article 3). Retrived at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:01992L0043-20040501, accessed on 02 February 2024.

[3] Only the part of the reserve under the jusrisdiction of the province of Grosseto is included in the *Parco delle Colline Metallifere,* https://parcocollinemetallifere.it. A complete list of the UNESCO Global Geoparks and Regional Networks is available at https://www.unesco.org/en/iggp/geoparks?hub=67817. Accessed on 02 February 2024.

and Francesconi 2022). An example of this approach is a system of *Park Gateways*, eight community-fed centres scattered within the park area that include a museum and an information point. These gateways serve a dual purpose: they function as a tourist hub to provide easy access to the park's various areas and as a cultural hub, offering numerous initiatives to highlight the park's features to visitors, including local school groups (Magliacani and Francesconi 2022; Francovich and Preite 2007).

One of the park's gateways is situated in the municipality of Montieri, specifically in the small village of Gerfalco, which also serves as the official entry point to the *Cornate e Fosini* regional nature reserve (see Figure 5.1). The reserve is constituted of two areas, with 397 hectares in the province of Grosseto (Montieri's municipality) and 392 hectares in the province of Siena (Radicondoli's municipality).[4] The reserve was founded in 1996 by a joint act issued by the councils of the two provinces involved. The reserve features the highest peak in the park, Cornate di Gerfalco, standing at 1060 meters (Touring Club Italiano 2000), along with several unique geological and biological characteristics. These include various rare and endemic plant species not found at other elevations in south-central Tuscany (Francovich and Preite 2007).

[4] The two areas measurements are given according to the official list of the regional protected areas issued by the Region's Council. Retrieved at https://www.regione.toscana.it/documents/10180/41067002/DOA+2022_DGR+408-2022_Allegato1+Elenco+ufficiale+aree+protette+regionali.+14+aggiornamento.pdf/7fb4f7c3-b0d0-0fb6-d3f2-4feb1955d0f3?t=1650968025792, accessed on 06/02/2024.



Figure 5.1 The village of Gerfalco, and part of the natural reserve. Source: Wikipedia Commons.

The reserve avails and benefits from the park authority's cultural policies and general openness towards culture-based initiatives, like the *Festival delle viole e degli strumenti antichi* [The Festival of Viols and Ancient Instruments]. The festival has been running yearly since 2011 in Gerfalco and claims to be the first Italian festival completely dedicated to the viola da gamba, a bowed, fretted, and stringed instrument precursor of the cello that first appeared in Italy and Spain in the 15th century (Van Der Straeten 1976 [1915]). According to Alessandro Pierini the artistic director of the festival, this festival is part of a contemporary effort to keep the instrument alive.[5]

This week-long festival is usually held at the end of the summer (in late August or early September), and, other than performances, includes instrument-making workshops, music masterclasses and other initiatives. Venues include the Church of San Biagio in Gerfalco and the Park Gateway Center, with all concerts offering free

[5] *I canti della terra* press conference, retreived at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmz5ud2pahs&list=PLB3G7GrpHwX4XQbAhpqHGXlqXCuqntltk&index=3, accessed on 06 February 2024.

admission.[6] On its website, the festival is defined as: "ancient music in ancient places in respect of silence and nature."[7]

Unfortunately, due to the restrictions that were imposed on gatherings and social situations to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 festival moved online.

The Festival Becomes Digital

On Sunday the 13th of December 2020 the local newspaper *Il Tirreno*[8] declared: "From the heart of the earth a song rises. In villages and forests the viols play."[9] With this evocative declaration, a new format for the *Festival delle Viole* was announced. The new, online version of the festival was named *I canti della Terra* [The Songs of the Earth]. The new format initially included a series of five music videos, released on the Tuscany Mining Geopark's YouTube channel and Facebook page.[10] The announcement was made public along with a teaser trailer that begins with an evocative misty landscape and an introductory writing, that reads: "The Parks Festival and the Festival of Viols present" (see Figure 5.2).[11]

[6] The program of the 2023 festival, run from the 26 August to the 2 September, is available at: https://www.intoscana.it/it/un-weekend-dedicato-alla-musica-barocca-grazie-al-festival-delle-viole-di-gerfalco/, accessed on 06 February 2024.
[7] Retrieved at https://festivaldelleviole.wordpress.com, accessed on 06 February 2024.
[8] *Il Tirreno* is a regional daily newspaper printed in Livorno and features several local editions.
[9] "*Dal cuore della terra si leva un canto. In borghi e boschi suonano le viole.*" Il Tirreno, 13 December 2020.
[10] Link to *I Canti della Terra* playlist within the park's YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB3G7GrpHwX4XQbAhpqHGXlqXCuqntltk.
Link to the park's Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/parcocm. Both accessed on 07 February 2024.
[11] Link to the teaser trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jzorPdEiLE&list=PLB3G7GrpHwX4XQbAhpqHGXlqXCuqntltk&index=10&t=3s. Accessed on 07 February 2024.



Figure 5.2 Screenshot of the introductory frame of the teaser trailer.

The parks festival mentioned in the video is the European Day of Parks (in Italian translated as *Festa dei Parchi*). This annual celebration happens every year on 24 May to commemorate the institution of the first natural park in Europe—a set of nine protected areas in Sweden (Europarc Federation 2014). The celebration has the goal of increasing citizens' interest and engagement with protected areas across the European Union (Europarc Federation 2021). While the date is fixed, Tuscany Natural Parks interpret the yearly recurrence loosely and often promote several events throughout the tourist season under the umbrella event of the European Day of Parks.[12]

The teaser trailer, only one minute and twelve seconds long, proceeds to show various scenes taken from the videos that constitute the main acts of the digital festival, ending with another evocative image, ultimately announcing the name of the virtual festival, the words mysteriously appearing from a misty forest dressed in autumn colours

[12] Examples of how local parks and organisations celebrate this event span from a weekend of activities in Maremma Park (https://www.toscana-notizie.it/-/festa-dei-parchi-le-iniziative-in-maremma, accessed on 07/02/2024), to a whole season of free excursions and activities offered by San Rossore Park (https://www.pisatoday.it/eventi/festa-dei-parchi-san-rossore-pisa-visite-guidate-gratuite-giugno-2023.html, accessed on 07 February 2024).

to underline the mountainous nature of the area where the reserve is located (see Figure 5.3).



Figure 5.3 Screenshot of the final frame of the teaser trailer.

The Videos

The five videos constituting *I Canti della Terra* were published on Facebook and YouTube for five consecutive days at midday, from the 18th to the 22nd of December 2020. In an interview published by the local newspaper *Il Tirreno*, Alessandro Pierini stated: "*I Canti della Terra* have the goal of presenting ancient music in ancient places, respecting the silence. Essentially, a meeting between art, music, sounds, and nature."[13] The sonic content of the videos, including the choice of repertoire and sounds included, will be discussed thoroughly at the end of this chapter.

Each of the five videos was shot at a different site within the villages of Montieri, Gerfalco, and the *Cornate e Fosini* regional nature reserve, and is named after that

[13] "*Dal cuore della terra si leva un canto. In borghi e boschi suonano le viole.*" Il Tirreno, 13 December 2020. As stated elsewhere in this dissertation, the concept of silence is often used by third parties as indicating the absence of anthropogenic noise.

location. Each video includes one to three pieces performed by members of the Ars Regia Ensemble, a group of Baroque musicians based in Gerfalco.[14] According to their Facebook page, the Ensemble is currently composed of the soprano Bianca Barsanti, the ex-director of the Livorno Conservatory Stefano Agostini playing the Baroque flute, Beatrice Bianchi playing the Baroque violin, Alessandro Pierini the viola da gamba, Cristiano Cei the theorbo and Baroque guitar, and Dimitri Betti the harpsichord and the organ. Five of these six musicians, Bianca Barsanti, Stefano Agostini, Alessandro Pierini, Cristiano Cei, and Dimitri Betti are featured in the video series.

In the following paragraphs, I will describe the videos one by one, outlining the repertoire, describing the performance and the video outlining its naturalistic elements, including the moments where the representation of the performance interpolates with the depiction of the natural area, and occasionally, its non-human inhabitants. These paragraphs are purely descriptive, and the content and its implications will be thoroughly discussed in the subsequent sections.

The first video (6:36 mins) is *I Canti della Terra*. *Pieve di Montieri* [The Songs of the Earth, Montieri's Parish Church].[15] It features the *Prelude in G minor* by August Khunel, performed by Alessandro Pierini (viol da gamba), and *An Evening Hymn* by Henry Purcell, performed by Bianca Barsanti (soprano), Alessandro Pierini, and Dimitri Betti (organ). The video begins with the same evocative image of a misty forest that was also featured in the teaser trailer, and the first thirty seconds are filled with trees immersed in the mist and their green-to-yellow leaves. At 0:23 the viol da gamba plays the first note of the *Prelude*. Soon (0:37) the village of Montieri is introduced with some drone footage that shows the village from above, the camera moving closer to the roofs and the buildings in the centre of the village, still covered by the morning mist. The location of this concert is indoor though, and at 0:48 the viewer is taken inside the *Pieve dei Santi Paolo e Michele di Montieri*, a 14th-century church in Montieri. The focus of this video is the religious austerity of the building—better shown during the second piece performed—although the forest appears in two short instances during the solo performance of the *prelude*, showing again the yellow autumn leaves at 1:12, and concluding the piece at 1:22 with a

[14] The Facebook page of the ensemble is: https://www.facebook.com/arsregiagerfalco. Accessed on 07 February 2024.
[15] YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jG8Ombtyd74. Accessed on 09 February 2024.

few seconds of the same drone footage shown at the end of the teaser trailer (fig 5.3), followed by a zoom in on the leaves at 1:25 and more misty forest. For Purcell's piece, the camera is focused on the performers and the church interiors. The video ends with again drone footage of the village from above, this time moving away backwards from the buildings. This is accompanied by a long silence of nearly 35 seconds.

The second video (5:21 mins) is *I Canti della Terra, musica barocca sulla vetta delle Cornate* [The Songs of the Earth, Baroque Music on the Cornate's Peak].[16] It features two pieces composed by Jacques Hotteterre le Romain, *Echos pour le Flute Traversiere seule*, performed by Stefano Agostini (Baroque flute), and *Feuillages vert naissez*, performed by Stefano Agostini and Bianca Bersanti (soprano). This is probably the most stunning of the videos featured in the playlist. The video opens with drone footage of the Cornate's Peak, the camera getting closer to a patch of bare rock at the centre of the picture (see Figure 5.4). At 0:12 the music begins, and as the video zooms in, the viewer notices a black-dressed figure standing on the rocks, playing the flute. It becomes clear at this point that the music has been recorded elsewhere, and superimposed on the videos in post-production, as the acoustic characteristics of the sound heard do not resemble the ones of the place seen in the video, and while the performers are exceptionally good and follow the music with accuracy, sometimes the gestures do not match the sound perfectly. The zoom-in continues until 0:35, and for the rest of the solo piece, the camera alternates between the performer and the lush landscape, both contrasting against the clear blue sky. The landscape and the non-human world are co-protagonists in this video particularly, and the film director often chooses to focus on single subjects, such as the leaves of a pine tree (0:58-1:01), a European robin (*Erithacus Rubecula*) on a lichen-covered tree branch (1:11-1:15), and a Eurasian blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) joined by its partner on a similar branch (1:39). At the end of the piece, Bianca is introduced as a silent figure standing behind Stefano, similarly wearing black clothes and sunglasses. The second piece begins at 2:04, and the video features similar editing choices to the first part. The performance is filmed from various angles and the footage featuring the performers is often alternated with some with the evocative landscape and details of the trees in the area, such as the ones shown at 2:52-3:01 and 3:32-3:39. The trail to reach

[16] YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUI4-f5TjF4. Accessed on 09 February 2024.

the peak is also a component of the video and is featured once per piece, at 1:16 and 3:21. The music ends at 4:39 as the drone slowly begins to zoom out away from the performers, bringing back the viewers' attention to the majesty of the landscape, accompanied by the sound of the wind.

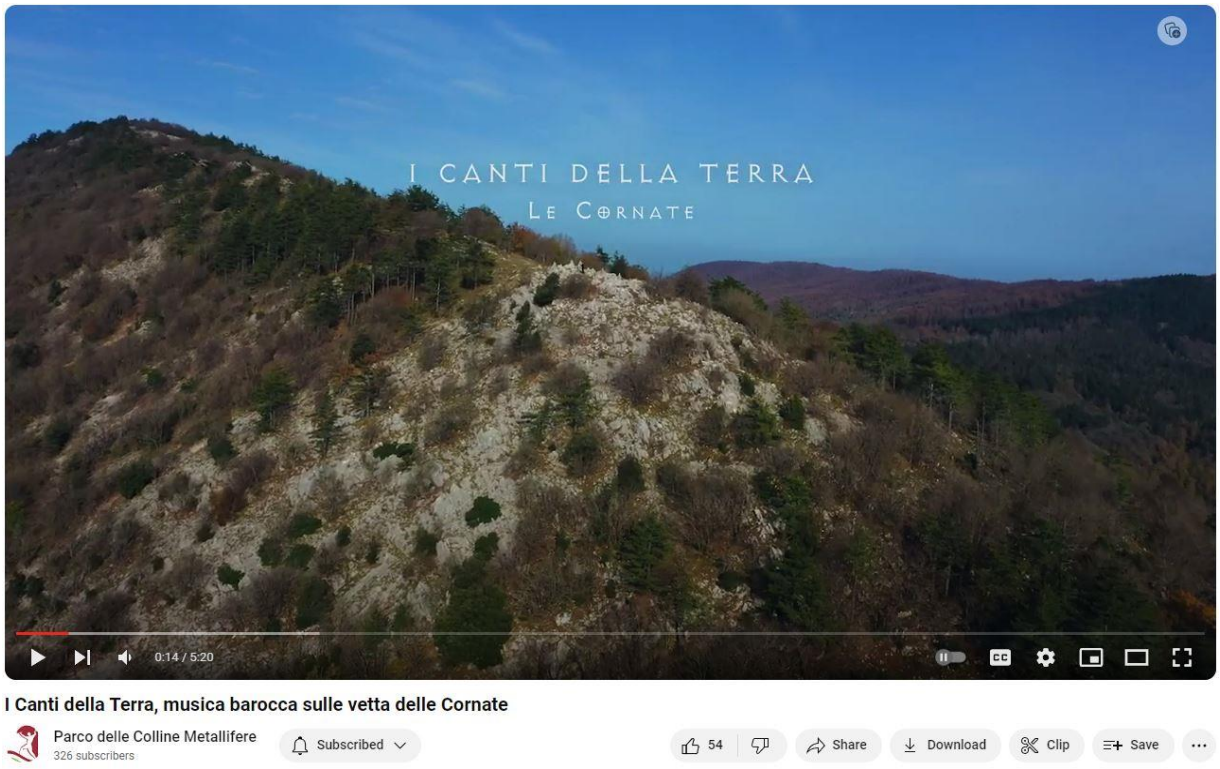


Figure 5.4 Screenshot of the second video's opening scene featuring the Cornate's peak.

The third video (4:08 mins) is *I Canti della Terra, Canonica di San Niccolò* [The Songs of the Earth, San Niccolò's Rectory].[17] It features the pieces *Prelude sol Majeur* by Robert de Visèe, performed by Cristiano Cei (theorbo), and *Pourquoy, doux Rossignol*, by Jean-Baptiste de Bousset, performed by Cristiano Cei, Bianca Barsanti (soprano) and Alessandro Pierini (viola da gamba). While the title seems to suggest an indoor location, the video is entirely shot at the ruins of the *Canonica di San Niccolò*, situated deep into the forest west of the village of Montieri. The first account of the religious building is on a document dated 1133 (G. Bianchi et al. 2014), and the *canonica* was documented to be in ruins in 1321. The site in its current state features only the wall frame of the building, including a particular flower-shaped frame (G. Bianchi, Bruttini, and Grassi 2012). This

[17] YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Q-1KHtQnCo. Accessed on 09 February 2024.

video seems to be a conjunction of editing choices seen in the previous two. The place is neither entirely anthropogenic, like the church featured in the first video, nor entirely natural, like the forest-covered peak in the second. Instead, it presents a combination of both: the ruins, which testify to past human activity, and the surrounding forest. The video opens with a detail of yellow leaves, an image that will be reproposed during the first solo piece. The soprano is shown walking behind the same leaves to reach the place (1:10), thus introducing the second piece beginning at 1:28. The rest of the video is focused on her performance of *Pourquoy, doux Rossignol*, which she sings while walking around the site. The particular design of the building frame is finally revealed to coincide with the conclusion of the song, as the drone moves vertically up into the sky (3:20).

The fourth video (4:45 mins) is *I Canti della Terra nel bosco delle Carline* [The Songs of the Earth within the Carline Forest]. [18] The video includes only the piece *Music for a While* by Henry Purcell, performed by Alessandro Pierini (viola da gamba) and Bianca Barsanti (soprano). This video is strongly characterised by the co-presence of human and non-human animals, especially those dwelling within the details that are often portrayed by the film director. The opening frame features a lush bush with sunlit cobwebs and flies, and as soon as the music starts a beetle of the *Scarabeus* genus is shown walking on a page of the score of Purcell's song (0:18-0:25).[19] Bianca's voice enters the scene while the camera focuses on a hairy snail (*Trochulus hispidus*) (0:33-0:41) (see Figure 5.5). Soon the camera frames more and more parts of the surroundings, and the performers are shown playing in a clearing on the top of hill covered in trees (1:37). Both Alessandro (2:48) and Bianca (2:18 and 2:37) are shown while walking through the wilderness to reach the place of the performance. A sequence starting at 2:57 shows a snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis)*, soon followed by a spider on its cobweb (2:59), to eventually move back to the openness of the landscape with Bianca standing on the grass (3:02). As the vocal part comes to an end, Bianca is shown with a similar beetle walking on her hand (3:40). The coda of the piece is instrumental, and attention is focused on Alessandro

[18] YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtXXB4Uz0lY. Accessed on 09 February 2024.
[19] While this could have been an exemplificative frame of this video, I chose to not show this frame as it conflicts with my own ethics. In the video is not clear whether the beetle has walked on the pages following its own will or has been placed there just to create a visual effect, thus forcing human agency upon the insect. Similar concerns apply for a scene featuring the beetle on the performer's hand.

(3:44-4:06). During this video, the performers are never shown together in the same frame. As the music ends, birdsong can be heard in the background. The video concludes with the detail of the music sheet covered with dead leaves moved by the breeze.

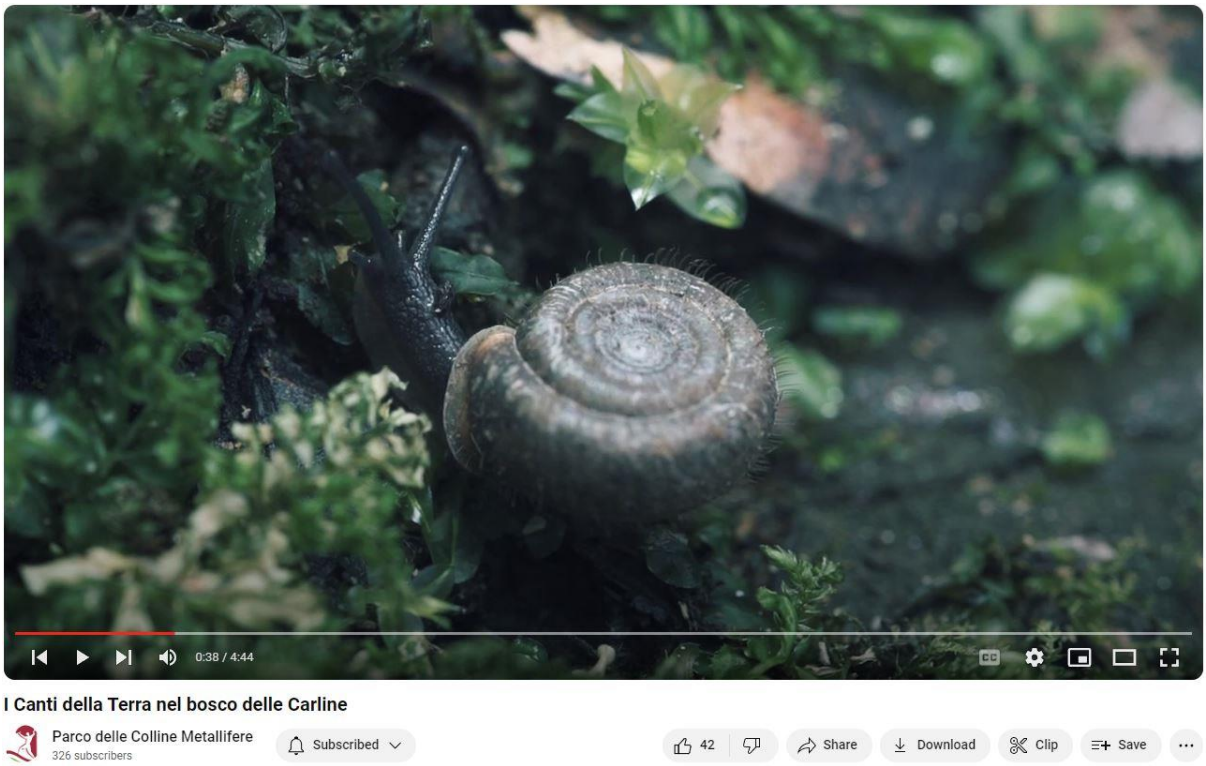


Figure 5.5 A hairy snail (Trochulus hispidus) is featured in the fourth video.

The fifth and last video (4:46 mins) is *I Canti della Terra, Gerfalco* [The Songs of the Earth, Gerfalco]. [20] This conclusive video features all the five musicians involved in this series. Alessandro and Stefano are on their usual instruments, while Dimitri Betti plays the harpsichord and Cristiano Cei the Baroque guitar. The piece performed is the popular English and Scottish ballad *Scarborough Fair*. The video begins with drone footage of the village of Gerfalco, in a similar way to how Montieri was shown in the first video, although this time there is no mist around the village. While the film director still aimed to include elements that reconduct to a sort of naturalistic imaginary—leaves, trees, and grass—the main scene features all the performers playing together on the staircase of the village's church named after San Biagio, and one-by-one in other corners of the village. The video concludes with a slow and evocative movement backwards, with the drone

[20] YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewQ5nYNhp7I. Accessed on 09 February 2024.

moving away from the staircase, while the sunset light painted the houses and the nearby forest (3:40-4:30) (see Figure 5.6).

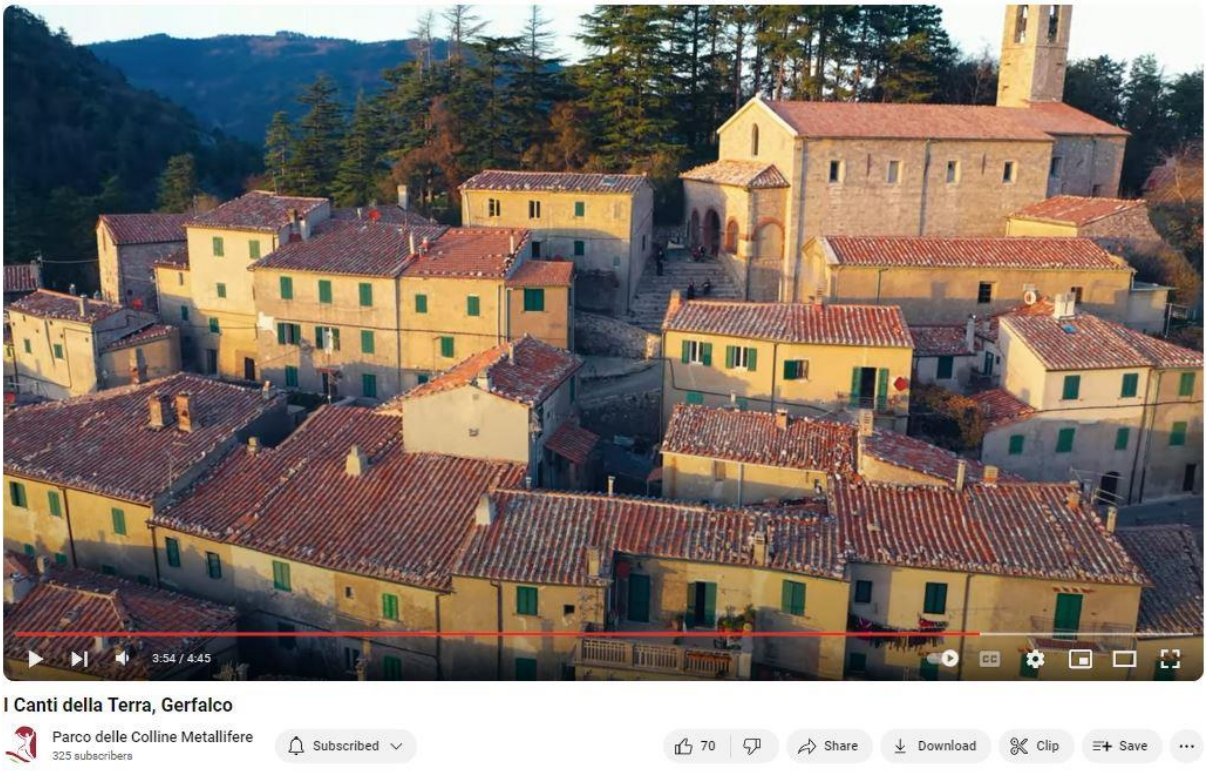


Figure 5.6 The drone moves away from the performers, slowly including in the frame the whole village and the forest of the nature reserve. The performers can still be seen on the staircase in front of the church.

The Making of *I Canti della Terra*

One week before the streaming of the first video, and together with release of the teaser trailer, the park authority posted on its YouTube channel and Facebook page a press conference explaining the rationale behind the video series, including details on its production.[21] Montiery municipality promotes yearly the viol festival, supervised by Alessandro Pierini. Nicola Verruzzi became mayor in 2014 and decided immediately to support the festival, based on what he defined as:

[21] The video of the press conference held on the 11/12/2020 is available at the following YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmz5ud2pahs&list=PLB3G7GrpHwX4XQbAhpqHGXlqXCuqntltk&index=3. The names of the presenters are available in the description, and include Montieri's mayor Nicola Verruzzi, the Tuscany Mining Geopark president Lidia Bai and its director Alessandra Casini, the regional chief officer of Grosseto's Environmental Natural Heritage Management Paolo Stefanini, the artistic director Alessandro Pierini, the flute player Stefano Agostini (one of the performers included in the project), and the filmmaker Federico Santini. Accessed on 12 February 2024.

> a very happy analogy between the viola da gamba, an instrument that during the course of history was abandoned and then found again, and the theme of the villages and internal areas.[22]

According to Nicola, *I Canti della Terra* stems from this analogy to bring music to places that have a millenary history. During the pandemic, they decided together with the Region and the Park authorities to create a professional, high-level cultural product that brings music and places together to contribute to the simultaneous development of the festival and the area, and to the rebirth and regeneration of the latter.[23]

The 2017 agreement is also mentioned by park president Lidia Bai as the regulatory background that facilitated this and other initiatives. The pandemic, Lidia says, helped in refining the potential of all the parts in play, and *I Canti della Terra* represents:

> The valorisation of the territories in the deep province, a province which is far from large [touristic] centres, a province which is sometimes forgotten and outside, so to speak, of the big strategies.[24]

Alessandro Pierini talks about the history of the festival as a successful one, and the speech exudes the love that Alessandro has for the viol da gamba. The pandemic, he argues, has taught that the future needs to be re-designed. He traces another parallel with the history of the instrument:

> As the viol after one-and-a-half-century re-interpreted itself in the midst of the 1900, we are trying to make all the beauty, richness, and potential of Montieri not just a memory. [25]

Alessandro believes that this online version of the festival will promote the area to an unreached audience, and he sees the video series as an instrument of web marketing that matches the music with the beauty of the places. In so doing hopes to:

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[22] Nicola Verruzzi, *I Canti della Terra* press conference, held on 11 December 2020.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Lidia Bai, *I Canti della Terra* press conference, held on 11 December 2020.
[25] Alessandro Pierini, *I Canti della Terra* press conference, held on 11 December 2020.

> Bring in a small municipality like Montieri, not the musicians that perform in Milan or Florence, but the [people from the] city go to discover those places, the music, but not only that, maybe the food, the places, the trails, and the park itself.[26]

In this sense, one of the goals of the videso and the festival is to create a sort of inverse tourist flux, that does not move people from the small to the big centres, but rather from the big to small ones. Similarly to the ecotourism cases analysed in the previous chapter, *I Canti della Terra* is promotes a niche form of tourism that is opposed to the mass tourism that affects popular destinations in this Country. Tourist coming to Montieri and the surrounding park are accomunated by special interest in the suggestive natural and historical dimensions of the area.

Stefano Agostini, the Baroque flute player featured in the second and fifth videos of the series, argues how music is important in a time of distress like the one that they were going through, and how it could help people to cope with ailments and problems. In this sense, it is not incidental that this project happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

> Do you know that music, the world [of music], and the musical environment, [are some] of those most affected by this pandemic situation, because all activities have stopped? There are thousands of operators in the entertainment and music sector who are in enormous difficulty. And on the other hand, in my opinion, one thing that this pandemic should teach us is that surely we should all review something about our way of life, right? And so it seems to me that the fact of having put together, that is, music and this territory also offers a possibility of solving problems and shows us a path for the future.[27]

To reach this conclusion, Stefano considers music and environment as part of the same cultural heritage of the country and argues that bounding the music with the landscape could also benefit the sustainability of the music:

> The cultural heritage is something important like the landscape. For example, ancient villages are an integral part of our cultural heritage, as is music, but music

[26] Ibid.
[27] Stefano Agostini, *I Canti della Terra* press conference, held on 11 December 2020.

> is more difficult, isn't it? Catching it... [music] is a more volatile thing, so it's difficult. We, on this occasion, enhance the cultural heritage.[28]

This work, according to Stefano, serves to re-discover this part of the country through music. Places whose natural beauty resonates with the music, in a way that both can be appreciated.

The spokesperson for the Region, Paolo Stefanini, is inspired by the worldly and visive resemblance between the musical instrument protagonist of the festival, the viol da gamba, and a local endemic flower, the *Viola etrusca*. Paolo sees music—whether in the form of virtual videos or physical festivals—as a tool for facilitating the park's fruition by the public and increasing the interest, care and appreciation for this area from local and distant visitors. But, Paolo says, that there is also a need to be careful in these circumstances and design activities that are compatible with the conservation activities:

> Sometimes what can happen is harm. [...] We should not forget that the nature reserve is made specifically for the protection of nature, so everything that comes has to be compatible with nature. We can do it, we must do it. It seems clear to me that, as evidenced by the work we have done from '97 to today on protected areas, we are ready to do our part, not to put up barbed wire with electricity and keep humans out, but to let us in. [...] On a musical level, then, would be the top of the top with the masters and professionals that I see here. Let's say that they created this magnificent work. I hope we can continue.
>
> In my opinion, on a personal level as well as a technical one, I think this is an excellent line [of work] and I don't consider it as a starting point. I would say that we already reached a good level and we absolutely should persevere in this situation which I think is excellent.[29]

Federico Santini, the filmmaker behind the camera for this project, is a television nature documentarist by trade who enjoys the natural landscape both for work and personal passion. In the press conference, admittedly, Federico says that before this experience he knew nothing about Baroque music, but he enjoyed working on these videos and found

[28] Ibid.
[29] Paolo Stefanini, *I Canti della Terra* press conference, held on 11 December 2020.

the rhythmic component of the music to be of aid during the editing. He therefore had to follow his intuition on the basis of his sensorial perceptions:

> [I could not] rely on those rhythms on which you normally base yourself to edit video clips so I tried more than anything to integrate the suggestions, the suggestion of the sound with the suggestion of the places that were seen, naturally getting help from the fact that there were the musicians playing in these places.[30]

Federico sees these audiovisual products as a way to spread awareness about the places filmed therein, especially those places that are hidden, that are far away from the usual touristic centres—such as the coastal ones, for instance. Hence the videos are a way to enjoy that part of the region, step away from the chaos and enjoy what that part of the territory has to offer.

The work of the performers was carried out in two separate instances. All the music was recorded beforehand in the church of Gerfalco and then juxtaposed on the footage shot by Federico, in order to have a recording that was satisfying quality-wise, including the natural reverberation of the Church ambience,[31] and then the performance was filmed in the chosen place. About this, Stefano recalls that:

> It was very interesting for us to have to repeat the songs during the video shoot. And it was an exciting job, so certainly very pleasant, apart from the effort of reaching the Cornate's peak. But once we got up there was this beautiful view that I didn't know before.[32]

The videos are skillfully edited and synced with the audio so that the average viewer can barely detect any visual differences between the live performance and the recorded version.

[30] Federico Santini, *I Canti della Terra* press conference, held on 11 December 2020.
[31] Stefano Agostini, *I Canti della Terra* press conference, held on 11 December 2020.
[32] Ibid.

Users' Engagement and Responses

The single videos on YouTube and Facebook can be considered the relevant virtual field sites (Przybylski 2020) for this case study. I documented users' engagement on the two platforms. On both Facebook and YouTube users engage prevalently via likes/reactions, comments, and sharing (Kim and Yang 2017; Burgess and Green 2018; Schultes, Dorner, and Lehner 2013). With this in mind, I will now analyze these elements for each individual video and the teaser trailer. Instead of quoting general comments of appreciation in full, I will focus on more detailed reactions. Since tracking the sharing of YouTube videos by users proved challenging, my analysis primarily centers on likes and comments.

As of February 2024, the teaser trailer has reached 2200 views on Facebook[33] and 1800 on YouTube. While there are no comments on the first platform, there are four on the latter, of which three express some sort of generic appreciation and enjoyment, such as "beautiful," "great initiative," and "evocative;" and one more specifically stating:

> @LaMaremmaperDante2021: colourful and intense late autumn with these melodies.[34]

The first video has 1900 views on Facebook and 1400 on YouTube.[35] This is the video that had the greatest engagement in terms of comments. On Facebook, there are three comments of general appreciation, while on YouTube ten users have commented, all positively. Eight comments express general appreciation, while the other two respectively read:

> @Mauropasquali6795: suggestive video. The music is very exciting. Congratulations.
>
> @pierosimonetti1940: Really enchanting! Wise dosage of harmony and voice, of instruments and light. An amenity for the soul.[36]

The second video has 2100 views on Facebook and 731 on YouTube. There are three comments on the first platform, two of which are of general appreciation and one user

[33] https://www.facebook.com/parcocm/videos/3353112991483178. Accessed on 20 February 2024.
[34] Ibid.
[35] https://www.facebook.com/parcocm/videos/405643554035312. Accessed on 20 February 2024.
[36] Ibid.

remembering the many times they climbed that mountain. [37] On YouTube, there are four comments, three of which express appreciation and one commenting about the suggestive footage shown in the video.[38]

The third video has 1400 views and zero comments on Facebook, and 1000 views and seven comments on YouTube.[39] All the comments are once again expressions of appreciation, and two users expressed more specific responses:

> @beatriceserra5107: Marvellous music and suggestive location.
>
> @annamariafabiani2351: You are a daydream, very good.[40]

The fourth video has 499 views and no comments on Facebook, and 607 views and eight comments on YouTube. [41] Of these, six express general appreciation while two comments are more articulated:

> @robertosantini5340: Congratulations on the beauty of the voice, music, filming and direction.
>
> @annamariafabiani2351: "A refreshing bath among sounds and images far from the chaos of the cities, very good.[42]

The fifth video has 1900 views on Facebook and 1400 on YouTube, and with nine comments on the first platform and twelve on the latter, it is by far the most commented one. On Facebook, seven comments are of general appreciation while two are more specifically engaging with the place:

> Massimo Mannella: Enchanting place, the video manages to enhance it!
>
> Maria Barbetti: Well done, beautiful, exciting. Gerfalco is in its best guise.[43]

On YouTube most of the users commenting articulated some precise comments towards the video and the festival itself:

> @mamo055: Excellent artists... beautiful music and video... magical Gerfalco...

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[37] https://www.facebook.com/parcocm/videos/426331218407433. Accessed on 20 February 2024.
[38] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUI4-f5TjF4. Accessed on 20 February 2024.
[39] https://www.facebook.com/parcocm/videos/208150530792630. Accessed on 20 February 2024.
[40] Ibid.
[41] https://www.facebook.com/parcocm/videos/444222043649862. Accessed on 20 February 2024.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Maria Barbetti, three years ago.

@annamariafabiani2351: So beautiful that I wouldn't want it to end. Congratulations to everyone.

@giancarlopagani8771: Truly engaging and fascinating for the places, the music and the artists, congratulations!

@Formicola: "Well done! I feel like singing in harmony... Splendid arrangement as well. Congratulations."

@marconero: Beautiful, congratulations, even the silences at the beginning and end are perfect.

@mauropasquali6795: Beautiful video. Excellent musical performance.

@Luna73565: I will miss these wonderful performances. Let's hope COVID passes soon so I can come and hear you live. ♥

@monsaeris8675: What dreamy atmospheres, capable of lifting those intoxicated by these sweet melodies into a millenarian elsewhere.[44]

Two More Videos

Following the success of the five videos, on the 25th of March 2022 the Park Authority announced on the park website that two more videos would be released and added to the series, making them the sixth and the seventh instalment of the project (Parco Nazionale delle Colline Metallifere 2022). These videos were produced still under the supervision of Alessandro Pierini and the direction of Federico Santini, but they feature new performers, with the only exception of Alessandro. The two videos were released simultaneously, although in the release announcement they are arbitrarily ordered. I will briefly describe them here, including views and relevant comments.

The sixth video (4:13 mins) is *I Canti della Terra*. *Autunno a Gerfalco*[45] [The Songs of the Earth. Autumn in Gerfalco]. This video features a piece composed by Girolamo Frescobaldi titled *Canzon quarta a due canti, da canzoni da sonar, libro primo*. The piece is performed by the Baroque ensemble "*Il Barocco Visionario Modus Phantasticus,*"

[44] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewQ5nYNhp7I. Accessed on 20 February 2024.
[45] YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQ6qRaE4_dk. Accessed on 14 February 2024.

including Beatrice Bianchi and Selina Cremese (violins), Alessandro Pierini (viola da gamba), Tommaso Tarsi (theorbo), and Cecilia Iannandrea (harpsichord). While the video's title would make one think of outdoor spaces and the colours of the autumn, the majority of the footage is filmed inside the *Chiesa della Misericordia* [Church of Mercy] in Gerfalco. The beginning of the video is the only glimpse of autumn shown in the video and features Tommaso playing the theorbo on a bench covered in dead leaves, with some trees showing their seasonal colours in the background (0:12-0:17 and 0:21-0:23). Between 0:18 and 0:20, a brief scene shows one of the violin players walking while playing the instrument outdoors in a similar setting. A drone view of the village is shown between 1:22 and 1:26, but soon the camera returns to focus on the performers inside the church. The video concludes with two outdoor scenes, one featuring the performers standing in a dark alley of the village immersed in the mist at dusk, and one with the drone camera moving above a dark and unrecognisable landscape, in silence.

This video has 2300 views and eleven comments on Facebook[46], and 1102 views and five comments on YouTube[47]. The comments on Facebook are mainly of general appreciation and positive reactions, and one user commented:

> Giovanna Forgeschi: Thanks to you all the music amplifies and makes this little church solemn. [48]

The comments on YouTube are similarly positive, with three out of five expressing a positive reaction and congratulations to the performers, and two praising the musical execution.

[46] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=691827928661634. Accessed on 14 February 2024.
[47] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQ6qRaE4_dk. Accessed on 14 February 2024.
[48] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=691827928661634. Accessed on 14 February 2024.

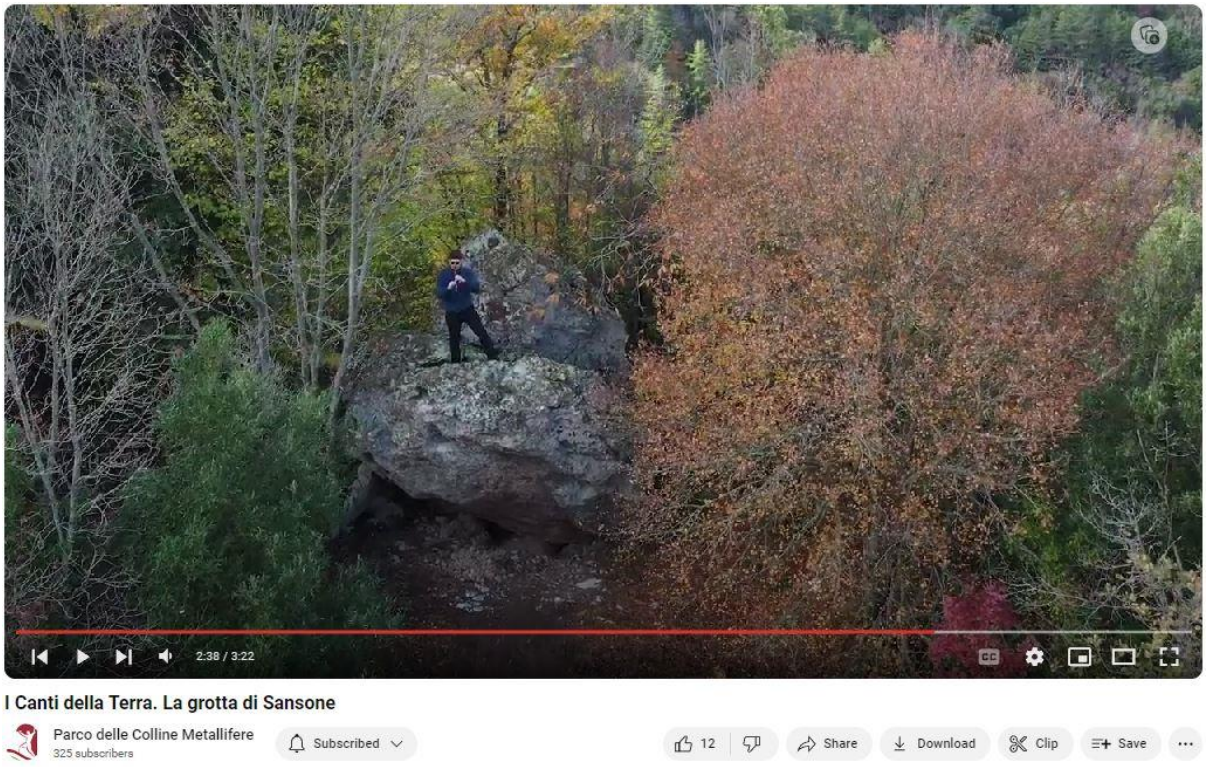


Figure 5.7 Marco Scorticati playing the flute on a rock in the forest in the seventh video.

The seventh video (3:22 mins) is "*I Canti della Terra. La Grotta di Sansone"*[49] [The Songs of the Earth. Sansone's Grotto]. This is a very intimate video that notably features only one piece for solo recorder, *Ricercata sesta*, composed by Giovanni Bassano and here performed by Marco Scorticati. The video description reads:

> The musician is filmed while playing in the woods in an area named "*Il grottino di Sansone"* [Sansone's grotto], from there comes the name of the video. [That place] has always been for the people of Gerfalco a destination for walks and visits. We are at the heart of the *Cornate e Fosini* Nature Reserve, one of the most interesting areas from an environmentalist and naturalistic standpoint, not only of the Tuscany Mining Geopark but of all Tuscany.[50]

The style of the video resembles the one used in the second one, with a combination of details and panoramic landscapes that add depth to the viewing experience of the bucolic performance. The video begins with the camera filming the path to reach the

[49] YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s82DnSXcVqU. Accessed on 14 February 2024.
[50] Ibid, video description.

place of the performance, as if to take the spectators themselves through the trail (0:09-0:14), and soon proceeds to frame the landscape from above, before moving to the performer, standing on a rock (0:18) (see Figure 5.7). The performer is shown also walking in a long sequence between 0:26 and 0:41. A longer sequence in first-person of walking along the path, followed by drone footage of the area is shown again later in the video (1:47-2:09), although with different material. As mentioned, the director here paid much attention to the details, focusing initially on the flora, showing leaves (0:22-0:25, and 0:45-0:50) and flowers (1:03-1:06), but also on the fauna, showing a robin (1:07-1:10) and some birds of the Paridae family (1:11-1:15). The drone is once again one of the director's preferred techniques, as demonstrated by the numerous frames showing the area from above, such as the long sequence showing the forest (1:53-2:09) and the village (2:17-2:24). The video concludes similarly to the second one, with the performer playing the last note and standing on a rock while the drone camera slowly draws back (2:43-3:10).

This video has reached only 364 views and one comment on Facebook[51], and 183 views and one comment on YouTube[52], with both the comments addressing the place filmed. The comment on Facebook reads:

> Giovanna Forgeschi: Thank you for so much beauty from my town Gerfalco, thanks to the director to the musicians, thanks to everyone.[53]

The comment on YouTube reads:

> @vilmasalusti7131: Beautiful and suggestive of the places of my native land. [54]

Virtual Ecotourism in the *Cornate e Fosini* Regional Nature Reserve

The seven music videos described so far included several elements of the nature reserve, such as the Cornate's peak, the Carline's Forest, and the woodland surrounding the

[51] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2497529503716391, accessed on 14 February 2024.
[52] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s82DnSXcVqU. Accessed on 14 February 2024.
[53] https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2497529503716391, accessed on 14 February 2024.
[54] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s82DnSXcVqU. Accessed on 14 February 2024.

villages of Gerfalco and Montieri – while also showcasing the two villages themselves. The entirety of the online audience commented positively about the merging of music and landscape displayed in the videos, and several people highlighted how beautiful, suggestive, and fascinating were the places shown there.

Using the virtuality of the web to visit a place from home is not a novelty in the tourism industry (Wei 2019; Neuburger, Beck, and Egger 2018), and this form of tourism has been defined as virtual tourism, meaning:

> a tourism experience in an electronic environment, which acts as a substitute for the actual travel experience or physical journey. This type of tourism will allow participants to travel to places via new technologies, free of the usual restrictions of time, distance, cost and human frailty (Ali and Frew 2013, 35).

The simplest form of virtual tourism consists of a video accessible by users on their devices that allows them to visit a place in real time while engaging with it through sight and hearing (Verma et al. 2022). Virtual tourism was initially theorised as a niche of tourism in support of heritage tourism (Arnold 2005), although it is with the COVID-19 pandemic that it grew in popularity (Zhang et al. 2022; Godovykh, Baker, and Fyall 2022). Its rise was so notable that virtual tourism has been proposed as a potential strategy for the tourism sector's recovery, both during and after the pandemic (Lu et al. 2022). A study among tourist guides in Catalonia has shown that some have tried to reinvent themselves during the pandemic by doing virtual tours via videos posted on social media (Galí 2022), and a similar strategy including virtual tours has been adopted by museums and cultural institutions all around the world (see Hoffman 2020; Burke, Jørgensen, and Jørgensen 2020). Interestingly, in a study of virtual museum tours in Spain, the most preferred virtual tour was one of the museum parks, highlighting how the virtual visitors missed contact with nature (Pourmoradian, Farrokhi, and Hosseini 2021, 883).

Ecotourism has been significantly impacted during the toughest phases of the pandemic all over the world, with the major negative effects being the loss of revenue and the consequent loss of funding for conservation and sustainable development activities (Virijević Jovanović, Mlađenović, and Zdravković 2021). Often tourist operators and park authorities had to rely on virtual means to aid the delivery of the ecotouristic experience to the visitors. International examples of this strategy go from virtual safaris in

Subsaharian Africa (Barker and Rodway-Dyer 2023) to Penguin TV, a live streaming hosted on YouTube and Facebook showing penguins' life on the Phillip Islands, Australia (Blaer 2023).

Gibson and Connell (2005) have dedicated a chapter of their seminal book on music and tourism to the issue of virtual tourism. The authors avoided confronting themselves with the digital and online world, instead focusing on historical examples of music having the effect of bringing places closer to the audience. Virtual tourism, they argue, was a way to make distant places accessible to those who could not afford it (neither in terms of time nor money), and this during the 19th and 20th centuries often happened through arts (Gibson and Connell 2005, 18-42). Listening to "music could transport the listeners to distant places" (Connell and Gibson 2004, 4), and early examples of music-driven virtual tourism showcase exoticised destinations, such as Ireland and Hawai'i. In these categories, the connection between music and distant places is often literal. According to Gibson and Connell's analysis, the audience will find themselves transported and connected to a place via a musical product that is somehow representative of that particular area '*x*', i.e. traditional music from *x,* music including sound from *x,* songs about *x*, and this product will be likely to be marketed using visual depictions of *x* too (Gibson and Connell 2005, 18-42).

Conversely, in *I Canti della Terra*, the connection between the music and the area is mostly contextual, albeit still an example of virtual (eco)tourism. Music here seems to be a soundtrack, an accompaniment to the immersive experience of the natural park. Similarly to what happens in survival or naturalistic documentaries, the music here "takes the concreteness of such images and imbues them with a more timeless emotional glow" (Nichols 2015, xi), accompanying the users through the distant beauty of the park. *I Canti della terra* is not a documentary series about the *Cornate e Fosini* natural park, or an ethno/musicological film about Baroque music in Tuscany though. Instead, the videos should be viewed as a series of music video clips or fictional films, where accurately representing the place or music genre was not a primary goal of the production team. Rather, they offer a creative interpretation of the connections between music, people, and the landscape of the natural park, with the absence of authenticity not necessarily being considered a flaw. In fact, all the composers whose work is featured in the video series are not related to the place, and only the two last videos (the sixth and

the seventh ones) feature the work of Italian composers, with the majority of the composers being English, French, and German. Moreover, the only two Italian composers featured were neither from the area nor had any connection to it in the record. The genre of the music used for the video series, while coherently Baroque, is also unrelated to the place, as both villages, Montieri and Gerfalco have medieval origins and have traditionally been mining communities until a few decades ago (Nacci 2003). The Baroque performances serve as both the soundtrack for the virtual journey through the park and the focal point of the videos. Along with the visuals, they help create a sense of peacefulness and idyllic natural beauty. In their comments posted during the restriction periods, viewers highlighted the videos' immersive and calming effect, describing how they transported them away from the distressing restricted reality of city life during the lockdown. In other comments posted subsequently, users still expressed their enjoyment of the virtual, musical, eco-tour offered by the videos.

The soundscape is inauthentic too, as further proof of the non-documentaristic aspects of the videos, and environmental sounds are included—most likely in post-production—only to add further depth to a virtual representation of places. In fact, besides the sparse presence of birdsongs in the fourth and seventh videos—and the blowing of the wind included at the end of the second one—in *I Canti della Terra* there is no reference to the local soundscape. The places are somehow silenced, and the presence of the performer looms louder than that of the landscape surrounding them, reinforced by the solemn reverb of the artificial environment where the music has been recorded, the church of Montieri. Of course, this is a consequence of technical requirements and production choices that made the performer record their music beforehand, rather than on-site, where they would have to carry extra heavy and delicate equipment such as computers, recording devices, microphones, stands, and so on. The silencing of nature in the videos—where humanly-made sounds are prioritized—serves both as a symptom and a reflection of the human species that "has occluded the natural world, leaving it voiceless and subjectless" (Manes 1992, 350). As a consequence, the natural beauty of the area often appears more like a backdrop or stage, rather than a thriving ecosystem. The result is very anthropocentric.

Silence was also a product of the specific historical context. In fact, spaces being silenced was a common theme during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. With cities and

streets emptied of most anthropogenic noise due to pandemic restrictions, urban areas were silenced and fell quiet (Giomi 2022). However, outdoor spaces retained their biophony and geophony. With lesser anthropogenic presence and noise, other species thrived, and the biophony and geophony felt more present (Bartalucci et al. 2021). Many people suddenly began to direct their attention to the more-than-human part of the world that was until then being sensorially neglected and/or overlooked.

In contrast to what was happening in the non-virtual world, the videos feature sounds from everything that is more than human but that have been muted. This creates a surreal sonic atmosphere where neither the wind nor the birds make any sounds. However, I believe that this should not be interpreted as an act of acoustic violence that suppressed the sound of other species and the place as a whole. Considering the few comments posted to the videos online and the intentions of the team behind the production of the virtual festival, by prioritising humans' (musical) voices the videos aimed to represent a re-appropriation of those natural spaces that were precluded to many during these difficult times. Given the positive effects of close contact with nature on human well-being (Martin et al. 2020; Richardson et al. 2021), the videos addressed this lack of connection with nature—and with music, and other people—responding with music to the silence and isolation that resonated in many urban areas.

These videos were thought and crafted during the pandemic to create an alternative to the in-person visit to the park and attendance to the festival that many visitors would have enjoyed. Many festival organisers in the world have chosen a similar path during those difficult times (see Perez-Monteagudo and Curras-Perez 2022, Ponomarenko 2022, and Pessina 2024 for some examples), but the uniqueness of the *I Canti della Terra* is the inextricable merging of the music with the landscape: while the music alone does not tell anything about this land, embedding the performances in state-of-the-art music videos made possible for the virtual visitors to embark on a journey towards places that were out of the reach of many, giving respite and a glimpse of nature to those who were confined at home. Once the pandemic was over, the videos kept attracting those users who wanted to enjoy distant places through their music and still constitute excellent marketing material for all the parties involved. Following the definition of ecotourism provided in the previous chapter, *I Canti della Terra*, also represent non-consumptive, nature-based, sustainable experiences. Also, the initiative aimed to raise awareness

about the park, supporting the conservation efforts of the Park Authority and benefiting the local communities, such as the ones of Montieri and Gerfalco.

Resilience, in sustainability studies, means the capacity of a system to face and adapt to change, to absorb disturbance while still retaining its essential functions, identity and meanings (Walker and Salt 2006, 36; Zolli and Healy 2012, 14). To some extent, the making of the videos is a resilient strategy to adapt in the face of the disturbance represented by the COVID-19 pandemic. *I Canti della Terra* is then an audiovisual product that aims at the same time to the cultural and environmental dimensions of sustainability, two dimensions than other than sharing a lexicon (Baron and Walker 2019, 3), are inextricably tied together (Allen 2019, 53-54). The link between the two in this case is evidenced by the combination of different goals and interests pursued by the various stakeholders. Sustainability, both in cultural and environmental contexts is aimed at safeguarding resources believed to be at risk (Titon 2009b). Sustainability is a process that requires resilient strategies enabled through adaptive management that "anticipates, and reacts to, changing circumstances, changes in values, and changes in knowledge" (Titon 2015, 179). Alessandro Pierini, the artistic director of the festival, defined the viola da gamba as an under-recognised instrument that despite being very niche still can grow in popularity, and the festival can help to reach this goal. The village, Gerfalco, belongs to the so-called *inner areas*, places that suffer from a sort of social exclusion due to the comparison with the major cities and major tourist centres along the coast, and the absence of essential services due to the distance from the main governmental bodies and resources (Berti and D'Angelo 2022). The mayor of Montieri stressed how the festival and the other initiatives of the Park Authority are key to dragging the visitors' attention towards these under-recognised areas that are situated outside the usual tourist trails. In this sense, the video series helped to sustain both the conservation activities within a natural park, a music festival themed around a niche Baroque instrument, and the communities of two medieval villages situated in a remote rural area of Tuscany.

This Park Authority's resilient initiative helped make people visit—albeit virtually—the idyllic landscape that is part of the geopark, making them appreciate at a distance the combination of natural and anthropogenic beauty constituted by Gerfalco, Montieri, and the *Cornate e Fosini* regional natural reserve. That happened with complete respect

to the location, as virtual tourism is a strategy that allows visitors to enter a place while maintaining, preserving, and protecting it (Ali and Frew 2013). This strategy was useful during the pandemic, as visiting the place via virtual means constituted a way to bypass and respond to the movement restrictions that were in place at the time that the first five videos were published. The pandemic has had notable positive effects on wildlife and natural areas due to the temporary absence of human beings, and the consequent reduction of their - mostly harmful - activities (Virijević Jovanović, Mlađenović, and Zdravković 2021). While the ideal strategy for protecting these areas would be to keep humans out, a second-best approach is fostering a conscious and respectful co-presence. This is reflected in the videos, where musicians are shown performing in a harmonious—though artificial—relationship with the surrounding landscape.

In his account of music-mediated environmentalisms in the Sailish Sea region, Mark Pedelty encounters a peculiar case that shares similarities with the videos explored in this Chapter. Pedelty argues that recording a music video about the preservation of a place—and filming it within that very place, then uploading it to YouTube—constitutes a new and distinct genre of music videos: "of place, for place, and in place (Pedelty 2016, 216). *I Canti della Terra* differs in that neither the music nor the musicians directly advocate for the preservation of the natural area. Instead, they promote the continuation of the interconnected relationship between nature, music, and expressive culture portrayed in the videos—making this case implicitly ecomusicological. *I Canti della Terra*, too, were made "of place, for place, and in place," although their activist stance is more implicit. They advocate for the responsible human use of the natural area as an ecological model, without adopting an explicitly activist position.

Of course, to some extent, the same technology that enables virtual tourists to access the *Cornate e Fosini* park through these music videos is likely the same one that contributed to the current ecological crisis (Cavallaro 2022). Digitalisation has a tremendous environmental impact, due to the enormous amount of energy required by data centres and the increasing volume of e-waste generated by discarded electronic devices (United Nations Environment Program 2021). Digital music exists in the form of audio files which, along with associated files such as licensing data, metadata, digital rights royalties, videos, and lyrics, all require physical, energy-consuming storage in data centres (Devine 2019a; Brennan and Devine 2020).

Pedelty's reflections on activist YouTube videos—along with the case study presented in this chapter—demonstrate that this same technology can also serve meaningful, positive purposes. The videos demonstrate that a virtual connection with places can still engage the public, even at a distance. Although the videos present several acoustic challenges, they imply that creating music videos in areas of natural beauty can foster meaningful relationships between human communities and their environments. This approach may enhance viewers' well-being, stimulate empathy and emotional attachment, and benefit all the parties involved in this multifaceted relationship, including nature, music, a baroque festival, local communities, and the virtual audience.

Chapter 6

But "What Can We Do?" Raising Environmental Awareness through Environmentalist Musicking

An 80's cover band performs with instruments made out of upcycled everyday objects, in front of people who dance and seem to have a lot of fun. A string quartet performs close to the source of the most important river in the region. In a school's courtyard, children shake bottles filled with gravel, while the teachers clap their hands, and a performer sings an old Italian song about flowers and timber. Various local pop singers perform on the stage of a festival that promotes innovative and sustainable technologies and solutions. In a hall filled with sculptures made out of garbage, the sound of a horsefly became a melody. Even though these events are very different from each other, they share a common goal: to raise environmental awareness, in the hope that people would change their behaviours. These events also share a fundamental element that holds them together: music, either live or pre-recorded, whether pop, funk, art, sound art, R'n'B, or belonging to other genres. Music characterises these events, attracting audiences, engaging with the people, entertaining them, making them dance and participate, and ultimately creating a context where our current worldviews and lifestyles can be questioned, and so alternatives can be suggested.

In the previous two chapters, I described the potential impact that music performances can have in terms of ecotourism, increasing responsible visits to nature reserves and protected areas, and contributing to raising awareness about local

environmental features and issues. In this chapter, I delve into the topic of environmental awareness and how music events and festivals can foster it. In the following sections, I explore five events that include music to raise environmental awareness and educate about pro-environmental behaviours, through not only the presentational part of the performance but mainly through the audience's participation in the event itself. I will describe the events in detail, analysing different ways to raise environmental awareness through music and arguing that the whole events' context—that is, live and communal—is important in conveying the environmental message. Following these findings, I will argue that all the activities that constitute environmentalist musicking events are equally important.

Music and Environmental Awareness

Cristopher Small's musicking theory (1998) is fundamental to my argument about environmentalist musicking. Small argues that music should be intended not as a noun indicating an object, but rather as an "activity, something that people do" (ibid., 2). Therefore music should be intended as a verb (i.e. to music) that indicates a series of actions connected to a musical piece or performance, for instance "to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, [...] by composing, or by dancing" (ibid., 9). Small factors within musicking also ticket-sellers, roadies, sound engineers, the cleaning staff, and so forth, as they all contribute "to the nature of the event that is a musical performance" (ibid.). Small's theory has been criticised for being primitivist and essentialist to some extent, as in previous drafts of this idea (see Small 1987) he referenced music's "potential to recover a primitive sociality that has been lost" (Hesmondhalgh 2013, 89). However, this theory is still highly relevant and popular inside and outside music studies. Musicking enables a "set of relationships" (Small 1998, 13) revolving around the musical performance, which facilitates the construction of "meaningful identities, [to] help us find our place in the world and [to] help us flourish" (Baym 2018, 25). Musicking is a genre of social and relational practice (Loaiza 2016) that creates and enables an environment in which all the participants—whether they are performers, audience, dancers, event organisers, etc.—

can engage with other participants' subjectivities and experiences (Clarke, DeNora, and Vuoskoski 2015). Musicking includes both individual and social activities (Wald-Fuhrmann et al. 2021) and can revolve around both virtual and offline musical practices (Nilsson 2014; Wald-Fuhrmann 2023). It is connected to human play (Ashley 2021), and as such it facilitates social bonding (Savage et al. 2021) and aids the individuals' mood regulation (V. Peters et al. 2024).

Environmental issues are social issues (Zelezny and Schultz 2000, 365), caused by human behaviours and therefore changeable by changing people's behaviours to promote environmental quality (Steg et al. 2014). Environmental awareness is people's acknowledgement of the impact that humans have on the environment (Fu et al. 2020, 2), including the attitude towards its consequence (Ham, Horvat, and Mrčela 2016) and general public perception of environmental issues (Geng and He 2021). Sometimes environmental awareness can elicit people to engage in pro-environmental behaviours (Ham, Horvat, and Mrčela 2016), meaning all those actions that enhance the quality of the environment (Steg et al. 2014, 104). Pro-environmental behaviours include low-cost individual behaviours such as recycling and saving water, lifestyle changes such as saving energy, 'green' consumerism, and reduced car use. They also include collective behaviours, such as belonging to an environmentalist group, protesting, and volunteering (Jiménez Sánchez and Lafuente 2010). Environmental awareness has a direct impact on pro-environmental behaviours (Si, Jiang, and Meng 2022), and some studies have demonstrated that people who are more aware and concerned about current local and global environmental issues are more likely to engage in such behaviours (Kousar et al. 2022; Fu et al. 2017).

What can music do in this sense? How can music elicit pro-environmental behaviours? How can music help to address pressing ecological issues, such as climate change? Music psychologist Helen Prior claims that the power of music "to change listeners' and performers' emotions, moods, thoughts, levels of empathy, and beliefs" (2022, 12) can be instrumental in addressing the current ecological crisis. According to music educator Daniel Shevock, music can be used to connect to local places, experience nature in meaningful and ethical ways, and cultivate eco-literacy (2015, 17; 2018). In his seminal study of environmentalist musicians in the Salish Sea region, anthropologist Mark Pedelty argues that one of the major contributions that music makes

is towards the communication of environmental issues, thus raising environmental awareness, communicating informational messages directly and helping in framing the debate about such issues (2016, 252-254). Environmentalist music asks audiences "to feel and care more deeply about environmental issues" (ibid. 254), to do what scientific information fails for most of the population, providing a sensorial and emotional connection with places and empathy towards environmental issues, rather than intellectual engagement with them (ibid.).

In ecomusicological literature, there are several cases of music raising environmental awareness and eliciting pro-environmental behaviours. Music raises environmental awareness by conveying an Indigenous understanding of places (see for example Ramnarine 2009; Dirksen 2018b; Post 2021; Hamill/čnaq'ymi 2023) and exploring the relationship between humans and non-human animals (see for example Baily 1997; Silvers 2020; Graper 2018; 2023; Rothenberg 2005; 2023). Music frames and shapes the debate about the environmental impact of human activities (Stimeling 2012) and environmental disasters (Stimeling 2014). Music is used by environmentalist activist movements to motivate protesters (Pieslak 2014), and often it is composed to constitute an act of activism itself (Torvinen 2022; DeLaurenti 2016). Musical genres used for environmentalist purposes may vary. Rap has been used as a tool for protesting about human-induced environmental disasters and their social consequences (Little and Przybylski 2022), for environmental education projects in schools (Cermak 2012) and to document relationships between humans, non-humans, and the built environment (Rosenthal 2006)(Rosenthal 2006). In India, Bhajan and Kirtan have been used to urge people to not pollute and throw garbage into the river Gange (Luthy 2019).

The modes of presentation and participation (Turino 2008) of environmentalist music also vary, and while some research demonstrates that participatory community setting can be effective (Mark 2016; Pedelty 2017; Rickwood 2014), even more presentational forms of environmental music such as music videos (Pedelty et al. 2020; Pedelty 2020) have had an impact on raising environmental awareness resulting in a change in policies (Pedelty 2023).

Similarly to the diverse scholarly directions within ecomusicology (Allen 2021), the case studies of music used to raise environmental awareness in the literature reviewed (and in this chapter too) are situated on a continuum that goes from the poetic to

practical.[1] Paraphrasing Allen, a *poetic* level of engagement regards the aesthetic of the event and/or the music, whereas a *practical* level of engagement concerns the activist and/or advocating performative action of the music. But the events are also organised on another continuum, that goes from implicit to explicit. By explicit environmentalist music, I refer to music that directly conveys information and raises environmental awareness, with musicians explicitly instructing listeners on what actions to take and how to address environmental issues. On the other hand, implicit environmentalist music refers to music that serves more as a contextual backdrop, helping to shape the discourse and bring people together at significant environmental events, where they can engage in discussions and learn about pro-environmental behaviors. In this latter category, music frames contexts that inform and advocate for environmental change and action, rather than aiming to educate about it. While the implicit/explicit distinction may seem like a binary either/or, I intend it as a continuum. The events explored in this chapter range from implicit to explicit, though most fall somewhere in between. None of them feature entirely implicit or entirely explicit environmental content; rather, they present a combination of both, which is also subject to audience interpretation.

Environmentalist music festivals (such as the last one that I am going to mention in this chapter) often are situated towards the explicit end of the continuum. Tourism scholar Donald Getz argues that events are at the same time the context and the determinant for—in this case pro-environmental—behaviour (Getz 2007, 66), Moreover, attending such events means entering a liminal zone where the cognitive and affective experience are modified, resulting in a feeling of transformation (ibid. 180). In this sense, music festivals, despite their arguable environmental impact proved to be effective in promoting pro-environmental behaviours and low-impact policies in a communal setting, a microcosm outside of everyday life that offers significant transformational potential (O'Rourke, Irwin, and Straker 2011b; Brennan et al. 2019).

What follows are events that aim to raise environmental awareness and elicit pro-environmental behaviours. The descriptions of the events are positioned along the

[1] "By *poetic* I denote a scholarly engagement with what is aestethic and/or interesting. By *practical* I denote a scholarly concern with what is activist and/or advocating" (Allen 2021, 105). See the introduction of this dissertation for a discussion of this quote.

implicit–explicit continuum outlined above, ranging from the most implicit to the most explicit, thereby illustrating the various possibilities that exist along it.

Circusbandando

At the end of May 2023, I drove to the town of Ponsacco as I was interested in a few performances happening at a local event, named Ecological Party, organised within a local park. I arrived early for the main performance, which was right after a show to entertain kids. My attention was drawn to the background used during the show that just ended: some old garbage bins with some staff notation flowing from and through them, including some musical notes (see Figure 6.1).



Figure 6.1 Circusbandando background at the Festa Ecologica di Ponsacco. Photo by the author on 27 May 2022.

Intrigued, I decided to learn more about it, and after the event I managed to find the performers online and email them. A swift response arrived in my inbox, inviting me to attend the same show that was going to happen at an elementary school in Santa Croce

sull'Arno in a few weeks. I was welcomed at the school by Paco Paquito—the stage name of Pasquale Cirullo, one of the two members of Circusbandando, an organization aimed at using music and theatre to educate about various themes. The groups of children arrive soon after. From the start, Paco demonstrated his ability to manage the situation by organizing the space and the audience, and seating the older kids in front of the younger ones. He explained afterwards that their shows aim to be educational on multiple levels: these are lessons both on the theme of the show and about discipline and group dynamics, and potentially an applied pedagogy lesson for the educators attending the shows too.[2]

The show starts with the song that gives its name:

Sciabadì sciabadai, usa e getta mai mai mai. [Sciabadì sciabadai,[3] never use disposable items]The show features a variety of musical moments, songs, stories, and games. The main story is told in rhyming verses and recited by Paco, while Celestina (stage name of Giulia Villa) plays multiple roles. She not only assists on stage but also manages the sound engineering, playing songs from her laptop and occasionally suggesting rhymes to Paco. Celestina is also the graphic designer of all the shows and painted and produced all the backgrounds herself. The show

[2] Pasquale Cirullo, interview by the author on 21/08/2023.
[3] These first two words do not have any sense, there are onomatopoeic sounds that rhyme with the Italian adverb *mai* [never].

brings up the theme of recycling and waste management framing it into the story, with invented characters (like the puppet *Spaz*, and a plastic-haired Poseidon) that through Paco's rhymes and songs speak for the importance of recycling and correct waste management. Paco demonstrates his versatility as a performer, playing various instruments throughout the show while keeping the children engaged. On this occasion, he played the guitar and flute and had planned to play the accordion before rain forced a change of plans. At the centre of the stage were four crates labelled for different types of waste: one for paper, one for plastic containers, one for water bottles, and one for cans, all empty. The last three crates, however, were all filled with rocks and gravel, making them sound like shakers.

The kids were involved in the performance from the start. Paco and Celestina believe in the importance of ensuring that every child has the chance to participate at least once. The kids received one recycled shaker each and, directed by Celestina,

accompanied Paco who sang Sergio Endrigo's 1974 hit *Ci vuole un fiore,*[4] followed by a Zecchino d'Oro's song about recycling, *L'astronave di Capitan Rottame*[5] (see Figure 6.2). The song repertoire is not fixed, and Paco and Celestina keep working on the material, changing the content of the show to adapt and improve it every time. In a previously documented version of the show, Paco sings a song about recycling that he composed himself, where he urges to stop producing waste in the world of disposable items (see Maggini and Micheli 2007 for a transcription of the song).

Towards the end of the second song, the grey clouds that were overseeing the entire show started pouring down rain on us, Paco and Celestina decided to wrap up the performance, moving the kids under the tree canopy at the side of the garden, and then concluding the show with a last song. I helped them pack all the stage material and load the van, and we went for lunch.

Circusbandando has a repertoire of eleven educational musical shows, covering a range of different topics, from recycling and water consumption to education about road safety, mindful technology use, body acceptance, and many others. Paco and Celestina both see education as a focal contribution towards a better, more just, and more

[4] *Ci vuole un fiore* is one of Italy's quintessential ecological songs. While the song is rather anthropocentric—focusing on human needs for natural resources—it offers a lesson about our relationship with those resources. The song was performed by Sergio Endrigo with lyrics written by renowned children's author Gianni Rodari. The lyrics recites:

Per fare un tavolo ci vuole il legno	[To make a table, you need the wood
Per fare il legno ci vuole l'albero	To make the wood, you need a tree
Per fare l'albero ci vuole il seme	To make a tree, you need a seed
Per fare il seme ci vuole il frutto	To make a seed, you need a fruit
Per fare il frutto ci vuole il fiore	To make a fruit, you need a flower
Ci vuole un fiore, ci vuole un fiore	You need a flower, you need a flower
Per fare tutto ci vuole un fiore	To make everything, you need a flower].

[5] *Lo* Zecchino d'Oro is a famous festival of children's music, featuring various artists that compose songs for children witha pedagogical value. The song in question can be listened on their website at the following link: https://zecchinodoro.org/canzone/lastronavedicapitanrottame, accessed on 27/04/2024. The lyrics of the song are about a device that gathers waste to recycle it. The chorus, quite evocatively, says:

Riciclare significa salvare	[To recycle means to save
Il pianeta, la nostra terra.	The planet, our Earth.
Riciclare vuol dire trasformare	To recycle means to transform
Evitando l'estinzione.	And to avoid extinction].

egalitarian society, so much so that Paco embraced a teaching career (from which he recently retired). *Circusbandando* aims to:

> Merge education with creativity, art, and great fun, which is a *conditio sine qua non* to make life better for everyone, children and adults. [*Circusbandando*] is social theatre.[6]



Figure 6.2 Paco (centre) plays the guitar and sings, while Celestina (right) and the kids play the garbage-derived shakers. "Spaz" the puppet protagonist of the story stands on the left. Photo by the author. The date is not specified to protect students anonymity.

The idea of the show began when they had children and started adapting their work and performances to their experience of parenthood. Fuelled by their shared sense of

[6] Pasquale Cirullo, interview by the author on 21 August 2023.

social commitment, they devised performances that aim to educate children based on children's needs and ways to experience the world.[7] According to Paco,

> [children] learn through the body, through doing, and so we made a very engaging educational theatre where the kids do things with us. They do not only observe. And we respect them, we do not make fun of them.[8]
>
> There is an emotional involvement that makes [the children] develop attention. And attention in adults and kids fades, but when the kids are involved that becomes a game, and in the end, no one is tired of playing. This is the sum [of what we do], you never get tired of playing.[9]

While *Circusbandando* organises shows addressed to children, they are engaging with the adults present too:

> [This] is applied pedagogy on current themes such as waste, water, environmental education, road safety education, sport, reading... and that is a refresher course for the teachers too, they see us working with recycled materials to make the scenarios and scene objects [and that we handle] great and small groups of people, all together, 20, 200, 1000, in one and a half hours.[10]
>
> Parents, teachers, grandparents, there's always some adults with the kids. We speak to these adults too [...] who find themselves in a context that is real theatre, where the kids are [theatrical] characters that intervene with their spontaneity in the play's structure, with an element of improvisation.[11]

Music is everpresent in *Circusbandando*'s performances, and they have published a few CDs of Paco's own songs.[12] They also employ tracks to perform other's songs during their shows. Normally they send the songs to the teachers before the shows to make them

[7] Music holds in fact a strong potential for environmental education projects (Gambirasio 2022b), and projects similar to *Circusbandando* were noted by Pedelty in British Columbia (Pedelty 2016, Chapters 4 and 5).
[8] Giulia Villa, Interview by the author on 21 August 2023.
[9] Pasquale Cirullo, interview by the author on 21 August 2023.
[10] Pasquale Cirullo, interview by the author on 21 August 2023.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Available on their website.

prepare the kids for them, and on more than one occasion the teachers re-used the songs for other projects.[13]

Despite its apparent chaos, every *Circusbandando* show is a well-well organised performance, where Paco and Celestina deliver, implicitly through a combination of symbols and participatory performances, essential life knowledge to the children. They use music to make the children participate in the embodied activity of learning about how to respectfully interact with each other, with themselves, and with the world.

Gaudats Junk Band

It was Easter Monday 2023, and I was enjoying a stroll with my partner in the seaside part of the town where I was born and grew up, Cecina. I had not been in the area for a while, and I was pleasantly surprised to see that there were many events organised there on that day, in an area that has always been alive only during summer thanks to the tourist flows. In the main square, a large crowd was gathered and singing in unison "rollin', rollin', rollin' on the river" a verse from the refrain of the 1969 hit *Proud Mary* by the American rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival.[14] The song was catchy, the music engaging. We enjoyed the music as we walked by. A closer look (online, as the square was so crowded that was impossible to get closer to the stage) revealed an unexpected detail. The instruments were not the *usual* instruments that one would expect to see at a rock performance, such as electric guitar, bass, drums, etc. Or better, they were playing those instruments, but the instruments were looking significantly different as if they were the result of a very skilful upcycling process (see figure 6.3). The guitars were squared-wooden boxes like those used to carry wine bottles, the bass was a white plastic container, and the drums and percussions were made of various pipes, buckets, cardboard, and other unrecognisable items that seemed to be taken from a landfill: the name of the band really represented them, as it indeed was a *junk* band.

[13] Giulia Villa, Interview by the author on 21 August 2023.
[14] The Gaudats Junk Band played the same song at their TEDx performance/talk, available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15KIt5ak_kE, accessed on 24 April 2024.



Figure 6.3 Guitarist Paolo Sodini plays his handmade upcycled resonator guitar made out of a wooden wine box and a pasta strainer on 09 April 2023 in Cecina. Source: Facebook.

In late June, the same band performed in their hometown of Capannori to celebrate the completion of a European Union-funded project. The project focused on designing and implementing local upcycling networks in four Mediterranean cities—Cordoba (Spain), Capannori (Italy), New Deir Allaa (Jordan), and Sakiet Ezzit (Tunisia). These

networks manage all types of waste, including organic materials, electrical appliances, books, clothing, furniture, and more (Quilez 2020). The part of the project that took place in Capannori included several upcycling workshops to educate the public about the topic. For example, they taught how to make purses out of clothes. Capannori is not new to these initiatives, as it hosts a Zero Waste research centre aimed at identifying and addressing waste management issues within the municipality, with the goal of developing means to recycle and upcycle the entirety of the waste produced in the area.[15] Thanks to this project, Capannori is the first Italian municipality to follow a zero-waste policy (Connet 2013, 106-115). The research centre has been founded by Rossano Ercolini, ex-president of Zero Waste Europe and Zero Waste Italy who won the Goldman Prize for his work and commitment towards the environment.[16] Rossano's approach is firmly grounded in localised actions while maintaining a global focus and reach. The solutions to the environmental challenges—he says in one of his latest books—ought not to be imported or passively parachuted into a place and imposed onto the population. Instead, they need to be transformed through a process of creative and original adaptations, resulting from locally-rooted participative actions (Ercolini 2020, 67). This idea has taken (musical) shape in the Gaudats Junk Band.

The project's final event took place in a hostel courtyard, where a local councillor opened with a speech highlighting the project's significance. The councillor praised the band, set to perform later, noting how their energy resonates with the festival's themes and aligns with local policies. I later learned that the band members are regarded as local celebrities, with some having successful careers in the music industry.[17] This drew a large crowd of locals eager to hear them perform live in their hometown. While the speech was ongoing, I noticed that the performance stage was set up in another corner of the courtyard. Out of curiosity, I approached it to take a closer look at the upcycled instruments on display (see figure 6.4).

[15] https://www.rifiutizerocapannori.it, accessed on 24 April 2024.
[16] https://www.corriere.it/ambiente/13_aprile_15/rossano-ercolini-premio-goldman-ambiente-nobel-ambientale-capannori_a7ed40ba-a5e0-11e2-956c-2114dad3bbcc.shtml, accessed on 24 April 2024.
[17] The frontman, Rick Hutton, conducted several music focused television programs, and the bassist, Marco Bachi, plays the bass with the folk rock band Bandabardò.



Figure 6.4 The plastic-container bass and the junk drum set. Photo by the author on 23 June 2023.

Around 9.30 PM, the concert started, and the people moved from the corner where the speech was held to the stage. The band took the stage and settled into their instruments. They quickly revealed themselves to be quirky individuals, not there to lecture on moral ethics or the importance of recycling and upcycling, but to entertain the audience and ensure everyone had a great time. And they are quite good at this as their entertainment skills are equal only to their musical ones. People were dancing, clapping their hands and singing along to their variegated repertoire that varied between rhythm and blues, reggae, funk, pop and rock hits mostly from the 70s and 80s. On the stage there were two guitarists, one slide guitarist, one bassist, one drummer, one percussionist and two vocalists (see Figure 6.5).

Their attire was part of the theme of the band too. During a break between two songs, they said that everything (almost) of what they were wearing on stage was coming from a local organisation that collects and distributes second-hand clothing. The band brought the attention of the audience to their peculiar instrumentation too, describing

the materials used to create them, but always in a playful and light tone. The amplifiers were custom-made to reflect the spirit of the band too, but despite their cheap appearances they included top-notch technology, and were made for the band by the Italian bass amplifier maker Mark Bass.



Figure 6.5 Gaudats Junk Band performing at Lunata Hostel in Capannori on 23 June 2023. Photo by the author.

After the concert and during the one-hour drive to my house, I found myself reflecting on the outstanding quality of the sound and the overall performance, considering the cheap nature of the materials employed. It was literally junk: wooden boxes, plastic containers, pipes, worn-off flip-flops, canisters, pieces of scrap metal and plastic, a suitcase, a pasta strainer. Soon after I contacted the band through their

website[18] explaining the nature of my study, keen to learn more about what I thought was an extraordinary combination of environmental ethics and fun.

I received an answer from the band's founder, Daniele Guidotti (the name Gaudats derives from a distortion of his surname), the percussionist that I had seen beating a set of orange plastic pipes with two flip-flops (see figure 6.3, at the left)—or playing the *tubofono* [lit. pipephone], an instrument that as humorously explained on their website, can be played only with well-worn flip-flops, because of their elasticity.[19] While this type of light humour pervades the band's aesthetic and their performances, Daniele is extremely serious with his approach to music, to the band, and to the environmental issue, also thanks to the particular context of the zero waste ideology in which he is living:

> We are from Capannori, and this influenced us. The [Zero Waste] project is a source of inspiration. I have always been passionate about environmental issues, but living there I am constantly stimulated as I am surrounded by this movement. And so I asked myself, as a musician, what can I do in this sense? So I decided, around 2015, to make some instruments with recycled materials. So I threw myself into this. I locked myself in my house for one year. I took the so-called sabbatical, saying that I wanted to do something for me, that I like, and if that is liked by others, even better. At first, I admit, I was seen as crazy. I used to study overnight because I am no luthier, although I am an atypical musician who likes a bit of every instrument, and I was interested to learn about their functioning. I educated myself and tried [to build those instruments], supported by my musician friends.[20]

I was curious to learn about their particular formula. At the two concerts that I witnessed, their message was not being said, and yet it was present, it was performed through their instruments and clothes while they focused on making the audience have a good time.

> We have fun together, but we send a message. We are a bit crazy but we are aware of this message that we send through music—which has considerable power. We

[18] https://www.gaudats.it, accessed on 24 April 2023.
[19] https://www.gaudats.it/tubofono/, accessed on 24 April 2023.
[20] Daniele Guidotti, interview by the author on 11 July 2023.

> do not say this on the stage, nor do we say it clearly, but sometimes this lightness is necessary to speak about some issues. [The concert] is a fun moment and we want to demonstrate that music can be done with anything.[21]

Following Rossano Ercolini's advice, Daniele brings this project to schools too, teaching students from six to twelve years of age to build simple musical instruments to educate them about craftsmanship, music, and the environment and its issues at the same time. He devised an educational persona, Doktor Gaudats, that he impersonates during school projects and workshops characterised by his combination of fun and education. Daniele gives great attention to the benefits of being able to use the hands to build the instrument, to make the students experience hands-on what recycling means:

> I always try to give [to the students] pills of good practices about recycling: how to recycle, how does it work, and so on. The kids are very sensitive about these issues, but they don't know what to do, although they know that it is positive to do something about it. [...] I give them a list of objects that we can reuse, I believe it is important that they look into their household waste. That is an action already, they have to reinvent the future.[22]

What is the impact of this work? How can building instruments help to achieve less wasteful communities?

> [What I do] does not solve the problem. It's not that I do what I do and I solve the problem. This serves to send messages, to stimulate people to think and reinvent everything. I work well with young people because they are the future generation.[23]

The work of the band is representative of this thought. While their music can not change waste-management processes or influence the policies directly, it sends light-but-powerful messages and fuels curiosity and interest in the creation of possible alternatives. Through their stage persona, the Gaudats subtly convey the importance of recycling and environmental engagement. While they avoid directly instructing the

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

audience on pro-environmental behavior, their message is effectively communicated through the symbols of their performativity.

Riciclare ad Arte

In Spring 2022, through friends, I came to know about a festival centred on promoting sustainable behaviours, such as recycling and upcycling, through art. At that time, the festival was still being planned, and I approached the organisers to learn more about it. The event was designed as an art exhibition to happen during two weekends at the end of the Summer in Castellina Marittima. When I first reached out to the organiser, Samuela Nati, my intention was to gather more information about the festival and enquire about its sonic dimension. To my interest, they said they wanted to organise something in that sense but had neither the resources nor the contacts to make it happen. I embraced the opportunity and offered myself to organise this part of the event, and for practical reasons, I decided to not organise performances involving other musicians but rather to step up and create a series of sound art compositions to populate the soundscape of the exhibition. The thought process and the technicalities behind the making of the eight pieces are thoroughly described in Chapter 2. Here I focus instead on the analysis of the event as a whole.

To tie the compositions with the rest of the exhibition, Samuela asked me to connect, conceptually, each composition to one of the paintings or sculptures featured in the exhibition and to make a video that would explicitly present those connections.[24] The eight tracks were named after the main sound featured in the recordings, as follows:

1. *Ruscello* [Stream]
2. *Bar* [Bar]
3. *Cicale* [Cicadas]
4. *Frantoio di Rosignano Marittimo* [Olive oil mill in Rosignano Marittimo]

[24] The exhibition featured the work of the artists Ignazio Fresu, Gustavo Maestre, Simona Albini, Alessandro Grazi, and Stefano Pilato. The 24'31'' presentational video that I made for the exhibition is watchable in full at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJaqMo4q9Zo, accessed on 25 April 2024.

5. *La Metamorfosi del Tafano* [Horsefly's Metamorphosis]
6. *L'ultimo grillo di via Casimarsi* [The last cricket in Casimarsi road]
7. *Porto di Cecina* [Cecina's Port]
8. *Pastina* [Pastina]

The festival, named *Riciclare ad Arte* [recycling with art], was planned for the 27th and 28th of August and the 3rd and 4th of September 2022 in a two-storey building owned by Castellina's municipality and that hosted the local eco-museum in its basement.[25] The installation, paintings and sculptures were scattered around the big hall, while the video that I made was screened in a loop on a screen, and the audio played through some speakers (see Figure 6.6).

[25] https://www.comune.castellina.pi.it/aree-tematiche/ecomuseo-/5767, accessed on 25 April 2024.



Figure 6.6 The author and some visitors watching and listening to the audiovisual installation that I prepared for the exhibition. Photo by Samuela Nati, 24 August 2022.

The goal of the event was:

> To create a format that shows different perspectives on a single path, capable of leading visitors to greater awareness of the topics covered and giving rise to the desire for a new, more sustainable way of living. All of this will be developed through the exhibition of original art pieces and creations [...] The exhibition focuses on the mindset of recovery and reuse through art and craftsmanship, in continuity with the commitment of the *RinnovArte* association in the field of circular economy. The goal is to positively impact, precisely through art, the

> mindset of sustainable recycling.[26] Art represents a regeneration of matter that can inspire all the other regenerations upon which the circular economy is based (RinnovArte 2022).

During the four days of the festival, several visitors attended the exhibition, although the exact number of attendees was not recorded. During the whole duration of the event, I spent my time asking questions to anyone willing to describe their experience with me. Most visitors seemed to agree on the importance of art to raise awareness and stimulate conversations on the topic of recycling and sustainability and reacted positively to the inclusion of music in the exhibition. The following are a few selected comments that I recorded:

> "Art arouses emotions and contributes to raising awareness on the issue."[27]
>
> "Art is a fundamental vehicle. Art and music bring us closer to the beauty that surrounds us. When something arouses something in you, that is a personal connection."[28]
>
> "The artwork gives sensations and emotions. The function of art on this theme is to communicate it, starting a thought, and idea."[29]

In the aftermath of the festival, Samuela was quite happy with my participation too, and expressed her thoughts regarding my music in relation to the goals of the festival and of the organisation:

> My goal was to raise awareness about themes such as recycling and circular economy. To have recycled the sounds of nature too was thrilling. I thought of [visual] art, food, and craftsmanship, but I have never thought of music, and it became an important element of the exhibition. It was an experiment, and it worked out.[30]

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[26] While commenting on this text, Dr. Aaron Allen pointed out that there is no such thing as sustainable recycling, as the word *recycling*, in English, should imply sustainability. The need for the adjective *sustainable*, indicates how recycling can also be a form of greenwashing.
[27] Audience #1, *Riciclare ad Arte,* interview by the author on 04 September 2022.
[28] Audience #2, *Riciclare ad Arte,* interview by the author on 03 September 2022.
[29] Audience #3, *Riciclare ad Arte,* interview by the author on 03 September 2022.
[30] Samuela Nati, interview by the author on 04 November 2022.

The success of the event was also due to the extensive online and offline marketing operation conducted by Samuela before the festival that attracted people from other areas of the region. Some of the audience members expressed that they were interested in visiting the exhibition after they saw a flyer publicising it.[31]

Reactions from the locals were instead mixed. While several people living in the area visited the exhibition, certain connections between *RinnovArte* and a local organization were disorganised, giving the impression that the engagement was not as hoped by Samuela. The festival was not replicated the following year.

This example is somewhat situated in the middle of the implicit/explicit continuum. On one hand, practical ideas about creative recycling were presented to the audience through art. On the other hand, the message was implicit in the context of the event, as there were no formal lessons on the topic. In this sense, in this festival music added a sonic context to the exhibition, and it encouraged the visitors to reflect on the "second life of things,"[32] the second life of the material objects and immaterial sounds that we all encounter in our everyday lives.

Passaggi

But "what can music do in today's society?"[33]

With this reflexive question, Stefano Zanobini starts our phone conversation. It is a hot August morning, and the intense heatwave that struck Tuscany in late July has begun to subside. The weather is still very warm, but more tolerable, especially in the countryside. Stefano had emailed me a few days before, after I had reached out to the organisation where he serves as artistic director, *Giotto in Musica* [Giotto in Music]. They started with the goal of bringing music to small urban centres, but they soon centred its activities on culture-based interdisciplinary actions centered on the most fragile folds of

[31] Audience #3, *Riciclare ad Arte,* interview by the author on 03 September 2022.
[32] Ignazio Fresu, one of the artists whose work was featured in the exhibition. Interview by the author on 28 August 2022.
[33] Stefano Zanobini, Interview by the author on 11 August 2023.

our society, in the belief that art can and must be a bridge to open new avenues of reflection and debate on the most lively social issues. [34]

I reached out to them after I found their work and some of their events advertised online, with my attention caught by the title, theme and contexts of the festival and some of the events of the festival planned for Summer 2023. *Passaggi* [passages] is a widespread festival occurring in and around some municipalities East and North of Florence, such as Borgo San Lorenzo, Pontassieve, San Godenzo, Fiesole, Bagno a Ripoli, and Figline Valdarno. The festival poster for the 2023 edition included four themes: Concerts, Rights, Walks, and Nature (see Figure 6.7).

Several of the concerts of this—and past—editions were also set in areas of naturalistic interest, close to rivers that are culturally and biologically significant for the local ecosystem (such as the rivers Arno and Sieve) and in rural areas. Although I couldn't attend any of their events in person due to other fieldwork commitments, Stefano was eager to discuss them with me, including the themes and the reasoning behind their organization. To explore the topic further, we scheduled a phone interview. This is how Stefano described the themes of the festival:

> The Festival *Passaggi* is a festival that happens in many places, and it is based on the assumption that listening to music benefits and enriches the listener. What can music do in today's society? My approach in this sense is the one that informed the making of the festival and the other activities of the organisation *Giotto in Musica*. There must be a concrete outcome, which does not necessarily mean to make Mozart known by… I don't know, by the owners of a bakery in Borgo San Lorenzo, but rather to increase people's active citizenship. And we do it with what we have, with our weapons, those of music.[35]

[34] https://giottoinmusica.wordpress.com, accessed on 23 April 2024.
[35] Stefano Zanobini, Interview by the author on 11 August 2023.



Figure 6.7 The poster of the 2023 Edition of the Festival "Passaggi," highlighting the four themes of the festival: Concerts, Rights, Walks, and Nature. Source: Giotto in Musica website.

To achieve this goal the organisation organised in the past several events regarding various themes. For example, they had a project called "Music and Regime," which featured works by composers whose music was banned during the Nazi regime. They also hosted concerts celebrating the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the first state in Europe to abolish the death penalty in 1780, including music from composers of that era.[36] The festival is primarily focused on classical music, following the interest of Stefano, who also is the first viola of the *Maggio Fiorentino* Orchestra and tutor within the prestigious classical music institution of the *Scuola di Musica di Fiesole*.[37]

According to Stefano, while the connection between regimes and classical music was easy to make the one with the environmental themes was less straightforward to make and they had to find other ways:

[36] Ibid.

[37] The *Maggio Musicale Fiorentino* is a prestigious music festival centered on Opera that happens every year between April and June in Florence. The *Scuola di Musica di Fiesole* [Fiesole music's school] is a renowned institution for the teaching and the perfection of musical skills nearby Fiesole.

Surely, one of the important themes is the environmentalist one. We just realised it. But [to find] the direct connection [with music] is hard. [...] The connection between the environment and music that was written three hundred years ago often drops, so we chose to set some concerts in places that can be symbols from an environmentalist point of view. We focused on our relationship with water because water is important for us and life and on both moments of droughts and floods. We did a concert at the mouth of the Arno, and we did one along the Sieve (see Figure 6.8), which is a large tributary of the Arno. And we did concerts close to the forests and their water bodies. There is a path, called *Sentiero delle Burraie,* which features some caves where water was used to cool the environment to make the temperature constant around 12-14° to preserve butter. We are quite close to the theme of water because that's the theme that binds humans with nature, and water signals when there is something not working in nature—either after our [human] intervention or because of nature's course. This is what we do, to bring audience and music to places, close to woods and forests or close to water bodies, especially after COVID.[38]

[38] Ibid.



Figure 6.8 The event "Lungo I cammini dell'acqua #2" [Along water's paths #2], set along the river Sieve in Borgo San Lorenzo. In the background, is the banner of Publiacqua, the local water provider.

At this point, I was interested in what was happening at a practical level. How music is used to convey messages during this festival?

> Music resonates with your feelings. The empathy that music stimulates is less mediated and more immediate than other arts. [...] We tend to not tell with too much rhetoric [the theme of the events], and the journey is left to the listener. We use instrumental music, and we have to decline it [to convey the meaning]. Music simply is. It's up to the people to draw from music something that can benefit humanity not only psychologically. Music can get people closer [to the themes], but is also the place that can get people closer to the thought.[39]

Another way mentioned by Stefano is to structure a concert program that resembles water less contextually and more poetically, featuring for example some compositions

[39] Ibid.

inspired by water, or some pieces that to him are related to water. Whatever the means the goal of *Passaggi* is to:

> Create some issues that then lead people to ask themselves questions. Of course, it is not music that brings this result, but it is the way that we employ the arts, that can be used to make humanity develop or not.[40]

Giotto in Musica does not currently measure the impact of their actions due to concerns about which measurement methodologies to use. This is because their impact is primarily focused on evoking subjective feelings of empathy towards the environmental crisis and the natural world. These events help shape a narrative and spark discussions around key issues. According to Stefano, this is similar to what a newspaper article aims to do. However, instead of using ink on paper and written words, they convey their message through a thoughtful blend of music and meaningful locations, offering a different medium and language. The organization introduces every event with a short speech about the theme and the issues that are at its focus: "We spread a message, that [in this way] has some visibility, without rhetoric."[41]

The message seems to be resonating, as the organization has repeatedly attracted attendees who are not just interested in the music but in the connection between the events and the locations themselves.[42] *Passaggi* is a festival that does not employ music to directly convey an ecologist or environmentalist message, and while their events aim to bring the audience and the music in key natural areas, such message is rather implicit. Music here is a tool to create and glue together a contextual semantic ecosystem of symbols and actions. In this sense, their focus on water is highly relevant. Just as water is essential to all ecosystems and sustains them, music serves as a unifying element that brings people together, creating opportunities for conversations and addressing difficult topics. This connection will be illustrated more clearly in the next case study.

[40] Stefano Zanobini, Interview by the author on 11 August 2023.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

Festambiente

On August 2, 2023, I travelled to Rispescia, a small town located 10 km southeast of Grosseto, the provincial capital, near the Maremma Natural Park.[43] Just outside the town, the national environmental organization Legambiente has been hosting a festival annually since 1989. The festival is named *Festambiente.*[44] The festival aims to bring together members and volunteers of the organization to promote its work to a wider audience. The name of the festival derives from the merging of two Italian words, *festa* [meaning party, festival], and *ambiente* [meaning environment, often the natural one]. *Legambiente* is the name that is more commonly used to address the non-profit organization for social promotion "*Legambiente Nazionale,"*[45] which operates—among others— in the following sectors:

- Safeguarding and improvement of the environment;
- Mindful consumption of natural resources;
- Wildlife protection;
- Protection of the cultural heritage and the landscape;
- Research;
- The organisation of cultural, artistic and recreational activities of social interests, including promotional and dissemination activities (Legambiente 2022).

To achieve its objectives,

> Legambiente operates through information campaigns, awareness-raising initiatives, citizen and community participation, project implementation, production of publications and audiovisual material, information and training initiatives, and activities related to formal, informal, and non-formal education. Additionally, it promotes initiatives and activities across various economic sectors (ibid. 3).

[43] https://parco-maremma.it, accessed on 18 April 2024.
[44] https://www.festambiente.it, accessed on 17 April 2024.
[45] The official website of the organisation is accessible at the following link: https://www.legambiente.it , accessed on 17 April 2024.

I left the car on a field that was temporarily transformed into parking for the numerous people who had travelled there that evening and were going to travel there for the following four days.[46] Walking towards the area of the exhibition, I noticed something soft under my feet as I walked on a surface of recycled rubber derived from exhausted tyres. Around me, I saw stands of agrifood activities, companies promoting their sustainable and recyclable products, bookstores and third-sector organisations. As a first-timer used to small-scale eco-festivals and events, I was impressed to learn from just a quick glance at the map that the area occupied by the festival was massive, as it also included two restaurants, an entire house furnished with sustainable appliances, an area for kids, a sports pitch, a temporary swimming pool, an open-air cinema, and two stages and other venues for readings and talks (see Figure 6.9).



Figure 6.9 Festambiente main stalls area. The festival included several other areas that are not included in the picture, such as the main stage, the two open-air restaurants, the cinema, etc. Photo by the author 02 August 2023.

[46] Festambiente 2023 lasted from the 2nd to the 6th of August.

Music is an important feature of the festival, and throughout its thirty-five editions, *Festambiente* hosted numerous performers of national relevance.[47] The festival includes a main act on its main stage plus other smaller performances. The 2nd of August was the day of the inauguration of the festival, and a marching band opened the ceremony that saw Angelo Gentili, the coordinator of the festival, in conversation with other local and regional authorities such as the Mayor of Grosseto, two councillors, and the president of Legambiente. Looking at this ceremony, the festival and the organisation seem to be well situated within the local political scene.[48]

The inauguration speeches were centred around the festival's goal to be an example of sustainability, a representative "ecological city" that uses sustainable, recycled, and renewable materials, and that is focused on promoting and implementing a circular economy for all its business partners.[49] From the beginning of the ceremony, it was clear that the way that the festival promotes its key themes is through a mix of information, reflection, and entertainment, often music-focused.[50] This point was stressed also by the Mayor of Grosseto, Antonfrancesco Vivarelli Colonna, who praised the festival's ability to make environmental sensibilization activities palatable for the youth.[51] The regional Councillor for Economy and Tourism highlighted the importance of enabling and facilitating conversations around the theme of ecological transition, because, according to him: "this is not an act of will. We are in a moment of change, and we need to decide how to be part of this changing reality."[52]

As I wandered around in the festival area I kept being amazed by the difference between *Festambiente* and the several other local events and mini-festivals that I have been documenting for this study. The number of people was impressive,[53] as were the

[47] Some of the environmentalist musicians mentioned in this dissertation such as Max Casacci (Chapter 2) and Gaudats Junk Band (this chapter) have performed on *Festambiente's* stage in the past years. The list of the main performers from 1999 till today is available on the wikipedia page of the festival: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Festambiente, accessed on 18 April 2024.
[48] In the past, the organisation has been criticised for its ties to local politicians and parties. An article published on the left-wing newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* openly criticized Legambiente for having close ties with some political parties and economic interests in the renewable energy sector (Franco 2014).
[49] Angelo Gentili, *Festambiente* inauguration speech, 02 August 2023.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Antonfrancesco Vivarelli Colonna, *Festambiente* inauguration speech, 02 August 2023.
[52] Leonardo Marras, *Festambiente* inauguration speech, 02 August 2023.
[53] However, it is worth noting that in Italy, most businesses close for the holiday during the hottest time of the year, in August. Hence, many people go on vacation, particularly around the 15th of August, called

number of partners of the organisation that were promoting their products and services within the festival premises. The musical acts planned for the first evening of the festival were two: a jazz band performing at one of the two open-air restaurants, and Livorno singer-songwriter Bobo Rondelli[54] with his band (see Figure 6.10). The other main acts planned for the 2023 edition of the festival were poet and actor Edoardo Leo,[55] singer-songwriter Roberto Vecchioni,[56] three members of the progressive rock band *Premiata Forneria Marconi,*[57] and left-wing folk rock band *Bandabardò.*[58]



Figure 6.10 The main stage of Festambiente 2023, before Bobo Rondelli's performance. Photo by the author on 02 August 2023.

Ferragosto. This tradition dates back to the time of Emperor Augustus, who established the holiday as a period of rest and celebration following the harvest. The holiday was revitalized during the Fascist era to provide lower-class citizens with the opportunity to travel to cities and coastal areas.

[54] https://www.facebook.com/BoboRondelliDE, accessed on 02 August 2024.

[55] https://www.edoardoleo.com, accessed on 18 April 2024.

[56] https://www.vecchioni.org, accessed on 18 April 2024.

[57] https://www.pfmworld.com, accessed on 18 April 2024.

[58] https://www.bandabardo.it, accessed on 18 April 2024. As mentioned earlier in the text, one of their member is also occasionally featured in the Gaudats Junk Band.

Angelo Gentili, who has coordinated and organized the festival since its inception, emphasizes the significance of using informal methods to raise environmental awareness and share information about potential solutions to the ecological crisis. What follows is an excerpt from a conversation I had with Angelo on this topic, particularly highlighting the role of music in these events.

Angelo: *Festambiente* starts as an experience of a group of young environmentalists in the Maremman branch of *Legambiente*, with the aim to realise a path that does not merely convince people of the importance of environmental issues through direct interventions and straightforward presentations of initiatives, conferences, etc., but also through new languages. These include music, animation, and gastronomy.[59]

Luca: What is the importance of utilising other languages to communicate these [ecological] themes? What is the importance of music, entertainment, and sociality in communicating them?

Angelo: First of all they enable to reach different audiences, [of people that are] not specialists, not sensitive at first glance, and not involved in the dimensions tied with ecology. This is important because by using different languages and leveraging emotions, feelings, and creating connections, we are more impactful. If an artist supports our battles [the message] is more effective than if we say it through conferences, or seminars, that even though they are important, they involve a lower number of people, and they are less effective from a language point of view. Therefore, the musical language, such as theatrical or cinematographic one, are all languages that contribute a lot to better—and more effectively—express the dimensions regarding ecology. If ecology remains confined to experts is but a niche. Instead, it is something that regards everyone—especially considering the environmental emergency that we are nowadays able to touch with our hands.[60]

Luca: Are there some selection criteria for the performances and musicians that are involved in the event?

[59] Angelo Gentili, interview by the author on 21 September 2023.
[60] Ibid.

Angelo: Yes, obviously we have some criteria. The artists that come are artists that, at least in broad terms, are sensible artists. They are available [to engage with] environmental thems and in some ways they are more effective than us about the message that we send, from a wider point of view. And then, the fact itself that they chose to perform within a festival organised by the most diffused Italian environmental organisation is a signal per se, as they adapt their performance to our dimension. [...] Many artists also accompany us in our campaigns and choose to be the face of some of the initiatives that we do, and try to convince their fans to be more determined to follow some environmentalist themes. With Piero Pelù[61] we do a series of initiatives called "Clean Beach Tour," in which we go to some beaches, and he joins us to pick up the rubbish intentionally left on the beach or brought there by the current. We accompanied with our presence (as an organisation) the last tour of Elisa to raise funds to plant trees and send out some strong signals about environmental sustainability.[62]

Although this edition of the festival features an impressive lineup, the role of music is more complex than it may initially appear. With few exceptions,[63] while the musicians performing at *Festambiente* generally support the cause, they rarely address environmental issues directly in their music. In this context, music is not merely entertainment that is separate from the organization's themes and issues either. In fact, it has more of a cohesive function than a strictly ecocritical one—or implicit rather than explicit. Music works as a glue that holds the people, the volunteers, the organisation's team, and the various stakeholders together, it creates a festive context that supports the promotion and delivery of values of sustainability, awareness, and possible solutions to the environmental crisis. This festive environment also facilitates conversations over the days of the festival, which often results in plans for policy making. After *Festambiente 2023, Legambiente* launched ten proposals to speed up the ecological transition of the country, including ambitious work on renewable energies, organic agriculture, and

[61] Italian rock singer and songwriter based in Florence who perfored at some of the past editions of the festival. https://www.pieropelu.net accessed on 20 April 2024.
[62] *Back to the Future* tour was a tour of the Italian singer-songwriter Elisa Toffoli framed as a fundraising campaign to plant trees in various areas of Italy (Life Terra 2022).
[63] Such as Max Casacci and the *Gaudats Junk Band* that performed in previous editions of the festival.

circular economy, and the suggestion to institute seventy more protected areas in the country (Legambiente 2023).

Music, Environmental awareness, and Pro-environmental Behaviours

I will return now to the initial question that I asked, rhetorically, and that some of the interviewees who contributed to this chapter asked themselves too: what can music do to raise environmental awareness?

The five events described in this chapter found different ways to answer this question. I will summarize them here.

- Musicking can directly educate people about ecological issues and promote pro-environmental behaviours. For example, *Circusbandando* incorporates important messages about pro-environmental behaviours into their music and performances, teaching children about proper waste management, such as recycling, and responsible water consumption. Similarly, the *Gaudats Junk Band* creates their musical instruments from recycled materials, showcasing the creative potential of upcycling to their audience.
- Music can prompt people to reflect on ecology and sustainable lifestyles. For instance, the *Gaudats Junk Band* indirectly demonstrates a creative way to reduce one's ecological footprint, similar to the upcycling concept showcased at *Riciclare ad Arte*, where both objects and sounds were transformed. Many audience members paused to consider the possibilities that this approach offers and how it can be applied. By bringing people closer to bodies of water and using music inspired by them, *Passaggi* aimed to encourage reflection on their significance.
- Music creates contexts that frame environmental discourse. Although the music performed at *Festambiente* does not explicitly contain environmental messages, attendees—drawn by the music, the performers, or the communal atmosphere—find themselves in a context that highlights ecological solutions and promotes pro-environmental behaviours, even if some may be corporatised.

All the events described here had some characteristics in common. First, they were live events. People travelled and gathered at a specific time and place to listen and engage with music and be in a context designed to raise environmental awareness. Would that music have worked if it was a recording, played by someone on their phone while they are on their way to work? Maybe, but surely it would have had less potential, as several other elements—such as the locale, the context, the participating stakeholders, the audience, the symbols, the recycled instruments/objects, etc.—were missing. Also, not all the musics explored here could work in that sense. For the series of compositions that I produced for *RinnovArte,* one potentially could listen to them anywhere/anytime on my Spotify/YouTube pages. In this way, the listener would have lost the rest of the exhibition, and all the reflections that could have been elicited by it. All the other events required the physical presence of the audience *in situ* to deliver their message. *Circusbandando* needs the kids to interact with each other and play the games regarding sustainability. *Passaggi needed to bring* people to the places that they chose for the performances, as they are part of the meaning embedded in the music. The *Gaudats Junk Band* relies on the sense of surprise that the audience has at their concerts, caused by their unusual instruments, looks, and exuberant attitude. Considering that their repertoire is constituted entirely by covers, one could potentially listen to the same songs anywhere, streaming them online, missing their message entirely as it does not lie within the music itself. Ultimately, *Festambiente*'s main goal is to bring people together to make them explore alternative lifestyles and reflect on possible changes to their behaviours. This brings us to the second point in common.

All the events that I observed are of a participatory nature to some extent. As Christopher Small (1998) suggests, I considered listening and performing—and all the other activities that were part of a musical performance, from organising to ticket-selling—all part of the same endeavour that gave meaning to this music. In the examples discussed in this chapter, the audience, even if not directly involved, plays a crucial role in the event and the performance. The communication of environmental meaning relies on the network of relationships formed during the event among the music, the audience, the organizers, and others. All the events aimed to bring people together and foster a sense of community, albeit temporarily. They were designed to create a sense of unity

within a temporary microcosm that exists outside the norms of everyday life. Here, pro-environmental behaviour is presented not only as a means to enhance one's lifestyle but also as an ethical choice in a contemporary society that prioritizes people over profit. As I will argue over the next chapter, people are nature, and they exist in constant exchange with their environment. Therefore, people in a just and ecocentric society ought to be in a communal relationship with each other and with their environment and its inhabitants. Studies on festivals have shown that the temporary relationship between audiences is instrumental in creating a transformative effect (Getz 2007). This is true for these events. They highlight this aspect of human existence by focusing on raising environmental awareness at the group level rather than on individual perspectives. However, environmentalist festivals are no panacea, as they still contribute to significant environmental impact and damage. Live music consumes resources, requires infrastructure, generates waste, and results in considerable carbon emissions from audience and artist travel (Brennan et al. 2019; Brennan 2021).

In these events, the performers, the performance, the audience, and the organisers equally contribute to the construction of the meaning of the event. If I already argued that the events within the festival *Passaggi* set along the river Sieve and *Arno* could not have taken place without the physical space, their message would have been lost if there were no audience—they would have been only a a group of musicians performing close to the water. The meaning would have been different. Let me bring another example. The environmentalist organisation *Legambiente* could choose to focus solely on other forms of activism and education—which they already engage in. However, the festival provides a different way of informing people about their work. This difference in meaning arises not from any single element—such as the sound of a musical instrument, the lyrics of a song, or the delivery of raw information about ecology and sustainability—but from the collective contribution of all its parts: performers, organisers, audience members, educators, and other stakeholders. The performance of the *Gaudats Junk Band* would mean nothing without an audience, and even when the music contains a direct message, such as in the songs sung by Paco of *Circusbandando*, its message would be lost if he and Celestina were not making the children engage and participate physically with the music and its meanings. In *Riciclare ad Arte*, the sound art compositions created a sonic ambience that contextualised the paintings and the sculptures within that specific place.

Would that have worked as an online exhibition? Would the single art pieces or compositions have brought the same people together? Cristopher Small argued that it is self-evident that "the meaning of music and its function in human life is not with musical works at all" (1999, 12) but rather lies in performing, listening, and in all that network of activities that constitute the whole of a musical performance (1998). Following Small, I believe that the power of music to raise environmental awareness is contextual, rather than lying in the musical object per se, and in this sense, in the examples explored in this chapter, the musical objects lose all their significance if detached from the performers, the performance, the audience, and so on—I will expand more on this idea in the conclusive chapter. Therefore, I view all these events as examples of environmentalist musicking—a complex human activity that includes musical performances, creating a context where intersubjective experiences, connections, and actions related to environmental sustainability are fostered.

The five case studies presented in this chapter aimed to raise environmental awareness and elicit pro-environmental behaviours through musicking contexts. With what result? According to the interviewees, while in some cases the performances managed to attract new and diverse audiences to these events, many people attending these events are likely to be part of the population that already engages with pro-environmental behaviours, and the impact on the rest of the population is hard to assess, creating a sort of bubble, or confirmation bias.[64] We can only hope that the sense of individual responsibility of people who already enact those behaviours is such that they share with friends and family the sense of community and the practical lifestyle alternatives encountered at these events, and even convince them to join, attend, and participate to them, and perhaps even bring their friends and family, and so on. While spreading information and perhaps eliciting new sustainable behaviours plays an important role during times of crisis and transition, the change needed seems that it has to happen deeper inside each of us,[65] and it has to affect our beliefs, our cognition, our

[64] Meaning the people's tendency to search for information—and situations, in this case— that supports their beliefs (see U. Peters 2022).
[65] While this consideration may appear to align with certain aspects of neoliberalism, this is not the case. See the conclusion of this dissertation for clarification.

philosophy, and, generally, the way we relate with the environment, and with nature itself. The next chapter will enquire into these latter aspects of change.

Chapter 7

Music, Sound, Ecocentrism, and Nonduality

On a sunny Sunday morning at the end of May 2023, I woke up at sunrise to get ready for a field trip. The air was cool and humid, and the sunlight warm, signs that summer had finally arrived and that was probably going to be a hot day. I got in the car and drove across the dormant countryside. My destination was Vinci, the town in the Tuscan hills between Florence and Pisa that was the birthplace of the omonimous Leonardo. I wanted to be there before 8 AM as I aimed to join an early yoga/sound bath session that was going to be held in an olive trees orchard near the town, as part of a local ecological festival.[1] These sorts of activities are nowadays quite common, a result of the commodification of some secular and new-age spiritual practices (see York 2001; Bowers and Cheer 2017), so I was not too surprised to see them there. What caught my attention was their relationship with the theme of the festival. I arrived early at the olive orchard and I was the first one, as Alice (the yoga teacher) and Lino (the facilitator of the sound bath) remarked after greeting me. I set my mat in front of them, and we chat about yoga while waiting for the other people. The event was held the year before too, and the previous evening they had a sunset session themed around inner relaxation and water, the natural element. The goal of this session was instead to make the participants feel the energy of nature. Soon the other people arrived, and the yoga practice began. After roughly one hour of poses, body bends, and torsions, we are told by Alice to lie down on our mats to

[1] EcoVinci Festival: www.ecovinci.it, accessed on 04 June 2024.

immerse in the sound bath. Lino had set up four suspended metal gongs mounted on a metal frame, complemented by a few Tibetan singing bowls and a harmonium (see Figure 7.1). Lino defined the gongs to be connected to the vibration frequencies of some planets, hence the gongs themselves were '*planetary.*' The sound of the gongs was very intense, very rich in harmonics, embracing and wrapping us all. Lino hit them using different strokes to get different sounds. We were told to keep our eyes closed during the sound bath, so my description of this event relies mainly on my aural perception. Sometimes, Lino was playing the gongs in front of us, while in other moments he took one of them off the frame and played it while walking among us. At some point he did the same with a singing bowl, then he hit all three bowls in a sequence, to eventually sit at the harmonium and play some chords. Some swallows flew among the trees, chirping. Lino started to sing, first a long syllabic *Om*, followed by a Kīrtan dedicated to the Hinduist deity Shiva[2].

[2] In Hinduism, a Kīrtan Is a devotional song of praise to a particular deity. They often include (such as in this case), an endless repetition of the deity's name(s) (Widdess 2001).



Figure 7.1 Lino and his set of instruments in Vinci, 28 May 2023. Source: Vinciproloco, Facebook.

As I was immersing myself into the sounds of the instruments and Lino's voice, I felt myself being one with the olive trees, the soil, the grass, the chirping swallows and buzzing bees, and I asked myself why that was happening. How could those sounds make me feel this sense of unity? Was I biased because of my personal interest in Indian mythology and cosmology, which Lino was clearly referencing? Or there was something more? How can music and sound make us feel closer to a place? How can they help us to develop not a rational connection, but rather an intimate one that transcends a dualistic understanding of our relationship with the world?

Lino and I talked about following up on these questions after the event and perhaps organising something together, with me improvising along with his gongs. As often happens in life, other things happened, and we did not have a chance to follow up, but the questions raised by that experience remained and informed part of my subsequent research fieldwork. In this final case study chapter, I will address these fundamental questions, looking at the practice of three other artists, sound practitioners, and

facilitators. I will describe how these sorts of music and sound-based practices create liminal spaces where the boundaries between the human and non-human worlds are blurred and permeate each other, allowing our dualistic understanding of the relationship between humans and nature to fade into a more holistic, and non-dual, comprehension of it. Similarly to other chapters in this dissertation, I argue here for the contextual effect of music on ecology and sustainability, rather than an intrinsic one. To support this argument, the three case studies that follow feature musical and sonic performances that differ significantly from each other. This approach helps avoid the pitfall of defining any specific music genre or type of sound and performance as having an inherent ability to address the ecological crisis.

Non-dualistic Ecology

Human beings perceive the concepts of environment and nature in relation to the linguistic framework (Pang-White 2023, 176). The concept of environment, for example, is often understood literally as "that which surrounds" (Ingold 1992, 40), something external to us. The idea of nature in our society, albeit different in its meaning from the notion of environment,[3] has been similarly constructed. Tim Ingold argues that human beings can define something as being *nature* only when they consider it to be external to them:

> [the] world can exist as nature only for a being that does not belong there, and that can look upon it, in the manner of the detached scientist, from such a safe distance that it is easy to connive in the illusion that it is unaffected by his presence (2000, 20).

This dualistic opposition between nature and culture, or nature and society, is a consequence of Descartes's fallacious—and largely refuted (Descola 2013a; Berque 2016; Lillebø 2023)—theories about a suspected divide between mind and matter (Haila 2000; Dussault 2016). Informed by an understanding of the Christian cosmology that

[3] According to anthropologist Tim Ingold the environment signifies only in relationship to one object. Then we can define an organism's environment as the world "as it exists and takes on meaning in relation to" the organism (Ingold 2000, 20)

posits humans at the centre of a universe that is built for them to exploit (Damonte 2017), the French philosopher proposed to "make [human beings] masters and possessors of nature" (Descartes 1950 [1637], 40). The nature that Descartes refers to is a nature that is essentially separated from humans' inner awareness (Sagan, Margulis, and Guerrero 1997, 172), a nature in which non-human entities are simply machines incapable of feeling pain and emotions (Thomas 2020, 1002-4). This notion provided a justification for many atrocities, perpetrated still today, on non-human animals in the name of science and human exceptionalism (Steiner 1998).

Cartesian dualistic understanding of nature is exclusive to Western culture during modernity (Valenti Possamani 2013, 838-839), and many indigenous, traditional, and non-modern societies do not share this understanding of the environment (see Callicott 2003; Descola 2013b; Staid 2022). The dualist approach makes us experience the world as divided into two essential elements that are opposed to each other, the natural and the artificial (Haila 2000, 168-169), an either/or anthropocentric approach (Pang-White 2023, 178) that enables a rupture that makes us believe that we can intervene, change, and disrupt our ecosystem without consequences (Whiteside 2004, 358). This dualistic nature/culture oppositional paradigm sees two sides opposite to each other: on one side stands the artificial, exploitable, human, on the other side there is the fetishized idea of wilderness, an otherised, romantic, vision of the natural world as something pristine and fragile that needs to be fenced and protected, in order to satisfy humanity's aesthetic needs (Cronon 1995; Callicott 1994; 2003). So far, this dualistic understanding has justified the anthropocentric and extractivist/exploitative worldview that is at the base of the current environmental crisis (Devall and Sessions 1985, 43).

Dualistic views of ecology see the words *nature*, or *natural*, as opposed to what is supernatural, or miraculous; artificial, or constructed by human voluntary actions; and anomalous, as different from what happens in the natural world. According to these views, nature is then what is normal (according to humans' thought), what is not touched by humans, and what is living according to human's natural nature (Dussault 2016, 17). A dualistic view of the world is purely anthropocentric (Kiyokazu 2009), and it "denies inter-being, inter-subjectivity, and the intrinsic relationship between self and other" (Pang-White 2023, 179). Dualism is a view that is challenged and proven unfounded by a concrete analysis of the interrelatedness between human activities and natural

processes (Haila 2000, 167), such as, for example, biodynamic agriculture (Roquebert and Debucquet 2024). Reality is in fact interconnected. In this sense, philosopher and physicist Karen Bard argues that phenomena are constituted by an entanglement of intra-actions, and entities' causal relatings are inexplicable in terms of an independent origination of phenomena therefore all phenomena and entities are entangled and bound to each other (2011, 125, 146-150). As opposed to the culture/nature divide and its resulting anthropocentric worldview, environmental philosophers Bill Devall and George Session (1985) theorised the Deep Ecology movement. Rooted in the principle of oneness and interdependence of all life derived from some Asian philosophical traditions such as Vedanta (Kiyokazu 2009), Daoism (Pang-White 2023), and Buddhism (Hanh 2008; Loy 2018), the term deep ecology was coined by Arne Naess, to describe an ecological movement that does not limit itself to fight against human-perpetrated abuse of the environment, but that also understands and acknowledges our planet's ecosystem as a network of relationships between interconnected organisms that have equal rights to live and thrive (1973). Deep ecology principles are based on this acknowledgement:

> if we harm the rest of Nature then we are harming ourselves. There are no boundaries and everything is interrelated. But insofar as we perceive things as individual organisms or entities, the insight draws us to respect all human and non-human individuals in their own right as parts of the whole without feeling the need to set up hierarchies of species with humans at the top. The practical implications of this intuition or norm suggest that we should live with minimum rather than maximum impact on other species and on the Earth in general (Devall and Sessions 1985, 68).

Deep ecology has been criticised as being rooted in the essentialism of animistic traits of some pre-modern societies and religious exoticism and mysticism (see Grey 1986; Humphrey 2000). It also has been accused of providing some theoretical justifications for eco-fascism (see Satgar 2021; Campion 2023) and has therefore fallen out of popularity over the years (Scerri 2016). Nevertheless, some of its principles are valid and in line with an ecocentric view of society, such as the one promoted by ecomusicology (Allen 2021, 91). The ecological holism proposed by Naess, Devall, and Session underlines the importance and the need for an approach to the world and living beings

defined as non-dualistic (Loy 1999). The claim of the absence of a dualistic relationship between subject and object, between the seer and seen, can be found in several philosophical traditions such as Daoism, Buddhism, and Vedanta, and it is also mentioned—either explicitly or implicitly—in the thought of several Western thinkers, including Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Jakob Boheme, William Blake, and others (Loy 1988, 1-8). Nondualism is an ontologic claim (Kyriakides 2012, 414) that questions the separate and intrinsic existence of objects and concepts (Van Gordon et al. 2021), such as the one of nature invented as opposed to culture (Dwyer 1996, 157). The environmentalist consequence of nondualism is that a view that transcends the differences between subject and object—and therefore between culture and nature, provides an ecocentric view of the world (Kiyokazu 2009), where environment and nature do not exist as separate conceptual entities anymore but are rather a reality to which the individuals are active parts and participants (Hanh 2008). Nondualism in fact acknowledges interdependence between all living beings, as well as their co-evolution (Hillman 1995), ultimately embracing "the Darwinian fact that we are part of nature" (Dussault 2016, 24).

In observing eco-musical performances with nondualist lenses, I am aware of the pitfall of opposing nondualism to cartesian dualism, which only ends up creating again a binary relationship, another dichotomic either/or relationship between the two views that is still dualistic (see Priest 2023). In this discussion of nondualist ecological thought, I rather argue that there is no alternative, or choice, between seeing the world as divided between subject and object or not, as cartesian dualism proves itself to be unfounded, especially in relation to ecology (Haila 2000). While this is a generally accepted claim among scientists and scholars, the vast majority of people—especially in developed countries—have been distancing themselves more and more from nature (see Vining, Merrick, and Price 2008). Human beings are often not aware of the interrelationship that we have with and within the world. This awareness is key to achieving sustainability in our society, and interventions aimed at stimulating an emotional connection with nature and challenging our philosophical understandings of it may have the greatest impact on fostering awareness in this sense (Ives et al. 2018). In the following sections, I will build on the idea that awareness of nondualism needs to be performed (Carvalho 2014) and experienced, such as through the liminal situations elicited by the musical performances described in this chapter.

Rituals and Liminality

In this chapter, I consider some performances and events as interaction rituals (Goffman 1967), using the definition of the term provided by sociologist Randall Collins:

> [A] ritual is a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership (2004, 7).

Rituals are divided into three parts: a preliminal phase, in which the subjects of the ritual separate themselves from their society; a liminal phase, constituting the main, transitional and transformative phase of the ritual; and a postliminal phase, where the subjects, made anew, are re-incorporated into the society through ceremonies that celebrate their changed status and understanding (Van Gennep 1960[1909], 21). The liminal phase is where the change of status of the subject(s) and their new understanding of the world are created. During this phase "the characteristics of the ritual subject are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner 1977, 93). The subjects that undergo the ritual are defined as liminal entities, individuals who are "passive and humble [and] obey their instructors implicitly" (ibid. 95). They share with each other a deep bond during the common experience of the ritual, which is an alternative to the societal structure. This bond is defined as *communitas* (ibid. 96). *Communitas* are essential to interaction rituals, which require the situational copresence of the participating individuals that engage in an entrained focused interaction, a sort of "socialized trance" (Collins 2004, 23).

Liminal situations can affect three types of objects: single individuals, social groups, and whole societies. They can apply to temporal and/or spatial dimensions. A specific place, area, or even a country can be considered liminal (such as a door threshold or a country affected by war). Also moments in time—such as periods or epochs—can be liminal (Thomassen 2009, 16). The realities represented by and through the liminal situations and the communitas constitute an antistructure that questions the current social norms, giving thus a powerful, transformational agency to the individuals

that subject themselves to the ritual (Turner 1977, 4). Liminal situations entail "the dissolution of ordinary structures and the suspension of the norms that govern ordinary life" (Ní Shíocháin 2018, 26), thus relaxing the limits imposed by society and culture on thoughts and behaviours (Thomassen 2014) and opening the way to a "storehouse of possibilities" (Turner 1990, 12) that can result in individual and societal change (Thomassen 2009), and "send society on a new course" (Ní Shíocháin 2018, 53).

Liminality applies to an open-ended realm of situations (Thomassen 2009, 17) and is what people who live through periods of great change experience (Szakolczai 2009; Horvath, Thomassen, and Wydra 2015). Evidence in the cross-cultural study of rituals shows that "liminality does not just happen [...], it has to be performed" (Ní Shíocháin 2018, 26), making performing arts, such as theatre, particularly appropriate to facilitate liminal situations (Turner 1982). Music can too bring the listener – and the performer(s) – into a liminal space characterised by:

> [a] different space/time dimension; a sense of encounter; a paradoxical knowing [...]; a sense of empowerment, bliss, realization; a sense of the beyond, infinity; a feeling of an opening up in the experiencer as boundaries start to dissolve; a sense of transformation, change; an evanescent and fleeting quality that cannot be controlled and which may result in a sense of givenness; a feeling of unity with other beings, people, and the cosmos (Boyce-Tillman 2009, 189).

Ní Shíocháin's analysis of liminality in Irish songs is instrumental in depicting the transformative power of music in this sense. The author affirms that songs are liminal spaces that could generate different ideas and utopian modes of thinking. The song takes listeners and performers away from reality, performs liminality, and brings them back to reality but made anew, through the embodied experience of the ideas and concepts the song was about (Ní Shíocháin 2014; 2018). Liminal experiences have been described to be experienced through multiple other musical genres, including, for example, sacred music (Poláčková 2023), traditional laments (Caraveli 1986), heavy metal (Riches 2011), jazz (Storhoff 2020), dance music (Jaimangal-Jones, Pritchard, and Morgan 2010), and many others. However, the transformative liminal power is also influenced by personal beliefs and experience, as mentioned by Boyce-Tillman in relation to an encounter with Greek Orthodox chants. In that instance, the author could not feel transported by such

music because of the performers' conservative beliefs (Boyce-Tillman 2009). This suggests, that while it is true that all rituals (and all the music genres used as part of) can be equally related to Van Gennep's tripartite structure (Thomassen 2014, 202), their liminal transformative power is neither absolute nor universal. Instead, it is highly cultural and contextual, depending on individuals' cultures and beliefs to be fully activated.

In this Chapter, I describe in detail three performances in which music and/or sound play a central role in eliciting a liminal space and timeframe that made the participants experience a non-dualistic relationship with nature.

Mara Sardi

In Chapter 4 I described how I co-organized an event within LIPU's oasis in Santa Luce, together with a sound-bath facilitator, Mara Sardi. While there I focused on the ecotourism aspect of the event, here I explore its more spiritual and ritual sides, in line with the theories discussed above. Mara and I were put in touch by Silvia Mascagni, manager of the oasis. Mara is a close friend of Silvia, and when the latter heard my proposal about organizing an event there, she immediately thought of her friend and suggested that we should do an event together. Hence, we arranged a meeting, to explore the area and talk about what we could possibly do, sonically, together.

Mara, Silvia, and I, gathered within a building at the LIPU's oasis to talk and find a common point on how to organise the event. I brought with me an acoustic guitar and a portable amplifier, and Mara had with her a series of metal and cristal resonating bowls, some chimes, and other little percussion instruments. As she made the bowls resonate, I tried to improvise around the drone notes that they generated. Mara considers the bowls as something more than merely musical instruments played by human agency, and she tells me that they resonate with the environment surrounding them, even outside the spectre of what is audible to us:

> We don't perceive it, but the animals, the plants, [and] nature perceive it. When I don't perceive the sound anymore [after the bowl is hit], the vibrations of the grass around tell me that it still perceives it.[4]

According to her, their impact on non-human life is visible. Mara tells me about an experience volunteering that she did in the animal rescue centre *Ippoasi*.[5] There, she did a sort of experiment:

> I do extensive work with animals that are ill. [...] But what happens if I play close to animals that are well? Animals that are free, have food, capacity to interact with me and leave if they want. [...] So I took my crystal and Tibetan bowls and the donkeys were closing their eyes. I played the Tibetan bowl for a horse, and every time I stopped he was poking me with his face. [...] I put a bowl on the ground and he was hitting it with his hoof. [...] I also have a video where I am sitting on the ground playing the bowls and I have many cows and bulls around me, they are very sensible to sounds. [...] I did some work with a pig too.[6]

Mara does not define herself as a musician. When she talks about her musicality, she says—laughing— that she always is out of tune.[7] She is a dancer, but she has never received formal training in instrumental or vocal practice. She does not think of the bowls and percussion instruments that she uses for her practice as musical instruments but rather as sacred tools that she uses to convey sacred sound.[8] I was curious to understand more about this definition and asked her if the sacredness of the bowls was somehow intrinsic to the objects or rather something that she imbued into them:

> Both. I'll make an example. This bowl here is made by and for people with a certain spiritual level. It is built in a certain way, and you don't have to do anything about it when you play it for the first time. This other bowl was given to me, but it is an industrially-made one. So I had to put it together with the other bowls, play all of

[4] Mara Sardi, interview by the author on 02 April 2023.
[5] Ippoasi is a no-profit sanctury for non-human animals rescued from farms. Source: www.ippoasi.org, accessed on 13 June 2024.
[6] Ibid.
[7] *Stonata come una campana* [out of tune like a bell] is exactly what Mara's said. Ironically, in Italian, the singing bowls are called *campane* [bells].
[8] Mara Sardi, interview by the author on 02 April 2023.

> them together, and [this bowl] took its own vibrational frequency, personality, and capacity to interact with people and animals. [...] There must be a [spiritual] basis, but it is the practice, and the relationships, that change everything. I had to play them many times to tell them about my intention to bring light, love, and peace into people's lives, imbuing them with my messages, even through all these practices that may seem a bit pagan.[9]

Mara has played her bowls in the oasis in the past already, in a sunset event on the lake's shore with "birds that accompanied and sang around the sound [of the bowls]. When the notes were going up, the birds were going up [with the pitch] too, when the notes were going down, they were going down."[10]

In preparation for our event, we decided to explore the area and once we found an appropriate spot, we decided to display our instrumentation and do some further practice (see Figure 7.2). Musically, we tried to interact with each other. I was improvising around the notes held by the bowls, and she tried to accompany my chords with some of her percussion instruments. During our practice, some warblers come to sing in the bushes surrounding us.

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.



Figure 7.2 The author and Mara Sardi rehearsing on Santa Luce's lake shore. Photo by Silvia Mascagni, 02 April 2023.

The day of the event came, and as described in Chapter 4, we carried on with our performance as planned, which included an introductory reflexive meditation and the improvisation. A few days later, I decided to interview Mara, to understand better the meaning of her practice. To do so, I drove to Rubinia, her holistic centre in the Crespina municipality that she calls home, situated in a beautiful land with olive orchards surrounded by forests of indigenous trees. Knowing my own thought process and how I improvised during the event, I became curious about how Mara approached it, so I asked her:

> [During our performance] I started with connecting to the environment. Then I felt the vibrations, the energies, of the place and the people. [...] I closed my eyes because I was listening to the energy of the people. [...] And when I was playing, I could feel the lake. I could feel it. While I was playing I was turning towards the

> water, and I could feel it. And when I was talking about the lake, I was moved, as if the lake were listening to me.[11]

Mara thinks that through these events we can suggest and deliver to the audience a model of awareness towards themselves and the surrounding environment. This is of course personal, as every individual has different ways to relate to the environment. The aim is then to make people experience the place and experience this awareness of themselves. Mara makes the example of the crystal bowls:

> If I can, through my work, bring to a status of awareness the people who experience these crystals, how do their perceptions change? If somebody succeeds in making you see these crystals as a natural being that can mix their energy with you, at that point, when you open yourself to it, you start asking yourself a billion questions.
>
> [During the event] I wanted to move around the audience with the bowls, because I felt that some of them needed it, to make them experience this closely. What would have meant to them to have the sound closer?[12]

According to Mara, "the experience also creates a disturbance, which is a moment of awareness, and from there, somebody can say 'I liked that bowl'" thus reacting to the sound while being aware of the present moment.[13]

> It was similar to what Silvia does when she forces the people to listen [to environmental sounds, especially birdsongs]. It is a shift in perception that forces them to the proprioception,[14] to say: "This disturbs me, I like this." Or: "Maybe moving we can listen to a different sound." Because, also animals if we move, they can perceive us differently, and sing differently. There is no ultimate goal in this, and the goal is to have this experience. To experience a situation that is the same for a while and then changes. [This has a function] to make people take control

[11] Mara Sardi, interview by the author on 11 May 2023.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Proprioception is "the perception by an animal of stimuli relating to its own position, posture, equilibrium, or internal condition." Enciclopedia Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/science/proprioception, accessed on 04 June 2024.

> over their attention. I believe that people need to re-experience themselves, but sometimes they need some external elements that bring them back to themselves.[15]

Being in connection with nature plays a key role in the stimulation of awareness that Mara aims to facilitate in the audience and participants. She plays with the word *nature,* meaning both the environment and its non-human inhabitants, and the inner nature of human beings:

> People need to reconnect to nature, they must reconnect to nature to reconnect to their own nature. Sound in this is a facilitator. Things are not divided, although they are [divided] in the Western mindset. People think that nature is outside them, so my aim is to reconnect this division, but I have to follow their illusion first to reconnect them with nature. Not everyone is ready to learn that they are not divided [from the rest of nature].[16]

Even if people are distracted, such as those who brought their phone to the event, Mara argues that they are still connected with nature, just unaware of it: "of course, they are connected with that part of them that resists to their own nature, and resists to the surrounding nature too."[17] Through her practice, Mara uses sound to overcome this dual understanding of the word 'nature,' on both literal and conceptual levels:

> Actually, people are looking for themselves, and they find themselves in conversation with their own nature. People open up, connect with their own nature through sound and discover themselves. Everyone needs to connect with oneself. Nature is one way.[18]

Sound is used by Mara as a tool to stimulate awareness and make people experience the absence of dualism in the relationship to humans' inner and outer nature. The literal ambivalence of the word *nature* as used by Mara suggests that the inner nature of human beings and the rest of the ecosystem can be intended as two entangled aspects of the

[15] Mara Sardi, interview by the author on 11 May 2023.
[16] Mara Sardi, interview by the author on 02 April 2023.
[17] Mara Sardi, interview by the author on 11 May 2023.
[18] Mara Sardi, interview by the author on 02 April 2023.

same thing (see Barad 2011). To benefit one's inner nature, means to benefit the external nature and vice versa, as there are no substantial differences or boundaries between the two. Sound brings people into the present moment, free from the construction of conceptual thoughts. Mara's practice is focused on this, helping listeners explore their inner world and live peacefully in harmony with the outer one.

Nemorea, Teatro delle Foreste

On the 8th of July 2023, I went to Coltano, a village between Pisa and Livorno, situated within a complexion of native pine and *macchia* forests and farmland reclaimed from the marshes. This is a landscape with a rich history of contested relationships between humans and nature that spans from the Medici family, who used the area (before its reclamation) as a hunting estate and built a villa in 1586 (Lapi Ballerini and Scalini 2011), to Guglielmo Marconi, who ordered the construction of a radio tower in the village and thus established a futuristic radio link between that area, Ireland, Canada, and Eritrea (Giannetti 2017). Since 2011, 110 years after Marconi's first radio signal from the tower, the area has hosted the 110Hz Festival annually. The festival features music, food, theatre, and other performances, all in keeping with its thematic name.[19]

It was the second day of the festival, and my goal was to meet with Sonia, a performer from *Teatro delle Foreste* [Theatre of the Forests] and attend a performance that she and her team had created specifically for the event and that particular location. Performance first. I went to the meeting point in front of the Medicean Villa of Coltano, to meet with Siro Nicolazzi, our guide, and a group of fifteen other hikers/audience. As the performance was intertwined with an exploration of this area and its history of negotiation of land between human communities and the marshes, we were going to walk—a lot—and we needed a trekking guide. Siro did not waste time and urged us to start walking soon: we walked through a street lined with centuries-old pine trees surrounded by golden wheat fields and sunflower fields. We arrived in a pine forest, where a man, dressed like a hunter from a previous age started knocking on trees and

[19] https://www.110hertzfestival.it, accessed on 21 May 2024.

playing an ocarina, a flute, and singing and running between us. No explanations were given, and as the group moved, we encountered other instances of oneiric appearances by Sonia and her crew, performing short scenes carefully crafted within the landscape that involved dialogues between mythical creatures. We kept walking, crossing more fields, a country road, and another patch of woods. As we listened to a brown kite screeching above our heads, I found myself asking multiple times: what was the performance, and what not? What was casual and what was planned? What was artificial, and what was natural? Were there boundaries between these concepts, or they were just that, concepts and ideas in my mind that were misleading my interpretation of reality?

We walked over 10 km through fields and woods, relentlessly bitten by mosquitoes—a reminder of the area's marshy past—until we finally reached the site of the final performance. We were in a field, full of weeds and all the remainders of whatever crop had previously been harvested. There were three chairs, surrounded by some musical instruments (a guitar-lute, a Sruti box, and some chimes and cattle-like bells). We were asked to sit on the ground by our guide. The three—now white-dressed—actors sat on the chairs and started a mix of songs, poems, chants, and imitations of non-human voices, (see Figure 7.3). The actors sang but slowly transmuted their human singing in a goat-like bleating, rattling their bells. When did the song end? Where was the boundary between the human voice and the non-human one?

At the end of the performance, the performers stood up and solemnly left, walking towards the forest at our back, where one by one they disappeared behind the trees. The guide made us stand up, and we started walking again, but not for so long: we found ourselves just behind the village, and the guide took us there, out of the performative labyrinth of the fields, after several hours of roaming and witnessing to several phenomena that were more than what I expected, but never felt more than natural, even though the whole experience seriously questioned my orienteering skills.



Figure 7.3 Final performance of Se'l cuore non muta forma e materia. Source: www.nemoreateatro.it. Accessed on 22 May 2024.

The performance was "*Se'l cuore non muta forma e materia*," [if the heart does not change form and matter] devised by Sonia Montanaro and featuring Letizia Sacco and Gabriele Basso, based on some of the content included in the *Operette Morali* by late Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi. Sonia crafted this performance as part of her research project "*A volo d'uccello: progetto di ricerca di Teatro in Natura in luoghi magnifici*" [A Bird's Eye View: Research project of Theatre in Nature in Magnificent Places], authored by Nemorea, Sonia's theatre company.[20] The project is aimed at:

[20] https://www.nemoreateatro.it, accessed on 22 May 2024.

> Nurturing the possibilities of an ecological relationship with the territories. Encountering places through the tools of theatre and paratheatre. Experiment and delve into creation and performative creation in relation to natural spaces (Nemorea. Teatro delle Foreste Associazione Culturale, n.d., 2).

Sonia's project is an artistic exchange with parks and natural areas. It builds upon Sista Bramini's work of Theatre in Nature to build and question performers'—and consequently, audiences'—relationship with the natural elements and other living beings (Bramini 2013, 19). This is a practice that, along with other performances, has been praised due to its potential to create an intimate bond with the locale and promote environmental sustainability (L'Astorina et al. 2021).

Sonia did not receive any formal musical education and does not define herself as a musician. In fact, in her interview, she states that she does not play any instrument but only some small percussion instruments. However, her artistic practice is deeply intertwined with the use of the singing voice, and she learnt and practised multipart folk music of various traditions and more experimental types of singing with several artists. Sonia's vocalizations are carefully crafted and attuned to the surrounding landscape, flowing within and around it. They are also designed to respond to and improvise alongside the natural soundscape:

> What is created is a set of superpositions, contrasts, resonances, and responses. The ability to be refined by the Theatre in Nature's actors/actresses is to be able to listen outside and inside at the same time, so as to take advantage of what is created or happens and integrate it (becoming integrated) into the scene. It can mean realising that the wind has risen and riding it with your voice, changing the colour of your voice because a storm or darkness arrives, or reacting to the dive of a fish during a pause [in the actress's voice] or realising the synchrony of silence with a flick of the tail in the water. This welcoming, remaining open, allows you to attempt an integration not only with the [pleasant] sounds but also attempt it with the disturbances (dogs barking loudly, passing planes).[21]

[21] Sonia Montanaro, email interview by the author, 01 October 2023.

In Sonia's performances, sound and music play then a central role in building relationships with the place.

> The sound waves that reach the ear, that reach the skin and resonate from the body outdoors, create like an invisible network in space, a mobile grid that brings together personal landscape with the surrounding landscape—with the surrounding landscapes and the participants immersed with the actors in that environment. The vocal emission takes into account the distances, the [acoustics of its] bounces on the rocks, the [sheep's] bleat, or distant [birds'] chirps and to do this the ear will have to be listening. Listening to the surroundings creates something that goes towards taking advantage of the little things, the passage of a snake, or a fallen leaf and this will ensure that, if we are lucky, a moment of silence can be created in which actors and participants find themselves together with nature, something that makes you say: "I am here," a moment of presence.[22]

The relationship is therefore triangular. To devise the artistic practice, the performers develop a deep rapport with the natural environment where the performance is set, but also the participants—as she prefers to call whoever attends her performances, instead of referring to them as simply "audience"—develop a deep understanding of the place, as a consequence of the attentive and alert sensorial presence that is required by the performers throughout the whole duration of the performance. According to Sonia, the participants are also witnesses of the creation of this relationship, and listening is pivotal in doing this. As the relationship created through the performance unfolds, it is not clear who is listening to whom and who is being listened to. The connection between the living beings and the material elements of a place feels stronger, and the boundaries between them blurred. The casual appearance of the brown kite screeching really felt like it was part of the play. Or was it the play that made the actors/actresses and performances feel like they were natural elements? They felt like they had always been there, following a cyclicity of seasonal presence, like mushrooms, or wildflowers, and as such, they can show their presence during every season if I am clever enough to know where to watch. During this event in Coltano, the actors made their presence more evident though, to aid

[22] Ibid.

the participants witnessing their presence—without imposing it, but allowing us to embrace the network of elements, beings, and relationships that endured in that place.

EliBi

As I have shown in other case studies in this research, Silvia Mascagni, the manager of the LIPU's oasis of Santa Luce, is quite interested in exploring different ways to connect with the nature of the protected area. In August 2023, the singer and songwriter EliBi (stage name for Elisa Bianchi) performed there a *concerchio* (see Figure 7.4), a neologism constituted by the merging of the words *concerto* (concert) and *cerchio* (circle) that she invented to define her particular performances. While I did not attend this event personally, I was curious to reach out to her, to understand better her idea of performance, and the connection with the protected area and the environment in general.



Figure 7.4 EliBi performs at LIPU's Oasis in Santa Luce. Photo by Silvia Mascagni, 08 August 2024. Source: Instagram.

"A *concerchio* is a meditative concert in nature."[23] This is the short definition given by Elisa to describe her particular performance. Her idea is to perform and deliver music differently from what normally happens in a bar or a restaurant, where music is a just background; rather it is a situation where the audience can have a meditative attitude and use listening to her music as a starting point to deep listen to themselves and the surroundings. Elisa says:

> This project [...] began from a desire to make people connect to themselves, and therefore to nature too – considering that ultimately we are also part of nature. I mean, we are, indeed, part of nature. Therefore, being close to nature brings us to our essence, what we really are.[24]

The music of EliBi is very reflexive and meditative by itself. Her latest release, *Un passo alla volta* [one step at a time] includes songs in Italian and Spanish that urge the listeners to be aware and mindful of themselves and their lives, through lyrics that stem from Elisa's own life path as a reunification with herself and the world, as she mentions in the title track *Un passo alla volta*[25]. The other tracks speak about her trust towards life and experiences on Earth (*Confio* [I entrust]), and her gratitude for it (*Ringrazia e via* [say thanks and go]). The last two tracks are a hymn imbued with love and gratitude towards water (*Mama agua* [mother water]) and a song to urge the listener to accept and entrust their own life's path (*Tutto è Perfetto* [everything is perfect]). Outside the literal environmental goals and implications of *Mama agua*, the only other track that explicitly mentions Elisa's relationship with the environment surrounding her—as she sings: "I connect myself with the Earth and with the sea, and also with the wind and the Sun."[26] In the other songs, while nature and the Earth are not directly mentioned, the connection between humans and the environment is less explicit but still very evident.

[23] Elisa Bianchi, interview by the author on 12 September 2023.
[24] Ibid.
[25] *Un passo alla volta,* available at*:* *https://music.imusician.pro/a/ttjn-l96?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAAR2ez3HZ48dYoXr09dTavNmPmDsYM9cgFWPGgKmnijGAsUFyyCXj6XZO7qA_aem_AbLrQRL2gZvxaccbylOXxGjMnP-MvMjyN3-0lj8z3stcytHqCMu3k_a4mu5tbkatt-TAIHLXzH6_6LdDZYo4qDJj* accessed on 22 May 2024.
[26] Ibid.

> In the concerts, I mainly sing songs that I wrote, but I would also like to include songs written by other people that I met on my path, but all songs by recognised artists. What all these songs have in common is that they take the people who listen to them in this connection with themselves, and therefore, with nature. It all revolves around this basic intention [of my music]. To make people live an experience of listening to themselves through the vibrations of the music, entering and re-finding themselves in a natural space.[27]

Elisa's *concerchio* is then a way to bring people into natural spaces and make them feel connected to them facilitating introspection and a non-dualistic view of the universe. But how does that work, exactly?

> [The *concerchio*] is a very profound experience, that makes you explore parts of yourself. It is an introspective journey via music and connection with nature. Thanks to it I have been to some marvellous places, including LIPU's reserve. [...] it is an ongoing project that is being improved, as I learn what people need and how to feel more the connection with the environment and with nature. I noticed how it changes the vibrations of the environment, of people and also of the environment.[28]

The *cerchio* [circle] element is also quite significant in this particular performance, as Elisa explains:

> It started as a ritual, a compromise between a concert, a meditation, a ritual, a moment of introspection [...] I did not want to do a concert, where the artist is on the stage, afar, distant, with the crowd standing under it, listening [to the music] and receiving it passively. The *concerchio* is a vision where we are all on the same level, we are all equidistant from the centre of the circle and a different synergy is created, where listening is empathetic and circular, not bidirectional anymore, thus one does not listen in a passive way but rather actively instead. [...] It would be great to bring this listening modality into our everyday life, as a tool to learn and

[27] Elisa Bianchi, interview by the author on 12 September 2023.
[28] Ibid.

> to change the world in which we are living, our reality, how we live ourselves, how we see others, the people that we meet, the events that happen to us.[29]

But how this model of music performance and listening attitude can improve our relationship with nature?

> Let's start with the presupposition that we are nature. We are connected with the other people that we meet, with the events that happen to us, and with the objects that surround us. [To acknowledge this] brings us back in connection with ourselves. Now, if we are nature – which is for me self-evident – when one spends some time in connection with nature let's say we are automatically going in this direction [to acknowledge these relationships], towards this different way to live our life. The more we are in connection with nature the more we are in connection with ourselves and consequently also with people that surround us, the events that happen to us and so on. [...] To me what really matters eventually is to bring a change, revolution and activism inside ourselves. Why? Because changing the inside subsequently changes the outside too.[30]

The music of EliBi and her artistic and life goals push different understandings of our relationship with nature. Our inner world and the outer world seem to be not so distant in a *concerchio*, and all those thoughts, experiences, and reactions, that constitute our daily experiences—including moments of joy and turmoils—coincide with the events that surround us. In a world destroyed by wars, hate, greed, and violence, the *concerchio* seems to be a safe space that transcends the physicality of the concert, a space where music, the people (all of them, without the usual dualism between performers and audience), and the landscape are all part of the same liminal experience.

Music is the element that initiates the ritual, but it is also the vector that conveys a message of unity, hope, and gratitude. EliBi's music brings people together and asks them to question their assumptions and beliefs about reality. The performance questions the relationship between the people and the world surrounding us, proposing a new model in a sort of counterintuitive way. In a similar way to what was expressed by Mara Sardi in

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

this Chapter, Elisa argues that to improve our relationship with the outside world, we should start from within listening to ourselves first, then to the others, and the rest of the world. [31] Listening in a *concerchio* is then intended both in a literal sense (to the music played, and to the surrounding soundscape) and in a metaphorical sense (to ours' and others' needs, developing empathy), thus suggesting that in order to overcome the nature/culture divide, perhaps is necessary first to understand that there is no divide at all—and EliBi's music and performances suggest this reality.

Sound and Music Performances as Models of Nondual Relationships with the Environment

The three events described above were based on a structure referrable to Van Gennep's tripartite one. In fact, in all three events, people gathered in a specific place, leaving behind their normative status, to venture within the undefined, changeable, trembling, liminal state enabled by the performance, to ultimately reaggregate with the world and society after it, with a change in their status and in their relationship with the surrounding world. The change in status is enabled by the liminal phase of the ritual, in which the subjects partaking in it (performance audiences and participants) temporarily become what Turner defined as liminal entities.

> Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions (Turner 1977, 95).

Liminal entities are between statues and therefore are in a position that enables them to question societal norms. During the liminal phases, the subjects experience different views and values that contrast with generally accepted ones (ibid. 107). Putting aside their previous experiences, ideas, and beliefs, liminal entities can have a prejudice-free

[31] Ibid.

glimpse of a different understanding of the world. These events, through the intersubjective experience of multiple individuals attending a performance set in a specific place, created a momentary state of nonduality that stood as an alternative to the set of human/nature relationships proper of our society, culture, and generally accepted worldview. While this state was achieved differently in the three performances, the results were somehow simliar.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz observed that rituals are cultural patterns representing symbolic models of relationship among entities and processes within "physical, organic, social, or psychological systems, by paralleling, imitating, or simulating them" (1973, 93). The relationship model presented through the ritual has both a "'of' sense and a 'for' sense" (ibid.), meaning that whatever is experienced by the subjects during the liminal moment of the performance, served both as a model *of* reality, as well as a model *for* reality. In the first case, a symbolic structure is made comprehensible in relation to pre-established nonsymbolic systems: the participants follow precise instructions about how to relate to the world. In the second one, a nonsymbolic system is given in relationship to the symbolic one: a theoretical model of how to relate to the world is given, but it is up to the subject to use such symbols to approach and interpret reality. In this case, a model *of* reality is a model of the human/nature relationship that has to be intended literally, whereas a model *for* reality provides the tools and framework to access and interpret the model.

The three performances described here, all provided both models *of*, and *for* reality, often at the same time. In Mara's sound meditations in nature, participants are provided with direct instructions about what to think and what to make their mind focus on at the beginning of the meditation. Similarly, she recited a few instructions at the beginning of the performance that we did together at LIPU's Oasis in Santa Luce. The instructions were simple: the participants were asked to listen to the sounds—to all of them, including the sound bowls, the guitar, the birds, the wind, and so on. The participants went through a physical separation from the normative world through the hike that they undertook with Silvia to reach the place of the performance (see Chapter 4), and they found themselves immersed in a place out of time and normative conceptual thoughts about nature. The music that they, as liminal entities, were asked to listen to, was going beyond any dualist definition of music. It was embracing all the sounds, whether they were produced by

human beings, non-human animals, or the geophony[32] of the area, losing behind any pre-conceived knowledge about the boundaries between them. The boundaries between concepts such as *sound* and *music* became loose, and their meaning vague altogether, as the participants immersed themselves in the holistic listening of the place. The relationship between sound and music can be seen as dualist as the one between natural and artificial discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In this sense, losing the conceptual thoughts about the boundaries between sound and music and their intrinsic perceived, isolated, natures, enables the participants to have a glimpse of nondualism, manifested via the absence of conceptual, enclosing, ideas that could create a distance between the subject (the listeners) and the object (the sound). Music in ethnomusicology is often understood in relation to its cultural significance (see Nettl 2005), but when all conceptual thoughts about it are overcome, all that remains is sound. The merging relationship of sounds coming from different agencies makes the participants, and us, the performers, to be in the place as part of it, and experience it in a different way. The industrial nature of the place,[33] of its concrete dam and metal pipes that suck water from the lake to feed a factory 10 km away on the coast, faded off. Silvia Mascagni, manager of the oasis, thinks that birds do not make distinctions between what is natural and what is artificial, and therefore are not bothered by the concrete structure within the protected area. If they feel threatened, they will simply leave to somewhere else.[34] The distinction between what is natural and what is artificial is proper of our species only and does not affect other species that possibly lack a dualist view of their relationship with nature. In this view enabled by the performance, the boundaries between the protected area and the industrial basin evaporates—similarly to those between ideas of music and sound. Only the place remains, with us and the other living beings more or less interacting with each other.

Mara and her practice are pivotal in eliciting this understanding. In her description of how she goes through the sound meditation, the use of the concept of nature is key. Mara aims to provide healing to what she calls the inner nature of the participants, and at

[32] The sounds produced by the geological and physical elements of a particular place (Krause 2002).
[33] The lake of Santa Luce, where the oasis is locate, is an industrial water basin. See Chapter 4 for a detailed description of it.
[34] Silvia Mascagni, Interview by the author on 20 August 2023.

the same time improve their relationship with the outer nature, claiming that the two are not separated and arguably the same thing. Interestingly, she considers that even if one of the participants resists the idea of reconnecting with themselves and with nature through sound, that is still nature at play, suggesting that there is no either/or relationship with nature, but rather there is only nature—which includes us. Sound, in Mara's practice—including the event that we have co-organised—is a facilitator. Through sound, the participants can participate in the ritual, separate temporarily from pre-conceived ideas about their relationship with the world, experience an alternative model of such relationships, and return to the society enriched by this event. Sound per se does not matter, as demonstrated by the different sounds protagonists of the event in which I participated. Mara usually plays different types of bowls, chimes and percussions, according to her intention, motivation, and feelings;[35] I played the guitar, and there were several non-human *-phonies* at play too. The transformative power is not an essential characteristic of any of these instruments but rather is created by the context. I will expand more on this point later on.

During Nemorea's event in Coltano, the tripartite structure was again very physical, as it included a walk from and back to the meeting point that symbolised the phases of separation and reaggregation from and with the society. The liminal phase made us feel out of time and place. We all felt confusedly lost in an intricate labyrinth of paths between fields and patches of forests. When I interviewed the guide, Siro Nicolazzi, he confessed that he intentionally took us around in a way that we could lose our sense of orientering, because that was an important part of the performance and of the experience of the participants.[36] It was also an extremely long event that lasted for more than three hours, in which the sequence of *apparizioni* [sudden performances, appearances, as defined by Sonia] facilitated the trembling reality of the liminal moment that lasted until the last scene. The actors made us immerse ourselves in an alternative world where our understanding of reality fell apart. We were moving through a world where each tree, bush, ditch, and shadow could hide a performance. The performers were part of the place, and the place was part of the performance: during its whole duration, there was

[35] Mara Sardi, Interview by the author on 02 April 2023.
[36] Siro Nicolazzi, interview by the author on 20 July 2023.

no difference between the two concepts. And we, the participants, were in fact partaking in both the place and the performance as well, becoming part of the whole. During this liminal period, all distinctions between humans and nature faded off, giving space to a nondualist view where humans and the nature of the place were in fact two overlapping concepts. The choice of the place also played an important role in it. Coltano has a history of continuous negotiations between land and community, making any boundary between humans and nature in the area conceptually—and historically—quite blurred. The non-normative relationship with the place established by the performance lasted until the very end when we separated and returned back to the societal norms. Back in in Coltano, it was night, and there was a festival including street art performances, food stalls, and concerts, and nature was once again only around us.

Sonia's relationship with the place of her performances is profound and multifaceted. She studies the place deeply, spending an extensive amount of time in it before even starting to develop a performance with the other actors. Every part of the performance, from the more general elements such as the scenes and the acts to the individual movements, postures, and reflection of natural light and sounds is accurately planned in accordance with the specific place. The place is not a stage where the actors perform. Instead, the place is a protagonist in the performance, which resulted in the feeling that the actors seemed to have always belonged to those forests and fields. The sonic part of the performance is similarly crafted too, as Sonia accurately studies the acoustic characteristics of the area, to understand its reverb, echo, and reflection when planning for moments of normal and/or declamatory speech, as well as singing and instrumental music, and other moments characterised by extended vocal techniques, such as the imitating of the goat-alike sound at the end of the last performance. Sound is not the protagonist in Nemorea's performances. However, it is an important part of the ecosystem created, where performers and their actions (including sound creation and music-making), participants and their actions, as well as the location and all its living and non-living elements, co-create a model—*of* and *for*— ecological relationships during the liminal moment. This model includes some literal instruction to initiate the relationship, such as to try to be aware of the surroundings, focus on our perception, turn off the phones, and be respectful of the place (model *for* reality); and it provides the participants and the performers with a direct experience of what it means to understand the world

with the lenses of an ecological nonduality, where there is no separation between performers, audience, and the place (model *of* reality).

Consciously created as a compromise between musical performance, a ritual, and a meditation circle, EliBi's particular performance modality, the *concerchio,* is developed in a way that creates a rupture with social norms, especially those about musical performances. Ordering the audience in a circle that includes the performers helps in establishing the ritual and framing its central phase while establishing the *communitas* that includes all the subjects. EliBi subjects herself to it by sitting in the circle, thus going against the normative idea of a presentational form of musicking, where the performers are on a stage and deliver the music to a passive audience, making it instead participatory (Turino 2008). Even though the audience is not actually making music, according to EliBi the *concerchio* enables them to participate emotionally, and empathetically, through a form of listening that is not bidirectional but rather circular. Participating in a *concerchio* is then to put aside any previous hierarchical notion of what a concert is, leaving behind the understanding of concerts as a dichotomous, separational relationship between the performer and the audience and experiencing the performance with no expectations or pre-conceived ideas about it. Similarly to Mara, EliBi considers humans' inner nature and the outer environment inextricably linked. She sees her music as a way to facilitate the individual process of acknowledgement and understanding of this connection in the audience. In this, the place plays an important role, and she accurately chooses places for the performances where there is a strong presence of non-human living beings, such as plants, animals, and so on. Bringing people to natural areas is for EliBi of pivotal importance, to make her audience recognise their nondualist relationship with nature. Her performance provides a model *for* a different relationship with nature that consists of being within it, feeling it, and respecting it, while leaving behind all pre-conceived norms about hierarchical models of human/nature—including also human/human—relationships.

If the particular modality of the performance provides an interpretative example *of* a relationship with nature, EliBi's music, instead, provides a model *for* this relationship. The lyrics speak about respect, love, acceptance and gratitude towards oneself and other beings and agencies. Most of the time the songs do not address nature and the environment directly, but that is because there is no need to do so. In providing another

meta-level model *of* this relationship, the songs address a self that is already part of nature—a fact that for EliBi is self-evident.[37] Every call for feelings of love and acceptance is directed both at the individual listeners and at nature at the same time, simply because they are the same thing. In EliBi performances music is the element that frames the liminal moment/space of the *concerchio* and at the same time is a carrier of examples of a relationship with nature that is not romanticised but rather accepted for what is, for what humans are a part of. The nature of the musical performance and the lyric content highlight the nondualist nature of this relationship, arguing ultimately that caring for nature is caring for ourselves, and being compassionate to ourselves is being compassionate towards the rest of the world as well.

Sociologist Antonio Carvalho argues that the asymmetric, dualistic relationship with the non-human world is performative, and such realisation may lead the individual to seek and construct different versions of one's identity by engaging with different philosophical contexts and understandings of the world (2014, 134). Using as examples several meditative practices of late Zen Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh, the author argues that in order to reach a non-dualistic understanding of nature, one should engage in a performance aimed at reimagining the social and therefore the ecological relationship between the self and nature (ibid.). Anthropologist John Holmes McDowell, drawing on similar intuitions about performativity and ecology, though based on different hypotheses and case studies, introduced the concept of ecoperformativity, that,

> highlight[s] the ways that people make use of traditional expressive resources to capture and convey knowledge about the natural environment, [which are] founded on ecospiritual participation in the natural world, and this, in turn, is based on ecopedagogical practices that preserve and disseminate this spiritual understanding (McDowell 2021, 22).

In theorising ecoperformativity, the author considers the presence of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) as one of the five elements for the ecoperformative act to be felicitous, the others being the appropriateness of the venue, the performance, its status, and most importantly that "the performance focuses, touches upon, or evokes the

[37] Elisa Bianchi, interview by the author on 12 September 2023.

placement of humans in the environment" (ibid., 27-28). Contrary to the performances explored by McDowell, in those examined in this chapter, the TEK element is missing. Nonetheless, they contributed to the reimagining of the role of the individual participants in relation to their environment through a performative act, in which all the participants (performers and audience included) performed their re-imagining of the self in relationship with nature through an appropriately crafted ritual.

In conclusion, the performances described in this chapter have several aspects in common. First, they were organised in a natural area of some sort. Second, their ecology included an important sonic component. Third, they were structured in a way that is relatable to Van Gennep's and Victor Turner's understanding of rituals. Fourth, they provided a nondualist alternative to the understanding of the relationship between human and nature. Furthermore, the area played an important role in all of them, and if in a traditional presentational performance there is a dual relationship between performers and stage, here the place was never just a stage but rather an active element of the performance, together with the audience/participants and with the performers/facilitator. Every dichotomous relationship between these elements disappeared during the performances, and all the elements within were liminal entities journeying through the uncertainty of the event. Sound and music were ever-present and often framing and facilitating the liminal process of reinterpreting the world, but they were never the (sole) protagonists. Rather, they were both part of the multiplicity of elements that created the context of the ritual and delivered the models of nondualist relationships. While sound and music were essential to reaching the liminal moment and framing the models, they could not achieve the same result on their own, and their qualities were entirely not essential or intrinsic. The performance made then possible for all the participants to experience an alternative to the relationship between humans and nature—which there is no difference between the two categories. Music and sound, together with the other elements of these events, made people feel part of the place, making the boundaries between the concepts of artificial and natural first blurred and then evaporated. These performances/rituals presented a model *of* and *for* an ontological alternative to the mainstream extractivist-neoliberal worldview that sees humans carelessly intervening and manipulating nature. An ecocentric way of being in the world in which human beings acknowledge that they are but a part of the Earth's

ecosystem, within which they exist in a relationship of interdependence and interrelatedness with all its other elements. An alternative way of being in which human beings acknowledge that they, too, are nature.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In the previous five chapters, I presented a series of case studies, representative of sound-mediated forms of environmentalism, each organized around themes that explore the cultural aspects of the environmental crisis from diverse perspectives. In this concluding chapter, I will discuss the key findings of this research. These include the ways in which sound and music contribute to environmentalism and sustainability, as highlighted in each chapter, as well as reflections on the methodology used throughout the study and the broader role of music and music studies in addressing the environmental crisis. This chapter begins with a summary of the key insights from the case studies, followed by a discussion of three potential avenues for future research: integrating music into both formal and informal environmental education, engaging with policy-making for European environmental and conservation organizations through musical practices, and examining the environmental impact of musical activities in natural settings. I then evaluate the effectiveness of using artistic practice as a research method in this eco-ethnomusicological study, highlighting both the benefits and limitations of this approach within my study. Building on the case studies, I further refine existing definitions of environmentalist music, particularly in relation to musical genres and styles. Finally, I use these insights to advocate for an ecocentric rethinking of music and music studies, exploring the layers of ecocentrism present in this research and addressing how activities and events including music and sound can contribute to solving current environmental challenges.

Summary of the Case Studies, Themes, and Practices

The first level of findings is the series of case studies themselves. The twenty examples of sound-mediated environmentalisms, constituted by events, performances, festivals, and individual practices, form a set of examples of approaches that can be deployed to address various cultural dimensions of the environmental crisis. Each of these practices conveys different degrees of environmental messages, objectives, methods, as well as different degrees of impact on the public, other human animals, non-human animals, and the environment. This body of work may then inspire artists, organizations, and policymakers to deploy music and sound-based practices to address the environmental crisis. However, there are inherent limitations to this approach, particularly due to the specific geographical, economic, and political contexts involved. Despite the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, Italy ranks relatively well on the Climate Risk Index. Between 2000 and 2019, it was the 22nd country worldwide with the fewest fatalities and overall losses caused by adverse weather conditions (Eckstein, Künzel, and Schäfer 2021). Yet, the country is not doing enough to mitigate climate change, and its actions in this sense—such as reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions while implementing renewable energy policies—perform well below the European average (Burck et al. 2023). The music and sound-based activities enlisted might work well in their current setting: an overall wealthy nation that has only been marginally affected by the environmental crisis for the moment, and whose actions to respond to such crisis have been so far underwhelming. Other contexts may require other. For how evocative the picture of making music against extreme events such as wildfires and floods could be, I believe that future implementation of similar practices would perform better in scenarios similar to the one depicted through this research, where the components of the environmental crisis that needs to be addressed are in a large part cultural rather than scientific, ecological etc.

This dissertation explored various music and sound-based practices employed by artists, facilitators, and environmentalist and conservation organizations to engage audiences with ideas a practices of ecology and environmental sustainability. These practices aim to establish meaningful relationships between humans and areas of natural interest, as well as between humans and the more-than-human world. The

practices seek to increase awareness of the current environmental crisis and offer simple solutions to address the cultural components of this crisis. What follows is a summary of the more practical findings derived from the analysis of the case studies presented so far in this thesis, chapter by chapter. The findings concerning eco/ethnomusicological theory will be discussed in a subsequent section.

In Chapter 3, I explored various case studies that demonstrate how walking and listening are used to foster deeper connections with the environment. These activities, which involve attentive listening to both natural sounds and music, help participants engage with landscapes and ecosystems, promoting understanding, care, and a sense of belonging. Since some human music encourages an attitude of engaged listening, it can also be deployed as part of soundwalks, to bridge the attention of the listeners to the biophony and geophony of a place, and thus to its environment. In this chapter, I expanded the definition of soundwalking, incorporating a holistic auditory approach that includes environmental sounds with music as a key element. I also identified three overlapping types of ecomusicological soundwalks situated on a continuum that goes from the practical to the poetical: Conservationist (aimed at wildlife monitoring), Educational (to raise ecological awareness), and Empathetic and Emotional (to emotionally connect people with nature and develop empathy towards non-human beings).

In Chapter 4, I explored the organization and impact of various nature-based musical events aimed at fostering connections between people and natural landscapes in Tuscany. These events, organized by conservation-focused groups prioritize environmental stewardship and carefully monitor their ecological impact. Despite their budget challenges, I observed that the events successfully drew visitors, some of whom were new to these areas, thus the events succeeded in promoting environmental awareness and appreciation. Through interviews, participants in the audience expressed a desire to revisit the natural sites and learn more about conservation efforts. The events combine music with education, allowing visitors to experience the landscape, understand human environmental impact, and witness changes in the Anthropocene. I found that these activities not only serve educational and conservation purposes but also help restore public access and connection to natural spaces that were previously marginalized or industrialized. By intertwining music and landscape appreciation, these

events promote sustainable ecotourism and encourage mindful human interaction with nature.

In Chapter 5, I analyzed seven music videos including Baroque music performances filmed in various scenic locations within the *Cornate e Fosini* nature parks. The feedback from users hints towards a blend of music and landscape that creates a beautiful and captivating viewing experience. I considered them as virtual tourism experiences that allowed people to explore places from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and served as a substitute for traditional travel experiences. The music videos constitute a form of virtual (eco)tourism, providing an immersive experience that connects viewers with nature while also promoting the music featured. Unlike traditional documentaries, these videos emphasize the emotional resonance of the landscapes, despite the lack of authentic local soundscapes. The production choices reinforce an anthropocentric perspective, often prioritizing the music over the surrounding environment. However, they also represent a re-appropriation of natural spaces during a time when access was limited due to the pandemic. This effectively illustrates our societal struggle to navigate a dualistic relationship with nature, underscoring the urgent need to rethink and transform our understanding of human/nature relationships. By merging music and landscape, the videos offer a unique escape for viewers and serve as effective marketing tools for the region. Ultimately, I conclude that these videos exemplify resilience in adapting to pandemic restrictions while fostering a cultural and environmental appreciation for under-recognized areas, promoting a mode of relationship with nature.

In Chapter 6, I consider how musicking can educate about ecological issues, as seen with Circusbandando and the Gaudats Junk Band, who engage audiences with sustainability themes through interactive performances and recycled instruments. Music also inspires reflection on ecology, illustrated by events like *Riciclare ad Arte* and *Passaggi*, which encourage contemplation of sustainable lifestyles and the importance of water bodies. The chapter emphasizes that these live, participatory events foster a sense of community and create contexts that frame environmental discourse. The power of music to promote pro-environmental behaviours is contextual and relational, relying on audience engagement and collective meaning-making. Ultimately, while these events may attract those already inclined toward sustainability, they also hope to inspire broader

change by fostering deeper connections to the environment, setting the stage for the next chapter's exploration of transformative personal and philosophical shifts.

In Chapter 7, I explore how three events structured according to Van Gennep's tripartite model facilitated a transformative liminal experience for participants, enabling them to question societal norms and reconfigure their relationships with nature. Participants entered a transitional space, becoming liminal entities that experienced a temporary state free from conventional beliefs and roles, allowing for alternative understandings of human/nature relationships. Through sound meditations and participatory performances, participants engaged in holistic listening and immersive experiences, blurring the boundaries between music and sound, and between the natural and the artificial, and questioning the existence of such boundaries themselves. Each performance, meticulously crafted to integrate the environment, established a nondualist perspective, wherein distinctions between humans and nature began to dissolve. The sonic elements played a vital role but were contextual rather than central, as they helped participants embody an interconnected model of existence. This chapter argues that such ecocentric performances can be part of a process to define and provide a crucial alternative to mainstream anthropocentric worldviews, emphasizing that humans are an integral part of the Earth's ecosystem, fostering a sense of interdependence and a more compassionate relationship with nature.

Contribution Towards Sustainable Development Goals Frameworks

In the Introduction I stated how I framed this research project in accordance with some United Nations SDGs and correspondent targets. Progress towards SDGs and their targets is measured using specific indicators (United Nations 2024). While the exact contribution of this research to the relevant indicators cannot be precisely quantified—since such an assessment is beyond the scope of this study—the following are my reflections on how this work aligns with the three main relevant SDG targets that I identified in the introduction.

Target 11.4 – Strengthen Efforts to Protect and Safeguard the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage.

The indicator for this target is defined as the "total per capita expenditure on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by source of funding, [...] type of heritage, [...] and level of government" (Ibid. 12). The case studies presented in Chapters 4 and 5 highlight how music was used to support ecotourism activities. Musical performances served as attractions, drawing visitors to protected natural areas, often in exchange for a ticketed contribution to the hosting organizations. Some of these organizations emphasized that the income generated helped fund their day-to-day operations, thereby directly supporting the protection and conservation of these natural areas.

Target 12.8 – By 2030, Ensure that People Everywhere have the Relevant Information and Awareness for Sustainable Development and Lifestyles in Harmony with Nature. AND Target 13.3 – Improve Education, Awareness-raising and Human and Institutional Capacity on Climate Change Mitigation, Adaptation, Impact Reduction and Early Warning.

The two targets share the same indicator, described as follows: the "extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment" (Ibid. 14).

Some of the artists, practitioners, and organizations discussed in this dissertation actively contribute to formal programs focused on sustainability and environmental education. Circusbandando performs in schools as their main activity, using their performance-based pedagogy to educate about various themes surrounding sustainability. The leader of the Gaudat Junk Band uses his skills to show students the importance of pro-environmental behaviours, in accordance with the SDGs. Other organisations mentioned in the case studies, such as LIPU and Legambiente, conduct numerous environmental education projects with pupils in formal educational settings

throughout the school year, although music and performing arts are usually not part of such projects.

Numerous other case studies mentioned in this dissertation (such as the ones included in Chapters 4 and 6) highlight the educational potential of sound-mediated environmentalism in accordance with SDGs targets, and while many of them limited themselves to non-formal and informal education settings,[1] there is a strong potential for this practices to be embedded in formal schools curricula (see later this chapter, "Three Future Research Directions").

Furthermore, the holistic appreciation of the environment and non-human species advocated by several other events and performances described in this body of work—such as for example those depicted in Chapters 3 and 7—contributes to the enactment of lifestyles in harmony with nature advocated in the title of target 12.8, although an assessment method that works in this sense has yet to be developed, and a proper indicator needs to be defined as a consequence.

Three Future Research Directions

In the following section, I briefly discuss what I believe could be three further directions of enquiry. Those do not necessarily constitute three different and contrasting research ideas, but rather three—potentially overlapping—dimensions of applied eco-ethnomusicological research that I intentionally excluded from this research project due to the limited time and resources at my disposal.

Future Research Direction 1: Music and Listening for Environmental Education.

In this study, I observed a series of contributions that music and sound offer in raising awareness and changing human's understanding of nature and other living beings. Future research could incorporate and measure the success of similar performances and interventions aimed at improving humans' relationships with the natural environment

[1] Less structured, out-of-school learning environments (Eshach 2007).

and non-human beings within environmental education programmes—inside and outside school settings. Environmental education is a holistic educational tool in which science, policies, and community practices converge (Mordock and Krasny 2001) to "enhance environmental attitudes, values, and knowledge, as well as [build] skills that prepare individuals and communities to collaboratively undertake positive environmental action" (Ardoin, Bowers, and Gaillard 2020, 1). Environmental education deals with and educates about living beings' interrelatedness within ecosystems (Pavlova 2013), engages with the current world environmental crisis, and suggests solutions (Stapp et al. 1969).

Figurative art has been widely used for environmental education to various degrees of success (e.g. Gray and Birrell 2015; Davis 2018; Schneller et al. 2021), under the assumption that art is a means for educators and students to immerse themselves in nature and interact with the environment, learning thereby about the complexity of the relationship between art, culture, and nature (Birt 1997). In the literature, there are only a few examples of music and sound-based practices used strategically to achieve environmental education goals. Those include undergraduate discussion seminars on ecomusicology (Allen 2017a), exposing learners to environmentalist songs (Publicover et al. 2018a), and developing children's empathy and sense of place through soundwalks (Bevington 2001). Music and sound hold great potential for contributing to environmental education programs (Gambirasio 2022b) and can facilitate ecocentric thinking and lifestyles among students (Allen 2024). The emotional involvement stimulated by the creativity of participatory music-making in contact with nature has proved to increase a sense of connection with nature and general cognitive well-being (Arbuthnott and Sutter 2019). Further research could then include music and sound-based practices to provide an aesthetic understanding of environmental issues (see Turner and Freedman 2004), including a double research methodology that takes into account participants' subjective experiences and impressions as well as their response to accepted environmental values evaluation models (F. X. Bogner and Wilhelm 1996; F. Bogner 2018). Such a study would build on the practices documented in this dissertation but with a greater focus on the audience. This would involve assessing the impact of environmentalist music through questionnaires, potentially including a control group for more accurate evaluation and comparison.

Further Research Direction 2: Policy Implications for Conservation Organizations

Another possible future research direction would be the application of sound and music practices similar to those explored in this dissertation as part of the policies of an environmentalist or conservation organisation that has not been doing it so far. While organizations like Legambiente and LIPU have successfully incorporated music performances and soundscape listening into their public engagement activities, many other organizations in Italy and across Europe's nature conservation and preservation sector have yet to adopt this approach. A future research project could aim to:

- Understand the organisation's and areas' needs (funding, engagement with the public, more subscriptions, influence towards policy-making, etc.)
- Develop a plan with park authorities and other key figures within the organisation to implement a series of sound and music-based interventions within their operational areas.
- Set a series of performances accordingly.
- Collect data through interviews with the audience (but also organisers, other performers, etc.).
- Make a revised plan for a future and wider usage of the applied practice.

Further Research Direction 3: The Environmental Impact of Music within Natural Areas

In this research, I intentionally focused on the social and cultural impacts of the musicking instances examined. I explored how these activities benefited conservation organizations and their initiatives, as well as how the performances and practices I observed, including those of the audience, shaped our subjective experiences. Although some organizations mentioned in this dissertation noted that they monitored and mitigated the performance's impact on the area—such as by limiting access to protected

natural areas and implementing no-waste policies—I did not investigate the potential environmental damage caused by these activities.

A bigger-scale approach to environmentalist musicking could then take into account the environmental impact of such activities. In Kyle Devine's recent outstanding political ecology critique of recorded music, he characterizes recorded music as a form of slow violence (2019, 172)—an insidious, often invisible process that gradually inflicts significant harm on the environment (see Nixon 2011). Devine claims that when we think of music we rarely go beyond its existence as a musical object and rarely consider its implications beyond the musical object and the performance per se, arguing that we need a political ecology approach to music that takes into account how music culture is "made and possessed, dispossessed and unmade" (2019, 18). A political ecological approach to music takes into account the environmental impact of music-making in its entirety, including the production and dissemination of the musical objects and the infrastructures that enable all such processes (Devine and Boudreault-Fournier 2021; Brennan 2021), and musical instruments use and production (Allen 2023, but also the case study of the Gaudats Junk Band described in Chapter 6).

A live music event does not end with the performances, but it includes a number of other factors, such as a space for the performance, specialised equipment, and people such as workers, audience, sound engineers, performers, and so on, just to name a few. In an ecological analysis of live musical performances, all these elements have an environmental impact (see Brennan et al. 2019; Brennan 2021). Therefore, further research about the topic must take into account the inevitable environmental impact of such performances and activities, exploring ways to mitigate it. To make an example, the organisers of a performance within a natural area could arrange some sort of sustainable means of transportation to get the audience to the venue. Or, conservation organisations could explicitly devise some low-impact performances by limiting the audience number and using only renewable energy. All these activities are important, otherwise, the positive outcome of the performance itself may be nullified by the number of cars moved to enable people to attend such performance.

Considerations about Employing Art Practice as Research Methodology in Ethnomusicology

As mentioned in Chapter 2, I was involved as a performer and sound artist in three of the events that I documented in this research (plus a fourth one that did not happen). While in that chapter I outlined the modes of my artistic participation, in this section, I will summarize the outcomes and reflect on my experience of employing such a methodology.

Participating as an artist brought me closer to the organisers. In those occasions, I was not an external figure trying to outsource data for an academic research project anymore, but rather I was directly involved in the organisation of the event and responsible for its success to some extent. The closeness with the organisers and other participating artists made it easier to reach out to them after the event, asking for an interview. Performing for them became a way to build trust and establish a professional relationship, a relationship that turned out to be much less formal than the one I had with other research participants. They were happy to collaborate, showed enthusiasm about my research topic, and praised my artistic contribution. In two cases my performance was considered one of the main acts of the events: my name was featured on the flyers, and they used my participation as a marketing point when advertising the event.

For all three events, I interviewed a portion of the audience. Interviewing the audience during the event was possible only during *Riciclare ad Arte*, the event that I contributed to with a series of sound art compositions. In that case, I was able to interact with the audience at the same time that my music was being played, thus capturing their impressions about the whole exhibition on the spot. During *Il Canto del Lago* and *Il Parco delle Stelle*, this was no longer possible as I was busy with the live performances. Moreover, the audience was following some walking trails during both events, moving toward me (or us) and then walking away. And even if in *Il Canto del* Lago a brief conversation was possible between the artists, the manager of the protected area, and the audience, in *Il Parco delle Stelle* I was on a floating platform, making any interaction with the audience impossible. Being both a researcher and a performer in my case meant having to choose which role to assume at any given moment, as it was often not possible to effectively fulfil both roles simultaneously.

For the latter two events, I reached out to the audience after a few days/weeks. Despite the delay, the performance remained vivid in their minds, and it was easy to establish a connection. Those who responded positively to my request for an interview participated enthusiastically, recalling details of the performance and expressing their satisfaction in speaking with one of the artists. Overall, it was easier to engage with research participants when they could relate to the vivid memories of the performance, rather than the abstract research topics and goals outlined in the information sheet. While I recognize that some interviewees may have been hesitant to admit they didn't enjoy my artistic work, a few audience members did express that they didn't particularly enjoy the performance or compositions. However, they found the concept behind the work intriguing and offered valuable observations and feedback on the performances, events, and the research topic itself. Being a performer helped establish a connection with the audience, as they were already familiar with me. Through my performances, I gained a better understanding of what the audience valued in those specific contexts and, more broadly, learned their opinions about the subject matter of my research.

When I was not performing, I attended the events in a more passive role, simply documenting the performances and interviewing key figures among the organisers and performers. In such instances, I was still establishing connections to potential research participants by saying that I had also been involved as a performer in other events, which I like to believe helped to spark their interest. In this sense, I believe that this direct and practical involvement with the issue that was enabled by the performance made my research endeavours more credible, and externally it looked like I really care about finding connections between music and environmental sustainability.

The extent of my personal involvement in the various events varied depending on whether or not I was a performer. Even though I cared about the themes and issues of the various events, when my music was not included, I could better separate my emotions from the event. In this context, I had no expectations for the event's outcome and no direct attachment to its success, in terms of audience attendance, ticket sales, etc. Instead, I was more concerned with understanding the organizational rationale of the events and performances, and the potential implications of employing music and sound to achieve the organisation's goals. When my music was part of an event, I found myself contributing to things like marketing, the setting up of the spaces, carrying equipment,

cleaning, etc. With the other people involved, we shared those moments of stage-related tension before the performance started, and we celebrated together after it. After the cancellation of the second event planned with LIPU's Santa Luce branch (see Chapter 4), we expressed our shared disappointment with the organizers and the other participating artists via WhatsApp. In this sense, being a performer resulted in some emotional involvement in the event.

A Note on Musical Styles and Genres

At the several conferences in which I presented some excerpts of this study, my presentation was often followed by a question about musical genres. A few colleagues (to whom I am thankful to have provoked these thoughts) asked which musical styles, genres, and instruments are more effective in fighting against the environmental crisis, and which are those that better facilitate and establish meaningful connection with the natural environments. These are important questions, and I want to take this opportunity to address them properly. However, the short answer might be somewhat unsatisfying: in my view, based on the findings of this research, no specific genre or style has the intrinsic power to combat the environmental crisis or to persuade people to care more about the planet.

This idea builds upon longstanding discussions in ethnomusicology, in which several scholars have argued that music does not possess inherent meaning but instead derives its significance from culturally mediated perceptions and relationships (Merriam 1964; Nettl 2001; 2005; Rice 2017). This approach is still problematic. Deborah Wong argued that for our work to matter we must "de-link [...] our work from music as a historical and ideological construct" (Wong 2014, 348). Music itself is not inherently problematic here (at least not at this stage of the discussion, and I will go back to this point in the next section of the conclusions). However, what is problematic is an approach that treats music as an exception among sounds. Wong argued that such an approach has a consequence that "music *cannot* matter" as this exceptionalism might make music "feelingful, experiential, embodied and unnecessary" (Ibid., 350). The considerations I presented in Chapter 3, where I equated music with other sounds, are

particularly relevant here, as they situate this work within a specific new stage of ethnomusicology's evolutionary arc. This field started with categorising sonic taxonomies of musical cultures, genres, and instruments (Bohlman 1988, 27-29), progressed through the relativism of the anthropology of music (e.g. Merriam 1964), and later shifted to incorporate voice and sound studies (e.g. Wong 2014). In this work I aimed to de-essentialize and de-exceptionalize music and sound, considering them for their fundamental sonic nature while at the same time acknowledging relational multispecies subjectivities and the ecologies of several infrastructures such as the environment, sociocultural contexts, and so on. Therefore, the approach employed here builds on both on an objective sound studies perspective and a more anthropological, subjective and context-based one, thus integrating the epistemic categories of sound and music into a unified framework, in which no category is inherently more important than the other. In fact, a music/sound dichotomy is not dissimilar at all from the nature/culture divide discussed in the previous chapter.

Anthropologist Mark Pedelty in his account of environmentalist music-making observed that the genres of environmentalist music were varied and diverse and that the status of environmentalist musicians was given by other factors, such as the capacity to synthesize environmental activism within the means of a song or a performance (2016). The genres that I encountered during the period of research fieldwork varied as such and included jazz, blues, R'n'B, improvisation, singing-songwriting, pop, European art music, folk, traditional music, indie, and others. In addition, many of the events included other sonic elements that question our definition of music, such as the employment of the ritual sounds produced by gongs and singing bowls, and interaction with the sounds populating the soundscape. This leads to a longer answer to the question at the beginning of this section. Based on this study, I believe that there is not a single sound, song, music genre, style, instrument, or sonic element or parameter that can reconstruct our broken relationship with the Earth and other living beings. Various species of non-human animals respond to specific sounds that might relate to simpler parameters such as pitch, level, timbre, volume, density, etc. (Popper, Hawkins, and Thomsen 2020), and recent research showed how plants react to acoustic signals too (Bhandawat and Jayaswall 2022). However, this is not true on our side of the relationship. To restore our connection with the more-than-human part of the world, we need more than a specific,

miraculous, healing sonic element. What we need is to reach the rational realisation that we too are nature and that caring for the environment and other species is simply caring for ourselves. Sounds have had a central role in all the events mentioned in this dissertation, but they become meaningless if extrapolated out of their contexts.

Mark Pedelty has defined environmentalist musicians as those who through music directly ask their audience to "feel and care more deeply about environmental issues" (2016, 254), and as ecomusical practices as those forms of musical performances "that engage environmental questions at the local level" (Pedelty et al. 2020, 24). Some of the music and sound-based practices examined in this dissertation belong to these categories. The members of the Gaudats Junk Band (see Chapter 6), for instance, are environmentalist musicians whose work embodies the importance of recycling and upcycling unused objects. And so are Paco and Celestina of *Circusbandando* (same Chapter), myself, and others. But while the environmentalist content of the musical performances seems straightforward in some cases, it is less obvious in others. For instance, those participating in *Musica sulle Apuane, Festambiente*, and other festivals and events did not include a precise ecocritical message in their songs, nor did they perform music that engaged directly with local environmental issues. Instead, they were part of events and festivals organised by organizations that actively contribute to raising awareness about the local challenges and issues regarding environmental sustainability. Despite this apparent lack of environmentalist content in the musical objects themselves, these practices can be labelled as ecomusical practices nonetheless, as they were part of a context that aimed to contribute to the conversation about the issue and enact cultural change in that regard. And that introduces the next point: if the environmentalist and the ecocritical messages were often not communicated by any of the musical parameters (lyrics, but also pitch, rhythm, etc.), and not communicated or performed directly by the artist(s), what made these performances to be ecomusical practices?

Eco-ethnomusicology: an Ethnomusicology without Music

Before addressing this final question, I will further reflect on some of the disciplinary-related perspectives through which I approached, from an ecocentric standpoint, these musical practices. In the introduction, I explained how an ecocentric viewpoint is a non-hierarchical one that considers humans as but a part of Earth's ecosystems. I also advocated for an ecocentric approach to music that aligns with the urgent need to re-evaluate our relationship with the planet, its resources, and its other inhabitants in order to address the environmental crisis. Similarly, in Chapter 3, I discussed how the anthrophony—all sounds produced by human activities, including music—is but a part of the sound commons, for in it, Titon reminds us, "biotic organisms and their abiotic environment interact with, and serve as resources for, one another" (Allen et al. 2023, 147). Reflecting on the broader crises of modernity, twentieth philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), argued that meaningful change must be radical, total, and begin within the individual rather than at a societal level (2018). This is not the form of possessive individualism advocated by neoliberalism (Harvey 2005), that exploits communities under the guise of protecting the freedoms of a privileged minority (Monbiot 2016). Rather, it is the acknowledgement that societal patterns are created by humans and that individuals are not independent of them, but interdependent with them (Krishnamurti 1967, Chapter 18). Each one of us is an actor of change.

To contribute towards positive change and transformation, we must then also change our perspective toward the world, including how we engage with sonic objects within the fields encompassed by music and sound studies. In this section, drawing on my fieldwork experience and theories from ethnomusicology, musicology, and ecomusicology, I will outline a framework for an ecocentric approach to studying music in relation to the environmental crisis. This framework introduces further findings from my research and advocates for a transformative shift in how we engage with sonic objects within music and sound studies.

Exploring these case studies was possible only through an ecocentric understanding of phenomena, rooted in interrelatedness. In this sense, I considered all the elements contributing to the co-creation of festivals, performances, and events as interrelated and co-existing without hierarchies of importance. This led me to reflect on

the role of music and sound within this research and in music and sound studies more broadly, particularly the tendency to isolate sound (and music) from other stimuli and prioritize it over other elements. Anthropologist Tim Ingold argued that separating sound from vision enables only a partial understanding of the world (2007, 10). According to him, sound does not possess any inherent qualities that make it more capable of accessing our inner experiences than other sensory stimuli, nor is hearing a more important sense than seeing for individuals to engage holistically with their surroundings (Ingold 2000c, 244). Following Ingold's thought, the case studies explored in this dissertation demonstrate how focusing on one sense only is, to some extent, unreasonable. That is because the subjective experiences were built on interwoven lines of perceptions that constituted the experience. Given that the concept of ecology itself refers to the interactions between organisms and their environment (Pimm and Smith 2004), I argue that focusing on a single element in isolation is detrimental towards the understanding of complex issues such as the impact of musicking towards sustainability.

That does not mean that studying music and sound in these contexts is not important. Conversely, I believe that they played a very important role in the events depicted here. However, I believe that their contribution and environmentalist impact lay in the relationship that performance instantiated with the other elements of the events rather than in the musical elements per se. Therefore, I believe that for the study of music and sound to contribute to efforts that promote environmentalism and a more ecocentric society, and consequently, for the study of ecomusical events and performances, we need an approach that reflects their contextual reality. In short, for our work to matter in building a more ecologically just society, we also need to think ecologically.[2]

This implies an approach aimed to de-centre and de-essentialize music (even in its verb form) as an object of study and considers the network of the relationships that occurs between music and its non-musical context. Joshua Pilzer's argument that music

[2] This idea is what Aldo Leopold called "thinking like a mountain" (Leopold 1949), meaning to think holistically to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the elements within an ecosystem. Here's a grammatically improved version of your sentence with improved clarity and flow:
The concept of interdependence of phenomena is not new and appears in the work of several other thinkers—from the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 150–c. 250 C.E.) (Siderits and Katsura 2021) to contemporary quantum physicist Carlo Rovelli (Rovelli 2021), and many, many others in between.
.

can also be a perspective, rather than an object (2023), enables a series of possibilities for ethnomusicologists who engage with non-musical objects of study, constituting a first theoretical step in this direction. Pilzer's understanding of ethnomusicology as a way to engage with life "musically" (2021, 452) entails a holistic way to engage with all aspects of life, society and culture, thus de-fetishizing music within music studies and approaching other aspects of expressive and social life with the sensibility of a music scholar (2023). In a sense, I used this approach to engage with people who aren't musicians, performers, or sound artists by connecting with their fields *musically,* applying the empathy I developed through music to address localized environmental issues. In evaluating the possibility of an "ethnomusicology without music," Pilzer's goal is to employ ethnomusicological emphasis on those "parameters often associated with music" and on "culturally and socially rooted aesthetic sensibilities and values" (2023, 15, 16) in order to approach and analyze other, non-musical, aspects of everyday life. As I observed in each of my case studies, the amount of sonic elements is sometimes lower than that of non-sonic elements. Nonetheless, ethnomusicology provided a useful toolset that enabled me to meaningfully engage with all the elements constituting each of the instances observed. The environmental crisis is a non-musical phenomenon, and yet, this research shows that studying the diverse sonic approaches to environmental issues is worth it because it can have an extra-musical (and also extra-academic) impact.

Ethnomusicology trains us to listen open-mindedly to musics with which we may be unfamiliar without any preconceived judgment. It trains us to analyse performances and expressive culture trying to understand the points of view of the people involved therein, avoiding essentialist assumptions. Ethnomusicology trains us to listen empathetically not only to music and sound, but also to the voices of other human beings, acknowledging and validating their perspectives, experiences, and everyday endeavours—whether they are musicians or not. We are trained to observe and listen to the different parameters of social life as they interact with each other. In this sense, we are already trained to go beyond music to consider other non-musical issues in our analysis of phenomena.

Quite paradoxically, Aaron Allen pondered if this ecocentric approach to the study of music and sound could also imply that we stop listening:

> Perhaps listening is overrated. Perhaps listening has been too fetishized in music and sound studies. Perhaps, we should listen less and pay more attention to the contexts of music and sound (2024, 149).

In looking at these contexts, Allen suggests three levels of what he calls ecomusicological listening: weaker, stronger, and extreme. The weaker aims to factor in those contexts—and I would add, the subjects—that are more than human. A stronger attention towards contexts, at the second level, aims to "*de-centre* the musical work or *de-fetishize* the sonic material" (ibid., 150, original emphasis). Allen's third, "extreme" type of ecomusicological listening occurs when we "disregard sound and music entirely" and rather focus on other aspects of the environment, of that entire context for music cultures, sound making" and "related musical tools and sonic actions" (ibid., 150).

This paradox, as Allen puts it, may seem contradictory. How can this practice be labeled *ecomusicological listening* if it urges us not to listen? How can we listen and not listen at the same time? Considering that ecocentrism implies the absence of power hierarchies between elements that are within the same ecosystem (as in, for instance, the abolishment of human exceptionalism), in an ecocentric approach to culture we cannot afford to put a single element on a pedestal and observe how the other elements react to it, but rather we must consider the whole network of relationships holistically. If listening from an anthropocentric standpoint is directed to single objects with hierarchies of importance, listening ecocentrically erases those hierarchies. We are still listening, but without believing that hearing is more important than other senses, that music is more important than other sounds, and that human culture is more important than other beings lives and the rest of the planet. The study of music should then expand "beyond who is making and listening to music [...] and even beyond what music sounds like, how it feels, or what it means" (Devine 2019, 20), resulting in a type of (ethno)musicological scholarship that may not be centred on music only:

> The phrase *musicology without music* is not a call to abandon music or music research. Rather, it is a call to expand and multiply those domains by insisting that they are not only tied to but constituted by a variety of distributed and ostensibly non-musical people, things, and conditions. To downplay or neglect those people, things, and conditions is to subscribe to a definition of "music" whereby

> preconceptions about what music is determine the parameters of what musicologists should do. This is a definition of music that says musicians and fans are what *really* matter in musical cultures. It is a definition that supports hierarchies about what counts as a creative act and what counts as a musical practice. It is a definition that persists in limited focuses on authorship and celebrity as well as the consumption of cultural artefacts as finished products. It is a definition of music that ignores where the materials of musical culture come from, who makes them for us, how they get to us, and what happens when we no longer want them. In short, common understandings of music tend to exclude a lot of the sweat and stuff that musical cultures rely on (Devine, 2019, 21, original emphasis).

These considerations are fundamental in order to understand the role that sound and music can have in the transition from the Anthropocene—a definition that implies that humans and their cultural products exist at the top of the power hierarchy—to a more ecocentric Ecocene (Boehnert 2018; Allen 2020b; Küpers 2020). The Ecocene is a geological era "yet to be designed" (Boehnert 2018, 11) that could be constituted by the establishment of functioning non-hierarchical systems of relationships. The success of the transition towards this new era "depends entirely on what we do now" (ibid.); therefore, for this transition to happen, we can—and we must, I believe—do our best to contribute even from the small niches of our scholarly fields and disciplines. One way to do so is to decrease the anthropocentric focus that characterises music and sound studies in favour of more ecocentric musicology, ethnomusicology, and ecomusicology—and as a consequence, eco-ethnomusicology—which paradoxically may as well exist and function *without music*.

An eco/ethno/musicology without music may avoid being entrapped by a narrow, selective, and deceiving focus on anthropocentric approaches to music that may impose limits on "what music cultures can be or where music researchers should focus their attention" (Devine 2019, 22). Instead, it can embrace a more holistic attention towards the whole network of processes and relationships comprehending those music-making and listening activities. This, in turn, highlights how music-making and listening activities influence our relationship with the environment. It is especially effective for studying

sound-based practices aimed at aligning individuals with the vision of a more just and ecocentric society. To move towards this direction, Allen suggests that we might have to

> [d]isregard the composer, the piece, the performers, the listeners even; instead regard the warming atmosphere, the polluted hydrosphere, the depleted lithosphere that encompass them. Disregard the pitch, the rhythm, the form, the timbre; regard instead the timber, the minerals, the animals, the bio-geochemical processes that make Earth possible for music and then sound (2024, 150).

This does not suggest that music scholars should abandon their focus on music and expressive culture, or that music did not play an important role in the events covered in this research. We are in these fields because we love music, and we believe that music is important somehow. Many of us—me included—are also active performers who care about music, its sound, and how performing makes us and the listeners feel. The seemingly contradictory act of setting aside music to ecomusicologically listen to it should then be understood not as an inconsistent paradox, but as an activist call to action, as it advocates for a shift in how we approach musicking within our disciplines, particularly concerning the context of the environmental crisis. Similarly, the title that I gave to this section was not to be intended literally, but rather as a voluntarily provocative title, and a reference to Pilzer, Devine, and Allen's theories expressed above (especially the definitions of ethno/musicology *without* music). A longer but perhaps less striking title to this flux of thoughts could then have been *ecocentric ethnomusicology beyond music*. In fact, these three authors do not move away from music in its entirety and still deal with music to some extent. Therefore the preposition *without* should be understood in its archaic sense, meaning outside or beyond an object—music, in this case—rather than suggesting distancing from it (Oxford English Dictionary 2023c).

An eco/ethno/musicology without music then does not want to exclude music completely but rather decenter it from the focus of its enquiries in order to move towards the inclusion of what lies *beyond* and *outside* music, including—but not limited to—all musicking's environmental implications, relationships, and impact. In this sense, another title/label for this section and approach could have then been *ethnomusicology within the environment*, to acknowledge that both musicking and its study exist in relationship with the surrounding environment that in turn enables them. This research

highlights how musicking could be implemented to affect the environment by changing the ways we think and relate to it. In fact, this section aims to show the potential of eco/ethno/musicology scholarship to look at and have an impact that moves through music and beyond music—rather than without it.

Drawing from four examples coming from his previous scholarship, Allen demonstrates that understanding music ecocentrically involves factoring in the entirety of processes that surround it. In such an approach music often serves as a pretext that enables us to enquire about the natural environment that enables it (Allen 2020a). My research serves also the purpose of constituting a case study of an ecocentric approach to music through music studies. Of course, ethnomusicologists have long emphasized the significance of considering sociocultural contexts in understanding music. However, an ecocentric approach to ethnomusicology should extend this focus further, encompassing not only human culture but also other species and the entirety of Earth's ecosystems—as well as all the relationships included therein. To some extent Jeff Todd Titon has pushed his theoretical work in this way, arguing for an ethnomusicology that in order to deal with the current challenges should move beyond the study of people making music "to the more inclusive eco-ethnomusicological study of beings communicating in sounds" (Titon 2024, 124).

By decentering music in this way, we can shift our focus to the broader complexity of the ecosystems that surround and sustain it, allowing for a more ecocentric perspective. When studying music's effort towards making a more ecocentric society, we must avoid, as the saying goes, mistaking the finger for the moon. In other words, we should look beyond the act of musical performance itself and appreciate the larger role that music and sound play in the transition from the Anthropocene to the Ecocene.

Music and Sound Creating Contexts for Change

In my research, two overlapping layers of ecocentrism that follow the approach outlined in the previous section. Initially, I focused on the role music and sound might play in addressing environmental challenges, positioning sonic objects at the centre of my inquiry. However, during fieldwork, I quickly recognized the relational and contextual

roles that music and sound held within the activities I documented, prompting me to expand my ethnomusicological focus to include non-musical elements. As hinted above, this often required looking beyond musicking itself to examine the contexts that enabled sonic objects and the relationships between musical and non-musical elements in the performances. In fact, the environmental impact of these events was also shaped by elements beyond music and sound. As detailed in Chapter 2, the development and dissemination of ecological and sustainability ideas in the various events explored here were co-produced by a diverse group of human agents. Additionally, factors like place, landscape, non-human inhabitants, weather, architecture, and the history of locations played crucial roles, along with institutions, municipal authorities, legislation, and both physical and virtual infrastructures. All of these elements contributed equally to co-creating the performances, events, and festivals, delivering messages of environmentalism, interconnectedness, and sustainability. Each element functioned within a connected system, where every component, however temporary, influenced the overall experience. This forms the first layer.

The role of music explored in this dissertation was also beyond its power in shaping ideas about the environment among the audience, as it ultimately holds a potential impact on the ecosystem itself. This constitutes the second layer. In fact, in exploring how the interaction of these various elements within the contexts of the studied event, I observed how these ecomusical practices contributed to addressing the human and cultural aspects of the environmental crisis. Furthermore, my efforts to explore these issues through writing, performances, and fieldwork contributed to addressing the same issues and had some impact on the environment. In a way, I looked at music to look outside of it. Or, better, in the various case studies, through looking at music, I had a better grasp of what lies beyond it from an environmentalist point of view. Even better, in this research, I looked at the relationship with the environment and its issues, paraphrasing Pilzer, musically, as I looked at musical events aimed at addressing and impacting non-musical issues.

Vice versa, the music and sound performances discussed in this dissertation were shaped by non-musical factors. They emerged as responses to a wide range of ecological issues and phenomena enabled by the environment. For example, the performances which took place within natural areas were in a way enabled by that very environment, as

it provided the space, the surroundings, the soil on which the audience and the performers walked, stood, and sat, and so on. A general example could be to consider that the oxygen that musicians and the audience breathed was also produced by the surrounding vegetation, which to some degree contributed to the performance. In this sense, the ecosystem of a place allows all the performances within it. A more specific example is my performance on Lake Massaciuccoli, detailed at the very beginning of this dissertation. This performance was only possible because of the lake itself, which provided both the physical setting and backdrop. The balanced ecosystem, including fish and insects that controlled mosquito larvae, also contributed to making the experience more tolerable. In this sense, every performance, event, and festival discussed here emerged as an affordance of the environment itself. Affordances are properties of objects, terrain features, events, and other living beings in relation to an organism, representing potential actions available to that organism (Gibson 1986). For instance, objects like musical instruments afford music (Tullberg 2022), and beings such trees afford musical instruments (Allen 2020a). Music, in turn, can afford, among other things, movement, synchronization, symbolic actions, cognitive engagement, and shifts in mood (Windsor and de Bézenac 2012). In this context, the sonic events in this study were affordances shaped by multiple environmental factors, from fundamental elements like the air, the performance space, and the other living beings involved in it, to specific conditions such as the materials used in the musical instruments that afforded such instruments, and so on. Each of these elements contributed to the environment's role in affording the experiences and interactions described here.

Then, what was the role of music and sound in these events? All the case studies explored in this dissertation differ from each other, not only in terms of genres, styles, ensembles, and musical instruments employed, but also in their settings, people involved, environmentalist aims, and contexts. Additionally, the formats of the events were often quite distinct from one another, ranging from small events with less than twenty participants to multi-day festivals touching thousands. The performances were also crafted with divergent intentions, aiming to entertain the audience, educate them, facilitate meditation, stimulate reflections, and generally, raise awareness. The role of music and sound within each of the twenty events documented in this study is varied and never fixed, each event oscillating between different positions to engage with its

audience according to the event's purpose and the artists' and host organisations' goals. What this suggests is that the context and the sum of all the elements are more important than the musical objects and parameters per se. Chapter 6 is exemplary in this regard: in the case studies examined, the communication of environmental values underlying sustainable behaviours was conveyed not only through musical means but also through other essential elements, both internal and external to the performance. These included audience participation, instrumentation, organizational goals, speeches on environmental topics, and the choice of venue. Similarly, in Chapter 7, the artists and facilitators fostered non-dualistic understandings of the human/nature relationship at different levels of explicitness. Even when directly addressed by the facilitator, the participants' experience was shaped by more than just the music, incorporating factors like the environment, audience engagement, and performance setup. The other case study chapters exhibit similar dynamics. In Chapter 3, a critical understanding of the environment and its ecosystems emerged from the interplay of participant movement, active listening, layers of soundscape (including music), and the intentions of organizers, performers, and the natural setting. This raises the question: would the message have had the same impact if the sounds of local bird species at the LIPU oasis, or the music from *Dei Suoni i Passi*, had been recorded and listened to at home? Likewise, in Chapters 4 and 5, music's role in promoting sustainable tourism was inseparable from the support of local organizations, the presence of visitors, legislation, and the management of the parks and natural areas involved.

If the environmentalist message resulting from these and other events and performances was co-created by the sum of all the parts involved, and by the relationships struck up between these various constituent elements, then music and sound nevertheless still played an important role in creating and sustaining the contexts in which ecological and sustainability messages were crafted and communicated. The musicians, artists, and performers I interviewed emphasized the crucial role of music in shaping various events. They recognized that without music, the events would have attracted different people, led to different experiences, and conveyed different messages to different audiences. Music and sound drew people to the event locations and unified them under the central themes of various festivals and gatherings. They helped establish the settings where implicit and explicit messages of ecology and sustainability were

delivered, fostering alternative perspectives and ideas about our relationship with nature and our co-existence with other living beings. Through framing these contexts, music and sound facilitated the portrayal of ecological themes, whether explicitly or implicitly, according to each case.

While it is true that the types of events, festivals, and performances described in this dissertation are likely to attract an audience that already cares about the planet, the natural environment, and related sustainability issues, several audience members I interviewed admitted that they initially attended a specific event or performance for its musical component. They became interested in the sustainability and ecological aspects only after arriving, exploring the area, and engaging in conversations with those involved. Of course, the number of people interviewed about this hypothesis is so small that I am far away from making any assumptions, but in these isolated cases, the musical performances successfully attracted people who were not interested in the issues and themes of the event.

In all these instances, listening undeniably played a role. Listening implies acknowledging communities of relationships between living beings (Titon 2015c; Katopodis 2019); it is an exercise of empathy towards the worlds existing outside our subjectivities (Stokes 2022). Listening, even not-intentionally, affects emotional responses and crafts identities (Kassabian 2013), and "it connects sciences to processes of ethical and political formation" (Jenkins 2021, 218). All the people who attended the events and festivals discussed in this dissertation, including their online versions, were compelled by the sonic medium to open their ears, both literally and figuratively, to other beings (both human and non-human), to the landscape, and to new ideas. Through the act of listening, they became receptive to learning and experiencing, thus opening themselves to other lifestyles, worldviews, and essential concepts necessary for making more sustainable choices and leading more sustainable lives. Again, audience responses highlighted this conclusion. Most of the people who attended the two LIPU events described in Chapter 4, as well as those who attended the *Riciclare ad Arte* festival described in Chapter 6, observed how music and sound contributed to bringing together the conceptual and experiential parts of the events and festivals, thus creating a context for ecological transition and change.

Final Thoughts

Our existence on this planet is currently under threat from multiple directions. As I write this dissertation, there are over 110 armed conflicts occurring in various parts of the world.[3] We have just emerged from a global pandemic and are experiencing an unprecedented series of natural disasters, with global warming reaching its highest recorded levels. In Europe, there is a documented resurgence of right-wing and illiberal political movements and parties (Schraff and Pontusson 2024), and poverty and other social issues are rampant everywhere. In this global chaos, is hard to believe that we, musicians and music scholars, can actually make a difference and contribute to the necessary transition to a more just civilization. A civilization that does not discriminate against other living beings (whether they are humans or not) and that understands that whatever damage we inflict on others is going to be reflected in ourselves. We need a society that understands this reality of interconnectedness, and interdependence, a society rooted in kindness rather than selfishness, compassion rather than profit, solidarity and empathy rather than isolation and exploitation. A society that recognizes that the greed and hunger for power that motivates speceism and extractivism is a poison that threatens our existence. Because, in the end, the Earth is alright, and the only existence that is truly threatened is ours.

Finally, this is the moment to ask once again the questions that have guided and motivated me in pursuing this research and trying to answer them. Can music and sound play a role in facing the environmental crisis and furthering the necessary ecological transition? Can music and sound address the human and cultural components of such a crisis, and can they facilitate change? After having conducted this research, I believe that the answer to both questions is yes, but music and sound's role in this sense is not necessarily a consequence of the explicit content of the lyrics, pitch, timbre, or the activist actions of the musicians and performers. Of course, that is one of the possibilities. In his seminal book about music and environmentalism in the Salish Sea region, Mark Pedelty argued that music contributes to the environmentalist cause by communicating ecological issues, creating activist communities, and fostering a sense

[3] Data from https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts, accessed on 07 July 2024.

of care for place (2016). While his study primarily focused on music that is explicitly environmentalist, I believe this concept can also extend to other types of music and sound in general and to other locales. The sonic objects I have described throughout this research were typically not composed to deliver a direct message or embody environmentalist advocacy. Instead, they supported the environmentalist cause by creating contexts for environmentalism. This happened regardless of the isolated musical, acoustic and event-specific parameters, resulting in a series of diverse environmentalisms mediated by music and sound, and by the conribution of all the other factors described above.

While the practices explored in this dissertation were confined to specific geographical and political boundaries, these ecomusical performances go well beyond such boundaries and may help to shed light on similar practices happening in similar areas of the world. This localised study will then help us in deepening our understanding of the role that music and sound may have within the undoubtedly necessary transitioning phase from the Anthropocene to the Ecocene on several levels, from localised communities to transnational societies. In facing the environmental crisis, I believe the power of music and sound lies in their ability to unite people and facilitate discussions, questions, and ideas about places, non-human beings, sustainable behaviours, and environmental responsibility. Ultimately they foster empathy for other human beings, non-human animals, plants, and our planet as a whole fostering an ecocentric understanding of Earth as an ecosystem constituted by parts that are interconnected to each other.

To provide a final answer to the question about the role that we, as musicians, artists, and music scholars, can play during these challenging times of ecological transition, I draw on the insights gained from my observations and participation in the events, performances, and festivals described in this dissertation. Through our art, we can inspire awareness, provoke thoughts, and foster a sense of community dedicated to sustainability. Through our creative endeavours, we can evoke emotional connections to the natural world, advocate for sustainable practices, and create contexts to enable the necessary conversations for change. This, I believe, is what we can do.

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Appendices

Appendix A. List of the Events Documented and Exclusion Criteria.

Date	Event	Location	Included in the Study	Exclusion Criteria
16/07/2022	Arcaica	Castellina Marittima	No	Redundancy
13/08/2022	Cena Galeotta	Bibbona	No	Redundancy
23/08/2022	Il suono del Silenzio	Sassetta	Yes	
25/08/2022	Il Silenzio e I suoni della pineta	Marina di Castagneto Carducci	Yes	
27-28/08/2023 03-04/08/2023	Riciclare ad Arte	Castellina Marittima	Yes	
25/02/2023	Alberi In città	Poggibonsi	No	Redundancy (similar to other case studies included in Chapter 6.)
29/04/2023	Demiurga live @ Extinction/Rebellion	Pisa	No	Not enough data about the topic.
29/04/2023	Natura Musica Rumore	Peccioli	No	The event was cancelled, but

				I interviewed the facilitator.
01/05/2023	Canto del maggio	Braccagni	No	Not enough evidence.
07/05/2023	Il Canto del Lago	Santa Luce	Yes	
20/05/2023	72 ore di biodiversità	Scandicci		Redundancy (similar to other case studies included in Chapter 6.)
20/05/2023	No Keu fest	Empoli	No	Not Enough data.
24/05/2023	EartHeart	Piombino	No	Songwriters should have been included in the thesis to constitute a chapter on itself, which I chose to not do eventually.
27/05/2023	Festa Ecologica	Ponsacco	Yes	
28/05/2023	EcoVinci	Vinci	Yes	
02/06/2023	NoBase Coltano	Pisa	No	Not enough data.
10/06/2023	Musica Sulle Apuane	Forno	Yes	
13/06/2023	Sciabadì/Sciabadai	Santa Croce sull'Arno	Yes	

17/06/2023	Alla scoperta dei canti della Natura	Vada	Yes	
17/06/2023	Festival del Bosco	Pieve di Compito	No	Redundancy (similar to other case studies included in Chapter 4.)
23/06/2023	Reusemed	Capannori	Yes	
24/06/2023	Joe Natta e le Leggende Lucchesi	Piazza al Serchio	No	See previous comment about songwriters
30/06/2023	La via delle foreste	Castagneto Carducci	No	Not enough data
08/07/2023	110Hz Festival	Coltano	Yes	
17/07/2023	Jazz for the Planet	Tignano	No	Not relevant
19/07/2023	Circusbandando	Palaia	Yes	
22/07/2023	Camminata Sensoriale	Camaldoli	Yes	
2-6/08/2023	Festambiente	Rispescia	Yes	
08/08/2023	Concerchio	Santa Luce	Yes	
10-12/08/2023	Il Parco delle Stelle	Massaciuccoli	Yes	
09-10/09/2023	MeNeCuro	Calci	No	Redundancy
Multiple dates	Passaggi	Multiple Locations	Yes	
Multiple dates	ViviParco	San Rossore	Yes	
Multiple dates	Dei Suoni I passi	Multiple Locations	Yes	
Asynchronous	I Canti della Terra	Online	Yes	

Appendix B. List of Interviewees and Exclusion Criteria.

Date of the Interview	Name of the Interviewee	Contribution Included in the Study	Exclusion Criteria
12/09/2023	Andreas	Yes	
11/08/2023	Stefano Zanobini	Yes	
25/05/2023	Giuseppe De Santis	No	Redundancy
02/06/2023	Matteo Zoppi	No	Not enough data
24/05/2023	Giacomo Panicucci	No	Not relevant to any of the chapters, although it can be included in future research.
31/05/2023	Fabio S.	No	Not relevant
28/05/2023	Lorenzo V.	No	Not enough data
29/05/2023	Lino	No	Not enough data
04/07/2023	Gioia Giusti	Yes	
22/06/2023	Saverio Lubrano	Yes	
11/07/2023	Gianluca Testa	No	Redundancy
11/07/2023	Daniele Gaudats	Yes	
03/07/2023	Joe Natta	No	Not relevant to any of the chapters, although it can be included in future research.
20/07/2023	Siro Nicolazzi	Yes	
30/07/2023	Andrea Gambassini	Yes	
21/08/2023	Pasquale Vaira	Yes	
21/08/2023	Giulia Villa	Yes	
21/09/2023	Angelo Gentili	Yes	

31/08/2023	Andrea Fontanelli	Yes	
28/08/2023	Luigi D'alessandro	Yes	
26/04/2023	Maurizio Busìa	Yes	
29/04/2023	Fausto Caricato	Yes	
12/09/2023	Elisa Bianchi	Yes	
20/08/2023	Silvia Mascagni	Yes	
11/05/2023	Mara Sardi	Yes	
01/10/2023	Sonia Montanaro	Yes	
19/09/2023	Marco Romano Coppola	No	Not relevant
11/04/2023	Donatella Mercatelli	No	Redundancy
11/04/2023	Simona Bertini		Redundancy
27/09/2023	Federica Carriaggio		Redundancy
31/08/2022	Rita Ferrini		Redundancy
29/08/2022	Sabina Manetti	Yes	
18/10/2022	Samuela Nati	Yes	
20/09/2022	Stefano Agostini	Yes	
19/09/2022	Stefano P.	No	Not relevant