

Multiplicity - a spectral analysis of Brussels.

Track 1. Berlaymont.

Multiplicity is an audio walk that attempts a spectral analysis of the city of Brussels. On the way, we'll learn some techniques. We start though, with the most basic: Listening, which you are already doing. and Walking.

As Rebecca Solnit quotes from Jean-Jacques Rousseau in her book "Wanderlust" "I can only meditate when I'm walking. When I stop I cease to think. My mind only works with my legs."

The Muses will guide us.

**Marche à droite / Loop naar rechts**

With your back to the escalators from the Metro station, with the entrance to Berlaymont in front of you, walk to the right.

Walking around the Berlaymont building, the seat of the European Commission, we hear very little but the soft noise-scape of the city surrounding the building with calm.

There's a glass exhibition display on the right, **(met een stuk van de Berlijnse Muur)** walk past that and continue along the wall up to the large spotlights by the steps.

Are you by the spotlights? **(wacht hier / arrêtez ici)** Then stop and look up at the building.

The Berlaymont is a Sound Mirror reflecting the vibrations of the city back towards us, fragmented by thousands of glass slats. Back at the end of the 'sixties, the original modernist glass facade of the building suggested democratic transparency. Now, although it still glitters in the sunlight, it's armoured like a Panzer: and instead of amplifying our voices it scatters them to the wind.

**(continuer à marcher / loop door)**

Continue walking anti-clockwise around Berlaymont until you come to the next curve in the facade.

Scrying is the use of a mirror to foretell the future, to catch a glimpse of the spirit world. For the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, the mirror is the surface where the past and the present interact, where the real and the imaginary are exchanged. During our walk we will come across many such mirrors.

Here's another technique that we will use:

<sine sweep>

Can you hear it yet? moving up through the frequency spectrum this sweeping sine-tone, this glissando, tests our equipment and our ears.

It glides upwards, insinuating itself in-between different acoustic territories.

- from the infrasound zone audible to large animals,

through the human range of speech communication,

and into the zones used by insects, bats, and ultrasonic imaging devices.

If you can still hear it now then you are perhaps not completely human.

**(hey! we kunnen het nog horen, zet het uit!)**

Stop here for a moment.

wacht hier, attend ici

<<sine sweep (through berlaymont IR - and gently mixed with ambient sound)

If we play this sound outwards, into the city, it calls for a response - the buildings talk back to us with their echoes. It's a kind of exorcism of the space: on it's way upward the soundsweep shakes loose spectral artefacts, sonic wraiths.

loop door - now carry on walking - continuer a marcher

The acoustic space that we *sound* with the Sine Tone is a spectral, ghostly world. Here the spectre is of course Europe itself, or perhaps the possibility of Europe's failure. If the EU disintegrated then Brussels might be left as the capital of nothing at all.

Walk out of the Esplanade and turn left on to rue Archimède.

Loop de Esplanade uit en sla linksaf naar de Archimedesstraat.  
heeft hij het over Brexit?  
en de Fantome de Strasbourg?  
praat er niet over!

At the corner, cross over to Cafe Berlaymont and turn left down Rue Stevin  
Prendre à gauche sur Rue Stevin  
Ga linksaf langs Stevinstraat

Our fourth technique is Filtering.

The soundscape of Brussels is dense and diverse. To help us find our way around it I made some acoustic filters. They are not high-tech, just bits of plastic pipe, old bottles, funnels and stuff bricolaged together. But if we listen through them, they allow us to slip into parts of the spectrum that would be otherwise obscure, occult, they allow us to hear ghosts. Let me show you...

You might wonder why my voice doesn't sound filtered. It's simple - my voice is inside your head. You are imagining things.

est-ce-que tu as confiance dans ce mec?  
Nee, niet echt  
loop verder over de rotonde

Carry on, over the roundabout down Rue Stevin

in 1971 several blocks of houses here were knocked down to extend European buildings. In the 1980's more blocks were expropriated. And this started a struggle to save the houses from demolition, and turn them into public housing. The association Kaputt was formed to co-ordinate the cause while revitalising the neighbourhood. This resulted in a long legal battle with the federal state which finished when the last squatters were evicted in the year 2000. Now the name Kaputt has disappeared from official history, but it was their fight made this street what it is today. Now that Squatting has been made illegal in Brussels, who is ever going to be able to contest developments like this, who will defend the commons?

continue walking...

ici essayons une autre filtre

At the junction, take the second road to the right - Rue de Taciturne - Willem de

Zwijgerstraat

Continue straight into the park in front of you and follow the path around to the left.

volg het pad naar links  
suivre le chemin a gauche

This park, Square Marie Louise echoes picturesque English gardens or perhaps the Parisian Buttes-Chaumont. And the ghost that we can almost hear is the spectre of colonialism.

The original houses on this square were almost all constructed during the time of the Congo Free State. (van 1885 / jusqu' 1908) The invention of the motor car, the death of millions in the Congo, the wealth of the Rubber Concessions and the construction of mansions are all connected. But these connections have been muffled, silenced. We can only hear the cars now - the sound of rubber on asphalt and cobblestones - masked by the pleasant hissing of fountains.

loop rondom de vijver tot dat het pad weer bij de weg aansluit.  
Keep on walking all around the lake to the right until the path joins the road again.

faire le tour de l'étang jusqu'à ce que le chemin rejoigne la route.

steek de weg over

traverser la rue

Cross over the zebra crossing into rue du Cardinal then start Track 2.

## Track 2 Kardinalstraat

continuer sur rue du cardinal

Walk along Kardinalstraat until you reach the Leuvensesteenweg.

Music played through open windows, perhaps carried in a mobile phone or in a moving car defines acoustic territories.

Cross the road carefully to continue past the yellow vest shop on the left hand side of rue Cardinal.

- le magasin de gilet jaune / gele hesjes winkel

The car stereo is an sonic cultural bubble moving through the streets. You're also in a private filter bubble now in between your headphones.

At the junction, cross over at the lights and walk down to the left.

prendre à gauche sur la Chaussee du Louvain  
ga linksaf lang de Leuvensesteenweg

Follow the road all the way down to the Place St Josse.

This city speaks with a forked tongue, in fact its tongue is truly multiplex - on this one street you can hear and read french, arabic, turkish, hindi, congolese languages, polish, and many others.

Ook Vlaams, hoor. Koerdisch, Bulgare, Spaans

The borders between the territories that these languages create are constantly shifting as populations move, and as shops and cafes open and close.

At the zebra crossing at the end of the street just before the St Joost church, cross over to the left.

steek over bij de zebepad / aller à gauche sur le passage clouté,

At the corner, cross over the next two streets to continue along the left hand side of place Saint - Josse.

In 1960, Raoul Vaneigem and Atilla Kotanyi founded the "research office for a unitary urbanism" here in Brussels.

In his book *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, Vaneigem writes:

The symphony of spoken and shouted words animates the scenery of the streets. Over a rumbling basso continuo develop grave and cheerful themes, hoarse and singsong voices, nostalgic fragments of sentences. There is a sonorous architecture which overlays the outline of streets and buildings, reinforcing or counteracting the attractive or repulsive tone of a district. But from Molenbeek to Madou the basic chord is the same everywhere: its sinister resonance has sunk so deeply into everyone's mind that it no longer surprises them. "That's life", These things are sent to try us - You have to take the rough with the smooth - That's the way it goes.... nobody seems worried that joy has been absent from european music for nearly two centuries; which says everything. Consume, Consume, the ashes have consumed the fire. (note Vaneigem uses parisian placenames in the original) ORIGINAL: La Symphonie des cris et des paroles offre au décor des rues une dimension mouvante. Sur une base continue se modulent des thèmes graves ou légers, voix éraillées, appels chantants, éclats nostalgiques de phrase sans fin. Une architecture sonore se superpose au tracé des rues et des façades, elle complète ou corrige la note attrayante ou répulsive d'un quartier. Cependant, de la Contrescarpe aux Champs-Elysées, les accords de base sonnent partout les mêmes : leur résonance sinistre s'est si bien incrustée dans toutes les oreilles qu'elle a cessé d'étonner. «C'est la vie», «on ne changera pas l'homme», «ça va comme ça va», «il faut se faire une raison», «ce n'est pas drôle tous les jours»... Ce lamento dont la trame unifie les conversations les plus diverses a si bien perverti la sensibilité qu'il passe pour la tournure la plus commune des dispositions humaines. Là où il n'est pas accepté, le désespoir tend le plus souvent à n'être plus perceptible. Lajoie absente depuis deux siècles de la musique européenne semble n'inquiéter personne, c'est tout dire. Consommer, consumer : la cendre est devenue nonne du feu.

(Mais, comme dit Henri Lefebvre, La ville n'est pas seulement une langue / maar ook een praktijk.  
blijf lopen) / keep walking

Keep left to take the narrow street up the hill / ga verder naar boven op de Leuvensesteenweg / continue en chaussee de Louvain en haut.

(long musical interlude)

At the top of the hill, on Place Madou, continue straight over the pedestrian crossings to the other side of the boulevard. Traverser le Boulevard. Kruis de grote weg over.

When you get to the other side, choose the next track

Track 3 Madou

(eigenlijk is het Surlet de Choquierplein)

Do you see the light coloured office building on the right hand side? It has large mirrored windows on the ground floor. Cross over to them now. Traverser a droit. Kruis over naar

rechts.

This is a good place to listen to the song of the sirens.

Like the calls of a bird or other territorial animal the sirens sing: I am here. This street is mine. And of course it is - the emergency services claim their right to use the roadway over everybody else. In claiming the street though, they perform a double territorialization by also dominating a large portion of the sonic spectrum.

The sirens, particularly those that sweep up and down in frequency, cover a large part of our functional hearing range, from 500 to 8000 Hz. This is exactly the range to which we are the most sensitive, because we need it to understand speech. The acoustic-ecological niche that we use to communicate with one another is being colonised by sirens.

The emergency vehicles in Brussels are allowed to produce 110 decibels measured 3.5 metres away.

And of course the gliding sound of the siren echoes our own technique of sweeping the spectrum - As they drive through the city, the police cars, ambulances and fire engines constantly scan the surrounding architecture; revealing echoes, reverberations, resonances and other effects. The large glass facades of office buildings reflect the sirens almost perfectly. When heard from a distance this has the effect of mirroring the sirens, shifting them in time and pitch to multiply them.

Do you see the monument down the road in the distance? Continue walking towards it down the right hand side of the rue du Congres . **Continue sur rue du Congres. Ga door op de Congresstraat.**

As the sirens recede into the distance, we hear less and less of the direct sound and more reflections. The overlaying of copies of the "sweep" creates a layer of noise. It fades away gradually into the other background sounds, but of course it never dies away completely - it is only gradually masked by the other sound sources. As, at any one time, there are countless sirens operating in the city, the resulting sonic "siren fog" is a constant integral part of the soundscape.

The siren, though, is not an abstract sound, it's a call sign, signifying a crime, an accident, a pandemic, a danger - For the fearful, the sirens create a soundscape full of fear. The Sirens raise the spectre of terrorist acts in our memories but they might also be a premonition - a group of police vehicles in convoy to evict refugees trying to make their home in between the cracks of the city..

The sirens sing of the wounded city.

**blessures? cicatrices? wonden? De kunstenaar is erg melancholiek, vind je niet? moet je kijken naar deze gebouwen! Il ne dit rien de ça.**

At the main road - de Koningstraat, we need to cross over to the monument. Be very careful crossing the road here. **Kruis de Koningstraat / traverser la rue Royale**  
Walk around the monument and straight ahead onto the plaza in front of you.

An anonymous gift to the city, this enormous plaza is; a place to congress, a place to conspire, a stage to perform. This is where citizens come to contemplate the sky and the city, to smoke, make selfies, dance, skate, fly drones, and, of course, to perform their ancient rites. Walk straight ahead to the railing to look out over the city below.

**(long musical interlude)**

Turn your back on the city now and walk diagonally to the right.

ga nu teruglopen en loop schuin naar rechts.  
retourner et marcher en diagonale vers la droite

At the corner of the building, follow the path along to the right.

Walk down the steps towards the building with mirrored glass in front of you. At least I hope it is still there - this is soon going to become a new police headquarters.

Cross over the road to the small door in the corner of the building in front of you.

Look in the mirror and study the reflections of the surrounding buildings.

According to the philosopher Michel Foucault, a mirror is a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: that's the utopia of the mirror.

**original: Le miroir, après tout, c'est une utopie, puisque c'est un lieu sans lieu. Dans le miroir, je me vois là où je ne suis pas, dans un espace irréel qui s'ouvre virtuellement derrière la surface, je suis là-bas, là où je ne suis pas, une sorte d'ombre qui me donne à moi-même ma propre visibilité, qui me permet de me regarder là où je suis absent — utopie du miroir.**

Walk up the road, keeping the mirror building on your right, and follow the road around to the right. onto Rue de Ligne. loop naar boven en draai naar rechts op de Lignestraat  
marché en haut. prendre a droit sur Rue de ligne

l'artiste parler toujours de l'utopie. maar als hij het had gevonden, zou hij geen werk meer hebben.

Cross over the Bank Straat to continue on the Bois Sauvage. (instructies) You're walking through the wild wood between the Cathedral Saints Michel et Gudule on your left and the National Bank of Belgium on your right.

At the corner, by the park turn right (a droite / naar rechts) down Rue de la Collegiale.

At the junction, cross over the boulevard at the lights. traverser le boulevard/ kruis de grote weg. When you get to the other side, choose the next track

Track 4, Rue de Assaut, Stormstraat.

cross over to the left side of the street and then walk downhill. traverse le Rue De Assaut et continue en bas sur le cote gauche. kruis de Stormstraat over en loop naar beneden op de linker kant.

Follow the road around to the right.

Sla links af naar de Wolvengracht / Tourner a gauche sur le rue de fosse aux loups  
Turn left into the ditch of the wolves. Home to the Spectre of Capitalism, the Wolf of Wolfstreet.

Even these massive financial institutions cannot resist the logic of capitalism. Look - while the physical money minted at the "munt" is melting, this bank opposite us is being sold off as penthouses and commercial space.

All that is solid melts into air. And liquidity itself evaporates into the electronic clouds that constitute contemporary finance.

kruis hier de weg over

Cross over at the zebra crossing and continue on the right side of the street.

traverser sur l'autre cote de la route

at the building with the pillars on your right, walk inside and go up to the mirrors on the back wall.

Here we find ourselves in front of a mirror again. Look past your virtual image to the city behind.

This is the perfect place to mirror Foucault's thought: A Utopia is a mirror, because we always look at it from our place in society. In a Utopia our city, our social system is distorted and turned upside-down as if we see it in a funfair-mirror. Utopia mirrors us so that we can look back at ourselves and our surroundings from that placeless place.

<sweep>

Can you hear the voices in the distance? it's time to go and join them.

go outside and continue walking for a few metres up to the next crossing.

traverser a gauche et continuer sur la Place de la Monnaie

Cross over the street to the left and walk onto the Muntplein.

kruis over naar links en loop door op de Muntplein.

The last spectre that we encounter on our walk is that of Climate change. If the banks were too big to fail or jail, then the climate is so big that we just can't see it - Timothy Morton calls it a hyperobject - a ubiquitous, complex and ungraspable entity. The only thing we can do is help sound the alarm.

Walk to the left, and mount the steps of the Theatre La Monnaie loop naar links naar de Muntschouwburg. marche a gauche a la Theatre la Monnaie

On the 25th August 1830, after a performance of Daniel Auber's patriotic opera La Muette de Portici, a riot broke out which became the signal for the Belgian Revolution. What's the chance of an opera triggering a revolution today? Probably not so great, so I brought an air raid siren along with me for good measure.

Look up at The Mint in front of you - the rebranded Muntcentrum. It's almost a perfect scale model of the Berlaymont building. A mirror site, it links us back to our beginning, we have walked a loop in time.

was dat het?

je suppose

hij had ons veel meer kunnen laten zien

maximilliaan park

molenbeek  
de passages  
les tunnels  
de noord-zuid verbinding  
gentrification dans le zone du canal,  
de utopie van de vergeten straat van Louis Paul Boon,  
hij had naar ons moeten luisteren  
peut-etre il faire une suite  
ok, c'est ca  
einde  
fin