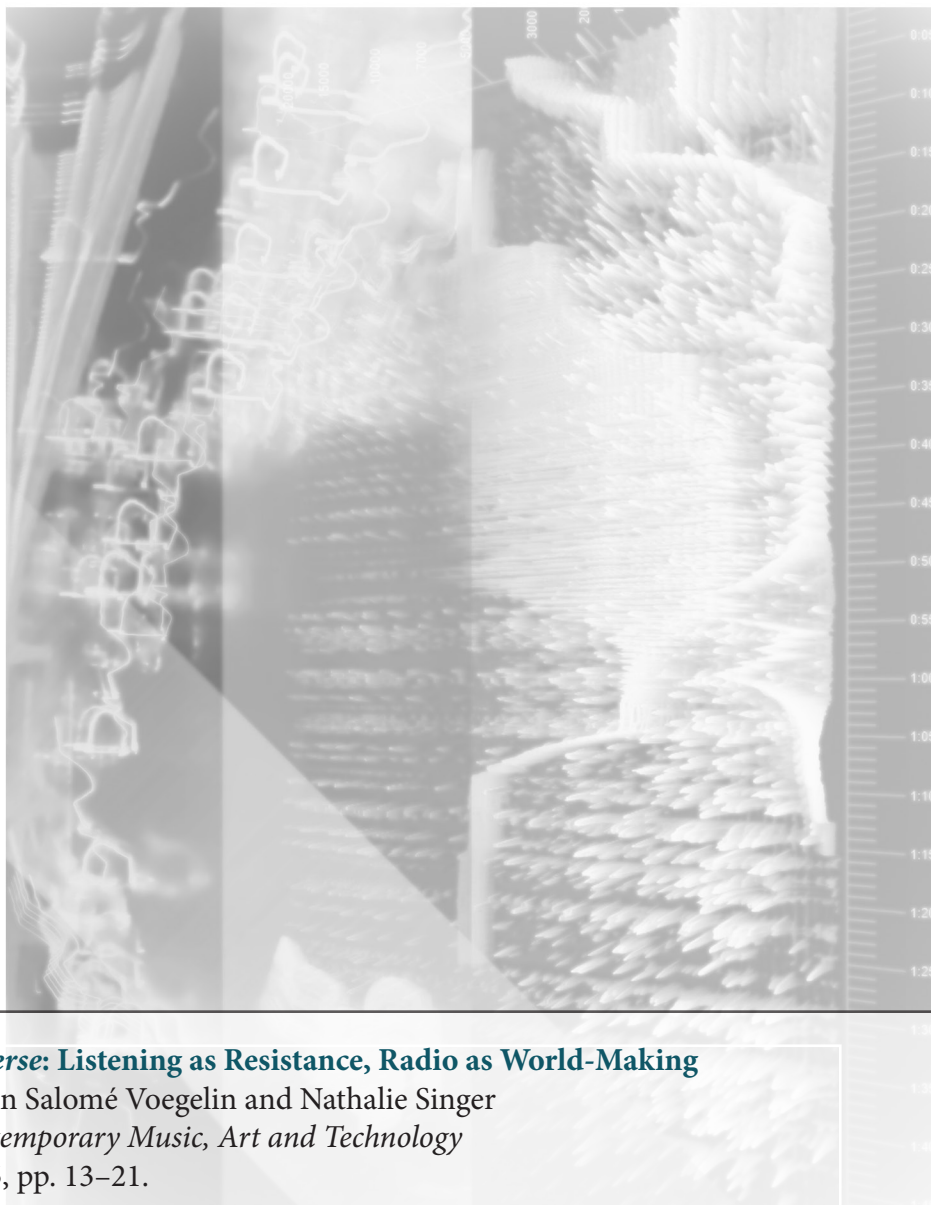


I N S Δ M

JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC, ART AND TECHNOLOGY



Tuning into the Pluriverse: Listening as Resistance, Radio as World-Making

A Conversation between Salomé Voegelin and Nathalie Singer

INSAM Journal of Contemporary Music, Art and Technology

No. 15, December 2025, pp. 13–21.

TUNING INTO THE PLURIVERSE

LISTENING AS RESISTANCE, RADIO AS WORLD-MAKING

A Conversation between Salomé Voegelin and
Nathalie Singer



Prof. Salomé Voegelin.



Prof. Nathalie Singer © Bauhaus-Universität Weimar.

Salomé:

Hello Nathalie, it's a real pleasure to speak with you about the possibilities and realities of radiophonic worlds. Radio is a format that has been present in my life at different moments and in different guises; as something I consume, avidly, as something I produce, occasionally; as art, as a channel of communication, as a technology and as a philosophical thinking tool. The radio carries narratives and performs invisible dramaturgies, it enables an imaginary of connectivity and reciprocity, it bridges geographies

and transforms temporal realities. How do you define radiophonic art within all these overlapping dimensions?

Nathalie:

Thank you, Salomé. I'm glad to have this conversation with you. That's the beauty and challenge of radio – it's so elusive, so multifaceted. I usually distinguish between two approaches: first, the classical, journalistic radio; and second, *radiophony*, encompassing all forms of artistic and experimental radio practices.

I've worked in this field for over 35 years, and I still struggle to define it precisely. It spans genres – the radio play, acousmatic music, *ars acoustica*, transmission art, even radio activism. It exists somewhere between literature, reportage, experimental music, media art, performance and social practices. This in-between-ness makes it hard for academia to categorize its practice, which is perhaps why so far, no comprehensive monograph on radio art has been published.

Salomé:

I have always experienced radio as having this incredible capacity, historically and still now, in its new, digital formats, to not only record, report on or narrate reality, but to make reality, which becomes realities: plural possibilities that intervene and augment what we perceive to be a current reality; and that can question normative ontologies and political normativities.

Nathalie:

Absolutely. Radio produces multiple listening spaces: the space of recording, of transmission, of reception – and, crucially, of imagination. Sounds enter my room and blend with my acoustic environment, forming a world of invisible connections. Radio can transmit reality, but it can also construct fictions and temporary worlds. The line between what's real and what's imagined becomes uncertain. And therein lies the power of radio art: beyond merely conveying information, it also has the ability to generate new imaginaries and thus to propose new worlds.

Salomé:

At a time when freedom of speech and collective action are under pressure worldwide, your work as Professor for Experimental Radio at Bauhaus University Weimar feels more relevant than ever. I'm especially interested in your recent project [*Listening to the World – 100 Years of Radio*](#), supported by the Goethe-Institut and the New European Bauhaus. What did you discover about radio's contradictory nature – its potential both as a tool for social connection and as an instrument of political control?

Nathalie:

Your question goes right to the heart of our research. Over the course of *Listening to the World*, my team and I conducted fieldwork in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa. We explored how radio has shaped listening and identity over the past century. What we found was a deep ambivalence: radio has historically served both as a medium of propaganda and as a platform for resistance. From colonial-era transmission towers to today's digital shutdowns during political crises – like in Iran or during the Arab Spring in Egypt – radio has consistently played a double role.



Figure 1. Panel discussion: “Architectures of Power and Propaganda” at Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), Berlin, with Elizabeth L. Enriquez, Frederike Moormann, Nathalie Singer, Riar Rizaldi and Alfredo Thiermann. © Laura Fiorio

Colonial powers built massive radio infrastructures to control distant territories. These ruins still exist and are often only now being rediscovered – frequently by artists.¹ But beyond these physical relics, we found subtler forms of influence. In the Philippines, for instance, American forces used radio to disseminate their language and popular culture, deeply influencing local identities.² In remote regions like Sagada, we encoun-

¹ For example, the two artistic projects: Riar Rizaldi: *Tellurian Drama*, and Angelika Waniek, Nashilon-gweshipwe Mushaandja, Frederike Moormann, Dieter Daniels, Tuli Mekondjo: *From Windhoek to Kamina to Nauen*.

² See Elizabeth Enriquez: *Appropriation and Resistance in Philippine Colonial Radio* as part of the panel *Architectures of Power and Propaganda* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin/ Rec. Radio Talk Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Weimar 21-24. October 2024.

tered hybrid expressions – indigenous language country music mixed with traditional gongs.³ These stories show how radio, even unconsciously, shapes culture and listening practices.

Yet, we also gathered numerous accounts of the radio being used as a means of resistance. In Colombia, radio was a key tool for the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) during the civil war.⁴ In Indonesia's jungles, anarchist collectives operate underground stations. In Myanmar, since the 2021 military coup, rural radio has become a lifeline for oppressed ethnic communities.⁵ And in apartheid South Africa, the ANC's *Radio Freedom* broadcast from neighbouring countries, crossing borders to mobilize resistance. Radio waves don't stop at national lines, after all.⁶

Salomé:

I've only observed and participated in two "radio workshops" myself – one with Tet-suo Kogawa, and another with the Shortwave Collective. Both emphasized DIY transmission and listening as an embodied, experimental act. Your project also included workshops – in Manila, Johannesburg, and Montevideo. How do you stage radiophonic workshops, what is your approach?

Nathalie:

I created something we call the *Bauhaus Listening Workshops*,⁷ emerging from the [Real.Sense.Lab](#), a lab I co-founded at Bauhaus University investigating how performative modes of perception can help shape more sustainable environments.

For *Listening to the World*, our workshops were designed to be reciprocal – not exporting predefined notions of what radiophonic art "should" be but rather co-creating radiophonic work with local participants. In each location we brought together about 20 sound practitioners and researchers, which we selected in collaboration with local curators. Formats included dyadic listening, blind walks, expanded listening walks, radio talks and a [Listening Future Lab](#).

In South America, for instance, many community radio actors met in person for the first time at one of our workshops, which led to a surge in collaborative projects. In Southern Africa, we saw how the workshops created space for artistic growth, particularly for women, and even opened healing processes related to colonial trauma. Personally,

³ Listen to Jerry Fati-ig & Sagada Musicerros: *Extract from Jam Session*, a band of indigenous people, the kankana-ey, from the mountain region of the Philippines.

⁴ Listen to Alejo Duque (Radio Libre): *Archives from the Lab #TodoEsRadio, held with ex-combatant members from the ex-FARC* (with English translation as part of the Audioplayer, from minute 20'24" on).

⁵ See/Listen to the presentations from Riar Rizaldi: Otonomi Feral: *Ecotage, Anarchism, and Radio in the Forest* and of the Anonymous Author: *Myanmar Radio After the Coup*.

⁶ See Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi: *The African National Congress's Radio Freedom and the Liberation Struggle in South Africa scientific project*.

⁷ See [Bauhaus.Listening.Workshop #3 – Johannesburg](#).

I learned a tremendous amount about listening cultures in the Global South. All our sessions were recorded and are now documented on the [Transcultural Listening Map](#), a web platform that continues to grow and connect radiophonic practices internationally.



Figures 2 and 3. Listening to Radiofrequencies during the Bauhaus.Listening.Workshop #1 – Montevideo, March 2023 © Tarruman Corrales.

Salomé:

Europe is currently phasing out FM signals, moving toward DAB+, internet radio, and podcasts. But these digital infrastructures are increasingly vulnerable to populist and authoritarian control. Therefore, I am curious about the transmission and listening possibilities that are made inaccessible through the FM switch-off, can we regain those for political and artistic interventions and resistance? Can we pirate the switched-off frequencies, switch them back on and generate an alternative network of sounds?

Nathalie:

Yes, that's a crucial question. Just recently, when a power outage hit the Iberian Peninsula, people dusted off their old crank radios to get updates. Analogue radio remains cheap, accessible, and resilient – especially in crisis scenarios.

By traveling the world, I also encountered small Indigenous radio stations, like [Radio Amazonas](#) in the Peruvian jungle, [Radyo Sagada](#) in the Philippine mountains, or [La Voz Indígena](#)⁸ in Argentina. They play a crucial role in giving often-unheard communities a voice and in reinforcing their cultural identity.⁹

Tetsuo Kogawa's micro-radio concept, which you mentioned earlier, is especially relevant here: it works with low-range transmission as a radical alternative to mass media.

⁸ Listen to La Voz Indígena: [Gender Memory and Communication](#).

⁹ Listen also to Tendayi Chakanyuka: [The Situation of Community Radio Stations in Zimbabwe](#).

While traditional radio has largely faded in the Global North, podcasting and audio walks – its digital descendants – are thriving. But I believe analogue radio might see a revival, especially at the local level.

Narrow casting and the social practice of radio making can also resist the monopolization of digital platforms. In our digital era, we're largely at the mercy of a handful of tech giants whose algorithms are designed to prioritize engagement and profit over truth, diversity, or the public good. These systems decide what grabs our attention – not what's accurate or meaningful. The result is a media landscape where outrage spreads faster than facts, creators are forced to play the algorithm's game just to be heard, and most of us end up stuck in echo chambers without even realizing it.

As FM frequencies are freed up, there's potential for small-scale, community-based broadcasting. If this were to happen radio-making could give marginalized voices a platform, counter social isolation, and push back against algorithm-driven content silos. Radio teaches us to listen – to perceive nuance rather than black-and-white binaries. That's a cultural technique sorely needed in our polarized world.

Salomé:

Drawing on Arturo Escobar's concept of the *pluriverse*, which proposes a decolonial design of the world that allows for multiple realities – do you see yourself as a designer of possible worlds when working with students or collaborators?

Nathalie:

That's a beautiful way to frame it. In fact, we might have called the project *Listening to Worlds*, plural. Like in my earlier exhibition *Radiophonic Spaces*. It gestures toward a multiplicity of sonic realities, layered and overlapping, often resisting the borders that map the world in political or colonial terms.

We tried to explore listening not only as an aesthetic gesture but as a situated, embodied, even spiritual act – deeply informed by place, memory, and culture. And while I hesitate to call myself a “designer” in the conventional sense – since design often assumes control, intention, and measurable outcomes – what does resonate with me is the suggestion of radio as an opening up of spaces for others to imagine and listen in plural ways. Radio, as I understand and practice it, is not about shaping a product, but initiating a process. It's about hosting and sometimes, the act of listening itself becomes the design.

Salomé:

And what about healing? I know your recent work touches on the healing potential of sound – not just physically, but also socially and politically. Can radio heal?

Nathalie:

That question has followed me through many of my workshops and personal works. I approached healing from many directions – rituals, body rhythms, collective memory, ecological attunement.¹⁰

Traveling, we found that in many cultures, healing is already embedded in the act of listening. In Sagada, we heard of the *dap-ay* – a circle where the young massage the feet of the elders while listening to their stories. If radio can heal, it's not through a frequency or formula, but through the cultivation of attention, empathy, and relational time.

Therefore, radio is never just about content; instead, it's about relationships and relationality. And in this sense, I think the most radical thing we can do right now is to listen. Really listen. To each other. To our surroundings. To the worlds within and beyond our own. Because perhaps listening is the first form of world-making. And radio, with all its fragility and resilience, reminds us that even in the static, even in the interference, there are signals worth finding.

Salomé:

I totally agree with you and believe that this is a very important moment to listen, to listen to how we listen and take part in radiophonic practices. To learn and understand what we listen to and how we hear it; and to remember collective possibilities and the violence of populist pressures and promises.

This leads me to my for now last question. In Tate Modern, there's this striking sculpture by Cildo Meireles – *Babel* from 2001– a towering structure made of hundreds of old radios, each tuned to [a different radio station](#). Some date back to the 1920s, others are more recent. The work is at risk of falling silent once FM signals are switched off. At a British Art Network seminar in 2016, the suggested solution was to gut the radios and replace their receivers with DAB chips – preserving the visual nostalgia while masking the disappearance of analogue radio. I felt this missed the conceptual point of the work – the entropy, the fading signal, the fragility of connection.

So, I wonder: should we work with the nostalgia of radio – the family gathered around a wooden speaker, the wartime messages, the gravity of political news – or is your work

¹⁰ See project: [Sonar-Sonar y Sonar](#).

Listen also to Victoria Yam: [The Healing Frequencies of the Mak Yong Ritual](#) or Duduzile Masuku: [Malopo and Dinaka Ritual Dances](#).

more concerned with what radio *is* and *can be now*? How do we engage with the legacy of radio without going backwards – but also without denying what is being lost?

Nathalie:

Thank you for raising the danger of radio nostalgia – it’s a powerful trap. For me, it’s not about returning to the small frequency boxes of the past, nor to traditional Indigenous practices, which often carry patriarchal structures no longer suitable for today. But we *can* learn from those pasts, especially from the unique qualities of radiophonic listening that we’ve already discussed – and rethink them with future technologies in mind. That could mean more ecological, more sustainable forms of radio. For example, new kinds of listening devices – perhaps wearables, integrated into clothing or everyday objects – or alternative energy sources inspired by biological systems or quantum computing. Systems that are less globally controlled and energy-intensive than our current digital infrastructure, which still relies heavily on massive, centralized data centres.

So, the “radio of the future” wouldn’t just be a nostalgic object. It would be an *invented* medium – a new space for listening that’s reimagined both technically and socially. A space that opens up pluralistic worlds and enables a different kind of social practice – one rooted in care, diversity, and shared attention.

Links and Further Listening

Websites:

- www.experimentellesradio.de
- www.radiophonic.space
- www.uni-weimar.de/realsenselab/

Explore the projects, recordings, and collaborators mentioned in this conversation by accessing the hyperlinks in the text, footnotes, or via:

Transcultural Listening Map – www.listeningmap.de

Suggested Entries

Bauhaus.Listening.Workshop – Montevideo

- **Alejo Duque (Radio Libre):** “Archives from the Lab #TodoEsRadio, held with ex-combatant members from the ex-FARC”, <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#229>.
- **La Voz Indígena:** “Gender, Memory, and Communication”, <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#389>.
- **Fátima González Donado:** “Amazonas”, <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#762>.

Bauhaus.Listening.Workshop – Manila

- **Riar Rizaldi:** "Tellurian Drama", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#550>.
- **Elizabeth Enriquez:** "Appropriation and Resistance in Philippine Colonial Radio" as part of the panel „Architectures of Power and Propaganda at Haus der Kulturen der Welt,“ Berlin/ Rec. Radio Talk Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Weimar 21–24. October 2024, <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#960>.
- **Gwen Gaongen:** "History and Programming of Radyo Sagada", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#444>.
- **Anonymous Author:** "Myanmar Radio After the Coup", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#444>.
- **Riar Rizaldi:** "Otonomi Feral: Ecotage, Anarchism, and Radio in the Forest", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#444>.
- **Jerry Fati-ig & Sagada Musiceros:** Extract of Jam Session, <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#406>.
- **Victoria Yam:** "The Healing Frequencies of the Mak Yong Ritual", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#406>.

Bauhaus.Listening.Workshop – Johannesburg

- **Sekibakiba Peter Lekgoathi:** "The African National Congress's Radio Freedom and the Liberation Struggle in South Africa", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#1214>.
- **Angelika Waniek, Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja, Frederike Moormann, Dieter Daniels, Tuli Mekondjo:** "From Windhoek to Kamina to Nauen", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#1625>.
- **Tendayi Chakanyuka:** "The Situation of Community Radio Stations in Zimbabwe", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#1133>.
- **Duduzile Masuku:** "Malopo and Dinaka Ritual Dances", <https://listeningmap.de/tlm-frontend/#1133>.