

Listening Log #1 – Distribution

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(Translated from Portuguese by Jorge de La Barre)

Abstract

The soundscape of a single day, February 21, 2021.

I arrive as usual at eight o'clock in the morning at the public office where I work, and what strikes my ears is the silence of the room, even with the presence of almost all the twenty servants that make up the sector of tax inspection, of the Secretary of Treasury of the Municipality where I work. Inside the room, all I hear is the sound of keyboards being tapped. Upon entering, the silence is momentarily broken by a simple "Good morning," expressed by me, and answered by some of my colleagues at their respective desks; then the silence returns, and I hear only the sound of tapping fingers on the keyboards of their computers, tick, tick, tick...

Another "Good morning," and I hear the beginning of a conversation, two colleagues starting to have their morning coffee in the "Coffee corner," and they catch up on the conversation – soccer, political intrigues of the city, complaints about the new administration, daily problems, among other subjects. Sometime later, I hear a resounding "Good morning;" it's Ana, another colleague, who arrives and starts talking to everyone in the room; the silence is finally broken. As she sits at her desk and turns on her computer, she also immediately turns on her battery radio on JB FM, her favorite radio station, and the environment is filled, at a low volume, with music by Phil Collins, Caetano Veloso, Maria Gadú, Simple Red, and other artists. The day goes on like this, with the silence of the people, the ticking of the keyboards, and the music on the radio; being broken, once in a while, by taxpayers arriving at the office, or a quick conversation among co-workers.

At a certain moment, I go to another sector of the secretary's office to take a file and take advantage of the opportunity to talk to some friends from the sector – a conversation that is almost impossible, because it is the period of the year for the delivery of the IPTU (Property Tax).

The sector is totally different; when you enter, you are faced with a wall of voices: the room is full, taxpayers arriving at all times in search of their diverse taxes, fees, and processes. You can hear the conversations among the taxpayers sitting in the blue, battered chairs, gossips, mundane events, criticism of the service, negotiations, soccer, N issues. The complaints of those who did not get what they wanted,

and take any servant they see to serve as a Judas doll on a Good Friday, and unload all their indignation and frustration on him.

I walk down the corridor behind the counter where my colleagues serve the general public, and listen to the service provided by them which, at this time of change of administration, besides giving the usual explanations to the taxpayer who is sitting in front of them, still need to pass to the new arriving servants sitting next to them, the dynamics of the service. So many voices, so many sounds that many times, we have to increase the pitch of the voice, so that our colleague could hear a simple "Good morning." I can say that this is the "most animated" sector of the Secretary's office, so much so that I don't even hear the sound of the keyboards.

I arrive at the small room, which is behind the service counter; I enter, hand the file to my friend, speak a word or two, joke with a colleague of mine and the situation of his soccer team, *Botafogo*; I stop at the water dispenser, fill my water bottle, and return to my sector.

Leaving that cacophony and returning to the marked sound of the keyboards and Ana's radio, playing the JB FM music parade, I sit at my desk, put the headset in one of my ears, and start working to the sound of instrumental music that I put on my work computer, and so the day goes on.

At five o'clock, everyone starts turning off their computers; I hear a "See you tomorrow" here and there, I walk out the door and hear my colleagues laughing, chatting after another day of work; I stop, chat a little and go to my car, turn on the car, turn on the radio to KISS FM (a rock radio), and go home, thus ending another day of work.

Note: This piece was developed during the Sociology of Music class of the first semester of 2021 taught by Jorge de La Barre at Fluminense Federal University. Almost a year into the pandemic, during the week of Carnaval which, for obvious health and safety reasons, had been cancelled in Rio de Janeiro and everywhere else in Brazil, the idea of writing sound reports was launched, in "remote mode."

About the author

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