

Eric Leonardson

Thanks to CASE for having me. I was invited to come and speak on very short notice, but I think I've cobbled together hopefully a decent presentation. I'm using Keynote by the way, instead of Powerpoint and my chops aren't very great on this, and I didn't have a lot of time to organize this, so bare with me.

In any event it's a real honour to be here, and it's exciting to meet all of you, and I'm excited to share the information about the World Listening Project. So here I'll go.

The World Listening Project started up recently. It's a non-profit organization registered with the state of Illinois and I'm one of the co-founders of the group. It started up just last summer in July. My intent here is to talk about some of the circumstances that lead to the formation of this organization. I thought it would be interesting because knowing the circumstance might help us understand how we can work together as a larger group in terms of the acoustic ecology form, the WFAE, and maybe it might give some insight into what to do, or what not to do with CASE and other efforts. Then I want to talk about the mission of the World Listening Project, and tell you about some of its recent activities, and what we see ahead for our future and how it relates to acoustic ecology.

So my background in this effort is, I've been working as an audio artist now for I don't know how many years. I got started in the early '80s. My interest in sound comes from a background in the visual arts, that's where my training is. Because of my interest in taking painting off the walls and into real life, in space, using electronic media, I became interested in video and sound, and contemporary music. All those interests lead me... I just focused on sound eventually. I studied at the School of the Art Institute as a graduate student in the early '80s where we had a Time Arts program for grad students. It no longer exists, but other grad programs do exist and I'll add that the sound department at the School of the Art Institute did start up a graduate program, maybe about four years ago.

I became connected with the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology and this movement through my friend Sabine Breitsameter, who I met because of our interest in radio and radio art actually. Sabine is a curator and writer and teacher in audio art with a focus on radio. You saw her name mentioned in Barry's talk earlier and I think Hilde mentioned her too. In any event she told me about the first International Conference for Acoustic Ecology, which happened in 1993 at the Banff Centre for the Arts. That was just a fantastic place to be and a wonderful experience. It really connected me with a lot of people who are here in this room right now. It just changed my way of thinking about sound and it greatly influenced me as an artist. So the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology was formed at this conference and from there I didn't stay very much involved with the acoustic ecology, or maintain my membership with it, and I guess the reason for that would be that I became interested in establishing my own work and finding my own voice as an artist, and I guess you can call my field of audio art electroacoustic composition live performance.

I think I focus more on live performance, instrument construction. So I became more like a live improvising musician in Chicago, and the city of Chicago does have a really active thriving community for improvised music, be it jazz or be it noise. So I kind of cross over in those genres in fact. Because of that activity, and because of my teaching at the Art Institute, and because of my awareness of acoustic ecology, and my connections with the community and developments in field recording, the World Listening Project came about, and I was approached to be involved with this.

On this slide here I just have three goals, number four should have been edited out. So it started off with this initial interest in collecting field recordings from all around the world and then creating a

sound map of the world and then you would see where all these sounds are on the map. Then these sound recordings would be archived in some way and you would access it through the website. Some of these initial people that were involved were Dan Godston based in Chicago, Brett Balogh also based in Chicago, and Chad Clark, J.D. Montgomery also from Chicago, **Noe Choir**, who was a student of mine and recently graduated from the School of the Art Institute. Then we made connections with Bernie Krause and his wife Katherine who run a business called Wild Sanctuary, and Barry was mentioning Bernie's work in nature sound recording and analysis of the natural soundscape. And my friend Steve Barsotti who lives in Seattle was involved in the Seattle Phonographer's union and Glenn Wayen who is a journalist as well as a musician who lived in Tucson Arizona and has been doing work with amplifying the wall that was built by the U.S. government between the United States and the country of Mexico to prevent illegal, I feel like putting quotes around illegal when I say that, immigration across the border. So Glenn plays the fence which is an interesting idea. It sort of raises our awareness of it, making the fence into a kind of instrument. And Jerome Joy who I came in contact with probably in the late '90s who had been doing a lot of work with telematic performance using networked computers and using the Internet as an instrument of a sort. Jerome teaches in France and works there as an audio artist himself.

Moving on, that was our core group. Kind of our board of directors more or less that I listed for you. So the circumstances leading to the formation of the group - I mentioned the Chicago community that's a thriving one with a lot of different genres of music, you know it's got a great tradition for jazz and blues and it's also an ethnically diverse city. But there's a small but very very active community of experimental musicians and electroacoustic composers who overlap with noise musicians and that. So the School of the Art Institute is quite connected with this small community. I was also involved with forming a non-profit organization in the '80s called the Experimental Sound Studio, which plays a very special role in promoting sonic art creation and has it's own studio facility and organizes an annual festival called Outer Ear with Columbia College, a liberal arts college with an emphasis on arts. It has a department for recording engineering and they call it Audio Arts and Acoustics now. There's quite a bit of cross-over between students and faculty and it's a great place to live and work I think.

So with the growth in interest in field recording I think people, as has already been mentioned already this weekend, have become a little more cognisant of what's going on in the sonic or the acoustic environment. And with the technology becoming more affordable, people are buying recorders and going out into the streets and recording or into the forests, and so a community of phonographers have formed in various places, not only in Chicago, but all around. I also did sound maps here. The role of the Internet and connecting people has played a role, because of the interest in or connection with field recording and an interest in the acoustic environment. The people that I connected with to form the World Listening Project or the WLP, were also very much aware of R. Murray Schafer's work and have read *Tuning of the World* and found that inspiring.

So it started off with those initial goals that I mentioned of collecting sounds from all around the world and creating a sound map. So in August we began this last year, and we talked about the mission. We realized that there were numerous sound map projects that already exist. We began to realize that we might actually be recreating or reinventing the wheel. There's a lot of people who have already done this work, so we began to take a step back and question what our actual mission should be as an organization. We began to question what the merits of representing sound in a geographical way were, and how to represent sound. And if you've seen maps, using Google Earth or the Google Maps interface, there's been questions raised about how effective that is about learning about sound and the environment where those sounds reside. It raises questions about recorded sound versus real-time sound.

So there were communications with some of the notable thinkers and activists in the field, obviously R. Murray Schafer, was nice enough to respond to Dan Goston, who was the man who came up with this notion of the World Listening Project. He told Dan that, the World Listening Project... well I'll just read what he wrote right from the slide here, "the World Listening Project needs to go further than just holding a microphone in front of the soundscape. The recordist has an obligation to know what is being recorded and to index it carefully." We did this with the recordings we made to accompany the Vancouver soundscape, and I'm glad we did because locating specific sounds on those recordings and knowing something of their history makes them much more valuable than a lot of the recordings made since then. There was more to his letter than that... I asked Bernie to write a little bit about the World Listening Project, and what his vision for it is, and he was very responsive and came back right away, with this statement, he wrote that, "a few remaining societies in our vast world know how to listen. It is an inherent part of their existence. One in which the received soundscapes of the forests, high plains, deserts, mountains, and coastal regions combine seamlessly with the visual, olfactory, and tactile senses. In some tropical regions dependence on acoustic perception supersedes that of all the others. Natural soundscapes serve as inspiration for their song and dance. It heals them physically and spiritually. Western society bases most of what it hears, or what it knows on the visual. We actually hear what we see. The World Listening Project aims to transform that perception in our otherwise urban-centric and abstracted lives. At a time when we are facing not only a silent spring, but a silent summer, fall, and winter as well, it is clear that where a picture is worth a thousand words, a soundscape may soon be worth a thousand pictures."

When I was talking with Jerome Joy about the Locus Sonus project which is a collaboration with Peter Sinclair and is actually having an exchange with students and faculty at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. We began to talk about ways that Locus Sonus and the World Listening Project could collaborate, and that collaboration is beginning to be realized through the Locustream Map. And this is a map that instead of having recorded sounds pinpointed on it, it actually used real-time streams. So it's an invitation to people to log into the map and create a link to their own Internet connection and have a web-based mic, so rather than a web-cam you would have a web-mic and just keep the mic open and have it placed somewhere so people can visit the map, and I'll show you the interface shortly, and just click on the link and listen to whatever's happening at that soundscape at that location at anytime day or night. It just shows a map of the whole world across it. So we envisioned this as a way to foster new ways of listening, new kinds of listening projects and I thought, or we think that would be a better goal for the World Listening Project. Rather than just focusing on archiving sounds solely, but to foster new kinds of listening practices, or at least to foster or promote new ways to find out about what these are.

In any case, this statement here is that "with the Locus Sonus stream map, once you've experienced the listening of multiple streams from new places in the world it is very engrossing. It is actually possible for varied practices of listening to be realized. The streams are available for, and have been used in sound installations by artists, and have also been recorded for later use." So at the time Jerome and I were talking about this in December, he said that, "an improved version of the Locustream Map would make this easier to do," and that has been accomplished and is up now. So our mission as of January emphasizes producing events that raise awareness of the soundscape and lead to understanding of the world and its natural environments and societies and cultures through the practices of listening and field recording. And we would do this by working through the disciplines of the Arts and Sciences, with the larger goal that we would better understand what role our listening practices play in making life better for everyone.

So in order to realize that, some of the activities we've been engaged in: we have been collecting recordings for archiving purposes, we've been linking our website to other sound maps and other acoustic ecological websites and projects, we have the goal of publishing an online journal curated by different field recordists or phonographers about the field and about their relationship with the acoustic environment. We're helping to populate the Locus Sonus, Locustream map with web mics, which is something you can do too. We're interested in conducting sound walks, but partnering with other like-minded organizations to use the sound walk to raise awareness of other phenomena or issues within the sound environment. So Dan Godston is spearheading that effort. And because of this activity and interest in acoustic ecology through the World Listening Project, it seemed rather obvious to me that we needed to have an acoustic ecology group and so we started up the Mid-West chapter of the American Society of Acoustic Ecology. So, why am I jumping back to 2008? Sorry about that, we'll skip that slide here.

So at this point, I have a list of the different websites and I thought I could show you some pictures and news, and go through that. Let me just get to my next slide on this. Maybe I can talk a little bit about how these different projects have manifested themselves. So the Locustream Map is an ongoing project, and our website has links to various sound mapping groups. I just found out about one created in one of the states of Brazil and it's goal is to map sounds all around the state. Somebody with the New Orleans sound map has contacted us. We hooked up with Max Stein who has created a Montreal sound map. I put a link to the Mississauga sound map on our Yahoo Group.

Some other things that we did, item 3 on my list here is that the Chicago-based founding members of the World Listening Project held a panel discussion about our group and our goals over at Columbia College at the invitation of the Art and Design department there. Then around Earth Week in late April there was an event that Dan Godston organized called Listening to our Planet, so he invited local artists and students to meet and play field recordings, read poetry, I did an online skype chat with Bernie Krause and took questions from the audience. So he talked a little bit about his work there, and some of the members of the Chicago phonography group, which is the Chicago version of the Seattle phonographers union did some playback of their soundscape recordings. Just recently I was working a lot on creating an installation for an art show at the Chicago Cultural Centre. The show was called A Synesthetic Plan of Chicago and it just opened on June 1st, and I show you a little bit more about that.

So that gets to the end of my thing. So these web links here, I'm going to show you these websites so you can see a little bit more about what the maps look like and how they work. I don't have audio hooked up, my assumption being that you can use your own Internet connection and explore these links. I try to make the links available through the World Listening Project and some of them... I created a website for the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology and Chicago Phonography is an informal collective of people, artists who are interested in field recording. I don't know if you know much about the Seattle Phonographer's Union, but the idea is that we stage performances with our field recordings and we play them as if these are our instruments. We do not process the field recordings, in terms of filtering or time stretching like that we know our materials, or actually each member of the group has their own set of rules and we just keep it to ourselves pretty much, but it's in the spirit of musical improvisation with the notion of listening to the soundscape as if it were a musical composition. So with these recordings we'll play them together and we'll create a real-time soundscape composition. And so Chicago Phonography has had a number of performances. It first started up in June and it partly led to I think inspiring Dan Godston to come up with this notion of the World Listening Project.

The Chicago Phonography group will be working with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago

next month and we have a one week installation and series of performances that we'll be doing there at the museum. So that's pretty exciting for something that's so new to just be invited to come and do this thing, because I know that as an artist working in sound in Chicago since the early '80's I've felt very lonely for a lot of that career and overlooked or simply ignored. So it's interesting that something in the atmosphere, in the world or people's consciousness, that makes them go, "hey you're just what we're looking for and we want to promote you in our curated series." The series at the MCA, the Museum of Contemporary Art, is called Here Not There. So it's very much about space and place, and so it's a series that they curate there and the invite local artists to participate in that.

I have information on my own website www.ericleonardson.org and I wanted to show you the Favourite Chicago Sounds project that was inspired by Peter Cusack. We mentioned him last night, or the night before. Radio Aporee is a website organized by Udo Noll, who lives in Berlin if I'm not mistaken, and it's really an effective use of the Google Maps interface, or API as they call it. It allows people to visit the map and click on links to sounds all around the world that people have uploaded, and also too to just upload their own sounds, and also to listen to them back as a continuous stream kind of like an Internet radio program.

Wild Sanctuary is Bernie Krause's website. Then I'll show you the Locustream Map as well. Let me just switch over to my web browser here. So here's the World Listening Project website here, and right at the top it looks like an announcement for Bernie's field recording workshop that's coming up really soon at the end of this month. You can read about that, and there might be time to sign up if you're interested in participating in this. There's a little notice about what I'm doing here. Here's a little information about the Synesthetic Plan of Chicago, a few shots of us trying to figure out how we're going to make an installation for this thing. There's the poster for it. So this is taking place in the visitor's centre at the Chicago Cultural Center, and so it's definitely providing a service for visitors, tourists, and here we are helping out the city promote itself to the tourist, not terrorist, market.

I hear that support for the arts really comes through well... the artists really help support the tourist economy, not only in Chicago, but in I guess any major city. So that's kind of interesting, because you know I was talking about tourism and Murray had made a mention that he worried that maybe a lot of recordists are just tourists in the soundscape. It's sort of a negative connotation of tourism, but I also like to think that maybe by being a tourist with the right mindset you can actually learn something and not just be a consumer.

So here's a link to Wild Sanctuary that uses a Google Earth interface. I'm going to skip that real quick and go over to the Locus Sonus map, which is showing you all of the earth here, and the orange little squares there, obviously don't tell you very much about a sound, but these are locations where you can locate lets see... here's my house, and by doing this you can click on the link and it should connect to the stream that the web mic sets up. This one I set it up so it actually gives you some information about the soundscape, you know what you're hearing in that space. It's set up in a way that's completely open. You don't have to say anything at all. You don't have to add pictures, but I thought the environment where I live is an interesting one, and sometimes it's a hostile environment in fact, because it's in a very impoverished part of the city. So I try to convey some information about that, where it's located, what the climate is like, what the sources of the sound are. And this is all inspired by the World Soundscape Project, so I'm trying to learn by your efforts with that and apply it. I don't have the audio hooked up, but you'd be hearing whatever my mic is picking up, assuming that the nine volt battery didn't run out while I was away this weekend.

So you can go to different places. There's somebody in Boston, and somebody down in I believe this is

Columbia, an artist in Reykjavik, in Sweden, and a bunch of them in Paris, one in Nice that might be Jerome's, we have somebody in Dakar in Senegal, and there's one off in Hong Kong. The ones that are just white squares with a black border are not streaming at this moment. I think these are located in Mexico. So it would be great to have more of these places to have streams up. I see none in Australia. One in Hong Kong, but none in Japan. It would be great to get some from around the Mediterranean, just you know, just populate the world with these so you could tune into these.

On the right hand side there's a set of links and among them is a mix table where you can click and listen to multiple audio streams and mix them together. So that's one way that you can interact with that. With software now you can also record these streams and save them and use them to make your own soundscape compositions. It's all open. There's a link for you to click on and if you want to participate this tells you how.

One of the other things they're doing is they've built a piece of hardware called the LocustreamBox. Let's see if that opened up there, yeah there it is. They've given a few of these boxes out to some of the early adopters so that we can hook up to the Internet without having a computer. So if you have the Internet connection, you don't have to have the computer and so it makes it more affordable and more portable. You can put the box...and it works wirelessly. I have one myself, but I haven't had a chance to go through the tutorial and try and hook it up yet, but the basic idea there is to set it up... I think you need a computer just to program how it hooks and like an IP address to hook up to the stream so it shows up on the web map. All that information is up here like that. There is a picture of the inside of the box. It costs about €150 to get one of these.

What else was I going to show you? Another mapping project, this is Radio aporee by Udo Noll, and it's similar to Locus Sonus in a way, but it uses the Google Map API to create these maps. Now lets see, if I click here...there's different sections, there's a map section where you can go and upload your sounds. He's done other projects called FM Walks that you can learn about, and there's also a little discussion forum there. I'll click on the map here and see if that comes up. Audio would start playing right from this little tool that I'm point at right here. So then you can just move around and see where the sounds are located like that, and you can just move to different places. Or you can go and do a search. So you can do a Google search. Let's see, I put one up at the North Avenue Beach, let's see if that comes up when I type it in, in Chicago. Yeah it did, that's nice. That's not the beach, that's interesting. It's not far from my home. My house is over here. You can see the big parks we have in the city. This is Garfield Park close to where I live and Humboldt Park and here's the lake here, North Avenue Beach, there it is Right there. So I can zoom in right there. I'm zoomed in a little too far into the lake right now. So I really geek out over maps and it might be because I'm the son of an engineer who would bring home plans home from my father's work and so I could have big sheets of paper to draw on the back of. But I'd look at the other side, or I was inspired as I got older in seeing geological survey maps. I would copy the legends and create my own imaginary maps, and that entertained me. So that's just my own personal affinity for this. Although I know other people... you know the general public may not be interested in a map of sound, but I don't know. People's awareness of the usefulness of this is changing so I shouldn't make any broad assumptions like that.

So this is Radio Aporee and I was also going to show you Favourite Chicago Sounds. Jessee C got involved with the World Listening Project a few months after we got started and she went down to Mexico City with me for the Sound Megalopolis conference. By the way I did write a report about it for the WFAE Newsletter. So if you go to the WFAE site and check out the newsletter you can see my report and reports by other participants in the conference. The idea here with the Favourite Chicago Sounds map, is that people can talk about different sounds and list their favourite sounds. I think Peter

Cusack was interested in that because of the interest in, or concern about the degradation of the soundscape had been widely noted. But he thought they would take a different focus and encourage people to talk about the sounds that they really enjoyed. So he started up Favourite London Sounds and then he came to the Art Institute and talked about this and invited students to get involved, and started a Chicago version. There are many versions all around, I don't know how many cities, maybe some of you already know a little bit more about it than I. There's a link here where you can listen to different ones. You can explore the whole catalogue. The sounds are in MP3 format and so you can go through a whole long list of these sounds. There are even a few that are mine here. I think I have a thunderstorm recording made right at my home, which is kind of lovely. The sounds of Chicago's public transit. The elevated trains that go around the city is a distinctive kind of sound mark, or in some places kind of a keynote. So these are all different things that are listed right here and available on the Internet, so you can listen to and read more about them.

Jessie also did an installation project at the Children's Museum in Chicago and I think she also has a link to it here on the main page. People can enter a description of their favourite sound and I think...like this one here, "Chicago fire cadets jogging through the streets on a Saturday morning." It doesn't have a sound link to it yet, but somebody mentioned it. So people can go out and if they're so equipped to record it, they can collect that sound and put it up here. Here's one from my loft space where my studio is, which is also a venue called Enemy in the Wicker Park neighbourhood. We used to have this old refrigerator, and this is kind of a disappeared sound now from my micro-soundscape of the loft space. A very noisy motor inside of it, that's been replaced since then so it's much quieter. So here's examples: you know birds, there's a wonderful one of the wolves at Lincoln Park Zoo. So that's something for everyone to explore there. There's also a new sound map added to this as well. We'll see if that comes up. So here's another one and it also used the Google Map interface.

Going back to the World Listening Project, which I think we have... those archives right there that I'm pointing at, those are probably for our meeting notes. So we try to publicize the meetings and where we're headed with our mission. It's a very open project so we're looking to get people involved. Here's a list of links here. So you can explore the links. We have the Mississauga Sound Map link there, and the Toronto Island Sound Map. There should probably be a link to CASE as well. I'm trying to build the Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology's website as well. Here's the website for that. It talks a little bit about the founding and a little bit about the Synesthetic Plan of Chicago, that installation that is in the visitor's centre. I added some of the sources for the inspiration there, which was a piece that I experienced at the Radio Without Boundaries conference in Toronto last year, and you see the platform right there. The idea behind the piece, which was called the Acoustic Mirror of the World, is to have short soundscape, one minute in duration recordings, playing through a platform with low frequency transducers so that visitors can stand on the platform and they would feel the vibration of the sound. The idea being to make it a more tactile experience. So that's our attempt at synesthesia. So we're collecting sounds from around the world, it's not just about Chicago. We hope that on a regular interval we can change the sound recordings so it'd have a new set of sounds, and we hope that through the World Listening Project we can get people from all around the world to submit sound recordings so that we can play them through the platform, or play them through the Acoustic Mirror of the World.

Right over there is a little picture of the Chicago Cultural Center, the site of the exhibition. It concludes at the end of September. And there are a whole series of pedagogical events planned along with it and so on. So there's more to learn about there.

Since it's about a quarter past noon and we going to have a lunch break, I thought maybe I should stop talking about now. I don't want to bore you here, and maybe open it up for questions. I was really

looking forward to having a Q&A session, because there are a lot of things we haven't figured out about what we can do and how to do it and so on. I'm really interested in hearing if you have ideas or if you just want to know more, so we can begin to talk about it from that point. Or if you want to hear some examples of the sounds we can do that too.

Question: Well I'd love to hear the live streaming sound of your place.

Eric: Yeah, can you go to the Locus Stream Map?

Hector: Check out which site? I have a listing of all the live streams, and there's one there called Chicago West Side.

Eric: Yeah that's my house. So if you click on that little link like this it should open up, and maybe you can hear my girls barking. My house is around 200 feet from railroad tracks so the train is constantly passing through.

[Plays example]

Question: So you're hearing now what's happening at your house right now?

Eric: This is at my house right now yeah. Well there's probably a ten second delay, there's a certain amount of latency about five or ten seconds.

Question: And what time is it there?

Eric: Oh two hours later in the day, so about 2:18 in the afternoon.

Question: Where outside?

Eric: Yeah the mic is right in the window so it's aimed right outside towards the back of my house. In Chicago we have alleys, it's kind of like Toronto.

Question: So are these people in the street or in the alley or...?

Eric: These people sound like...oh there's a halfway house on the next block, so people will stand out in the back in the alley to smoke cigarettes and talk. These are people recovering from drug problems or just alcoholism and have to do some time in the halfway house. It's operated by a church.

Comment: There's a lot of birds going on there.

Eric: A lot of birds, a lot of sirens. We live... the railroad tracks are about 2-300 feet south of our house and then about 100 feet to the north of our house is a high rise building. It's a City of Chicago senior citizens apartment building so there are a lot of people coming and going from there, also it's a regular stop for emergency vehicles. The older people have to go to the emergency quite often.

Comment: Somewhere on an Island in British Columbia they're yelling.

Eric: Yeah so this is the interesting part of this and something that as a listening practice, you can think of it as radio in a way, but it's not programmed. It's just whatever's happening at any moment. Now it's

been commented, "I don't know if I really like this, because you know, it's not really the most interesting thing to listen to." I think that's how you define interesting. I'm very much influenced by John Cage's idea just about sound and the environment and our you know life. I think you have to have a Cagean attitude or engage in Cagean listening. You know it is what it is. There's drama all around, you never know what's going to happen. The sounds are almost non-stop.

Comment: This brings up a of course for the public, a sort of troublesome concept of what's been previously called our surveillance society, and we've seen this reaction to the Google city business, you know the visuals. We know what our purposes are and what our intents are. In terms of the general public, particularly Britain which has the highest density of CCTV, closed captioning, like everybody's on... you know security issues etc. etc. It used to be called eavesdropping you know, now this is definitely surveillance right? And so as laudable as this project is, I think that you will have to think about how it's going to be positioned within a society particularly if you're trying to involve listeners who are not as understanding of the goals, that we would be. Because in the current cultural context this is surveillance and it's really no different. In fact in some ways it's more immanent than closed captioning TV. You know, I'm sure other constituencies could grapple with this. I don't know about the bandwidth. Traditionally video bandwidth is higher than audio, but I don't know nowadays they can do this with video.

Eric: Yeah well it needs a lot more bandwidth...

Question: I suspect that this is easier even than the CCTV. How would you position this you know?

Eric: Well I haven't come to any conclusions, but I've wondered about this, just in a real kind of mundane way. Like, 'well what if I have friends over, and we're sitting on the back porch and my microphone is right above there and we start talking about something that might not be acceptable you know in a variety of different social or political ways?' You know we're just letting whomever wants to come in an eavesdrop on what's going on here. So it's like, 'hmmmm hmmmm'.

Comment: And that's even for you, you're someone that's aware that this microphone is there whereas the inhabitants of this halfway house have no idea right? Other than if they were a member of this particular web community, they would have no idea that that actually even exists.

Eric: Or if the neighbours are walking by and they're talking loudly you know. If the wrong person is listening at the right moment or wrong moment however you think about it, yeah what does that mean?

Comment: The same difficulty, like in doing my mapping project as well, it's like 'well I'm takking these people's voices that they have no idea.' Like they see me sitting there with the microphones on, but have no idea what I'm using it for or why or anything like that.

Comment: But it also reminds me of, in the World Soundscape Project phase, when Bruce Davis, our colleague, came up with the idea of Wilderness Radio. And it was exactly that same concept, of having a radio that listens in to nature and just let it run and that way we will not disturb nature but we can listen in to the the rhythms of nature. So I think the positioning of the microphone really becomes a huge issue here. What do we want to listen in for and for what purpose? And if it's a way of listening in to a community or a natural environment where we really want to find out about the ecological issues involved. Perhaps one could find ways of discussing that and having more specific purpose behind this type of thing.

Eric: I think you know, it's the novelty of it right now. It's got us excited or some of us excited. So to think it through in terms of, what does it mean in terms of surveillance? or the fact that these sites are all urban sites, there are no sites like in a wilderness setting, although the LocustreamBox suggests that it can get away from the grid maybe, and get one that's self-powered perhaps, maybe a solar-powered stream box? Although Internet connections? I don't know, the technicalities of it, I'm not sure it would work, but that would be an interesting thing to push it in that direction.

Comment: But in a way it is wilderness. You know, I mean we're not really separate from like the animals over here, we're civilized and they're not. You know, to me it is wilderness, and to me it's fascinating. I live in a rural area, and hearing your soundscape with you here just tells me a whole lot more about you as an animal. The other thing that comes to mind that I would consider is actually labelling your mic so that it's visible to anybody walking by, "this mic is on the World Stream," you know, because then it also could be an opportunity to have some discussions that people might want to have that would want it to be heard. You know about say situations that aren't good and just to be heard. So it changes it from surveillance to like a choice. I mean even the neighbours walking by might be able to see the sign, and I think that might be really interesting.

Eric: In fact on the website there's a sign I think you can print it out, I think with a symbol of an ear with some text on it. It's a post, you know it says "here's a microphone" and it states what it's for.

Comment: I find it interesting with this conversation, like where does the public and private stop and start and how are cultures changing? I mean how far can we retain our private-ness in the public space and I just look at cell phones and when you talk to people who talk into cellphones in public, they really believe that no one is listening, but like everyone's listening. How can you believe that no one's listening to your phone call? And they're like, "well it's a private conversation," so again it's like where do perimeters change of private and public? And I think that's changing and evolving quite quickly and so it is putting out some sort of an edge of questioning it. So for this, it'd kind of a public space, I mean it's on your back porch or balcony, but it's kind of penetrating into public space, but how far is that private? So it's an interesting negotiation.

Question: Do you really think that people don't think that they're heard?

Comment: Yeah I was listening to a radio show and there was a sound artist who was interested in doing work with cellphones and people talking on their cellphones and then he approached the people who had been talking on their cellphones and said, "look I've been listening to your conversation, and I'm doing some research..." and they're like, "well that's a private conversation," and he said, "but everyone heard it," then, "oh." And they were amazed that people were actually listening in detail to them word for word, and it's like well that was very loud. And so, not everyone, but a good portion of the people talking on it, they're just oblivious, they really think there's just a cone of silence.

Comment: I don't have a cellphone. I was sitting on the train in Germany once when it was two hours late and I heard everyone going on their cellphone talking to someone that the train was two hours late, and I thought, 'oh well maybe I better phone my mother too,' but I didn't have a cellphone so I asked my neighbour whether he minded, and I noticed that, never having had this experience before, that as soon as I connected with my ear to the destination, my perception of the environment listened was gone, totally gone. I was involved in the conversation on the other end and I probably also had my voice a little louder than I would otherwise, and I noticed myself switching. That somehow this place just disappeared.

Comment: And I think that's what happens, I think you just believe that you're immersed in a private zone.

Question: And you have to listen very hard on those little machines too, so the attention has to go there. I was also interested, somewhere there in your presentation there was a little flash of creative commons. The idea that all of this, these microphone live streams are free so anyone could sample them and use them for their own creations. What about where you cross over into a composed piece, are there composed pieces available on your various websites?

Eric: Oh yeah there are. I think there are, oh I don't know. I guess one example would be the Chicago Phonography group and the performances have been recorded so you could go to the Internet archive and just do a search for Chicago Phonography and then you could hear the recordings of those performances played there.

Question: So I'm kind of from a writers background, and there's big blah blah blah going on about copyright because it's been blown wide open, partly by Google, and I wondered, are you just giving them away?

Eric: Well it's up to the phonographer or field recordist to decide how they want their recordings to be used you know. We're thinking of making things available through the World Listening Project website under a creative commons licence, but I know that not everyone would be interested in doing that, in which case you would probably have to pay to hear their stuff. I know that Bernie Krause invests huge amounts of his personal money to go around the world and record his work, and he's not interested in just giving it away because of the monetary investment that he's put into it. He'll release certain things under certain conditions, but this is his livelihood. You know he doesn't work for free, so he's got to pay the bills like everybody else. For me, teaching sort of supports me, but a lot of my work I almost just give away. So it's all up to the individual recordist I think to decide how they want to treat it. I don't know if that answers the question.

Comment: Well it does, I'm just interested in the idea, that the web really frees things up so much, but we still all have to eat somehow.

Eric: Yeah, putting things up on the web it kind of makes it all freely available.

Comment: And there's a great attraction in that, obviously one wants one sounds to be heard, one wants one's paintings to be seen.

Eric: I think you have to be kind of strategic about it. You know maybe there are certain things that would not just be publicly available, but I don't know what that strategy is.

Question: And you haven't had to discuss it with your group?

Eric: We haven't had an in depth discussion of it, but I think everyone's aware of it. As we get closer to a practical realization of things like that online journal that we're talking about doing, I think we're going to have to really address it and maybe have a meeting with a lawyer and just make sure we're doing the right thing, and doing it the right way.

Comment: Well thanks for playing that because it was really neat for me.

Eric: Well good, and all these things up here should be linked to one another. There's a yahoo group where we actually have a discussion about a lot of these issues. In fact, let me pop this up for just a quick second, because Dan just announced this idea of doing these sound walks in partnership with other organizations and when there was a conversation about activism I thought Sound Walk could be a good way to connect with that, and Dan seems to be connecting with people. There's a particular situation described here where there's a group called Preservation Chicago, and they are preserving architectural landmarks in history. So the City of Chicago is getting ready to make it's bid for hosting the 2016 Olympic games, it's already planning to tear down historically valuable buildings to make way for an Olympic village. So Preservation Chicago is trying to stop this, so Dan is thinking about having a World Listening Project/Preservation Chicago sound walk to help raise awareness of the soundscape, but also awareness of the potential loss of buildings that were designed by Walter Gropius and Nees Vanderau. Chicago is famous for architecture and things like that. So that's just a quick thing I didn't want to forget about. Here's some other things. What I'm showing you up on the screen here is from the Yahoo group. So we have a discussion group that anyone is welcome to subscribe to and participate in, I know a lot of people already are.

Question: Can I just ask you one quick question? I'm just wondering if and how you're perception has changed since you've had this stream going in your house. What's this been like for the past 10 minutes or so?

Eric: Well you begin to realize, that your soundscape becomes, let me find the words, a kind of a social experience. So I'm not just experiencing the soundscape, and thinking about how I'd love to get a recording of that particular railroad freight car with this amazing squeak, you know which I hear all the time, but I'm never ready to record it and use it as material. But then I'm like 'well other people are hearing this,' and so I'm potentially not the only listener here, so it's that surveillance thing that I'm thinking of I guess.

Question: But what's the difference between before you turned this on, and now that we're all here with you in your home?

Eric: Well that I'd have to make a recording of it and that would be selected. Like I would be making intentional selections about what I want to present for people. Now I'm giving up control. Maybe that would be the difference.

Comment: Well it's influencing me, and my conversation with you. I feel hot like I'm in the environment and I'm breathing fumes and I'm here as well.

Eric: And this is a mono feed, if it were stereo we'd hear the sound as it bounces off the buildings around there, because the back yard is kind of open and there are a couple of empty lots near by. Then there are these kind of taller buildings that create these walls.

Comment: Well I don't know if it's appropriate, but I noticed a change in you when your home sound came in.

Eric: It's like I'm talking to you from my house on the telephone.

Comment: Well it's like I felt just immediately a lot closer, like with you in a different way. As I would if I walked into your home. I would see you in a different way than here. So yeah, there was a whole other thing that happened, for me just seeing you.

Eric: Yeah, and Jerome has staged public events using the Locus Stream. There was one in Paris several weeks ago, I guess in May, and then another one that was in Hong Kong. I don't know how the public interacts with it though because I wasn't there personally, but I know he's doing events that are being featured in festivals and things like that. Maybe you can organize one too, you know participate in this. It's that open source model can be used in different ways. Hopefully for good ends, and not for evil.

Comment: I was just remarking to Charlie that you could organize concerts using the Locus Stream right? You know if you just got a couple of musicians to sit in your back alley, then they could be playing and you could choose to listen or not, or you could actually organize on a global scale, using the mixing feature as well, then the individual in their home could be listening to Chicago, Hong Kong, Reykjavik, all kind of performing in their ambient acoustic environments.

Comments: Well there's latency.

Darren: Well we have to conclude we're running out of time, and so thank you Eric.