

AN APPROACH TO UNDERGROUND MUSIC SCENES

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× **~~Abstract~~**

To address the issue of art, sustainability, and ecosystems, we use the contributions of theories that address the sensory experiences of individuals as a means of social, political, and cultural analysis. What we want to say is that the use of a sensory-theoretical approach can - in the context of analysing and reflecting on art, sustainability, and artistic ecosystems - enable a theoretical and empirical advance in the sensory experiences of social agents - artists, activists, or others - forming the basis of a comprehensive contemporary political-cultural project, because this sensory reflection is centred on difficulties, acts of resistance and the reversal of dominant-hegemonic 'orders of feeling' (and creating). Here, we also bring into the discussion the contemporary conceptualization around activism and artivism, as we consider it indispensable for addressing the conceptual and empirical richness that underlies the chapters that make up this book: the spaces and places of artistic ecosystems. In addition, it is essential not to mention the concept of resistance against monopolies of power within the scope of artistic production; at the same time, the themes of sustainability and pedagogy, serving and illustrating the purpose of sensitive DIY as a democratizing agency in contemporary times; it is very relevant to consider in this book sensitivity and its impact on social agents, mainly how they communicate and create anti-hegemonic strategies, with a vital gender component; the theoretical-empirical materialization, in different time-spaces, of the concept of low-tech and high-tech about 'wild design' or about sensitive DIY; all this analysis also involves collaborative creations and utopia: those new micro-ecosystems and emerging means of sustainability that we mentioned earlier.

Keywords: art, sustainability, ecosystems, sensorial approach, activism, artivism.

To address the issue of art, sustainability and ecosystems, we begin by expressing the support of Huberman (2023), in the sense that the author contemplates the sensory experiences of individuals as a means of social, political and cultural analysis (Guerra, 2023a, 2023b). What we intend to affirm is that the use of a theoretical-sensorial approach can - in the context of analysis and reflection about art, sustainability and artistic ecosystems - allow a breakthrough in theoretical and empirical sensory experiences of social agents - artists, activists or others - constituting the basis of a comprehensive contemporary political-cultural project, due to the fact that this sensory reflection focuses on the difficulties, the acts of resistance and the reversal of dominant-hegemonic 'orders of feeling' (and creating) (Doerksen, 2018).

Focusing on artistic ecosystems, other concepts seem necessary for this discussion, even if they can't be applied directly, such as *technoenthusiasm* (Huberman, 2013). This concept is generally associated with bodily modifications in the sense of robotic improvement, i.e., to make human beings faster and more intelligent, but - in our opinion - the same concept can be applied to artistic productions, specifically musical productions, especially when we think about the attainment of an ideal of perfection which, consequently, occurs with the expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and the increasingly strong



preponderance of social networks and digital platforms in terms of artistic production, consumption, and dissemination. Let us read the excerpt below:

**Artists are the ones who I think are mostly interested in experiencing or exploring different ways of seeing things. We see this as an art, the art of creating new senses, the art of creating new organs, and the art of designing your perception of reality. Art's aim is to change the way we see things or the way we think of things or perceive things. These senses literally do this, they literally change the way we sense things, and we perceive things, and it changes our reality. So, we see this as an art movement (Huberman, 2023: 3)*

Another idea that seems attractive to us concerns the fact that there is a commitment on the part of the self to the technological sustainability of artistic-musical production, in the sense that artists - by using digital platforms and instruments - place their artistic production (Guerra, 2023c). This dichotomy emphasises the preponderance of Huberman's (2013) concept of *technoenthusiasm*, as it presupposes an incessant search for the best beat, the best platform and the best product, this is the "process of developing new senses" (Huberman, 2023: 3).

It is undeniable that - in this late modernity - sustainability in the field of the arts almost necessarily involves a presence and an alliance with the digital universe, something that is interconnected with our previous idea regarding the importance of sensory experiences as promoters of varied feelings of belonging. Consistently, the production of dynamics of belonging based on sensory/sensitive experiences is interconnected in contemporary times with the theme of sustainability, mainly because the biological senses are more refined and, in this way, they become decisive in conducting an artistic-musical creative process (Balsamo, 2011). Now, from the point of view of sustainability, we suggest an analysis/reading that goes beyond the strict sense of the concept - related to nature and the environment - and instead proposes a broader reflection that sees sustainability as a philosophy, a practice, and an ideology. A kind of body with senses - like a sensory experience - that dictates the creative process (Bourdieu, 1993), while, in the specific case of music, it ends up simultaneously allying with and contradicting the commercial/anticommercial spirit of consumer society.

Also, about these analytical axes, we have reappropriated the concept of 'wild design' by the artist Huang Heshan (Liu, 2023), which is characterized by a low-tech approach consisting of improvised solutions born of the ingenuity of people with low economic power but high cultural and symbolic power. The definition of this concept, within the scope of our analysis, remains the same. Still, it is only necessary to replace the concept of 'low-tech' with that of 'high-tech' due to the solid technological impact on contemporary artistic productions from music to literature, contemporary art, painting or sculpture, among many others. For Yaxi (2023), 'wild design' is not just a practice carried out by social agents with fewer economic resources. Still, it is a paradigm of temporal articulation and production of space that, in complementarity, can create a sensibility - in other words, a creative sensory typology - of space and time that includes alternative and unimagined strategies. Thus, we are dealing with a sensory do-it-yourself typology (Bennett & Guerra, 2023) that is defined according to a specific space-time and which is even more used by social agents located in urban systems and who are/were socio-economically marginalized or invisibilized:

**Wild design agencies are ubiquitous but, at the same time, largely ignored because of the practitioners' low status and the undesirable qualities associated with them. (Liu, 2023: 419)*

But alternative and improvised solutions such as DIY are nothing more than temporary solutions. Why is that? Because these solutions don't solve the basic problems related to the precariousness of artistic careers. But the DIY ethos-praxis can be interpreted as a theoretical-conceptual advance, since it goes beyond a mere artistic practice or mode of production; there is a focus on sensitivity, the artist's senses and the space-time relationship. At the same time, there are also other theoretical contributions (Lichtman, 2006; Turney, 2004) that argue that the use of a low-tech or high-tech DIY approach - as we saw earlier - allows the researcher to uncover specific aspects of the cultural identity of the artist and/or social agent, as well as offering us insights into their position in terms of social class, two crucial axes for

looking at the importance of sustainability in a broader and more comprehensive panorama of creative ecosystem typologies.

What's more, the act of sensory DIY production is primarily related to the creation of an aesthetic that, conversely, should not be judged solely on its quality, but rather as a discrete set of tactics that transform the material world into a creative sensory flow (Liu, 2023), thus blurring the boundaries between production and consumption. We can add that sensory DIY, within the scope of artistic ecosystems, can be seen as an autonomous practice (Jackson, 2015), but also as a democratising and liberating agency. Let's look at the different forms of participation by young people. We're not referring to action strategies, but to the way the political system deals with youth activism, which has been gaining more and more prominence lately. Hart (2008) raises some possibilities: the first, which he calls 'manipulation,' involves using young people to defend a cause when they are not adequately informed to make that decision. Characteristic of this measure is the use of young people wearing T-shirts or anti-vaccination flags during demonstrations; secondly, tokenism, which is more usual when social problems are related to ethnic or sexual minorities, in which some members of these communities are presented solely to prove that the movement is inclusive and open to diversity; the third possibility is already different from the previous two, as it implies an open and frank dialogue between young people and public authorities, in which young people are consulted and their opinions are taken into account. Here, we can give examples of social and community projects in which young people are essential social partners for their ultimate success. Finally, there are projects initiated and carried out by young people, such as the environmental school strike campaigns, where the project was implemented locally and internationally by young people and youth communities set up through social networks.

Turning now to action repertoires, a concept postulated by Tilly (1995) to describe the different ways that social groups and movements use to achieve their goals. Fischer and Nasrin (2020) postulate the different strategies used specifically in environmental a(r)tivism. Firstly, there is activism that seeks to have a direct effect on the environmental cause, which primarily involves lifestyle changes, such as reducing one's ecological footprint, which can be achieved by changing eating habits, making one's own clothes, creating artistic artefacts or opting for public transport. However, although it brings with it a feeling that change is still in the hands of each individual and that we are having an impact, it is not without its limitations, as it does not bring about the structural changes that are perceived as necessary. Despite these limitations, it is an individual change that underpins one of the main theories that has emerged recently, the theory of degrowth (Hickel, 2021). And undoubtedly, many of these practices are based on a DIY ethos. Aren't they going to solve all the dramas? No. But they use technology and digital to resist and make the world a better place.

**A recession is categorically different to degrowth, however. A recession is a shrinkage of the existing economy (an economy that requires growth in order to remain stable), while degrowth calls for a shift to a different kind of economy altogether (an economy that does not require growth in the first place) (Hickel, 2021: 57)*

There is also activism with indirect effects on the environment: a set of actions that, rather than being content with individual activities, seeks to influence and pressure social and political change. This includes political pressure strategies to change laws and cancel projects that are harmful to the environment, legal actions, such as taking state or business institutions to court for their actions or indifference to the environment, etc. Ultimately, the aim is to accelerate political movement in the environmental field. Fisher and Nasrin (2020) develop four sub-dimensions of this type of activism: litigious activism; activism aimed at companies, working with the political system, and operating outside the economic and political system. The first type of activism involves the application of climate lawsuits promoted by environmental activists and movements. One of the prominent examples was the case of four children and two young people filing a lawsuit at the European Court of Human Rights against 33 industrialized countries for not reducing the emissions that cause climate change, arguing that these emissions jeopardize their future. Activism aimed at companies involves pressurizing to get companies, especially on social media, but not only, with the aim of getting them to change activities that are seen as harmful to the environment, such as pressurizing and boycotting clothing companies like Zara or Levi's so that

they have more environmentally friendly processes (which, in turn, causes many companies to fall into what is known as greenwashing).

Activism, which works with the political system, refers to the relationship between the state and social movements, establishing pressurizing partnerships between state bodies and social activities, which Abers et al. (2014) call institutional activism. Finally, activism outside the political sphere is characterized forward suit by more contestatory and transgressive action towards the state through protests, the creation of parallel economies, etc. When we think of DIY, artistic ecosystems and sustainability, we can also think of all these concepts as an agency that inverts hegemony and monopolies of power, mainly because artists - in general - deal with a radical scarcity (Liu 2023) of opportunities and practical and technical resources. DIY, in this sense, assumes itself as an imaginary of freedom that - although conditioned - allows these social agents to renounce, to a certain extent, the dynamics that imprison them in the systemic monopolies of economic, political, and cultural power. In this regard, De Certeau (1984) mentioned that the ways in which consumers - and producers, we might add - operate is what allows for the creation of an anti-disciplinary network of action, through which the strategies of dominant artistic producers are contested, creating, as a result of this contestation, new micro-ecosystems and emerging means of sustainability (Guerra, 2022)

These questions and themes that we explain here serve as a motto for the presentation of this book, which is divided into six parts. In the first part, the concept of ecosystems is addressed in relation to physical spaces, namely cities, places and, in turn, there is a reference - in the chapters that make up this part - to the sensitivities of social agents in relation to physical spaces. The second part concerns resistance, especially in relation to the concept of resistance against monopolies of power within the scope of artistic production (Guerra & Oliveira, 2023). The third part, as a corollary, looks at the theme of sustainability and pedagogy, serving and illustrating the purpose of sensitive DIY as a democratising agency in contemporary times. The fourth part of the book therefore focuses more on the theme of sensitivity and its impact on social agents, especially the ways in which they communicate and create anti-hegemonic strategies, with a strong gender component in the chapters that make it up. Also important is the fifth part of the book, which - in overview - focuses on the theoretical-empirical materialisation, in different time-spaces, of the concept of low-tech and high-tech in relationship to 'wild design' or in reference to sensitive DIY. It is a part that presents creative alternatives and portrays the role of digital platforms in relation to sustainability in musical and artistic production. This thematic line is maintained in the sixth part of this book, with the addition of a focus on collaborative creations and utopia: those new myco-ecosystems and emerging means of sustainability that we mentioned earlier.

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