[RE]PLACE
[RE]CONSTRUCTING SOUNDSCAPES
A collaborative socially-engaged sonic art project

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Abstract

[Re]Place. [Re]Constructing Soundscapes is a collaborative socially-engaged sonic-art project that has three fundamental components: the environment [the landscape, soundscape, the ecological, the surroundings], the social [community-based, education, social-engagement], and the technological [sound (re)construction, geo-localization, archive, phone application].

This project employs digital technology for data recording and data transmission; explores concepts of acoustic ecology and sound practices; and requires a strong educational and community-based approach in order to facilitate participants the activities of [re]cognizing and [re]constructing their surroundings.

Communities are invited to engage in a series of activities —sound walking, deep listening, and field recording—, using their personal hardware as recording gear —mobile phones as sound recorders— and a dedicated app designed specifically for this project. Wandering through specific urban or rural areas, participants record those sounds that they might find stimulating and thought-provoking. At the end, they are invited to discover the sonic pulse of their surrounding-space while listening to a final mix of individualized micro-soundscapes.

Keywords

Community-based, Socially-engaged, Sonic art, Pedagogy, Research, Soundscape, Ecology, Sound-Documentation, Deep Listening, Sound-walking, Landscape, Sound Studies, Web-based Map, Phone Technology, Geo-localization.

Introduction

Sound maps that use geo-localization tools –in which web and cell phone technology is used as an element to register audiovisual data–can be tracked globally on or around 2000. One of the first projects of this kind is *Aporee* [1], a project that called for field recordings made on public spaces around the globe (2006). *Soinu Mapa. Basque Country Sound Map* [2], *Sound Seeeker* [3] and the *Montréal Sound Map* [4] are examples that still exist and in which collective collaboration is fundamental for them to stay in operation. *Badafonia: Cartografía sonora de Badia del Vallés*, *Madridsounscape.org* and *Escoitar.org* − sound map of Galicia, Spain–, are projects that had to close between 2010 and 2014, cornered by the technological limitations and the lack of interest —on the long run— of the communities for which these projects were conceived.

Web and cell phone technology has come to high level of performance, and permeated fully our everyday lives both in rural and urban areas. Specially among the youngsters, cell-phones are now the source of entertainment, communication, storage of valuable data. But this tiny gadget has the software/hardware of a computer: high performance camera for video and photos, a sound-recorder, and an excellent transmission device.

Now that communities are more interconnected through these technologies, the question that arise is: can we use these technologies to rewire the ways we build our sense of place and our sense of identity?

[Re]Place. [Re]Constructing Soundscapes comes from the same principle: register sounds, circulation of data, online archive, community collaboration. In this quest there has to be a balance between the three axes of the project: the environmental, the social and the technological.

The environment

[landscape + soundscape + the surroundings]

our surroundings

This collaborative socially-engaged sonic-art project gets its nourishment from several —interconnected— sonic art traditions heavily linked to the environment: sound walking, field recording, deep listening and the making of collaborative-online-soundscapes.

With sound-walking, attentive listening, and the recording of sounds, community members have the opportunity to participate of an outdoor activity that will implicate them in a concentrated listening-recording action.

When an individual is invited to walk through a certain area, to listen to the main acoustic elements, to actually record the acoustic elements that he/she finds challenging, and to listening to a micro-soundscape made of those recordings, we are inviting him/her to value their surroundings.

By attentive listening to it and registering its sounds, communities would contribute on the preservation of their surroundings.

The social

[communitv + education + social-engagement]

who is involved?

In order for the project to work, the community has to adopt it as its own: appropriate-it and embrace-it. Social workers, artists, and educators, have to work building awareness on the surrounding.

The project operates with a strong educational-branch: workshops and talks should be organized in order to help communities to [re]shape their acoustic habits and their relationship with the environment.

In each of its installments, the project will have to include a strong educational component that will address concepts like *sound walking*, field recording, sound ecology, *deep listening* and the making of collaborative-soundscapes.

[Re]Place. [Re]Constructing Soundscapes was conceived as a modular collaborative socially-engaged sonic-art project.

The technological

[sound (re)construction + phone application]

How It works?

By building their own soundscape through active sound-walking and recording, visitors will be part of that particular soundscape. Using their own cell phones as recording gear and provided with special headphones, participants will be prompted to listen carefully and record/register the acoustical surroundings during their walk.

Through SONODE an app specially designed for this collaborative socially-engaged sonic-art project, participants are able to record, listen and approved recordings, add an image to the recorded sound, and add metadata on each of their recordings through tags. Sounds are uploaded into the cloud automatically.

On their way back to the 'base' or starting point, participants will be prompted to listen to the micro-soundscape or to listen to a wider soundscape made with all the sounds made by previous participants.

Case study #1
The South of SanAntonio's Sounds
[SSAS]

where we start?

The first specific development of *[Re]Place. [Re]Constructing Soundscapes* is scheduled to be launched in San Antonio, Texas. It will encompass The San Antonio Missions National Historic Park [5] —UNESCO World Heritage—, The Medina River Natural Area [6], and the Land Museum [7], all areas that are interconnected and concentrated at the south of San Antonio.

Each part of the South of San Antonio has its own specific sonic pulse, and each has a specific fauna and flora living-in. Just the Land Museum is comprised of more than 1,200 acres devoted to understanding nature, history, geology, are open to the public in an ongoing basis.

At The Missions, the Medina River Natural Area, or the Land Museum, visitors will be invited to walk through different trails, and to start to look and listening with attention. Using their own cell phones as recording devices, visitors will be prompted to download an app, and to sound walk through attentive listening. They will have the option to register the acoustical elements that caught their attention during their walk.

On the spot —or at home —, they will have the option to listen to their recordings or to make a short 'sound-construction' with their own sound-bites, or those of previous participants. A micro soundscape will come out. Participant's sounds will be part of the making of an auditory archive of the area.

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