

SPATIALITY AND PUBLIC ART

Thoughts on Sound and Urban Space

María Andueza

En: *Tacet. De l'espace sonore. Vol.3 (2014) pp.186-227*. Le Presses du Réel. ISBN: 978-2-84066-717-9 EAN: 9782840667179 (Francés / Inglés)

Abstract: The paper takes up a problem of definition that is often debated nowadays in the field of Sound Art and moves it to the field of Public Sound Art: Which is the role of Public Sound Art in contemporary art? Are we enriching the field by validating this expression to denote a group of works created with sound in the public space? The paper addresses these questions at the same time it focuses the attention in the spatiality, a concept used by Edward Soja to describe the socially-produced spaces, that sound creation tackles in the public space. The paper also presents a review of the exhibition *Augmented Spatiality* that was based on these topics and took place in August 2013 in Stockholm, Sweden.

Keywords: spatiality, public space, audience, social works, appropriation

Spatiality and Public Art. Thoughts on Sound and Urban Space

Public Sound Art is a fairly new discipline, barely outlined around the use of sound by artists and collectives in the public sphere. The approach to the works usually described within this practice reveals many open issues in order to address and analyse their complexities under this increasingly used umbrella term. Several essays have discussed Public Sound Art in the last few years (Batchelor, 2012; Andueza, 2012; Klein, 2009), and the question of whether it embraces a well defined subject or not arises as a compelling one at this point.

The hesitation derives from similar discussions in the field of Sound Art. One of the most remarkable and well known authors in the field, Douglas Kahn, observed in 2005 -almost 10 years ago- that *'most artists using sound use many other materials, phenomena, conceptual and sensory modes as well, even when there is only sound'* (2005:1). He suggested how damaging was for the outcomes to be enclosed within the frame of 'Sound Art'. Other theorists and artists have discussed about this impoverishment, and different congresses and seminars have gone into endless discussions trying to define what Sound Art is (e.g., Labelle, 2007; Neuhaus, 2000 and Engström & Stjerna, 2009). Meanwhile, we still tend to use this expression in different contexts to create a safe place from which to perform and where all the concerned people know its dim borders: sound artists, sound art history, sound art criticism, etc. Master programs and specific studies on Sound Art are increasingly being offered to students and scholars, transforming progressively the category into an autonomous and incipiently institutionalized discipline. This issue should not be seen as a negative one, on the contrary they are offering a space and time to students and artists to think on this issues, but these programs need to pay attention to the fact of not promoting a vague categorization under the term 'sound art' of a variety of contemporary art practices that use sound or musical aspects. Instead, efforts of finding the connections of sound art production to contemporary art field have to be done. Most of the Sound Art works, and the most remarkable sound artists remain still today excluded from standard circuits of art in many ways, and, needless to say, missing at the comprehensive studies in art history, being sound art practices considered in separate extents of the rest of the contemporary ones. If Dick Higgins described an Intermedia art in the 60's showing not only the increasingly dialectic among different media and disciplines, but besides, formulating different questions about what to use them for? (Higgins, 1966); and if it seems that contemporary art today goes beyond the medium, or uses the medium to make a critical reading, why do we still tend to categorize a practice by its medium?

In the same vein, sound practices in the public sphere are usually encompassed in the broad, standard and ambiguous term, Public Sound Art. While it is not clearly stated which practices are within this category, people involved in the theoretical and the practical production use the expression regularly as they try to understand what it means, and whether it entails something beyond just Public Art.

The first traces of Public Sound Art in art history are closely linked to the importance of specificity and social issues, two questions that still predominate in these practices today (see Andueza, 2010). Well known are the first encounters with sound in the public space by the practitioners of the Happenings in North America and Central Europe – Germany particularly. Remarkable were some of the actions by Wolf Vostell and Allan Kaprow, where sound was the preferred medium to address the perception (political, social, aesthetical) of the context. Less known, but equally important, are other precise examples that help us today to understand the confluence of approaches to the public space by doing use of sound. That's the case of the Situationist International using walkie-talkies in some of their *drifts* (cf. Ross, 1997) or the theatrical use of sound in the public space during the dictatorships of the 70's in Latin America as a response to the imposed silences (e.g., some of the performances by TIT -Taller de Investigación Teatral- in Argentina).

Although these examples contribute today to understand the important role that sound practices started to play in the public space in the 60s and 70s, it is not possible to clearly point in these examples the origins to Public Sound Art. However they contribute to understand how the sound -as medium- was at the service of the intention of the artists, at the same time that sound was at the core of some of their practices. The examples slightly referred here, were performative actions by groups of artists against specific political contexts or questioning mainstream forms of art. In their practices sound was used as an additional tool, as a mediator to link the perception to the specificity of the contexts. In a wider sense, they worked with what was not corporeal to affect the somatic experience of the contexts and so providing a first-hand knowledge of the social and political context in each case.

It is no coincidence that those examples happened at the time Michael Fried was criticizing as *theatrical* the minimalist production of Tony Smith and other artists as they proposed a strong relationship between the work, the viewer and the space. (cf. Fried, 1967) Also, it is not coincidence in the same period Lucy Lippard wrote about the dematerialization of the artwork to point at the origins of the artworks whose ideas transcended their materiality. She even mentioned some sound works by Pulsa Group in her writings as she was developing these ideas (see Lippard, 1968). Whether Fried or Lippard were referring to experiences where the artworks as phenomena affected the complete space and time surrounding the individual that was inevitably immersed in the situation. These phenomena, whether light, sound, mirrored surfaces or blocks of coloured stones were beyond their materiality proposing a new position of the viewer in the artwork and creating a situation (phenomenological) from where to experience the piece.

Public art that additionally sounds: Max Neuhaus, the artwork as a phenomenon

In order to start discussing more properly Sound Art in the public space, we will next focus the analysis on Max Neuhaus (1939-2009), as his whole practice and intentional body of work is remarkably clear in terms of installing sound in urban contexts. It is noteworthy that he moved into the public space to purposely work with the encounter of the artworks with the specific space and the citizens, considering all the possible interweaving among them. He was at the time of this shift a renowned percussionist and composer. Retracted from the distinction between the performer and the audience in the traditional settings for musical performances, he moved to the city and assumed it as the space of creation, interpretation and reception for his pieces. By working in the public and open space of the city he pursued to make this difference between the audience and the performer disappear. In the public space of the city, he continued to use sound as the base for his pieces, but sound was from that moment on the medium to stimulate this encounter between the context and the citizen.

In Neuhaus' works sound fades into the background context. There is nothing happening with priority. Everything blends in the perception of the phenomenon created by the introduction of an almost unnoticed sound in the existing soundscape of a public space. A sound that is as imperceptible as the other imperceptible sounds are for a non-attentive hearing. Sounds that are separated from any reference, signal or recognisable melody. The process for Neuhaus to arrive to the creation of these sounds implies to understand what he calls the nature of sounds, that part of a sound that is purely audible, where the perception is separated from any kind of form. That way, the introduced sounds might point to the other sounds that cohabitate the space-time and so produce a deeper perception of the environment.

The essence of what I do when I build a sound work lies in the nature of the sounds I build into a given context, what I call the character of the sound. We all have a sense of sound character. We are born with it perhaps, or learn it at a very early age. It is inherent in our language, though unconscious; we use it as another layer of meaning on top of verbal language. (...) One could describe sound character as having several continuums of meaning lying between distant points, say, harsh and smooth or rich and thin or warm and cold, superimposed upon one another. In the area between these points, within the nature of the sound itself, lies an immense zone of meaning. Its expressions are transcultural; they are neither literal nor codified. (...) I have been interested in going further, distilling this essence, this inborn language, letting it be the sole carrier of meaning in a sound work. That's what I do when I construct a work's sound (Neuhaus, 1997)

Let's talk about the sound in one of his most relevant works –as *Time Square* in New York (installed in that location of the North American city since 1977 with only a break of 10 years between 1992 and 2002). The sound in this installation is a humming, a single and continuous frequency, which is influenced by the currents of air active in the in the space where the source - a big speaker – is placed. Coming

from one of the ventilation paths of the subway system, the sound scatters itself with the other sounds and actions happening in the space-time that they all share in the public space. Sound in *Times Square* displaces its own central nature, the audible presence of tones or frequencies, to become the switch of a deeper comprehension of the spatiality in the specific contexts. Neuhaus is working with the hearing. The sound he introduced is perceived and interpreted not isolated, but as part of a whole and in relation with the rest of the elements and events contemporary to it. For those who recognize the piece sound appears as an additional element inside the specific context that coloured it. *Times Square*, as it occurs with others of his installations, strongly connects citizens with a singular aesthetic perception of the urban space. It links the individuals to their context and uses the materiality of the piece and the colour of the specific sound as a phenomenon that provokes that consecution. The sound he introduced becomes a mediator of our perception.

Quite a few decades before Neuhaus started to work with sound installations in the public space the Suprematist artist, Kasimir Malevich, had written a statement that relates as well to this role of the artwork as mediator. The artist introduces something, which is in between the receiver and the context where both, the individual and the piece, are immersed:

(...) Ha caído sobre mí esclarecer progresivamente este prisma que supone mi trabajo principal en la ciencia pictórica. (...) Para que esto resulte más claro, diré que la esencia pictórica no consiste en el reflejo de lo visible, y todo lo visible no es un pretexto en el sentido en que se comprende. La pintura es uno de los medios de conocimiento del mundo de los fenómenos, y el fenómeno conocido en la naturaleza o en la vida se expresa precisamente en una cierta construcción de cada fenómeno, en la forma. (Malevich, 1923)

J'ai pris sur moi aussi d'éclaircir progressivement ces prismes et ils composent mon travail principal dans la science picturale. (...) Pour que cela soit plus clair je dirai encore une fois que l'essence picturale ne consiste pas dans le reflet du visible et tout le visible n'est pas un prétexte dans le sens où on le comprend. Le peinture est un des moyens de la connaissance du monde des phénomènes, et le phénomène connu dans la nature ou en général dans la vie s'exprime précisément dans la nature ou en général dans la vie s'exprime précisément dans une certaine construction de tel ou tel phénomène, dans la forme. (Malevich, 1923)

Without pretending to connect Malevich's ideas to sound art and to Neuhaus production, Malevich's statement on his pictorial practice as a prism is brought here to show how the discourses and the intention in both artists were similar. If Malevich was working with painting and occasionally with volumes, Neuhaus was instead working with sonorities. Nevertheless both of them were creating a situation from which to perceive and comprehend the context. The work reaches a new entity beyond the objecthood. In Neuhaus' pieces we are not admiring how

the sounds are, not only at least, but we are also experiencing its plasticity, and the almost chemical reaction it triggers in the perception of the public space where we are also immersed.

What we are mainly concern here is demonstrating how similar interests were put in practice through the use of different mediums. If we move again to the tradition of visual art, we can state an obvious equivalence with the pieces that use light to fulfil a space. Dan Flavin, James Turrell or La Monte Young they all transform the whole perception of the space with their luminous ambiances, their pieces go beyond the light to create an atmosphere that is related of course with the properties of light but implies a deeper understanding of the whole context. Whether with light or sound, the materials used turns the piece into a phenomenon which is influenced by the context- that is, something that we interpreted as it is perceived, distinguished from its real nature. The sounds and the lights used are not self-referential; they are broadening up the perception, and recalling our attention to different layers of the space.

The Spatiality

When talking about the pieces of Max Neuhaus we are referring broadly to the idea of an urban context that goes beyond the physical space and poses the discourse into the social space. In the 1960s, the concept of city prompted numerous insights, based on an analysis of the multiplicity of actions that take place in cities. The French sociologist Henri Lefebvre worked with this plurality when he analysed the 'social space' of the cities in which multiple actions occur. He employed this term to indicate a space of urban relations where the role played by the citizens had an impact in the resulting city.

Times Square – as many other sound installations in public arena – addresses the physical space. At the time, it contributes for the citizen to acquire a deeper understanding or recognition of all the activities that are provoked by the other citizens living in society who produce an always-changing soundscape in the city. Since *Times Square* was installed in the 70s this place has suffered different urban transformations. Not only the visual appearance of the place is different (new buildings, multiple façade-screens, advertisings) but also the activity in the area has completely changed, being now a crowded space all the time, and subsequently a noisy one. However, the piece continues today to be contemporary since it perfectly works together to the multiplicity of stimuli in that place. This is because of the character of the sound. Since it doesn't contain any literal meaning, and doesn't refer to any particular signal or source it has the asset to accommodate itself with the new ones without provoking a dissonance, and still pointing the attention of the perceiver into all the situations that denote the sounds. Therefore the piece draws attention into a space that is a result of the *spatiality*.

The term *spatiality* was coined in 1983 by the sociologist Edward Soja to refer to the space that is socially produced:

The dominance of a physicalist view of space has so permeated the analysis of human spatiality that it tends to distort our vocabulary. Thus, while such adjectives as 'social', 'political', 'economic', and even 'historical' generally suggest, unless otherwise specified a link to human action and motivation, the term 'spatial' typically evokes a physical or geometrical image, something external to the social context and to social action, a part of the 'environment', a part of the setting for society – its naively given container – rather than a formative structure created by society. We really do not have a widely used an accepted expression in English to convey the inherently social quality of organized space, especially since the terms 'social space' and 'human geography' have become so murky with multiple and often incompatible meanings. For these and other reasons, I have chosen to use the term 'spatiality' to specify this socially-produced space. (Soja, 1989: 80)

This concept is relevant, not only to understand Neuhaus' installation, but to understand as well a context for sound creation in the public space. By relating spatiality to this field it is opened one of its most striking features: the capacity of sound installations to draw the non-physical space that implies the idea of spatiality in the public domain, and to do it by the means of the immateriality of sound, which may determine our experience of the public space.

Analysing sound creations in the public space from the perspective of spatiality and the disciplines that deals with it such as sociology, geography or urbanism- enhance the understanding of the processes that take place during the conception, setup and performance of sound works in the public space. Sound in those contexts is able to trigger a particular sensitivity among citizens: not only to sound itself, but to the totality of the social dynamics and conflicts that constitute the city.

The fact of sharing the moment of the deployment of sound in the space is the particular fact of sharing the creation of many other particularities. And the virtue of many sound installations that only works with sound is to achieve this without doing exhibition of it. They are so engraved in the fabric of the urban context, that the context itself absorbs the pieces without prioritizing it. For this reason, when the pieces catch our attention don't introduce any particular meaning to the context. The recognition of the piece gives meaning to the piece in the specific place and context of the public space.

The features stated previously in Neuhaus' works are also present repeatedly in other sound interventions in the public space created by other artists since the first Neuhaus' installations at the end of the 60s. The work of contemporary artists within the diffuse category of Public Sound Art -such as Bill Fontana, Peter Cusack, O+A, Maia Urstad, Georg Klein or Bernhard Leitner- are then susceptible of being interpreted under categories that attend to their contextual performance at the time that emphasize on the properties of the sounds used, the features of the soundscapes or the celebration of attentive listening.

Public Sound Art may be understood as a set of practices using sound whether to shape and determine the public space or to point at the importance of aural culture and the role of sound inside public spaces. Nevertheless, seen from this angle so connected to the materiality of sound, may restrict our comprehension of the complexities these practices provoke within the urban context and in relation to other artistic practices as well. Three questions will arise then: Where is the interest of this practice: is it in the sound or is it in the effects triggered by the sound? Are there no other public art installations -with any sound- triggering similar experiences and proposing similar issues from their contexts? And finally, in all these practices framed under Public Sound Art, what is being worked with?

Sound artworks affect to the urban contexts. At the same time, they are affected by the citizen dynamics and the interactions with the rest of the conditions operating in the physical and the symbolical space. These interactions rebuild, re-appropriate and give new meanings to the materiality of works themselves as has been explain in Neuhaus' piece. This way of working is not unique in public sound art, but a set of characteristics that usually shares the artworks grouped under Public Sound Art, but also many others that are not (e.g., see for example "Conical Intersect" by Gordon Matta-Clark where the artist in 1975 bore an abandoned building before its demolition.) The works done by the artists are not the final product but the trigger of something beyond, which is produced in the encounter with the public domain. In the light of this particular fact it seems Public Art might frame all of them without just grouping these pieces by the use of the main material it is used in its construction. On top of that, many of the pieces framed under Public Sound Art has a powerful visual component (e.g., Georg Klein or Hans Peter Kuhn installations)

Public Space on the spot: a review of *Augmented Spatiality*

Despite the generalization of the discipline proposed, there is a characteristic of sound creations, which has struck me the most when it happens in the public space. The use of sound in the public space sharply connects with the specific conditions that make the space social. There are many other works in line with these ideas, but the way sound creations addresses this particular issue is remarkable for the intensity of its occurrence. Probably its no occupation of the visual space in many cases and the dissipation of sound material in the physical space provokes that the piece doesn't have a specific position, or a precise attitude for the citizen to be taken into consideration to perceive the work. The lack of references makes the pieces work intimately connected to the specific context, which apart from the architectonic is above all full of actions produced by the individuals.

These and other issues were at the core of my curatorial project of public art and sound creation, *Augmented Spatiality*, held in Stockholm in 2013. After 10 years of doing research in the field of public sound art, at the time of proposing *Augmented*

Spatiality my intention was to create a collective ground for discussion and exploration– through practice – of the concerns, doubts and questions that the field of Sound Art and specifically Public Sound Art was – in my view – opening and need to be properly addressed in practice.

The project was selected and developed in the frame of CuratorLab, a one-year course for professionals in Arts of Konstfack University (Stockholm) to do research in curatorial practices. *Augmented Spatiality* featured works by Hong-Kai Wang, Trond Lossius, Cecilia Jonsson, Jacek Smolicki, Gentrified Improvisation, Iván Argote, *Playing the Space*, Konsthall 323 and a group of 16 artists that participated in the listening section and will be mentioned later. *Augmented Spatiality* was founded by 11 partners (The Embassies of Spanish and Poland, the Ministry of Taiwan, Iaspis, Stockholmshem, Bergen's Council, the Bergen Center for Electronic Arts, Konstfack University, the Stockholm's subway system, the Nordic Baltic Mobility grant and the Electronic Music Studios of Stockholm - EMS), and was part of the Öppet Forum of Konsthall C which allowed the project to use a privileged space that will be discussed later.

The exhibition, *Augmented Spatiality* (Andueza, 2013b), was organized in Hökarängen, a southern suburb of Stockholm with 9000 circa population. The project aimed at reflect on the formation of the social space in the city in order to analyse ways of how public art might bring awareness to citizens about the social networks that exist around them. Having identified some of these evidences in the work of different artists using sound in the public space, the intention of the project was to address through sound creation in the public domain the concept of *Spatiality* previously mentioned by Edward Soja in a specific context.

In the event, artworks and performances took place in several venues and open spaces along the suburb and were integrated into their social and spatial processes. It. The project produced 6 new pieces and displayed others already produced. All of the commissioned artworks were proposed to artists working with sound from many different perspectives while the other pieces produced before the exhibition (e.g., Cecilia Jonsson *In constant Flux* or Iván Argote *Without title/NY*), were selected with similar criteria so they could be installed in specific areas of the neighbourhood and gain a new perspective connected with the aim of the project.

As for the selection of the location of the project, the ideas of Saskia Sassen were taken into account, particularly when she asked herself about the idea of 'creating public space':

The making and siting of public space is one lens into these types of questions. We are living through a kind of crisis in public space resulting from the growing commercialization, theme-parking, and privatizing of public space. The grand monumentalized public spaces of the state and the crown, especially in former imperial capitals, dominate our experience of public space. Users do render them public through their practices. But what about the actual making of public

space in these complex cities, both through architectural interventions and through users' practices? (Sassen, 2006: 20)

In her response to this question Sassen proposes to work in *modest spaces* outside the heart of the cities; modest spaces that, opposite to the city centre, are open and are still permeable to differential processes of acting in the city development. It is reasonable to think that the modest spaces that Sassen refers to are more porous to the presence and the activity of the citizens and as a result in those spaces is easier to create the ground for a public space. Sassen adds in the same paper the differences between 'public spaces' and 'public-access spaces' which increase her position in this topic. Public spaces as she explains require the making of practices and subjectivities of people, while the public-access spaces imply merely their access (Sassen, 2006: 21). This differentiation seemed to me relevant to be worked in *Augmented Spatiality* which aimed at think the space, the public space, which is socially produced. A space where the presence and the role of the citizen are central and are in relationship with the social institutions, the private spaces, the history and the ideology. In that sense, some of the pieces in the exhibition were presented in public access spaces – as the piece by Gentrified Improvisation or Jacek Smolicki, other in private places that works as hybrid public-access spaces in the collective imagination (e.g., an open platform of the subway system where it was installed the piece by Trond Lossius) and other were installed properly in the public space (e.g., Iván Argote, Cecilia Jonsson, Hong-Kai Wang).

Hökarängen: The specific space of the project

Swedish architect David Helldén designed the most representative area of Hökarängen at the end of the 40's as a result of an urban planning competition. (cf. Einarsson, 2010) whose premises was to test in Hökarängen the ground for the society of the future. Helldén was influenced by new English ideas about neighbourhood units and community centres, resulting from his plan a singular urban area that still preserves its iconic planning nowadays. When arriving to the neighbourhood, citizens find a spacious square he designed connected to a pedestrian street embodying a welcoming gateway. Hökarangsplan, as it is named the pedestrian street of about 200 meters was the first one ever planned with this purpose in Sweden, taking space back from traffic. Hökarängen is identified as culturally and historically significant in the comprehensive plan for the City as it became iconic for the planning of new suburbs in Sweden.

The population of Hökarängen is today highly diverse as it is an area with a high degree of immigrant inhabitants from Latin-American, China and the Arab world that shares the space with middle class Swedish people. In this context some years ago, the Waldorf School of Söder opened in the neighbourhood. This fact, as explained by the citizens, prompted the arrival of new families with children, and involved in the neighbourhood the beginning of a process of gentrification managed by Stockholmshem, a public housing company owned by the City of Stockholm. Stockholmshem was created in 1937 with the main task of beginning

the construction of the so-called *barnrikehus*, houses for low-income families with many children. The company quickly became an important instrument of urban development and housing construction that promote the construction of different areas in the suburbs of Stockholm (cf. Historik, n.d.) Today, Stockholmshem plays an important role in the neighbourhood, being the owner of many of the buildings in Hökarängen.

After a law adopted by the Swedish Parliament in 2009, the publicly owned housing companies were permitted to make profit of their properties. As a result, in Hökarängen properties are starting to be sold to higher prices to those that tenants can afford. And, as a consequence, an incipient movement of population is going on, at the time new fancy shops and cafes appear in the central streets of the area. Art, as an exchange value that improves the image of a neighbourhood, is also very present in this particular gentrification process, as new studios and gallery spaces are rented to artists at a very low price.

In this frame, considering the history, the present time and the physical aspect of the neighbourhood as a result of an interesting process of urban planning very much connected to social space, Hökarängen was selected – among other suburbs of Stockholm city as the venue for *Augmented Spatiality*. It was a challenge for the project to add the discussion on the gentrification process previously mentioned, since the project was inevitably positioned as a potential part of it.

The decision followed in *Augmented Spatiality* was to collaborate with a big group of agents operating in the area (whether from the side of the gentrification process, whether from the side that is facing it) and to propose a collaborative framework for institutions, shops, artists and citizens, so that the project itself and its development could be an attempt to get in contact with the on-going cultural, educational, economical and political actions operating in the social space.

The aim of installing and proposing different works in specific places was to augment the everyday processes operating in a specific space and thus, augment the ways in which the citizens of an area and the agents operating in it -through their own practices- were producing the space in which they live and/or operate. The project tried not to place itself from one side, but to work with the already existing networks in the area, from a more distant position. The aim was augmenting the current social situation in the neighbourhood at the time it was analysed the idea of public space. For the reasons we have been discussing in the first part of the paper, it was thought that sound creation and public art might be a good point to start.

Almost none of the artists participating in the exhibition would be framed as a Public Sound Art artist in a comprehensive study. However, all of their pieces in the exhibition worked with the notion of public space and the strategies and uses of sound to create a piece in the specific place. Following will be addressed some of the works and events carried on in *Augmented Spatiality*, to tackle the topic of this article from different perspectives.

Processing the context: *Gentrified Improvisation*

One of the projects in the exhibition dealt with the gentrification process and the debate on the ideas about the 'creative city' by Richard Florida that asserts that metropolitan areas with high concentration of artists (among other particularities) display a higher level of economic development. (Florida, 2005)

Gentrified Improvisation grew up, as a collective project initiated by the Basque artist Mattin consisting of a 3-day workshop that concluded with a public performance in the *panrummet*, an industrial space that used to be the boiler room of a voluminous laundry building. This space lent by the public housing company to Konsthall C, the main art centre of the neighbourhood, is sporadically used to do some shows, projections and other artistic events.

This particular project was in line with the way Mattin usually works in his performances and/or events, creating tensions among the different parts involved in each case: audience-performers, institution-curator, curator-audience, etc. (see also his performance in the project *The audience is the mother of self-invention* organized by Index in Stockholm in 2012). As far as *Gentrified Improvisation* is concerned, it achieved to create in *Augmented Spatiality* two different processes that came together: on the one hand it created the ground for discussions with KonsthallC, and on the other it focused on the fact of producing a collective artistic workshop and performance on the topic of gentrification and musical improvisation.

During the production of this particular project, and after the decision to develop *Gentrified Improvisation* in Konsthall C, it started an interesting process in relation with the fact of having permissions by the side of the institution to do it. After some conversations the team of Konsthall C decided to accept the project for the programme of Öppet Forum (open forum), a platform where KonsthallC offers externally produced, finalized, or developing projects a space. Öppet Forum understands the institution as an open space and as a place to test new modes of working as an institution. However, and despite the permission, KonsthallC showed some logical doubts about the general project *Augmented Spatiality* and the role it played in Hökarängen. A Swedish artist - Per Hasselberg, and the community of Hökarängen created KonsthallC as a public art project in 2004, that is, previously to the origin of the gentrification process. Currently, Konsthall C sees itself as being used to create a new fancy image of the neighbourhood so is trying to define its position against the open gentrification process. Being part of *Augmented Spatiality* project meant for them to face directly his role in the gentrification process. Was *Augmented Spatiality* part of it? Very interesting, challenging and not always easy conversations followed this question. We discussed the role of the project, at the same time we analysed a kind of property feeling over culture that Konsthall C and other art spaces in the area had since they existed previously to the beginning of this gentrification. My question was: Since there was an on-going gentrification process... Wasn't possible to propose an

artistic project there that defied and analysed gentrification as part of the spatiality of Hökarängen?

All these conversations and ideas emerged as well in the workshop. *Gentrified Improvisation* launched the following question: *What does it mean to freely improvise in a context where cultural expressions are being instrumentalised in order to promote a neighbourhood as an artistic hub?* (2013). Departing from this question, during the workshop participants shared ideas, projects, articles and experiences at the time they analysed the situation in the neighbourhood, inviting and talking to different neighbours and/or people involved in that process. The project proposed to work collectively, starting from the examination of a concrete situation and trying to generate an outcome that acknowledged its contextual resonances.

The resulting improvisation created a representation of all the ideas addressed in the workshop and consisted of a 1-hour performance in Panrummet where 5 people voiced, "I am free" with different intensities and rhythms while moving in the dark space of *Panrummet*. This part of the performance aroused distinctive feelings in the audience that somehow echoed the moods of the neighbours in the area: delight in the perception, boredom in the repetition or violence masked in the concern, as passive audience/citizens, of being asked to be part of the performance or the gentrification process. *Gentrified Improvisation* was expounding the context in the vicinity through a sound improvisation, a collective performance that ended up with the personal testimonies of the 5 participants declaimed or played in a makeshift stage, strongly illuminated that created again a clime of implicit violence echoing maybe the one generated in the neighbourhood through the gentrification.

This project, departed from a situation affecting not only the public space, but also the public domain, and reflected on the relationship of public spaces with public-access spaces and the interesting relationships that exist between them. If we recover now Sassen's assumptions – the former required the making of practices and subjectivities of people, while the second implied merely their access. In *Gentrified Improvisation* the borders of both were confronted and were purposely blurred to create an ambiguous and improvised situation that ended up vehemently. After an in crescendo sound ambiance provoked again by the sentence "I am free", the audience was immersed, suddenly, in a deep dark space and in silence, which led the situation to an uncertain end followed by a prolonged silence in the audience which was very timidly broken while they left the space and went back again to the public space from which they had come.

Immersed in the urban fabric: Iván Argote *Untitled NY*.

In the public space, or to be more precise, very much related to the public space, was installed the piece by the Colombian artist Iván Argote, who often creates interventions and performances in the public space. He uses the video in his practice as a means to explore the space-time dimension of the city as a space of

relational conflict, as a place where the confrontations and behaviours of citizens display a spatiality subordinated to political and cultural issues. The piece exhibited in *Augmented Spatiality, Untitled (New York)*, showed excerpts of video of 10 seconds circa, in silence and in slow-motion, that captured the moment where something caught the attention of New York passers-by, as they turned around while waiting to cross a street.

This piece, already produced at the time of the exhibition, was installed in the window of a Colombian café of the pedestrian street in Hökarängen. The video, in complete silence, shows fragments of diverse durations where different people, caught by surprise in the city, turn around and look at the camera attracted by something. These sequences watched in the public space of the pedestrian street in Hökarängen made the passer-by in this area seeing oneself in sights of others, strangers, which slowly turned around to look at him in the street (see also Argote, n.d.). The use of medium close-up shots in the video hinders the possibility of guessing the city where the action occurs. Which is in fact New York, but it doesn't matter this time. This non-location made the image more powerful in the streets of the suburb in Stockholm, emphasizing the importance of the role of each individual citizen in that situation. Additionally, although the artist intentionally erased the sound from the video, hiding the cause that captured the attention of the passers-by, something sonorous is vividly evoked in the mind of the audience. And it is precisely this fact, this lack of information, and the audience guessing and asking themselves what makes the people turn around which made the piece become sonorous. A stimulus, that in this case was only visual, was able to focus the sights of passers-by who diverted immediately their attention to the sonorous, to the specific sounds that – although imagined, cohabit the urban spaces.

This video installation enhances the temporalities of the urban public space, and the shortly time that events can capture the attention of the individuals in a cityscape. Additionally, in Hökarängen, its reception provoked a similar reaction to that induced in the video. A gesture, that of turning back to look at something, which was also very common in that street which is full of stores and thus attract with their window shops the sights of the passers-by.

Displacing the physical space: Chinowski Garachana, *Acoustic Mordor*.

As part of *Augmented Spatiality* a listening section was organized, implemented as a collaborative work of curating. Sixteen artists participated in a process build by aggregation. Instead of one curator deciding and inviting each artist, a process was proposed where three initial artists received an invitation to select which piece to contribute to the project and a request to invite a new contributor to follow the same process. (Andueza, 2013a).

The 16 artists in the listening section as a result of this collective curating process were: Kamen Nedev / Pablo Sanz / Katrinem / O+A / Peter Cusack / Anna Raimondo / Younes Baba-Ali / Simohamed Fetakka / Mohamed Laouli / Mustapha

Akrim / Edu Comelles / Juanjo Palacios / Chinowsky Garachana / Camilo Cantor / Albert Murillo / Raúl Hinojosa.

The 16 pieces composing the listening section, that each artist decided to contribute observing the ideas underlying the whole project, were on display in Konstapoteket, one of the new small art spaces that have been mentioned previously when talking about gentrification. The pieces consisted mainly of urban sound recordings, soundscapes or sound elaborations from references to different aspects of urban social spaces.

Acoustic Mordor / Through the tunnel of the Alcazaba was the piece for the Listening Section by the Spanish sound activist Chinowski Garachana. He is co-founder member of El Sueño de Tesla (Tesla's Dream), a collective in Málaga (Spain) whose work focuses on production, archiving and pedagogy around sound culture.

In May 2012 a general strike defending Public Education against the cutbacks was held in Spain. In the region of Málaga, the concentration overflowed and became a demonstration of more than 5000 people that walked around the streets of the city and went through the tunnel of the Alcazaba, of around 180 meters long.

The piece – 7 minutes long (see Self/Noise, 2013), registers the soundscape of this demonstration when passing through the tunnel. Despite the singular location of the recordings, when listened dislocated from their original place, the sound and noises of demonstrators become a stereotyped soundscape of demonstrations in public space. The acoustics of the tunnel create an effect in the listening similar to the radio transmission filter, where the encapsulated sound recordings get distance from the real fact. From the listener point of view, this distortion locates the sound in a non-specific urban space, or what is even more interesting, in the specific place and particularities where the piece is listened.

Acoustic Mordor -and the rest of the pieces in the listening section- worked as a sound anthropology of the urban tissue that scatters in the public space (cf. Delgado, 1999: 34-35) and in the individuals minds. A public space that is physically appropriated by the citizens. A public space where citizens acting as living entities, model and reshape symbolically or physically the spaces.

Conclusion

The public sphere is today characterized by a greater use of its spaces by citizens, who constantly evolve the social dimension of a space. A notion of a city space that goes beyond the physicality is needed to understand these appropriations. Citizens do not design the physical appearance of the public spaces, but are however forced to use it. Social movements happening worldwide in the last years show that the public sphere is becoming more and more a space to be used and occupied by the

people, not only as pedestrians, but as active citizens that want to be part on the creation of the publicness.

In this regard, following Michel de Certeau, it is appropriate to consider the role of the citizen in the public sphere, and thus the role of the artist in the public space, as a 'practitioner' (1984:93) This concept refers to individuals who are able to modify what they have received, instead of being only passive consumers of the public space.

Public art is playing an important role in promoting and advancing these citizenship practices. Different strategies are involved in current public art projects: empowering communities (Rick Lowe- *Project Row Houses (Houston)*), reflecting on the role of public art in very different places of the cities (Sky Limit Walled City - Pakistan), involving communities to redefine and explore in depth their social spaces (Hong-Kai Wang – *Music while we work (Taiwan)*), or provoking a critical position of the citizenship (Democracia – *Proyecto Manresa (Cataluña)*).

Looking at recent public art from this plurality of strategies, it seems that the discipline is thinking itself through the exercise of its own practice in different contexts. Using different techniques and materials Public Art is exploring ways of active intervention in the public and social space.

At this point, it should be considered whether it is better to differentiate a specific way of working in the public space that deals with sound -Public Sound Art- or to continue just thinking in Public Art, expanding it through concepts such as Spatiality, that can be explored through the immateriality of sound works, the relevance of sound in urban contexts and the power of using sound to create public space.

Augmented Spatiality was my attempt to offer some critical traction to an increasingly complex field of experimentation such as public sound art. It tried to go beyond sound art to talk about public space, but it talked about public space through the possibilities that offer sound culture, sound production and the politics of listening.

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