
ctp 5.2

Wie wir Krankheit und Stadt hören – listening to the cities

A talk between Julián Galay and Christoph M. Gosepath

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Christoph: How did you get the impulse for the project „listening to the city“?

Julián: The first version of the work was commissioned by Satellit, a place that works as a satellite of Haus der Statistics with a critical approach to the city and architecture in general. The invitation came from Erik Goengrich and Peter Schmidt, who are developing a cycle of walks, always starting from the same point to the other, in which they invite different guests from multiple disciplines to develop a theme and talk about that.

They proposed to me to do a "soundwalk", which at this point is almost a genre in itself, these are walks, which generally take place in silence, with the focus on listening. The activity seemed interesting to me, and in fact walking is a fundamental part of my own creative process, but at the same time I kept thinking about how to give it another twist, how to bring this "format" closer to my own research and interests as an artist. For example, how to give "a talk" without the sound of my voice overlapping the sound of the city, or how to propose a reading, or reflection, of that walk without hindering the experience. That's how the idea for this first version came up, in which we first did the walk and then, almost instantaneously, we watched and listened to a film that represented the walk we had just done as a group, also incorporating the language in the form of silent subtitles.

Christoph: Let me first say how thankful I am to have been invited to the soundwalk at that warm sunny June afternoon. I was immediately interested, since ctp is very interested in phenomenons of sound in the city, of noise, breeze, flakes of talking, voices of human beings and birds and so on. We look at it in the context of getting stressed or even ill from the sounds of the city: which sounds are "good" and which are "bad"? We are working on the question of "Krankheit und Stadt" in a web-based project.

So I started to walk with the group very curiously, concentrating on sounds. By the way I saw you filming waist-high, but didn't care about it. Nobody spoke a word while walking, everyone was listening. Arriving at the Satellit space, we were invited to watch a short film about such a silent walk. I then saw a film about a walk with comments to the sounds concerning rhythm and music, done in subtitles. By seeing it, I found it a nearly identical copy of the walk we just did, but it could not have been our walk! How could it be commented so fast - in terms of content and also technically? Alternatively: how could you have filmed a walk before, almost with the same noises, the same weather, the same cars? As a spectator I was trapped in this typical gap of experiencing a fictitious story and identifying myself with it by empathy - and to do so by thinking: "this is real!".

But only later I learned that this *was* the walk we did - and that the commenting was done by you in a few minutes - when the audience had been distracted for a moment by being offered a coffee. This had a huge performative attraction to me - and I thought, I had to ask you to do this in our digital project.

Julián: Yes, I was pleasantly surprised to see how that first impact worked. I'm very interested in that crossover between the real experience and its representation, and also in the possibility of re-listening to a sound of an experience, like re-reading a book, and speaking "silently" also incorporating the moving image.

Christoph: Very nicely done, Julián!

Julián: Later, you asked me to look for a possibility to transpose the project into a web-based interactive project. At first, I thought there was no way to do it, but we started talking over a cup of coffee ... and from there this new collaboration arose ...

Christoph (*laughs*): Yes! And we both were very quickly overwhelmed, we needed some technical help, a programmer. You introduced me to Federico Isasti. How do you know him?

Julián: In addition to being a great programmer, Federico is a great musician. Also, he is my friend, I met him a few years ago in Buenos Aires. He was a resident of a postgraduate program where I teach, but we also have many friends - especially from the experimental music world - in common. When we started talking about this web version, he was

traveling, living in Berlin for some months and taking the opportunity to play here, so he seemed to me the ideal accomplice, and indeed he was. For this interactive version, I wanted the text to be different each time, playing with the limit between control and lack of control, or between composition and improvisation, to put it another way. And he managed to solve these kinds of puzzles that opened up the possibilities of the project.

Christoph: And beyond that, how was the adaptation process for the website?

Julián: At first it was too close to the original project, and that's why I think it didn't work... the idea was to represent on video the different stages of the actual walk... but then the possibility of interaction and the gesture of leaving the Internet and going for a real walk appeared. Also the possibility to generate an archive. I am very attracted to archives, atlas and collections in general.

So, all that got me interested, and reminded me of a conversation that I have been having for many years - in relation to the city, architecture and sound - with a great friend, Emilia Pascarelli, she is an architect and talking to her helped me to give the final shape to this new experiment.

Some years ago, conversations with friends, along with walks, became a fundamental part of my personal process to do work, and that's why this also made sense to me.

Christoph: Ok - so let's show the visitors of our site how it works:
-> [listeningtothecity](#)

Website of the whole project ctp 5.2:

-> <https://www.ctp-berlin.com/en/blog/ctp-5-2-wie-wir-krankheit-und-stadt-hoeren/>