# SOUNDWWWALKS

## Bernhard Garnicnig

Computer networks and cities both are social spaces that have emerged as material spaces where lives are lead and work gets done. While extensive studies on the Soundscape have been undertaken in the past, the sonic properties of network spaces have been left unconsidered and thought to be without sonic properties. The panel is an investigation towards an Acoustic Ecology of Networks and the WWW as interface and material for live performance.

*Soundwwwalks are an emerging genre of live browser-based performances using <EMBED> improvisation, plugin sound-collage and multitab mixing, shamelessly blending the traditions of pro-surfing, Soundwalk composition and laptop music.*

*The performances take the audience on a sonic Detour through the World Wide Web. A Soundwwwalk considers the act of surfing the World Wide Web as form of sonic action.*

*The artists either perform their Soundwwwalks themselves on stage or transmit their notation, sometimes in real time, to a local interpreter operating the browser.*

*All performances follow the Soundwwwalk One-Line-Manifesto: "All sound sources must be played in a browser, must not be self-produced and must be publicly accessible."*

The above description was part of the invitation I've sent to selected artists in the past, along with details about the date and other circumstances of the performance. So far Constant Dullaart, Joel Holmberg, Peter Moosgaard, Julian Palacz, Jamie Allen, Will Schrimshaw and Ceci Moss have performed the format at various events throughout Europe. [1]

Soundwwwalks were the beginning of an investigation towards the possibility of browser based sound performances. As an artist interested in internet art, sound collage, soundscape theory and improv performances, I started to understand that the World Wide Web has become the largest possible library of sonic artefacts and recordings, considering any sound and video file uploaded to the web any given day as material for sonic ideas and actions. I wanted to explore a way of working with this resource the same way I've used turntables for improv sound collage performances with Albert Allgaier in the past, or I've seen other artists using various objects, tools and instruments. But I wasn't interested in just sampling, ripping, downloading and then mashing with those materials as sound files in standard digital sound workstation environments, detached from their original ressource, as mere material outside the context of its source medium. I've found it to be much more interesting to work with the specific qualities, characteristics and phenomena related to the world wide web as a sound source, the network as intermediate space with quasi-acoustic properties and the desktop browser as the interface.

We developed different approaches to Soundwwwalk performances, especially because the invited artists often couldn't physically be at the site of the performance. While the performer would usually come on stage and perform the Soundwwwalk using a standard computer connected to the PA system and a projector, this can also be done through real time communication from anywhere else. A local performer will then execute instructions sent by the "composer" in real time. These come in the form of

hyperlinks and instructions regarding for example volume settings or particular timing requirements. What follows is an excerpt of a performance composed by Constant Dullaart, transmitted via text chat and interpreted by Bernhard Garnicnig live on stage at a Soundwwwalk performance at the interactive Media Art Laboratory Brussels in November 2010. [2]

*[12.11.10 22:23:38] constant dullaart: New TAB: http://www2.research.att.com/~ttsweb/tts/demo.php*
*[12.11.10 22:23:55] bgarnicnig: k*
*[12.11.10 22:24:00] constant dullaart: dont press speak*
*[12.11.10 22:24:11] constant dullaart: new tab COPY 3rd LADY GAGA ASCII FROMhttp://hotascii.com/ terminal/ascii_lady_gaga*
*[12.11.10 22:24:27] constant dullaart: Back to  2nd tab: PASTE! DO NOT CHANGE VOICE, JUST PRESS SPEAK*
*[12.11.10 22:24:42] constant dullaart: paste in the att one*
*[12.11.10 22:24:52] bgarnicnig: running*
*[12.11.10 22:25:10] bgarnicnig: 2nd loop*
*[12.11.10 22:25:18] constant dullaart: Open New TAB http://sounddogs.com/previews/25/mp3/222978_ SOUNDDOGS__ba.mp3*
*[12.11.10 22:25:32] bgarnicnig: running*
*[12.11.10 22:25:50] bgarnicnig: -00:20*
*[12.11.10 22:26:10] constant dullaart: open new tab: http://www.planetofnoise.com/midi/morse2mid. php*
*[12.11.10 22:26:24] bgarnicnig: k*
*[12.11.10 22:26:29] constant dullaart: COPY PASTE THE FOLLOWING IN THE TEXT FIELD: ANY MEDIUM AT ALL CREATES A NEW PATTERN, A NEW ATMOSPHERE, A NEW  ENVIRONMENT OF HUMAN PERCEP-TION*
*SELECT QUICKTIME! and press "make midi file"*
*[12.11.10 22:26:52] bgarnicnig: running*
*[12.11.10 22:26:59] bgarnicnig: still loop lady gaga btw?*

The sound ressources on the World Wide Web are ephemeral, much like the sounds exist in our habitat and environment. Briefly appearing signals and notes, their existence on the archive-in-motion is fluctu-ative for various reasons: YouTube takedowns enforced by copyright owners, users correcting their rep-resented identities and editing their archives, servers failing, connections dropping, geographical access restrictions etc. Like a train passing and chatting couples passing by on the sidewalk, they appear and disappear. The Acoustic Ecology and the Soundscape Project have studied exactly the specific phenom-ena, histories and properties of sound found in our habitats. Yet so far, this type of research has not been expanded into the field that is now also a de-facto space where our lives are led, work gets done and social structures emerge: Although the spatial metaphors have been used for networks since a while (think about the volume of a MySpace, the length of a YouTube or the diameter of a CyWorld). The space of computer networks has been regarded as being a space without acoustic properties and sonic phenomena.

Since the 1970s, the World Soundscape Project used the practice of Soundwalk [3] and the term Sound-scape [4] as analytcial tools for their research of the sonic environment of the human habitat. These terms and methods since then have become independent and widely used artistic practices, Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller Soundwalk projects [5] and Luc Ferraris Soundscape compositions ("Presque Rien ou le lever du Jour au Bord de la Mer" [6] being popular examples. Through a process of reverse engineering, the Soundwwwalk project is an initial effort towards establishing an analytical

framework for an Acoustic Ecology of Networks, starting with an artistic practice. The experiences and discussions this yields will contribute to a more elaborate jargon and finer differentiations to the field of network acoustics and the browser as potential platform for sonic expression.

## *References and Notes:*

*Special thanks to Jamie Allen for the discussions and contributions, which resulted in a collaborative workshop on Net Acoustics at Mullae Art Space Seoul, Korea in June 2011.*

1. *Museumsquartier Vienna in May 2010, WORM Rotterdam November 2010, iMAL Brussels November 2010, Klangmanifeste, Echoraum Wien Dezember 2010, Mullae Art Space Seoul June 2011, ISEA Istanbul September 2011.*
2. *iMAL - interactive Media Art Laboratory Brussels, 2011: moddr_ exhibition pening programme (accessed 10.09.2011).*
3. *Barry Truax, Handbook for Acoustic Ecology, Second Edition (Vancouver, 1999).*
4. *Murray R. Schafer, The Soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world (New York, 1977).*
5. *Janet Cardiff and George B. Miller Online Project Archive (accessed 10.09.2011).*
6. *Wikipedia, Biography of Luc Ferrari (accessed 10.09.2011).*