

# **Tales From the Square**

**by**  
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BFA, Concordia University, 2016

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in the  
School for the Contemporary Arts  
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
Spring 2022

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## Declaration of Committee

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## Abstract

*Tales From the Square* is an online soundmap of Victory Square, a city square located in Vancouver, British Columbia. The map itself was created with acrylic on canvas; the icons were drawn by hand with ink and coloured digitally; the font used is a template of the artist's own hand-writing; and the work was coded in Javascript by the artist himself. Each icon represents an object worn or held by square frequenters, or an animal or insect seen within the square. Upon clicking an icon, a field recording of the square begins playing, and a title appears on the screen. After the title of the story enters and leaves, the user is invited to read the story, choosing the pace by clicking green arrows to either move forward or backward. Upon finishing the story, the user is then invited to return to the map and click another icon. Through an eclectic mix of observations, musings and conclusions about time, space and people, the artist seeks to illustrate the *everythingness* of Victory Square, a square he lived in front of for 3 years during his graduate studies at Simon Fraser University.

**Keywords:** soundmap; field recording; Victory Square; acoustic ecology

dedicated to Pierino Ciccone (1943–2021)

## **Acknowledgements**

Thank you, universe,

Thank you, mom, dad.

Thank you, committee: Kyla, Sabrina and Rob.

Thank you, Peter and Chris.

Thank you, cohort.

Thank you, family.

Thank you, Jenny.

Thank you, Jo, Jo-Anne, Kwyn, Sara, Felix, Francis, Karen.

Thank you, Martin and Milena.

Thank you, Passport Program and Safety Net.

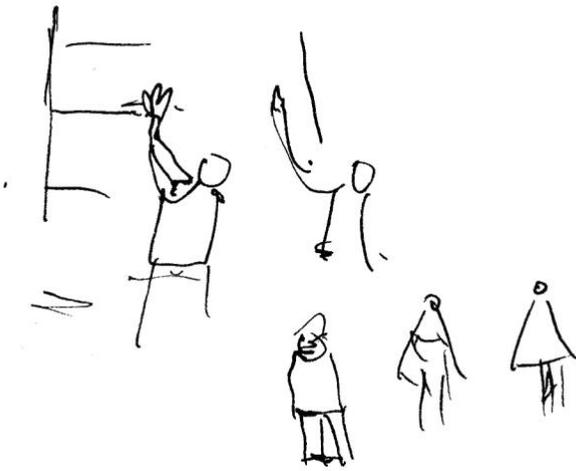
Thank you, grandpa.

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**Architects around the cenotaph**

# Defence Statement

## Opening thoughts

Julia Child said “You'll never know everything about anything, especially something you love.” (Child, 2006), Westerkamp wrote about the impossibility of trying to express the sonic impression of Vancouver (Westerkamp 2019), and I find myself in the very same predicament with Victory Square. Now, I am tasked with putting an end to my research and finally presenting it, but I have just acquired four new books on the subject and I feel like I am just rediscovering it all over again. But I suppose I have made some progress in my three years working on this. I suppose I do have something more to say than when I first began.

## The square

In Town and square from the agora to the village, Zucker writes that city squares “create a gathering place for the people, humanizing them by mutual contact, providing them with a shelter against the haphazard traffic, and freeing them from the tension of rushing through the web of streets.”.

Victory Square in Vancouver, British Columbia is a city square at the junction of Cambie and Hastings, surrounded by Hamilton and Pender. It is one of the larger city squares in Vancouver, and one of the only accessible green spaces precariously located between the East and West side. Oddly enough, if you look it up in Google Maps, you'll see that it is written as closed on weekends. Having just noticed this now, I can assure you that this is false information. Victory Square is accessible day and night, at all hours, every day. Unlike some green spaces in London with restricted access, the square is not boarded up, fenced up or off limits to anyone - unless of course a movie is being filmed, in which case elite access is provided to the filming and acting crew, and their filming paraphernalia. However, normally, anyone from any walk of life can enter the square at any time and experience the “life in between buildings” as Jan Gehl puts it in his eponymous book. At one time, the square was surrounded by large trees, but these were

removed so that the square could more easily be surveilled by police who happened to be driving in the area. By proxy, its open landscape is visible at all angles.

According to the classifications of city squares Zucker provides, Victory Square can be categorized as a dominated square, in that the cenotaph was conceived as the focal point of the square, towards which the rest of the square pours. The strip of land itself had originally been created for the purposes of a courthouse, and following that, it was used as a recruitment area for WW1. Finally, conceived to inspire nationalism and commemorate those who had perished in war, a stone monument was erected and unveiled in 1924. The nuclear area around the cenotaph is occasionally populated, and whenever it is, the focal point becomes those within its vicinity. When a group of architects began measuring, hopping around and prodding the cenotaph, I could not help but watch them, enthralled by their activities. Indeed, people-watching is one of the core features of public spaces, and Victory Square is a location in which one can spend an eternity both watching others and being watched.

Robert Wayne Hall, a UBC Masters student in Geography, was no fan of the dawdling that went on at Victory Square and wrote his thesis to this effect in the 70s. He categorized people that frequented the square and spent time in the square measuring distances at which people sat from each other on benches. He was interested in how Victory Square was being used, and more importantly, by whom. In my reading of his thesis, it seemed that although he may have begun his research with heavy-handed judgments of the homeless - he called them "tramps", "powerless outcasts of wider affluent society" and said that Victory Square was a place of "pathetic retreat" - he also realized that there was an entire world unfolding within the confines of Victory Square. What sparked his interest in the first place? I'll never know (he hasn't responded to my Facebook message). However, I can speculate that it was something about the energy.

In the square, there are the pigeons, seagulls, carriages and those pushing the carriages, tourists, preachers, singers, guitar players, saxophone players, fighters, concierges, students, professionals (and their business cards), the cenotaph, performers, radios, protestors, hot dogs, bagpipes, dogs, ballerinas, cranes... and more. Tourists take pictures of the pigeons on top of the cenotaph and leave reviews on Yelp complaining about the filth. The educational and historical institutions from which students and

professionals emerge surround it. Dogs from different owners meet and fight. The sounds of skateboards ricochet off the cobblestone.

The global state of the square influences the ways in which people can circulate and also changes what people can do in the square. When the square becomes a movie set, choreographed actors walk up the slope and simulate liveliness, pretending to be strangers bumping into each other. Meanwhile, bodyguards prevent anyone else from entering the square. When activities that compromise the flow of the square are not adequately guarded, challengers come forward. After a particular time of it being compromised, especially during Memorial Day, following its release, there is an uneasiness which takes some time to dissolve.

There are those who championed its inception and those who named it. The riot act was read to a huge crowd of people here. The streets are occupied by cars and buses. Once, a procession of honking logging trucks blocked the flow of traffic on Hastings. Parking officers patrol Hamilton. Maintenance is regularly performed: the cenotaph is power washed, the grass is cut, and the benches are painted; following the latter, "Wet paint" signs are strewn about.

## **Encountering place**

When I first encountered the square, I was not smitten. I actually felt quite puzzled. Suburban areas, where I grew up, are notoriously barren of gathering points, favouring instead individual lawns and backyards. The only urban, outdoor public gathering points I remember seeing back home were McDonald's parking lots and dog parks. Victory Square was no suburban parking lot. In my first week living in residence at the Charles Chang which overlooks the square, I encountered fireworks, karaoke, the constant sound of sirens, and a full-blown concert lasting a total of two days, where a politician promoted his platform. All of this outside my bedroom window. I thought that maybe it was a special time of the year, but eventually, I started to notice that this kind of activity was a constant thing.

At first, the sounds were harsh to my ears, but as I became accustomed to it, they became part of my day; the unpredictability of the soundscape became rhythmic in a way. I began to notice patterns: most nights contained many instances of sirens streaming by either Hastings or Cambie; on mild days there were groups listening to radios at different places in the square; the sounds of street traffic was constant; on cool Summer evenings, solitary musicians would play, often in the circular area facing the cenotaph. I also noticed intricacies within the patterns, for example, the saxophone player was quite social and would often talk to his fans in between notes, thereby halting the music every few seconds or so and allowing the street noises to come in and out of his song.

The use of instruments, radios, speakers, amplifiers and microphones was very common in the square. In many ways, amplifying the voice allowed various marginalized groups to take up significant space not only within the square, but also within the surrounding buildings, as the sounds would blast into corporate offices and apartments. I was incredibly fascinated by this phenomenon, of sound being used as a social magnet, a tool of dominance over the rest of the square and its vicinity, and a means of vocalizing injustices to an implicated audience.

On observing

It is not only sound that informs and shapes our listening, but also the language and narratives surrounding sound. Some of the most significant and intriguing sounds we ever hear are the ones recounted to us by another. Likewise, the language, and narratives, that surround field recordings affect how we interpret them, and subsequently interact with them. (Anderson, I. and Rennie, T, 2016)

Field notes are what my MFA project is built on. Reflecting on my environment is deeply ingrained into my way of navigating the world. When I came across the field of acoustic ecology, I realized that there were many others thinking and writing about the sounds of their environments. Murray Schafer, whose soundscape work laid the foundations for this field to take shape, reflected extensively on the sounds he experienced, drawing conclusions about the role of listening as a “form of social relation.” (Droumeva 2019).

Over the course of three years, I learned to listen to the square. Initially, I would simply listen when I heard something interesting sounding from below. The sound would catch my attention as it poured into my apartment, and pull me away from whatever I was doing – whether that was cooking, sleeping or working. Many of my field recordings stem from this process, and I created a field recording journal in an auto-ethnography course to that effect. Over time, however, I began setting out specific times where I would sit at my window, watch and journal *without* the field recorder in tow. Whereas prior to this, I was involved mostly in recording very pointed activities that would pierce through the sonic fabric of Victory Square, by setting out these time slots and forgoing the field recorder, I began noticing an under-layer within Victory Square: what was going on – often beneath the soundscape. How could that be? This act of repeated observation without motive or interest-peaking facet allowed me to become acquainted with the visual and narrative qualities of the happenings within the square. I was adding to my internal database of sensorial experiences.

## Creating the work

Sound maps began intriguing me in 2016, when I was studying media practices at University of Montreal. Digging deeper, I came across Radio Aporee, a website which hosts a massive collection of geo-tagged field recordings on a map like Google Maps. The red dots on the map symbolize field recordings you can click and listen to. The submissions come from amateur or professional field recordists, who upload their high-quality field recordings and provide brief descriptions of the sounds.

Playing around with this map was one of my favourite activities while I learned more about acoustic ecology and the study of sound in the landscape; I would often let the randomized mixer play, so there was always something unexpected coming up while I worked. A very interesting feature of the project is the ability to mix different sounds together: so, you could be listening to church bells ringing in Belarus while pigeons are cooing in Denmark. My main point of inspiration for the format of *Tales From the Square* came from Radio Aporee. That you could place sounds on a map was a new concept for me.

The map I ended up creating looks very different from Radio Aporee's map or any other online sound map I have come across. Whereas in these other projects, the focus is on populating a real-world map with sounds identified by pins, my work uses a reimagined map with drawn icons to symbolize stories. The field recordings in my work accompany stories; some of the stories contain references to the contents of the field recordings, but sometimes they don't. It is a mixed bag. I wanted the user to be surprised each time they clicked something, while remaining in the world of Victory Square. It was also important for me to reveal my inner dialogue, my engagement with the happenings and my own thoughts about listening, a quality of engagement that I had begun cultivating in my early years at Concordia University. In creating the soundmap, I was also greatly inspired by Hildegard Westerkamp's transparency in her works. She often speaks about what she is doing and how it makes her feel. This quality is crucial to my work, and I would find that especially important in engaging with Victory Square. I wanted to gently say: *listen*. Or rather, *I am listening, this is what I found*.

Field recording that listens: it starts with us listening curiously through the keyhole. Then the doors open by themselves and new sonic worlds appear in front of our ears. Recordist, composer and environment speak together. In the end whether the sound recordings are made for the radio, a podcast, a film, a soundscape composition, or simply for capturing soundscapes without an end in mind, they are made to let the soundscape speak for itself, to encourage listening to it, and to notice what it 'says' to us. (Westerkamp, 2021)

Victory Square, from my experience living in front of it, felt like an incredibly alive place: there was life in every sound and sound from every life. I wanted to express it in its entirety, but as I would come to find out over multiple failed efforts at conceptualizing it in a satisfactory way, the only thing I could hope to do was to express how I experienced the square. In creating the map, I had to choose among a vast number of observations. You may have noticed that I have tried to fit even more within this statement. Nevertheless, my observations are rooted in my curiosity for how humanity unfolds in small interactions between entities.

Lynda Barry's approach to comic making greatly influenced my work, both the visuals and the narrative aspects. In her book, *Making Comics*, she invites the reader to

try their hand at drawing comics, no matter what level of skill the reader is at. I was able to indulge in this during the pandemic, exploring visual storytelling in tandem with written narratives. One of the most important points I gathered from her teachings is to allow the pen strokes to happen subconsciously without trying to control them to change the outcome. These uncontrolled drawn lines form new shapes. From those shapes we derive new meaning. By omitting judgment from the very first step of the process, touching the paper with the tip of a pen, the story is free to become whatever it is.

At 611 Alexander Studios, amid papers strewn everywhere from a research paper I was writing on reimagined soundscapes of city squares, I made this map of Victory Square to help me organize some of the thoughts I had been having about the square. On the map, I wrote: “A flock of black birds migrate East” “Squares reaffirm our commonality, our shared sense of place, and our desire to be included.”; “The street is so busy”; “Street noises clamour left and right. Rain does something to the flow in the air and makes the noises louder.”; “I walk down this alley.”; “She sings here”; “A single seagull leaps from the cenotaph.”; “She sings here too.”.

The map I ended up creating for Victory Square is based on this sketch I had made. I used bold, basic colours, simple shapes and lines, uncomplicated segments to show the different parts of the square and its surroundings, the buildings, the streets and alleys, and things on the perimeters in the distance. The colours were a way for me to express the aliveness of the square, the pull of it. I played with perspective and expectation in creating a sky with red lines on a yellow background, a circle without a cenotaph, a watery blue alleyway. The map was to serve as a reimagined world of Victory Square, within which my observations, stories and sounds would live.

## **User-friendly story containers**

During the MFA program, I created a number of projects which influenced the overall nature of my graduating work. In them, I explored how to present my field recordings and engage the audience with soundscapes, visual components and storytelling. Through these experiments, I learned interactivity and accessibility were focal points for me.

In our second studio course, I presented an installation in a small nook at 611 Alexander Studios, displaying some of my writings from my previous field recording journals. I wrote these out on little papers, hanging them from these icon-like pieces with string. The audience was invited to select one of these and place it atop three paintings. The process of selecting writings was helpful practice in curating material. I chose a selection that was varied and colourful, each piece of writing belonging to a different journal entry and many of them containing insights into my motivations in recording. In presenting this work, I noticed that the audience was intrigued by both my observations and my actions. This inspired me to create user-friendly story-containers about Victory Square, where I placed myself as field recordist, describing observations and revealing my own actions in watching.

The use of icons was also something I would develop as part of my graduating project. In the studio work, I created random shapes and objects that would serve as the icons. With *Tales From the Square*, I felt that the icons could be more closely connected to the various things I had noticed in the square, serving as another layer of observations.

Another creation from my studio course was an installation taking place in my office space at Woodward's. The audience was invited to weave through layers of fabric and access a toggle area with a hand-written label "Try Pressing Some" laid over the top of a midi-interface. Here, they were invited to press buttons which would gradually trigger field recordings and tonal sounds. As a result of this experiment and noticing some ambiguity in terms of the audience really feeling the buttons' effects, in making *Tales From the Square*, I wanted each icon to immediately give the intended effect, for the story to start, as expected, so that the audience could connect their actions with a tangible result.

## **Closing thoughts**

The real nature of this place may rest more in the minds of the people who use it rather than those who seek to determine its nature (Hall, 1974).

Hall wrote this in the conclusion of his thesis after a long and arduous examination of the square's users. I find myself smiling as I write this ending.

One of the critiques of the World Soundscape Project was that they wanted to capture the “world both as it was and as they wanted it to be.” (Akiyama 2019). This is reminiscent of Marc Augé’s reflection on Western societies, where he writes that “the individual wants to be a world in himself; he intends to interpret the information delivered to him by himself and for himself.” (Augé 1995).

It wasn’t long ago that the lone ethnographer rode into the sunset in search of his “Native.” After undergoing a series of trials, he encountered the object of his quest in a distant land. There he underwent his rite of passage by enduring the ultimate ordeal of “field work.” After collecting the data, the lone ethnographer returned home and wrote a “true” account of the “culture” (Whitinui 2014, Rosaldo 1989).

Having arrived in Vancouver as very much an outsider, I felt conflicted with the idea of making work about the square. The concerns I was having were localized around the potentially exploitative nature of making artwork that was derived from recording a vulnerable public location, where members of marginalized communities made up a large component of the square’s soundscape. It compelled me to think critically about my positionality in recording the square, and the responsibility that would come with making work about it. I struggled with feeling like I had no right to create work about the square, while deeply wanting to shed light on my experiences in listening to it.

Although I was worried that I would make something *wrong*, I wanted to try to make something anyway. I could not adequately tackle the idea of having a right to make this work, but I tried my best to be respectful of the environment and those using it. To maintain ethical boundaries, I decided not to record sounds that felt exploitative, like yelling, fights, or anything that contained clear conversations. In one instance where I wrote about the charge of the square, I wrote that there was someone yelling, but did not include any recording of it. I also tried to document happenings within my specific context. I would place emphasis on my own actions in listening, writing about how the square’s happenings influenced the course of my day.

At the end, I began to reflect on the loneliness I had felt at times leading up to its creation. I wondered if this may have stemmed from the singularity of my perspective, in which I really was the lone ethnographer in a “foreign land”, trying to make sense of it all.

As a result, I wonder now about a more collaborative approach, and how my work could have been transformed by gathering different perspectives in how sound shaped their experiences in the square, if at all. I sometimes wondered about going down in the square and speaking to people about their experiences, but I could not figure out a pathway to it prior to having found a way to externalize my own observations and stories. Considering how rewarding the end result was for me to have and having learned how to create a multimedia online map, I wonder about the potential in teaching others to make something like this, a soundmap of their own, and what a collective soundmap of Victory Square might look like.

Admittedly, listening and thinking about the square was such an enjoyable experience, almost like a spell was cast, that even if I had felt compelled to do so, I don't think I would have been able to conduct the kind of community engagement works that sound researchers like Linda O'Keeffe and Andra McCartney have.

I believe field work takes great maturity as it asks one to sacrifice one's immediate enjoyment of a particular phenomenon, to suspend one's thread of engagement with their jewel, in order to create a space for others to make their own meanings, who may then transform the work into something much different than what the researcher may have intended.

What would my work have looked like if I would have asked "What do you hear?". This time, I was compelled to reflect on my own experiences, but perhaps next time I will be able to ask this question to another.

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# TALES FROM THE SQUARE

TALES FROM THE SQUARE IS AN INTERACTIVE  
SOUNDMAP OF VICTORY SQUARE IN VANCOUVER,  
BRITISH COLUMBIA.

IT WAS MADE BY JOEY ZAURRINI DURING HIS  
TIME LIVING IN FRONT OF THE SQUARE AT THE  
CHARLES CHANG RESIDENCE.

Figure 1. *Tales From the Square* website intro view



Figure 2. [Tales From the Square](#) website map view

# WORMS

Figure 3. *Tales From the Square* “Worms” story title view

The material of my jeans folds into the  
gaps of the cold bench as I lean my back  
against it.



Figure 4. *Tales From the Square* “Worms” story panel view

November 17 2020



Figure 5. Journal November 17, 2020

November 24 2020



Figure 6. Journal November 24, 2020

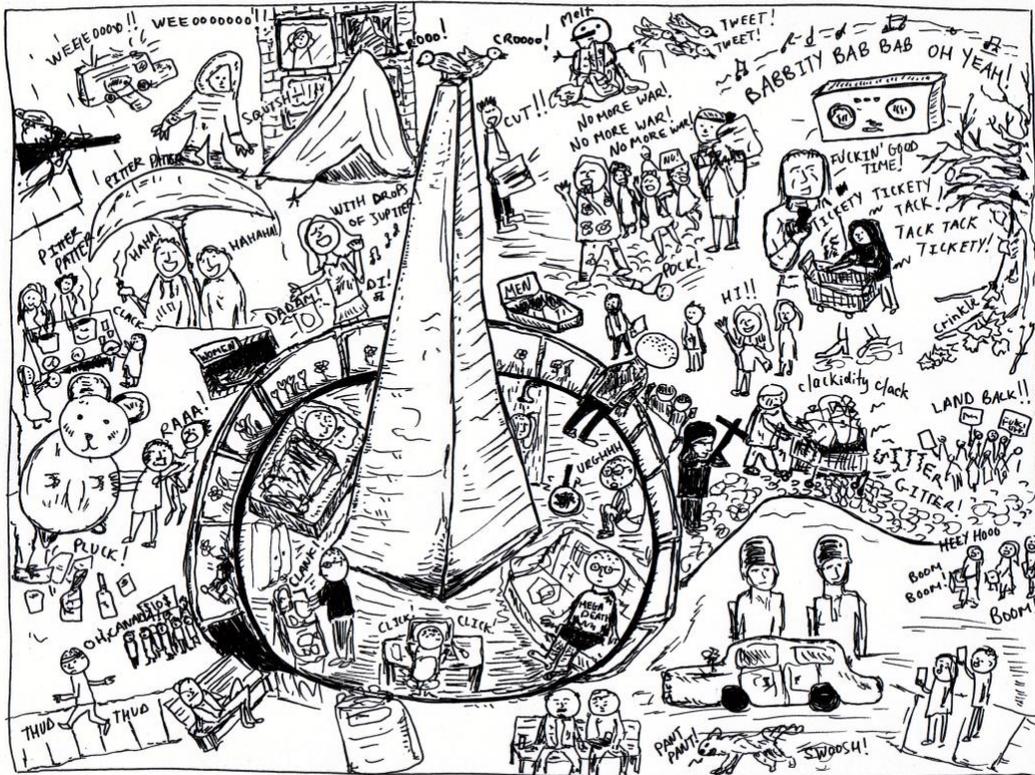


Figure 7. Soundmap Drawing of Victory Square, 2020

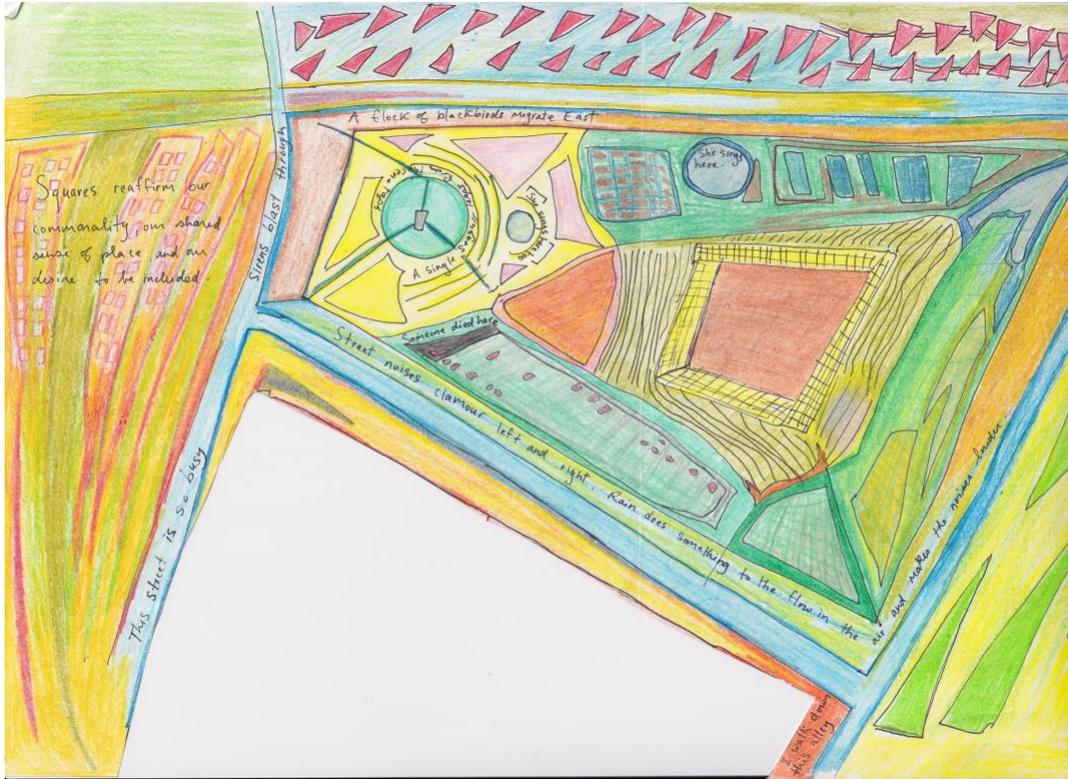


Figure 8. First sketch of Victory Square, 2019



Figure 9. Studio project, 2019



**Figure 10. Studio project, 2019**



**Figure 11. Studio project, 2019**

## **Appendix A**

# **The Place-Making Potential of Reimagined Soundscapes**

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December 2019

## **Introduction**

In this paper, I will explore the place-making potential of reimagined soundscapes. I will begin and perhaps end with the encounter of place. I will investigate the sensual perception of sound as a place-making mechanism that can inform the creation of subsequent audio works. Drawing upon a wide range of writings on the topics of soundscapes, place-making, and emotion, a guide is put forth towards the aim of considering how reimagined soundscapes can reinforce both the artist and the listeners' sense of place. My research is linked to my experience of living in front of Victory Square in graduate housing for over a year. I have sought out others who have written about city squares to better understand my own experiences.

## **Place and memory**

“Without emotion the synergies that make place are silent [...]” (Berrens 2016, p.76).

The theoretical foundation of place attachment—established by Altman and Low—defines place attachment “as an emotional connection between people and their surroundings.” (Altman & Low 1992; Najafi & Shariff 2011, p.1057). Since the beginning of time, “the affective bond between people and place was a fundamentally important part of human experience” (Tuan 1974; Butler 2007, p.3).

## **Square Sounds**

The soundscape of the Florentine Mercato Vecchio was written extensively about by Antonio Pucci, a Florentine who was served as town crier and bell ringer, and who Atkinson describes as being a patriot and story-teller whose life was “profoundly integrated with the city as noise-making machine” (Atkinson 2016). Indeed much of his life was spent running about a city square. Being on the move as he was in his regular working life and watching the square move around him perhaps sweetened him to the

“fleeting moments that make up the everyday” (Sheller 2015). The activities that took place within the square and the people that enacted these seemed more meaningful to Pucci than the surrounding structures that encased them (Atkinson 2016). Drawing on Pucci’s writings, Atkinson reveals a compelling narrative about the Florentine city as being constructed “through the continuous dynamics of human conflict, commerce, and clatter, which were encouraged, amplified, mediated, and contained by the concrete architecture of the city square” ( Atkinson 2016). For Pucci, the raucous sounds of bargaining and competition for market space, the sounds speeches being read, and of bell-towers in dialogue across the city, imbued the square with meaning and emotion (ibid). One wonders at what Pucci really heard when he listened to what many others would have considered noise.

The act of reflecting over a soundscape may have played a role in Pucci’s attachment to the square. And certainly, the act of writing *stories* about the sound he heard created narrative ties to the square (Altman & Low 1992; Najafi & Shariff 2011) which he then shared with others (Atkinson 2016). Pucci created his personal “acoustemologies of place”, in which he derived meaning from emplaced listening (Drever 2002; Stevenson & Holloway 2016, p.2). One could argue that his very sense of identity was intrinsically tied to his perception of the sounds he encountered, and that his impassioned writings on what he heard in turn played a role in shaping his readers’ perception of the square.

## **Even Squarer Sounds**

One of the earliest recordings archived online by London Sound Survey Project contains a recording taken at Leicester Square in September 1928, narrated by Commander Daniel. The final product is a 12” 78rpm disc that appeared to be connected with a “Daily Mail campaign over urban traffic noise” (Rawes 2008-19). From Commander Daniel’s stagnant position in what Rawes surmises to be a recording van with a disc-cutter, Leicester Square sounds noisy. A hammering noise can be heard coming from a nearby building, which Commander Daniel describes as being “out-of-sight”; following this sound, a motor “without a proper silencer” is heard; then, a newspaper boy’s bell rings

and a bus passes by on the opposite side of the street (ibid). Commander Daniels narration of the recording helps the listener follow along, as the noise of the graphophone here is often louder than the city soundscape being recorded. The combination of his voice and the soundscape offer an interesting form of oral history, and perhaps one of the first instances of a field recording being taken at a city square. However, what is most notable in this recording is that the noise is explicitly viewed as negative.

The difference in Commander Daniel and Pucci's experiences can be indirectly explained through O'Keeffe's decade-long study of Smithfield Square. The short story is that perception of sound directly affects our connection to place. Drawing from interviews with over 80 adult participants, she found that individuals who had experienced the soundscapes of Smithfield Square prior to industrialization felt a stronger connection to the square itself which directly influenced their construction of selfhood; in contrast, the daily exposure to its current soundscape played a significant role in hindering individuals' connection to the square (O'Keeffe 2017). Most compellingly, her own experiences can be added here: O'Keeffe's first phase of her research involved going on soundwalks around Smithfield Square and noting her experiences to the sounds she encountered at different hours of the day. For O'Keeffe, who grew up in the Smithfield area, the square only came alive briefly when the square was filled with school children out for lunch (O'Keeffe 2017). One can imagine that hearing the sounds of children reinforced time and place, and activated O'Keeffe's own memories of being a child out for lunch herself.

Most often heard yet *devoid* of emotional meaning—for her participants and herself—were traffic noises. There is indeed a scientific explanation to the inability to easily connect with traffic noises, as prolonged exposure to low frequencies commonly produced by automobiles and other machines can dull our nerve endings, diminish our visual ability to perceive depth, and lead to hearing loss. Noise is also similar to the effect of alcohol in that it can lead to a disorganizing effect on the nervous system and can lead to fatigue and loss of concentration (Ming et al 2014). These effects have been proven to have a negative impact on neurogenesis and memory building. It follows that continuously experiencing traffic noises can directly inhibit our brain's ability to create new connections and relate to the spaces we navigate on a daily basis.

No wonder Commander Daniels sounds so unimpressed with the soundscape he recorded. These same sentiments towards noise can be found in Schafer's writings about lo-fi and hi-fi soundscapes. In his book *The Tuning of the World*, Schafer describes lo-fi and hi-fi soundscapes respectively as soundscapes in which signal saturation prevents the listener from easily distinguishing sounds, and ones in which all sounds can be heard clearly (Schafer 1977).

## Soundwalks

Enveloped by the noise of a city, hearing oneself proves at times to be painfully difficult. Yet Pucci was able to build an entirely diverse and beautifully personalized world from what was essentially a humanized noise machine. Amid the chaos of the market, he was able to attune himself to the different sounds, thereby parsing them apart, and investigating their individual and collective meaning.

Engaging in listening exercises, though in no way changing the grim reality of an industrialized soundscape, can help us sensually engage with our environments, thereby enabling us to form some kind of place attachment.

Schafer's concept of a soundwalk, founded upon listening exercises, consists of following a trajectory on a map, using a "score" to guide the walk (Schafer 1977). The map can be as minimal or as detailed as one wishes, and can be created for oneself or others. The act of mapping out a trajectory can take place after a general survey of the site, where the map-maker gathers a sense of what is interesting and possible within the area. An example of some specific instructions that may accompany a soundwalk would be to ask the listener to notice the different conversations taking place while following a specific trajectory along the paved paths within Victory Square; an example inspired by O'Keeffe's fieldwork, would be to walk along the extremities of Victory square, noticing the varying sonic density found on Hastings, in contrast with surrounding streets, Cordova, Pender and Hamilton (O'Keeffe 2016). Soundwalks, through their ability to make us think about the sounds we are hearing in the site itself, encourage us to make our own acoustemologies of place.

## Reflection

Reflection has been a focal point in field recording practices for decades that allowed recordists to deepen their connection to the sounds heard through recording emotions felt, oddities come across, and difficult moments encountered (Anderson & Rennie, 2016 p.230) Much of the World Soundscape Project was founded on ecological preservation which placed the environment above the personal narrative (Akiyama 2019). However, field notes maintained in the process of field recording were reflections that revealed the recordists' worldviews (Anderson & Rennie, 2016). Akiyama writes that "every act of recording is an act of framing; every act of framing is an act of omission." (Akiyama 2019, p.121). Field recordists, no matter their worldviews, make decisions on which sounds and reflections are important enough to remember. By documenting the field recordist's inner world, "important insights of place and space are found." (Tuan 1991; Anderson & Rennie 2016, p.230).

## Reimagined Soundscapes

"In soundscape composition, the artist seeks to discover the sonic/musical essence contained within the recordings and thus within the place and time where it was recorded." (Hildegard 2002, Akiyama 2019, p.122)

The artist's reflection over site-specific sounds can play an important role in the way in which the sounds are reordered and manipulated in a sonic creation. For example, in *Beach Soundwalk* (1989), Hildegard Westerkamp manipulates a field recording taken at Kitts' Beach so that the road noise is less prominent. According to her overdubbed narration, this best represents how she herself experienced the soundscape when she recorded it (Anderson & Rennie 2016). Thus, a sonic creation can reflect the artist's embodied perception of a site-specific soundscape, which may differ from how the

recording actually sounds. The soundscape composition becomes a way for the composer to prioritize and share narratives that are important to them.

Sonic engagement with place can be reinforced by the act of reflecting over the listening experience. Reflection over the listening experience is a way in which we can become more connected to place. Andra McCartney's *Journées sonores canal de Lachine*, is a poignant example of an approach to sonic installations that puts reflection on the soundscape to the foreground (McCartney 2015). This work involved recording the Lachine Canal over a period of multiple years to document the shift in sound as the location was developed (ibid). She presented a time-lapse of these recordings as an installation, specifically targeted for people living near the Lachine Canal, thereby curating situated conversations and opportunities to engage with the political dynamics of the area they inhabited (ibid).

## **Audiowalks**

Janet Cardiff was the first artist to produce a public sound art audiowalk in the UK nearly 20 years ago. Her work was entitled *The Missing Voice: Case Study B* and was made to be listened to through headphones on a CD player. An audiowalk is “embodied history in situ”, characterized by “the ability to listen to oral testimony that springs from, or refers to” the place in which one may be standing or navigating (Bradley 2016, p.101). In light of technological advancements, “story and mobile media is rapidly gaining popularity with a widening public audience eager to experience the past through the voices and stories of the people who were there.” (Bradley 2016, p.100).

Butler writes that site-specific audiowalks using field recordings and recording interviews with locals can create “alternative networks or paths through a community” and that this in turn can lead to “more complex connections between people, place and their identity.” (Butler 2007, p.5). His most compelling example is his own sound work, *Drifting*, where he interviewed thirty people who live alongside the river Thames and created audiowalks using interviews and field recordings taken on site. In his audiowalk, audience members are equipped with an MP3 player and a map; the latter shows them where to

play each track on the MP3 player. Playing the tracks along the river “afforded the listener a plural and multilayered impression of place” in which they could learn about the people who inhabit the area while experiencing it for themselves (Butler 2007, p.8). He calls his work a “memoryscape”, comparing the brain’s memory building processes with his own compositional techniques in which he combines field recordings and interviews (Butler 2007; Stevenson & Holloway 2016). The memoryscape, according to Butler, has the potential to mirror the way our brains make memories, through “an active, mobile process, connecting often disparate things in an intensively creative way to make sense of our past, present and the future.” (Butler 2007, p.6).

## Headphones

Though Bradley focuses on the importance of mobile technologies, much of the place-making potential of reimagined soundscapes is facilitated through a technology much older than smartphones: headphones.

Schafer writes that “the ultimate private acoustic space is produced with headphone listening” which “directs the listener toward a new integrity with him/[her]self” (Schafer 1977, p.119). This is not only beneficial to create an intimate listening environment for the listener, but it also allows the acoustic environment in which the audiowalk may take place to be relatively undisturbed. All too often, speakers are used in public spaces to a detrimental effect that transforms public places into lo-fi environments where the clarity of other existing sounds is compromised. An example of this is Catalina Pollak’s Phantom Railings in Malet Street Gardens, Bloomsbury, which involved installing 55 sensors along a 50 meter path that would trigger the sounds of a stick being dragged against a metal fence. This work negatively affected people who encountered the space: people working at the ground floor of the nearby Senate house reportedly could not stand the clanging sounds they heard all day; homeless people could not sleep there anymore; and the reaction of many people who would walk this path was fear and stress. Despite being a commentary on accessibility of space, this work ended up rendering space inaccessible and was ultimately removed (Stirling 2016).

While listening on headphones, the real-time soundscape unfolding beyond the headphones may go unheard for the listener experiencing the sound piece. This may in some way affect the listener's connection with the site itself. Despite these shortcomings, the sound piece should not be forced onto non-audience members. The very facets of a place that may inspire the creation of a soundwalk based on field recordings (i.e. different site-specific sonic events) should not be jeopardized for non-participants in the location. Certainly not everyone would choose to listen to a sound piece in their day-to-day life. Place-making, after all, is deeply personal.

## Encountering Victory Square

30.3.2019

*A man drums a stick against the edge of a hard plastic sheet. He is standing at the edge of the cement circle and he is illuminated under a row of helmet lamps. It is midnight. The sound reverberates against the looming infrastructure and seeps into dimly lit apartments. Laughter from another story beyond the edge bubbles over and disappears. Devoid of low vegetation, flat, open: Victory Square is like a cymbal waiting to be activated. I run to grab my recorder, tripping over wires strewn in my apartment. I perch it on the edge of the open window.*

By the time I wrote this, I had already spent months conducting field recordings from my apartment. I wrote about the sound, I wrote about myself, journaling these individual experiences as part of a multimodal ethnography course. Each recording began with me speaking the date and time, and describing the events that were taking place. This would help me contextualize the recordings in my writing. I would later delete these first few minutes, unknowingly adhering to an old standard in field recording whereby the field recordist's sonic footprints are minimized or erased in order to capture the essence of the environment as it is. And yet, in spite of omitting my own sounds in the recording, by reflecting on the sounds I heard, I had begun an important journey of emplaced listening that would irrevocably deepen my connection to the square.

## The Sounds of Victory Square

Inside the prevalent cityscape found at Victory Square, characterized by traffic sounds—hardly shifting in frequency distribution or intensity—are embedded many human sounds. I have heard a pipeline protest taking shape from 4 people to hundreds, where the sound of someone crying out for their land thundered across the square, intertwined with masses of cheering and rhythmic drumming streaming down the alleyway. Many protests have used Victory Square as a meeting point. The procineum looking space is often used by people as a stage, where sound-making activities include playing acoustic instruments such as drums, acoustic guitar, saxophone; in the seating area near the Hamilton side of the street, karaoke will often take place in the warmer months; throughout the Summer, one man plays his boombox on the Pender staircase.

My favourite sonic experience in the square to date is when someone drummed a stick against a plastic sheet for multiple hours at 2 in the morning, the ringing textures of his makeshift instrument piercing through the wind and into apartment.

As I experience it, Victory Square is metaphorically and quite literally being used as a stage, and sometimes even an instrument in of itself. Its structure is an accidental megaphone blasting into corporate buildings, or a cymbal waiting to be activated, telling stories that are quite simply ignored and often viewed as nuisances.

In respect to my own positionality, my quotidian activities are perhaps not as functionally tied into the soundscape as they were for Pucci, yet my life is very much affected by the sounds I encounter in my day to day. I have woken up to Remembrance Day bagpipes and have heard ambulances countless times in my sleep; I looked out the window countless times, unable to visually locate the sounds of yelling, singing and intense laughter; I have listened long enough to extras yelling “No more war!” to notice the shifting polyrhythms that the on-site director was conducting.

These sonic narratives can be illuminated and further explored in the process of composing reimagined soundscapes.

## **Conclusion**

Pucci could not help but bask in the place-making sounds that surrounded him whereas O’Keeffe and many of her peers in acoustic ecology have both lamented the loss of the hi-fi soundscape and linked its disappearance to industrialization. Though we may feel better listening to a hi-fi environment, in place-making, the sounds we hear may come secondary to our ability to reflect over what we hear.

The journey begins with listening and reflecting—two activities that often naturally occur in the practice of field recording. By listening and reflecting, we come to understand which narratives are meaningful to us. The magic of creating reimagined soundscapes lies in the ability to transform our encounters with place into sonic narratives; audiowalks are a popular and effective way of connecting people to place. Finally, headphones allow us to make work almost anywhere in the world without disturbing the existing soundscape. This can be especially important in areas sonically loaded places such as Victory Square.

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