

*Soundscape*s

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SOUNDSCAPES - to start up an international participatory art project online



Figure 1: images of the blog project

This text is about an arts education collaborative learning experience called Soundscapes Project. The Project aims the development of local intercultural projects in educational settings using arts processes. The initial part of the experience was a pilot study conducted during 2013 involving students aged from 3 years old until 18 years old from schools in Greece; Portugal; Brazil; Spain and Sweden. The project started as a collaboration between teachers from University of Jaén in Spain and the art teachers association APECV in Portugal. In that project interactive media was used for communication and creation of contents. Some interesting points emerged in the group such as the use of digital tools to reflect upon pedagogical practices; the use of performance as a collective tool for sharing and reflecting about practices and finally the impact of interchange intercultural art education projects on teachers lives. After analyzing those issues with the pilot study participants we brought up some possibilities for using digital media, and multimodal performances for pedagogical reflection within a model of participatory research.



Figure 2: images of the Blog
Project
Collective dialogues
First layer: Setting
the concepts

Several layers of dialogue occurred during the project. The initial dialogues between the main coordinators Teresa Torres de Eca, from APECV, and Maria Paz López-Peláez Casella from University of Jaén and teachers from the arts department in the University of Jaén. From those conversations the main ideas for the project were settled in the beginning of 2012, that were the creation of Sound Landscapes and hybridism of the artistic languages in education. In the dialogues it was clear that the experience should be participatory, any teacher willing to participate should enter in the project. The concept of sound landscape was first used by Murray Schafer to reference the sound environment of a concrete place. In the project proposal the sound was a crucial axis to articulate the creation of self-referential learning processes. However our sound landscapes were not meant to follow Schafer's sound landscapes' concepts, but instead, they were envisaged to focus on the specificity of each one of the landscapes to learn about and understand the different identities of the spaces, communities and sites they represent. So it was about the creation of a concrete environment through the use of sounds and silence as the primary element.

The team was expecting that participants (children and young people with their facilitators: teachers and artists) would create their interpretation of a specific place using previous information shared in the Internet project website or blog. Each participant or group of participants would send information about their experience of their own place of living to the other participants in the project (e.g. textual, visual, sound documentation).

The information could be interpreted in educational settings (e.g. classrooms) where the teacher or facilitator would help the children or young people to transform the information using multidisciplinary and collaborative educational methods to develop work projects. In the projects, we will not be limited to the experience of sound but will develop non conventional graphics (notations) to express sounds- like a musical score made with words, drawings, other musical scores, etc. We can use different materials and textures to enhance the legibility of the discourse. The synergy between sound and image will be later completed by movement. The participants could perform the scores using body expression improvisation techniques. The final performances could be video recorded and uploaded to the web, to be further object of group discussion in the class.

With this proposal we intended to create situations to construct axiological experiences. Through the syncretic experiences of sound, image and movement we intended to escape educational stereotypes of

fragmented disciplines and boundaries between the arts. We intended to approach concepts and experiences of space/place/time in specific communities by working with the students micro narratives and self-representations. So the student could be aware that he is not expected to carry up the metalanguage of general descriptions of space and place. They should be able to understand that there is no such things like objective and neutral descriptions of a place. Therefore we wanted teachers to work with the students the dangers of such ethnocentric approaches. We believe that through the creation of collaborative sound landscapes and their performance we would help students to reflect upon preconceived ideas of globalization; normalization and the experience of local cultures.

Initially, in the pilot study, many teachers from university levels were interested in the project, but may be because the project was not funded by any particular university or program very few of them engaged through time and create learning experiences with students. We tried to have some funding for the traveling of teachers and coordinators under a Leonardo da Vinci program (Long Life Learning European Commission calls), but we didn't have it approved.

Second layer: building interfaces

In a second layer dialogues, were established to try to find out the interfaces for sharing the information about te different experiences happening in the participants schools.

The first attempt was through the blog

<http://soundscapesart.blogspot.com.es/>. But we soon

realized the problems of the platform, it was difficult to organize the information and teachers found difficult to upload images and sound. Teachers started a social network in Facebook , a closed group,

to ensure privacy of contents. Facebook is widely used by teachers and students and very intuitive, so participants little by little used more [the facebook group](#) than the blog to

share images, they started to use sound and video uploading platforms such as soundcloud.com and youtube.com

The team from Jaen built their project site as a [wiki](#). Many different platforms were used and the diversity of platforms

was esteemed to be positive, however we felt a need for a main platform that should be multimedia to try to collect

visual, written and audio data from the different participant settings. So we looked for other options, and initiated

conversations with people from the software company called [Mydocumenta](#): Cristina Casanova and Andrea Contino, and after a meeting with them in Barcelona we decided to use their multimedia platform. By this time (January 2013) we envisaged to seek for funding and submitted the Project with the partnership of Mydocumenta, other associations and universities in Brazil and Europe to an ICT

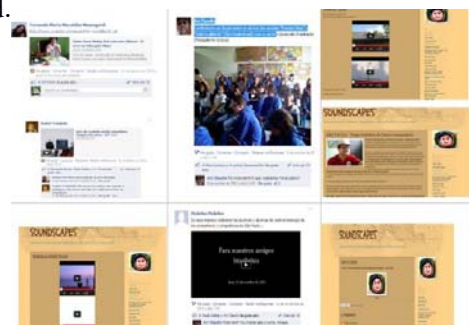


Figure 3: images of the Blog Project and FB

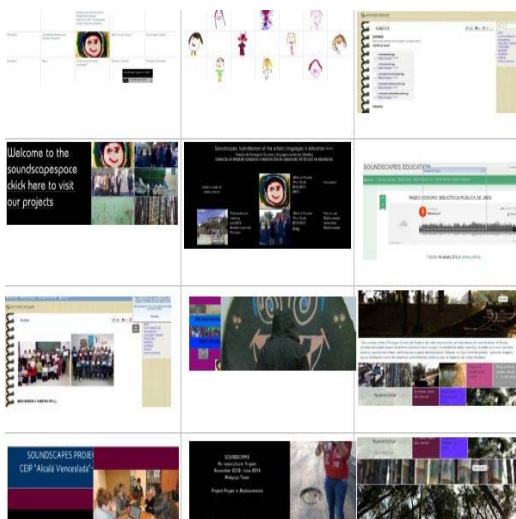


Figure 4: images of different web sites created by participants for the project

European Commission call¹. Unfortunately our submission was not accepted. But we continued the project anyway. Teachers started to use Mydocumenta platform with many difficulties that were partly overcome during one to one tutorials through videocalls and phone calls. Andrea and Cristina came to Portugal (Porto) in March to deliver a workshop about the platform to the Portuguese teachers. All these work was done on a volunteer basis by Cristina Casanova; Andrea Contino and Teresa Eça.

The complexity of the communication on many different structural levels at the same time, concerning things like the artistic standpoint of the project or how to practically use the software tool, or how to solve the formal demands of the EU programs, were discussed from an organizational level but opening it up to the teachers who wanted to participate. Many researchers and teachers joined for one or two discussions, and after they did not continue. May be because the conversations were made using emails with no precise guidelines or how to collaborate norms and this open model for participation is time consuming in the busy agendas of teachers. Flexibility and free participation is time consuming, and has disadvantages because we only could count the number of people involved in the end of the pilot when the local experiences results were published using multimedia tools (19 teachers and about 450 students involved):

Greece - 1 art teacher Maria,

Portugal - (5 art teachers Teresa: Isabel; Cristina; Paula; Fernanda; 1 primary teacher Rosa; 1 languages teacher Rita,

Brazil - 7 art teachers Ariclaudio da Silva, Tiago , Fernanda Carla, Talita, Rosvita, Eliza,

Spain - 3 art teachers Maria Paz; Carmen and Alfonso

Sweden- 1 art teacher Sol

However through that year many other teachers were touched by the ideas pertaining in the project, and they might be participants in the next experiences.

2. Communicating work in process

1 The EU submission was made under the program LLF-MULTILATERAL_PROJECT_ICT_KA3.



Figure 5: images of the Multimedia site of the Project in Mydocumenta.com

Third layer: constructing experiences

At a certain point the group felt the need to meet and share their experiences with the students. By end June it was also time to have an evaluation meeting, so, in July 2013, an week-end meeting was arranged in a village in south Portugal (Molelos- Peniche), the meeting was arranged by Cristina Henriques, an APECV teacher who was interested in the project but could not participate in the pilot. She arranged the meeting to be held in the local primary school, people who could travel come physically the ones who couldn't joined the conversations through video conference. The video conference tool was a good solution but not the best one, because to develop this kind of projects, participatory based on flexible and creative models of generating ideas and strategies it is important to perform together, to live together in time and place so the best of each participant can be revealed and the group can gain full confidence in the sharing process. During the meeting we only achieved this with the teachers who were physically there.



Figure 6: group meeting in Molelos Peniche, Portugal

The meeting included: 1) description of the experiences held in the different schools and group discussions about it; 2) Experiences and performances using sounds and images to convey meanings; 3) Reflection about the project – SWOT analysis (see figure below); 4) Ideas and suggestions for the next steps ; 5) visiting and exploring the village.

Cristina Henriques and people from the village received the group with generosity, the village has a long established tradition of community art and values arts education. The immersive experience in the village; the spontaneous strategies encountered such as using performance to experiment concepts and reflect upon pedagogical issues made this meeting a very positive model for future evaluation meetings. One feature also very important was that new teachers were invited to attend the meeting, they were enrolled in the second stage of the project (2014).

S	W	O	T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cultural dialogue - foster cognitive and expressive capacities of students - hybridism of the arts, dis-fragmented curriculum - highly motivating for students and teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Channels dispersion lack of common guidelines (technical aspects) communication problems file conversion problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interdisciplinary work new technologies intercultural knowledge visibility of the arts in the curriculum (eg. through Etwinning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualistic routines in teachers cultures , specially in Portugal, teachers with students 11-18 years old, no problems in primary or infant schools. lack of technical resources

Figure 7: SWOT analysis of the Pilot study

3. Digital media and art teachers

In this part we intend only to raise the questions emerging through the pilot in the actual process of the project, as the teachers started to work at the local schools, to collect material, make art projects together with the pupils and upload it online. What went well, and what obstacles came up, and how can we avoid that the same problems will occur in our main project? As the pilot was an online-project, some interesting things happened that was not planned for. For instance, many of the teachers did not use the primary blog in Blogger, that was set up for uploading material, but formed a Facebook group instead. Some others built wikis for the ongoing project in their schools. When we came to the last part of the project, where the teachers were supposed to use the multimedia blogging tool Mydocumenta, some had a tremendous difficulty to overcome this task, and why this problem occurred will be further investigated to look at the combination of possible reasons for that. This phenomenon can be discussed in terms of gender and new media, but also in relation to lack of a strict framework and the difficulties of handling a project using models of absolute freedom (with no specific guidelines) and peer work. From the lessons we learned from this study we can recommend that to held intercultural and distance projects with no funding it is important to have motivated teachers

involved with their communities engaged themselves in transformation processes; making partnerships; conducting meetings and hands- on workshops; making participants to feel ownership of the project by allowing diversity of digital tools and including them in all the stages and dialogues, even if it may be time consuming. But in the end to avoid disappointing cacophonies it will be important to have a common tool to link all the participant contributions and to display the data generate in the different experiences. These tools may work as an Atlas, or a table were all the artifacts are displayed to be analyzed, to generate findings; results and ultimately theories. And being so digital media may be a very useful resource for art teachers not only create products; present and display experiences or having on-line conversations but also as a tool for the necessary reflection underpinning research.

References

SCHAFER, Murray (1991). *O ouvido pensante*. São Paulo: UNESP