

Mapping, scoring and activating urban sonic space: *Ljud vid Nissan / Sound at Nissan*

Conor McCafferty¹

¹ Recomposing the City research group, Sonic Arts Research Centre, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland
cmccafferty06@qub.ac.uk

Abstract. This paper explores how maps were used as an important interface for the analysis of public urban spaces, artistic development, public engagement and sonic activation in *Sound at Nissan*, a sound art festival staged in Halmstad, Sweden, in September 2016. In the festival, various kinds of maps – what we might call sound maps or listening maps – were used not as *results* but starting points. These maps were used to characterize sound spaces in the city, to help participating artists plan their works and to engage with residents of Halmstad as participants and audiences. In this paper, I consider the festival programme as a “score”, before discussing the approaches used by the artists in their works and the knowledge they generated. I will make suggestions for how the approach used and knowledge generated by the festival could inform planning, by rethinking urban space in terms of “sonic spatial intelligence”.

Keywords: Festivals, Mapping, Planning, Sound art, Sound space, Soundwalks, Spatial intelligence, Urbanism.

1 Introduction

Sound at Nissan (Ljud vid Nissan) was a sound art festival hosted by Harp Art Lab in Halmstad, Sweden, in September 2016. *Sound at Nissan* drew together a wide range of ideas and practices: as well as showcasing artistic experimentation in sound installation and improvisatory performance, the festival demonstrated a hybrid model for collecting and harnessing urban “spatial intelligence” relating to sound, from multiple perspectives. The artworks in the festival offered useful, albeit informal, investigations of sound in public space – across physical, social and sonic dimensions – that are not feasible in normal planning and development situations. Soundwalks conducted with public participation encouraged engagement in urban sound space among residents through artistic practices of listening.

In the paper, I will discuss what I consider as a “score” or “meta-composition”, which the curators established for the festival. I will examine some of the approaches used by the artists in their works. Finally, I will explore how the knowledge generated through the festival could inform planning from a sonic perspective.

2 Context

Halmstad is a port city of some 50,000 inhabitants on the west coast of Sweden. The city has a strong industrial heritage, but the city centre is now mainly marked by a proliferation of leisure activities and apartments overlooking the river. Boats moor on the river docks in the city centre and in a marina in the harbour; road traffic and pedestrians cross the river on its many road- and foot-bridges. The city's busy port facility forms part of the Ports of Halland county.



Fig. 1. View of the Nissan River flowing through Halmstad, looking towards the south. Photograph: Mikael Ericsson.

Around 15 kilometres northwest of Halmstad, in the village of Harplinge, stands the Harplinge “smock”-type windmill, an 1895 construction that produced flour by grinding corn until the late 1960s. The husband and wife team Mikael and Julie Ericsson, both artists, took over the mill in 2010, establishing Harp Art Lab there the following year; since then, as curators, they have been inviting artists to take up residencies at the venue, especially during the annual *Bzzz! Festival*, to create and perform (sound) art and experimental music.¹

In *Sound at Nissan*, the Ericssons wanted to apply the curatorial approach they had been developing at the Harp Art Lab. They began to think of the city as a kind of “canvas” for artistic intervention.² The four-kilometre stretch of the Nissan river flowing from north to south, through the centre of Halmstad and out to the harbour, formed an extensive, varied and interconnected series of sites, where invited artists could experiment with sound art installations and performances.

Sound art festivals have proliferated internationally in recent years, and some of them have focused on their given urban context as the primary subject for plural

¹ See <http://harpartlab.se/>

² Mikael Ericsson, email correspondence, February 2017

artistic investigations. Festivals like *Tuned City*, which has been held in multiple cities since 2008, and *Bonn Hoeren*, which appoints a city sound artist every year for the city of Bonn, Germany, are two recent examples that have now built up several years' worth of sonic urban practice and research.³ In developing *Sound at Nissan*, the Ericssons had a similar interest in engaging with the built environment and urban development processes in the city of Halmstad. In the initial call for proposals, the curators referred to current developments in the city, and through the festival they have established a body of knowledge about the city from a unique perspective.

One of the key outcomes of *Sound at Nissan*, I will argue, was the generation of what I would call “sonic spatial intelligence” which was driven by the curators’ sense of interconnections in the city at both a large scale and in detailed knowledge of specific sites. For the media and urbanism scholar Shannon Mattern, “spatial intelligence” relating to urban systems stretches beyond readily measurable forms of urban data (noise and air quality levels, pedestrian footfall and transport passenger numbers, for example) to encompass more nuanced epistemologies of cities. Such approaches, she argues, are culturally and historically aware, open to the wide spectrums of sensory experience and appreciative of the “wisdom” to be found in resident communities (Mattern 2017). The landscape architect James Corner, with a similarly nuanced understanding of urban intelligence, cautions against the “...indiscriminate, blinkered accumulation and endless array of data” (Corner 1999, p. 251) to be found in many mapping practices, instead seeking connections between observable (or, perhaps, audible?) material facts and their tactical (re)presentation – what Corner calls the “relational reasoning” of mapping (Ibid.). In this activist mode of cartography, maps can actively *create* fields for practice, the geographer Denis Cosgrove notes, going beyond their “narrowly scientific duties of survey, record and plan” (Cosgrove 1999, p. 22).

In what follows, I want to examine how the Ericssons curated artworks as part of what I consider to be a tactical “score”, how the participating artists developed their works to engage with the established context and how publics were purposefully engaged in the analysis of sound spaces in the city. I hope to show how this meta-composition and its realization points to some key considerations for the creative use of sound in urban planning.

3 Scoring sound spaces in Halmstad

3.1 Identifying distinctive sound spaces

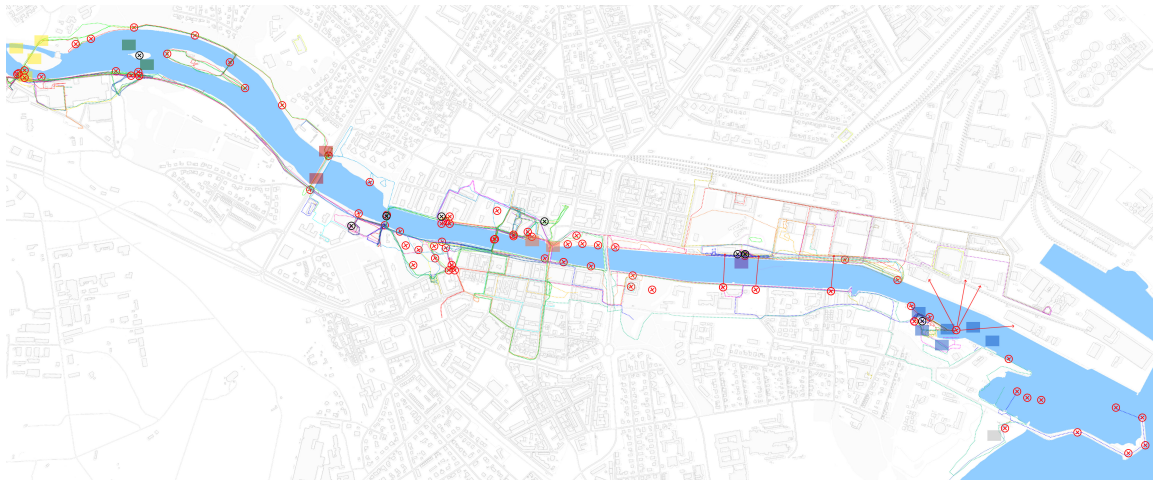
Sound at Nissan was held in September 2016, but it entailed preparations that went on for at least a year before the festival proper, involving the curators, funders and city officials, artists and members of the public. To establish the context for the

³ See Ouzounian and Lappin 2015 for further discussion of this development in sound art practice.

festival, Mikael and Julie Ericsson conducted an analysis of the existing acoustic conditions of sites along the river. They wanted, Mikael Ericsson says, “to understand the canvas we [had] to deal with”⁴. The Ericssons gathered sound recordings, videos and photographs and used this material to publicize the festival. In a call for artistic proposals posted on the Harp Art Lab website, the Ericssons shared the materials they had gathered from each site to help artists develop their proposals.

From over one hundred applications, the Ericssons invited five individual artists and one duo to participate in the festival.⁵ Both Mikael and Julie Ericsson also contributed works themselves. The Ericssons’ engagement with the artists began with this selection process but continued through the conceptual development of artworks and the sequencing of the works in the festival. The curators stressed that this developmental approach to the artworks, and the fostering of a sense of community among the participants, was as important for them as the original conceptual proposals. The participating artists developed their work for the festival over the summer of 2016, in some cases visiting Halmstad to explore different sites.

While the artists developed their projects, the Ericssons continued to map the river, making recordings and videos of the artists’ visits and mapping out “listening points” along the river; this map identified sixty-four sites, serving as a kind of listening map, which the artists and organisers could use to reference the acoustic characteristics of locations in the city.



⁴ Mikael Ericsson, email correspondence, February 2017

⁵ The artists were Klara Andersson (Sweden), Johannes Bergmark (Sweden), Ann-Louise Liljedahl (Sweden), Aga Jarzabowa, Maciej Baczyk and Maciek Polak (Poland), Kajsa Magnarsson (Sweden) and Laurie Tompkins (U.K.).

Fig. 2. Listening points along the Nissan, identified during research for the festival. East is at the top of the image. Courtesy Harp Art Lab.

In their own research, the Ericssons found themselves drawn more to the sound environment in the southern section of the river at the harbour, and the northern section at Slottsmöllan, than they were to the city centre. To help them characterise the sound environment of this busier central area, they planned a series of seven soundwalks, inviting different groups to participate during the summer months: one session with a group of art students; one with politicians, planners, architects and civil servants; and four open-invite sessions with the public. The Ericssons limited the time of each walk to 30 minutes, with a 30-minute introduction beforehand and a one-hour discussion afterwards.

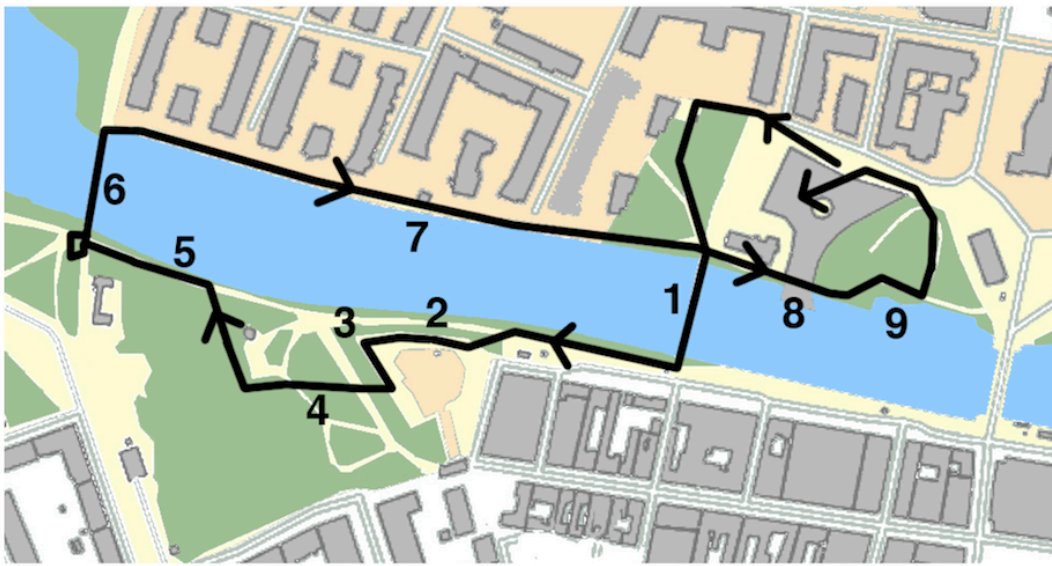


Fig. 3. Route of the soundwalk in Halmstad city centre. Point 1 is the pedestrian bridge beside the library and point 6 is the railway bridge. Courtesy Harp Art Lab.

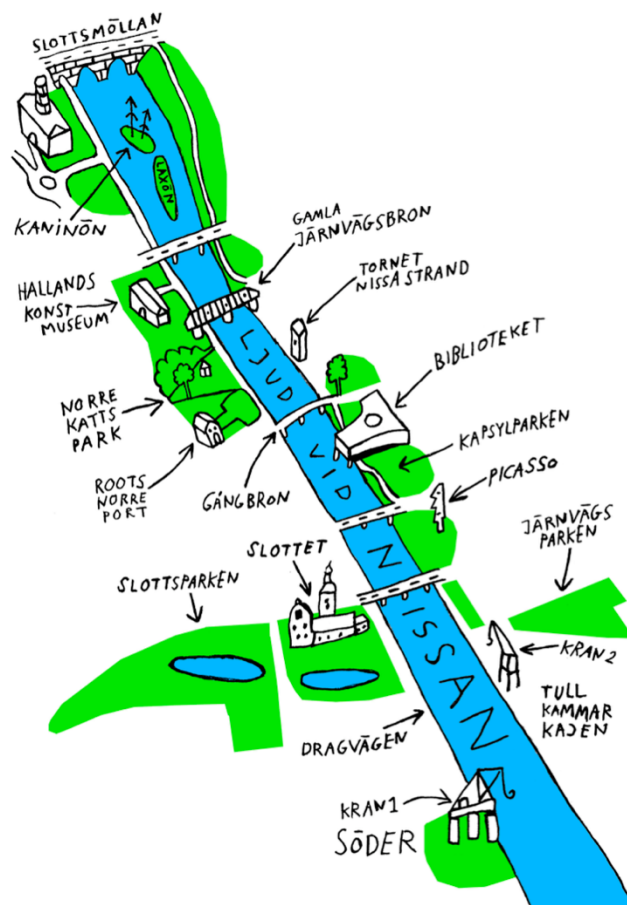
Participants were led by Mikael and Julie Ericsson, following a route planned by them in advance; as the group reached each stop on the map, they took freeform notes, recording their impressions of the area and things they heard. The participants were also equipped with handheld sound recorders, which they were free to use if they wished. (Mikael Ericsson later repurposed these recordings as material in *Soundtrack Nissan*, his sound installation in the festival.) Each walk was held in silence, encouraging people to pay close attention to what they heard.

Mikael Ericsson told me that they wanted to engage participants on a direct experiential level, by giving them a shared task to complete, based on their own listening experience, as well as an intellectual level, by encouraging them to reflect on their experience in discussion afterwards:

“The discussions... became very spontaneous after a half hour of silence. The participants' [auditory] experiences raised topics about how urban design, buildings and parks along the river affect the sound of the city. Participants noted silent places, sound pollution and how different materials such as wood, gravel and stone and buildings amplify or block the sounds.”⁶

The organisers saw value in the creative and aesthetic use of listening and recording by people of diverse backgrounds in the soundwalks, but they also emphasised the need for a critical discourse, such that ideas and perceptions could be explored and qualified in group discussion. These carefully planned soundwalks were a tactical intervention by the Ericssons to help fill a gap in their knowledge; they saw the soundwalks as an opportunity to design a distributed task of creative analysis. The results were detailed and diverse layers of knowledge, emerging from, and reinforcing, shared understandings of the city's sound environment.

3.2 Spatial and temporal sequencing and blending



⁶ Mikael Ericsson, email correspondence, February 2017

Fig. 4. This cartoon map drawn by Mikael Ericsson shows festival sites and landmarks along the length of the Nissan River through the city centre of Halmstad. Courtesy Harp Art Lab.

Participating artists took up residencies in Halmstad in September 2016, when the works were realized. In the final festival programme, Mikael Ericsson's hand-drawn map of the river highlights points of interest that are relevant to the festival and important for way-finding: iconic buildings and sites of festival events and installations. Each of the works offered an alternative use of its location; along the 4-kilometre length of the Nissan, artists could take advantage of a greatly varying set of spaces:

Table 1. The range of sites used in the festival, held from 9th – 11th September 2016.

	Site	Artwork(s)	Type of Space
1	Slottsmöllan	Bergmark, 'Sound Fishing' (Fri 9 th) Tompkins, '600 Halmstad Songs' (Fri 9 th)	River / natural greenspace Road bridge / natural greenspace
2	Kaninön	Magnarsson, 'Rabbit Island Rave' and 'Rabbit Island Rave (Aftermath)' (Fri 9 th and Sat 10 th)	Sound installation: Island Performance: Green corridor / natural greenspace
3	Hallands Konstmuseum	Jarzabowa and Baczyk, 'Deep in the Image' (Sat 10 th and Sun 11 th)	Public museum (interior)
4	Gamla Järnvägsbron	Andersson, 'Expedition' (starting point) (Fri 9 th and Sun 11 th) J. Ericsson, 'Ferrovie dello Stato' (Fri 9 th and Sun 11 th)	Pedestrian bridge and underpass Green corridor (peripatetic route)
5	Tornet Nissastrand	M. Ericsson, 'Soundtrack Nissan' (Sun 11 th)	Semi-private multi-purpose meeting venue
6	Norre Katts Park	Andersson, 'Brandtal' (Sat 10 th)	Public park
7	Roots Norreport	Andersson, 'Brandtal' (Sat 10 th) Jarzabowa and Baczyk, 'Deep in the Image' live performance with Pinpark (Sat 10 th)	Nightclub interior City walls

		Magnarsson, 'Rabbit Island Rave' (performance) (Sat 10 th)	
8	Gångbron	Bergmark, 'Play the Bridge for the Fish!' (Fri 9 th and Sat 10 th)	Pedestrian bridge River
9	Stadsbiblioteket	McCafferty, 'Workshop - Tullkammarkajen' (Fri 9 th and Sat 10 th)	Public library - interior
10	Kapsylparken	Andersson, 'Brandtal' (Sat 10 th) Bergmark, 'Sound Fishing' (Sun 11 th)	Public park
11	Kran 2 / Tullkammarkajen	M. Ericsson, 'Soundtrack Nissan' (Fri 9 th , Sat 10 th and Sun 11 th) Tompkins, '600 Halmstad Songs' (Fri 9 th , Sat 10 th and Sun 11 th)	Industrial heritage structure (crane) / civic space / industrial space (dock)
12	Kran 1 / Söder	Liljedahl, 'Echo of Iron' (Sat 10 th and Sun 11 th) Liljedahl, Bergmark, M. Ericsson, Closing concert (Sun 11 th)	Industrial heritage structure (crane) / industrial space (fishing quay)

The programming of the festival highlighted the different characteristics of these public spaces and buildings. Each site, with its own physical, acoustic and social characteristics, played an important role in the development of the artworks presented there. The festival did not suggest long-term changes to the spaces used, instead emphasizing potentialities through its ephemeral interventions. In the following section I will describe some of the strategies that artists used to engage with their sites and the kinds of spatial intelligence their interventions generated.

4 Activating the “score” through performance and installation

While most of the artworks presented at *Sound at Nissan* could be called site-specific, dealing with one site or structure, some used a broader or fuzzier scale, encompassing the length of the river or sections of it. One work was peripatetic, moving along the river between different sites; one used the edges and interstices of

spaces; one was based on several different sites along the length of the river and one drew its materials from the entire length of the river.

Here, I will focus on how each of these projects generated new knowledge about their urban context, in terms of physical space, sonic space and social space (with the understanding that these categories are not necessarily separate). After discussing each of the works in turn, I suggest how they generate new knowledge about urban sound space.⁷

4.1 Artworks engaging with individual sites and structures

Johannes Bergmark – *Play the Bridge for the Fish!*



Fig. 5. Johannes Bergmark installs his work *Play the Bridge for the Fish!* on the Gångbron. Photograph: Mikael Ericsson.

Johannes Bergmark uses custom-built instruments to enact playful and theatrical conceptual ideas and improvisational performances. On the Gångbron, the pedestrian bridge by the library, he staged *Play the Bridge for the Fish!* The bridge is a key route in the city's network of pedestrianised streets and a means of crossing from the civic and residential area on the east into the commercial city centre.

Bergmark used hardware elements – contact microphones, an amplifier powered by a car battery and a loudspeaker sealed in waterproof tape, which was suspended from the bridge and submerged in the river using piano wire – to create an extended instrument using the suspension cords and other elements of the bridge. Strumming and striking the metallic cords, the wooden handrail and metal supports of the

⁷ See <https://vimeo.com/203572202> for a short video showcasing each of the works presented in the festival.

bridge, people passing by could activate the contact microphones, and the resulting sounds were played back through the loudspeaker to any passing river life below, and to the public through a second loudspeaker located on the bridge.

Bergmark's invitation to "play the bridge" reconfigured the everyday pedestrian connection. The idea that sounds produced on the bridge could be heard by the fish required a suspension of disbelief and a willingness to play along with Bergmark's straight-faced joke, reimagining a piece of urban infrastructure as a large-scale instrument, and the fish below as a receptive audience.

Julie Ericsson – *Ferrovie dello Stato*



Fig. 6. People listen as Julie Ericsson's work is played at the old railway bridge. Photograph: Mikael Ericsson.

Julie Ericsson's *Ferrovie dello Stato* drew on the uncanny possibilities of sound reproduction. Her work, mounted at the old railway bridge (now a busy pedestrian and cycle route connecting a key green corridor in the city centre) reminded the listener of the physicality, materiality and even tactility of trains passing over the river, a phenomenon that has long since disappeared.

Ericsson's work was based on recordings of trains she made in Italy (the title refers to the Italian state railway system). Played back into the underpass using a simple mobile loudspeaker, these sounds had the psychoacoustic effect of creating a sense of movement along the bridge above, and could be heard for several hundred metres in both directions on either side of the river. The dramatic, almost reckless sense of speed conveyed in the recordings was dizzying. The effect was impressive, thanks to the sudden onset of the powerful sounds between longer quiet intervals. The work also played on the lack of an obvious visual cue to match the sounds: as

the spectral sound- image of the train barrelled past, there was a curious sight of pedestrians, joggers and cyclists moving leisurely across the bridge, or looking around to try to source and identify the sounds.

This work drew an audience on the bridge, underneath in passing boats and on the river banks. It prompted discussions on site between the artist and the spectators, some of whom, Mikael Ericsson says, felt “provoked [by the work], some fascinated”. These conversations about the work, and about the meaning and value of “sound art” in general, spilled over from the site into social media and the local newspaper.

Ann-Louise Liljedahl – *Echo of Iron*



Fig. 7. Part of the audience that gathered to observe the closing concert of the festival, which was based on *Echo of Iron* by Ann-Louise Liljedahl, and which featured Liljedahl, Mikael Ericsson and Johannes Bergmark in performance. Courtesy Harp Art Lab.

Ann-Louise Liljedahl’s *Echo of Iron* was the most straightforwardly “electroacoustic” composition in the festival, but all the source material came from her chosen site, the fishing quay at Söder, and its disused crane, and was presented there, in the open air, rather than an acoustically-treated concert hall. Her composition, a fixed media piece, was based on a collection of recordings of the metallic sounds of the crane which she manipulated and sequenced; as an installation, the work was played back through loudspeakers attached around the crane itself. Hearing the metallic sounds of the installation for the first time, the fishermen who still work at the quay asked Liljedahl if she had somehow switched the crane on again.

As well as being mounted as a sound installation throughout the festival, Liljedahl’s piece also served as the basis of the closing concert of the festival, which she, Mikael Ericsson and Johannes Bergmark performed. Invited guests and interested members

of the public stood or sat on the quayside on a pleasant September Sunday evening while the local fishermen sat outside their huts, at a slight remove but still watching. In a dramatic, at times comical, performance, Ericsson and Liljedahl both stood on top of the crane, coaxing a rich palette of sounds from the crane by striking it with hammers and mallets. In the arch of the crane below, Johannes Bergmark – suspended in stirrups by piano wire – performed along with them using another of his custom-built instruments – this one consisting of a sounding board, piano wire and contact microphones, amplified by contact microphones. Using bows and wooden blocks, Bergmark played a wide range of stringed sounds to complement the Liljedahl's piece.

As the sun set on a calm Sunday evening, birds and planes flew in the distance into the darkening sky, and the drama of this “found” outdoor concert stage and venue came into focus. Sounds of the performance – one moment delicate and haunting, the next thunderous – echoed out into the stillness of the evening. Across the water, the cranes of the port were still at work late into the evening and the occasional boat pattered past, heading up the river. On board, people turned their heads to the strange sight and sound, as a dormant structure on the Halmstad quays seemed to come back to life.

Kajsa Magnarsson – *Rabbit Island Rave and Aftermath*



Fig. 8. Canoeists try to get closer to the *Rabbit Island Rave* installation by Kajsa Magnarsson. Courtesy Harp Art Lab.

Kajsa Magnarsson's *Rabbit Island Rave* was a playful invite to passers-by, inventing a mythical narrative and populating Kaninön – the Rabbit Island – with characters who were responsible for a sound and lightshow that erupted out of the darkness of the quieter northern section of the river. The work brought together strands of

ancient and contemporary Scandinavian culture, informed by the Fossegrim or Strömkarlen, a Norse mythological character who lured people with his fiddle playing, as much as by Gothenburg rave culture. “I love that feeling of going to an outdoor party on a late summer’s evening, when you start to hear the music in the distance,” Magnarsson told me.

Inaccessible except by boat, the tree-covered island provided cover for an installation of loudspeakers and lights powered by a generator. *Rabbit Island Rave* consisted of a loud 4/4 techno beat that underpinned different synthesised sections in a 20-minute loop. As darkness fell, the work began to overwhelm an otherwise tranquil locale, the sound clearly audible clearly a kilometre downriver. The work attracted a small crowd of revellers, some of whom knew about it advance, and others who simply stumbled upon it while out along the river. At one point, three figures dressed in rabbit masks appeared amidst the audience with flares, dancing to the music coming from the island.

During the day, in a work called *Aftermath*, at the same location, there were sparse echoes of the fictional party from the night before: shorter, abstract excerpts of synthesised sound emerged from the island from time to time. People went about their day, canoeing upriver, or walking their dogs or running along the embankment while, in the world of the *Rabbit Island Rave*, unseen creatures caused mischief.

4.2 Artworks engaging with the Nissan on a broader scale

Johannes Bergmark – *Sound Fishing*



Fig. 9. Johannes Bergmark performs with his sound fishing contraption. Photograph: Mikael Ericsson.

In a second work for the festival, *Sound Fishing*, Johannes Bergmark took on the role of a wandering fisherman, with an amplified fishing rod made from found objects collected along the river and a loudspeaker strapped to his back. Bergmark playfully explored the edges of the river, relying on his sense of physical balance to navigate the rocky and grassy edges of the river banks, and his musical sense of improvisatory timing – and adventure – to attempt to generate sounds from the water and rocks using his contraption.

For the curators, this work served a useful link between sites, since Bergmark had more mobility and flexibility than the other site-specific works. Mikael Ericsson thought of Bergmark's work as a "walking sound sculpture."⁸ Playing an unassuming character, Bergmark would emerge from the everyday environment and crowds of people to suddenly generate a confusing array of sounds when he dropped his bright yellow propeller into the water. As he walked around the edges of the river, Ericsson says, Bergmark was "a fusion between man and machine – activating the space between the human body and the surrounding environment".⁹

Laurie Tompkins – 600 Halmstad Songs



⁸ Mikael Ericsson, email correspondence, February 2017

⁹ Ibid.

Fig. 10. Laurie Tompkins vocalising at the Slottsmöllan. Photograph: Mikael Ericsson.

Laurie Tompkins, like Bergmark, works in an improvisatory tradition – the title of his *600 Halmstad Songs* alludes to the new dwellings to be built at Tullkammarmarkajen and lends significance to the most fleeting, apparently throwaway ideas. In both conception and performance, Tompkins made use of the delaying, reverberant effects to be heard at several points along the river.

Singing and shouting, with cupped hands or a horn for amplification, he revealed acoustic effects, materials and spatial dimensions and used long reverberation times to sing in duet with himself and some of the wildlife. The songs varied but tended to consist of an array of howls, shrieks, grunts and heavy breathing, with occasional harmonica.

Tompkins was not present at the festival, so Mikael Ericsson played a selection of the songs from the Slottsmöllan bridge while Bergmark wandered on the rocks below with his sound fishing gear. As well as the gathered audience on the banks, there was an incidental audience of people out for a Friday evening walk or run along the river or over the bridge, several of whom stopped to listen. For Ericsson, Tompkins' work invoked a highly personal and enjoyable memory of making recordings with Tompkins earlier in the summer – Ericsson knew the pieces intimately. On the opening night of the festival, it was Tompkins' voice that howled downriver to start the show.

Klara Andersson - *Expedition*



Fig. 11. Klara Andersson leads a group on her *Expedition*. Photograph: Mikael Ericsson.

Klara Andersson's *Expedition* sounded the multitudes of personal experience to be encountered along a sequence of shared public spaces. In advance of the festival, Andersson invited local people to send her stories or memories relating to locations on a specific route along the Nissan. She collected and read these stories aloud through a narrowband megaphone, at the location where the events had happened.

As Andersson weaved her sonic path, her silent audience could only follow, listen and imagine. *Expedition* rendered stories as a kind of official pronouncement, delivered in monotone. The personal became public and the intimate was widely shared. An ordinary walk in the city was transformed. As Andersson's audience eavesdropped on personal stories they formed new shared memories of otherwise neutral spaces.

Mikael Ericsson – *Soundtrack Nissan*



Fig. 12. Mikael Ericsson's *Soundtrack Nissan* was played from horn speakers mounted on both sides of the crane at Tullkammarkajen. Photograph: Conor McCafferty.

Mikael Ericsson, in *Soundtrack Nissan*, brings together field recordings from Halmstad and excerpts of soundtracks drawn from classic films with waterfront settings. The field recordings were made by participants in the soundwalks that the Ericssons led before the festival.

The crane provided a useful visual focal point and a natural stand for mounting two large horn speakers high above ground. This area, slated for redevelopment in the coming years, is marked by more sparse, open brownfield space than the green

corridor and commercial city centre to the north across the road bridge, which forms a boundary between the city centre and the southern area. Though it is well used by local industries and people docking and servicing their boats, the area does not attract the kind of heavy footfall to be seen further north. The river opens out to the harbour just south of here, where the site seems to blend into the industrial zone of the port.

Soundtrack Nissan engaged with this open public arena for listeners, offering a subtle intervention without a clear beginning or end. Ericsson's work was the most heterogeneous in terms of sound content, with long pauses between field recordings, passages of song and music, and evocative fragments of dialogue that retained the shuffling and crackling of film Foley sound effects found on the original soundtracks. The playback of the piece through the horn speakers created a wider performative space than most of the other works in the festival and allowed listeners a sense of drifting in the open space as strangely familiar sonic elements mingled with everyday sounds.

Aga Jarzabowa and Maciej Baczyk – *Deep in the Image*



Fig. 13. Aga Jarzabowa and Maciej Baczyk collecting organic materials from the Nissan during their residency in Halmstad. Photograph: Mikael Ericsson.

For the Polish artists Aga Jarzabowa and Maciej Baczyk, the route of the river through the city represented an opportunity to engage in a detailed quasi-scientific survey. Their project, *Deep in the Image*, was an outlier among the works in the festival, in several ways: it had a broader spatial scope than most of the other works, based on a mapping process they conducted over several consecutive days.

Moreover, *Deep in the Image* was not manifestly a “sound art” work, nor was it site-specific in the sense of being either from, or presented at, a single site.

After spending a week in the run-up to the festival intensively shooting film and collecting samples of materials found in the river, Jarzabowa and Baczyk presented their work in an exhibition in the Halland Art Museum on the Saturday afternoon of the festival. *Deep in the Image* consisted of a short, silent film, using the narrative form of a travelogue around various sites in Halmstad. The artists used a combination of techniques to create the final work, using both stop motion animation and the transformation of the film negatives and organic materials with various chemicals. The artists juxtaposed and layered their filmed material with the various organic samples found in the river, placed directly on a platform they used to produce the animation. In the exhibition, the film was presented alongside some material fragments that had been used in its production, with a map and colour-coordinated key showing where film fragments had been shot or samples had been found. In a second iteration of the work during the festival, they also performed a concert at the Roots Norre Port nightclub with their colleague Maciek Polak, accompanying their film with live electronic music.

In their detailed excavation and mapping of sites along the Nissan, Jarzabowa and Baczyk uncovered visual patterns and rhythms of endless variety and sublime detail. *Deep in the Image* reflected a concern with the material life of the Nissan, casting it not simply as a static object to be captured or represented, but as an organic system that is much more complex than first meets the eye, or ear.

4.3 What knowledge was generated by the festival?

First, the festival highlighted the range of “listening points” in the city, and engaged the public in cataloguing the qualities of some of these sites through a series of soundwalks. The Ericssons gathered the responses from these soundwalks for future analysis. Mikael Ericsson has also developed a new artwork based on this material (fig. 14 below).

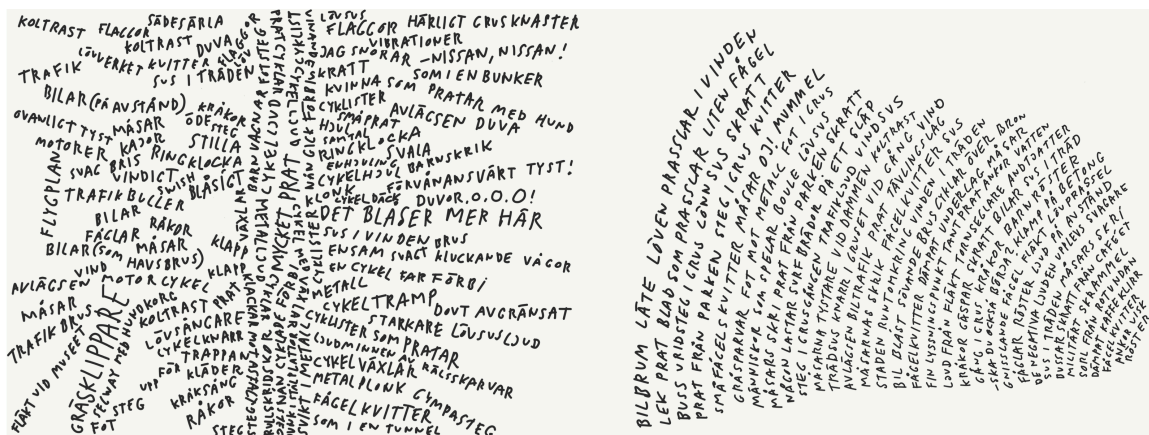


Fig. 14. The sounds of the railway bridge (left) and Norre Katts Park (right) – work-in-progress. The text (in Swedish) in this drawn “sound map” by Mikael Ericsson is based on the responses from participants in the sound walks. The completed work will take the form of the river’s route through the city, with sections corresponding to each site along its length. Courtesy Mikael Ericsson.

Secondly, each of the artworks in the festival offered artistic research into the context, history and materiality of the sites used, proposing alternative, albeit temporary uses for them. The artworks demonstrated how sound art interventions can activate sound in urban space, and potentially transform the perception of those spaces, in several ways:

- **Investigating acoustic qualities of outdoor spaces:** ranging from recordings of Tompkins’ voice in *600 Halmstad Songs* amplified and projected downriver, to Liljedahl sounding out different components of the crane in *Echo of Iron*.
- **Drawing attention to existing physical features:** literally, by inviting people to seek the source of sounds emerging from an uninhabited island (Magnarsson’s *Rabbit Island Rave*), or by acoustically activating a disused piece of industrial infrastructure (as in Liljedahl’s *Echo of Iron*).
- **Instrumentalising/gamifying the built environment:** as in the soundwalks, where participants “scavenged” urban sites for interesting sounds; Bergmark’s surreal attempts to “fish” for interesting sounds using contact microphones; and Tompkins’ use of urban space for its reverberant qualities to form the basis of his songs.
- **Playing between acoustic and visual experience:** as in Jarzabowa and Baczyk’s *Deep in the Image*, which offered a silent, but visually rhythmic exploration of the city’s atmosphere, or Mikael Ericsson’s *Soundtrack Nissan*, which drew material from films including snatches of songs, foley effects and ambient sound.
- **Investigating new uses for spaces:** such as performance, public gathering, or alternative routes – including both used and unused space – some, such as Andersson’s *Expedition* invited the public to reimagine familiar spaces from the perspectives of other people.
- **Generating public reaction:** the public responded, both positively and negatively, and sometimes intensely, to some of the artworks presented. The artists and curators engaged people in conversation about their works in person at the installation/performance sites, on social media and in the letters pages of the *Hallandsposten*, the local newspaper.

5 Festival knowledge informing urban planning

The creation of this kind of sonic spatial intelligence is only a first step, however: there is no guarantee that it will be used in any meaningful way, not least because the festival operated outside traditional planning and urban development processes. However, I would argue that the creative approaches seen in *Sound at Nissan* are instructive for those with responsibility for planning and designing new urban spaces, to encourage an urbanism that is informed by sonic experience:

- Analysis and mapping carried out in advance of the festival enabled the curators to **“score” what would happen, where and when.**
- Through soundwalks and the presence of sound art interventions in the city, people can be supported to build their **sonic literacy**, and to express what they like, or don’t, about a given sound or sonic experience – and why.
- The festival entailed **purposeful public engagement** relating to sound. The participants had a role that went beyond spectatorship and beyond superficial box-ticking. The creative task encouraged a focussed attention on everyday sound and the discussions afterwards led to something that went beyond binary understandings (good/bad, noise/quiet) of sound in urban space. Organised on a regular basis, these soundwalks could start to form a new archive of sonic spatial intelligence, reflecting changes in the sound environment of Halmstad over time.
- As well as using maps in planning and designing the festival, maps for the public – the soundwalk maps and the festival programme – provided **immediate, visual cues** for engaging with sound space in Halmstad, and a guide for attentive listening in the city.
- Engaging artists in exploring urban sound space is important in another way: it allows **complex ideas and phenomena to be brought to light and transformed**, sometimes complicating and challenging received ideas and perceptions.
- *Sound at Nissan*, as an urban-scale “score”, did not attempt to “pin down” single sounds to single sites but instead presented **a range of possibilities**. First, in an analytical and pedagogical mode, it took account of atmospheric conditions, acoustic spaces and horizons, and the range of sounding materials one might encounter. Secondly, in an artistic-activist mode, it introduced new sonic materials, to suggest possibilities, to provoke a response and to share site-specific artistic experiences.

Sound at Nissan mobilised a collaborative sonic interpretation of the city, curating new strata of sonic spatial intelligence; instead of relying on existing data sets, the festival fostered its own collection of knowledge that lays the groundwork for the discussion, analysis, design and usage of urban sonic space in the future.

Acknowledgements. Thank you to all the artists who gave their time so generously to be interviewed during this research. Thanks to Matilde Meireles and Elen Flügge for lending a critical ear, and to my supervisors, Dr. Gascia Ouzounian and Dr. Sarah Lappin, for sharing their wisdom and support. And a special thank you to Mikael and Julie Ericsson for their kindness and hospitality.

References

- Corner, James.** "The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention," in Denis Cosgrove (ed.) *Mappings*, pp. 213-252. London: Reaktion Books, 1999.
- Ericsson, Julie and Mikael Ericsson.** Harp Art Lab. <http://harpartlab.se> [Accessed 10.02.2017]
- Mattern, Shannon.** "A City is not a Computer." *Places Journal*, February 2017. <https://placesjournal.org/article/a-city-is-not-a-computer/> [Accessed 10.02.2017]
- Ouzounian, Gascia and Sarah Lappin.** "Editorial: Recomposing the City: New Directions in Urban Sound Art." *Journal of Sonic Studies*, no. 11, 2015. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/236505/236507/741/0> [accessed 10/02/2017].