Multiple Perspectives on Sound Art Documentation: an Empirical Study

Sound art and installations workshop with Janet Cardiff - 2024-04-23 Montreal, QC

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Project Overview: Sound installation Documentation

- Investigate the relation between the sensory experience and documentation of Sound installations for Reinstallation, Maintenance, Repair, etc.
- Target several domains of expertise : Sound artists ; Sound engineers ; Curators ; Conservators.

Le projet : Sound installation Documentation

- Two Case Studies
  - Estelle Schorpp's ***Écosysteme(s)*** & Jean-Pierre Gauthier's ***Générateur stochastique***

The setup

- Recording and Interface
  - 7 ambisonics 3rd order Microphone Grid
  - 6DoF recording
  - Binaural Rendering on headphones

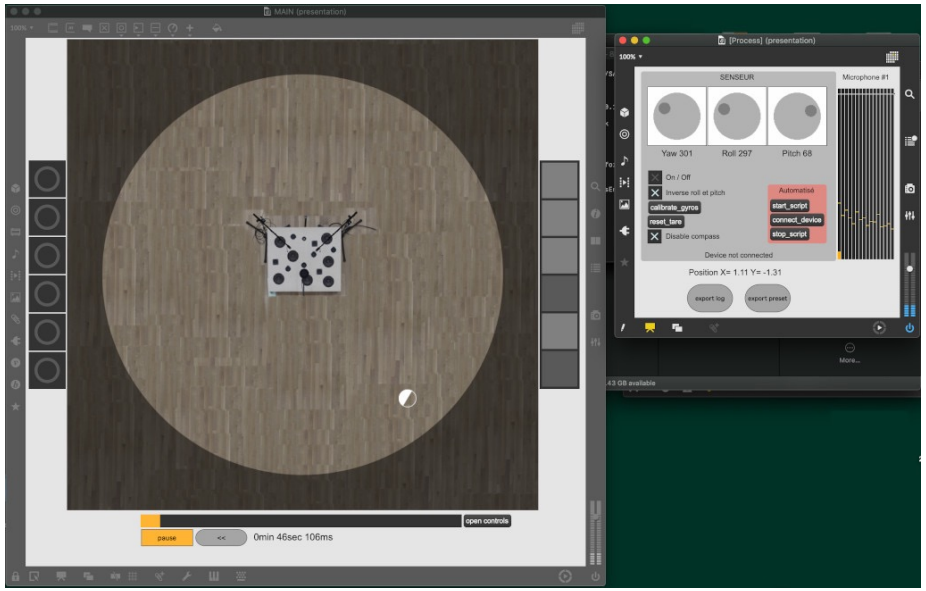
Same grid spacing and placement for both cases

Minimum expertise document

Not a virtualization of the work

The setup

- Interface
  - Free navigation in limited 2D space (view from above)
  - Free navigation in time (10 mn recordings)
  - Participants select “interesting” positions
  - Participants do not see microphone positions
  - At the end, questions relating to each position



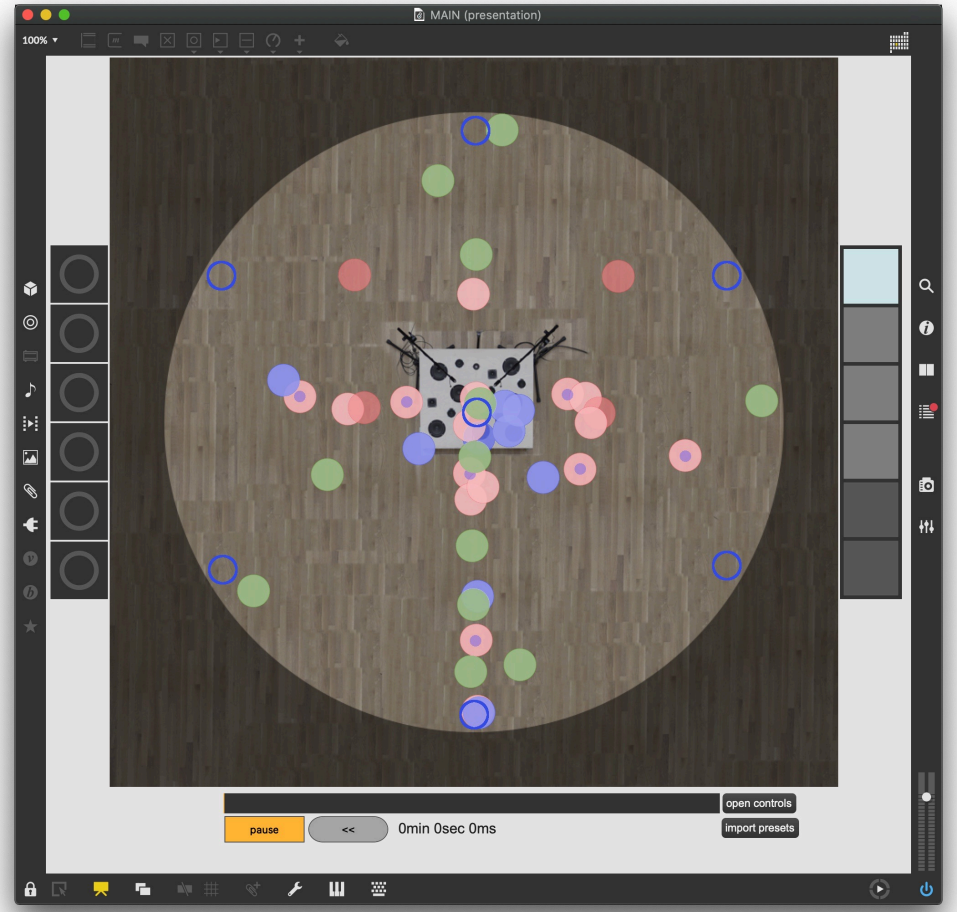
Experiment

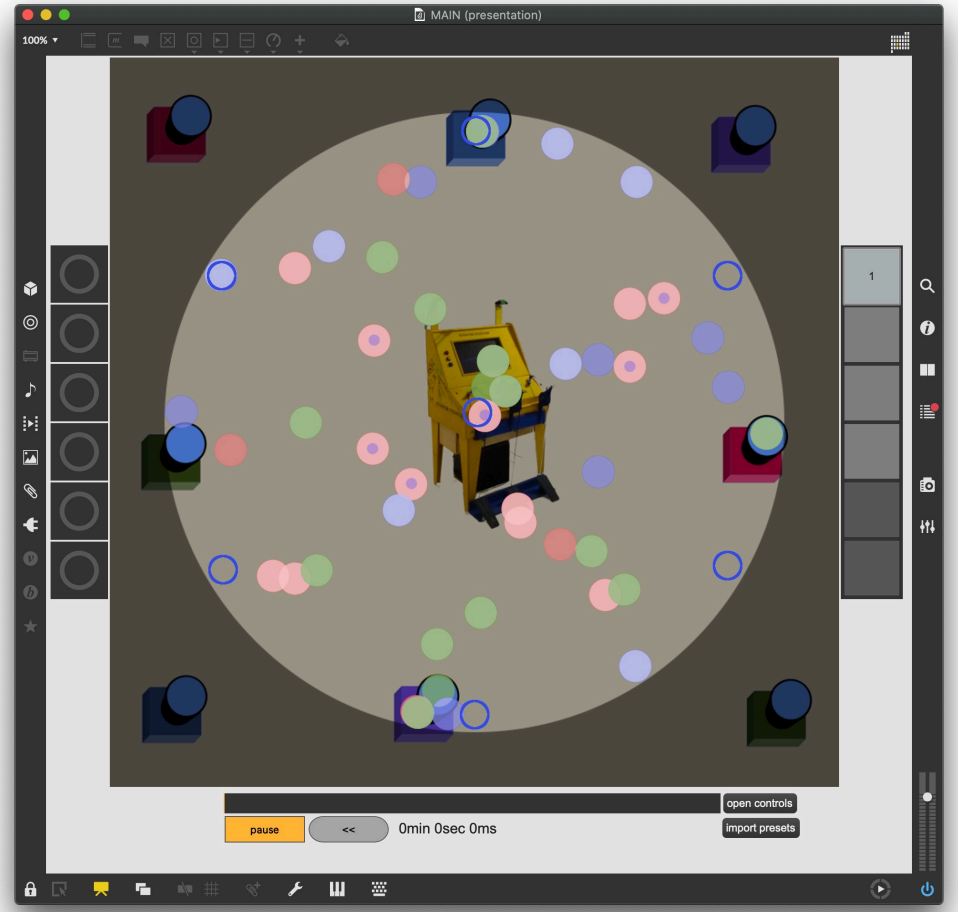
- 16 participants – including the two artists
- 4 domains of expertise
  - Sound artists (6+2) (13)
  - Sound engineers (5) (7)
  - New media and Sound art Curators (4) (7)
  - New media and Sound art Conservators (1) (3)
- High porosity

- Main expertise (2 dual profiles : SA+SE & CO+CA)
- Have some expertise

Analysis

- Positions that have some level of interest for reinstallation





Sound Artists

Sound Engineers

Curators & Conservators

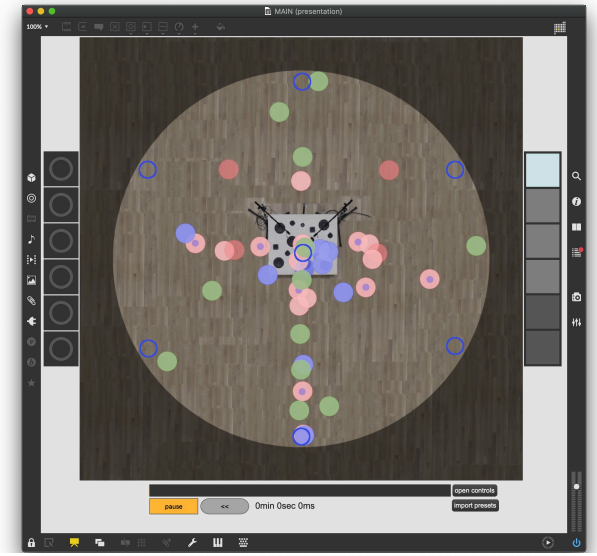
Mixed profile

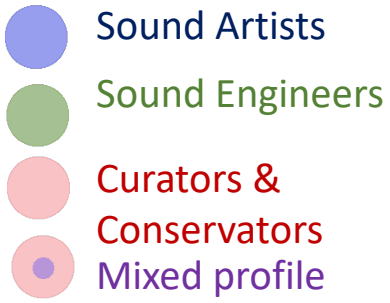
Time selection is not represented in these figures

More transparent positions (looks darker) == less interesting for reinst.

Analysis

- Positions that have some level of interest for reinstallation
- Higher legibility for **Ecosystème(s)**
  - More focus on center positions for Blue and Red; better spread for Green
  - More frontality for Blue
  - Difficulty for verbal description more central for Blue and Red; opposite for Green (related to question about tacit/explicit knowledge ; not visible on figures)
- More complex for **Générateur stochastique**
  - Influence of interface more apparent, especially for Red
  - More focus on sound sources for Green





Analysis

Analysis of first question for each position : *Why this position ?*
Inductive analysis (Bottom-Up)

- Method (Analytic)
  - Spatial or temporal comparisons between positions (homogeneity vs heterogeneity)
  - Complementary positions or intermediary positions
- Hedonic
  - Pleasantness (Subjective != representativeness)
- Re-Presentation/Re-Production
  - Projection in the physical space of the work
  - Rendering
- Listening Modes
  - Interaction
    - Active vs Passive
  - Descriptive
    - Sound objects (content)
    - Sources
    - Sound areas and transitions
  - Curatorial : Listening trajectory (narratives)
  - Holistic :
    - Blend/Mix ; Global position
- Reference position
  - Quality of Spatial Image
    - Depth ; Legibility ; Precision
  - Representativeness
    - Representative position
    - Impossible positions
- Presentation
  - Room acoustics
  - External sound sources
  - Without (or minimum) Room contribution

Converge with literature from all domains of expertise (with overlap)

- Soundscape Lit.
- Sound Engineering Lit.
- Museum Studies Lit.

Analysis

Question : *Why this position ?*
Inductive analysis (Bottom-Up)

	Method				Re-Presentation			Listening modes									
									Descriptive				Curatorial	Holistic			
Expertise	Comparisons in time or space	Complementary or Intermediary positions	Σ	Hedonic	Body & Space	Recording & Rendering	Σ	Interaction (Active vs. Passive)	Sound Objects	Sources (contribution, color & localisation)	Sound areas (physically or conceptually)	Σ	Trajectories	Blend / mix / balance	holistique (ensemble pas sources isolées, pas source)	Σ	
SA	17	7	24	5	2	1	3	3	12	13	0	22	5	5	4	8	
SE	3	0	3	4	2	4	6	5	2	9	6	16	3	13	6	14	
CU/CO	2	3	5	0	1	0	1	4	8	8	1	15	5	3	5	7	

Coded by position and not by participant

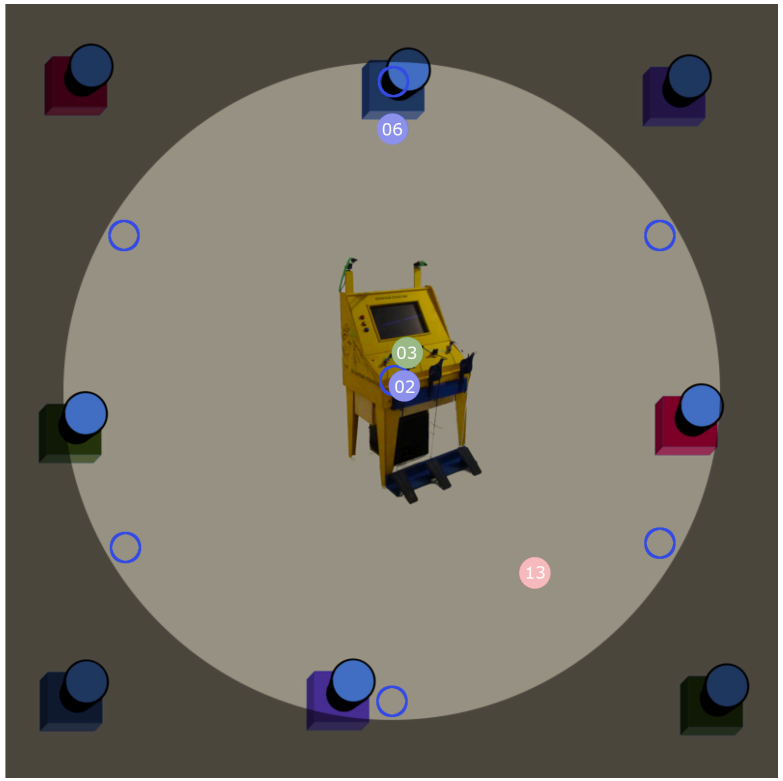
	Reference position										
	Quality of spatial image				Representativeness			Presentation (Identity vs. Iteration)			
Expertise	Layers/depth	spatial image / lisibilité / immersion	précision des sources/HP (lisibilité??)	Σ	Representativeness	Impossibility	Σ	Room acoustics (& architecture)	External sound sources	without (dry to focus on content only)	Σ
SA	2	10	1	11	4	1	5	9	3	1	12
SE	0	5	2	5	3	1	4	5	1	0	6
CU/CO	2	2	0	4	2	0	2	6	0	2	8

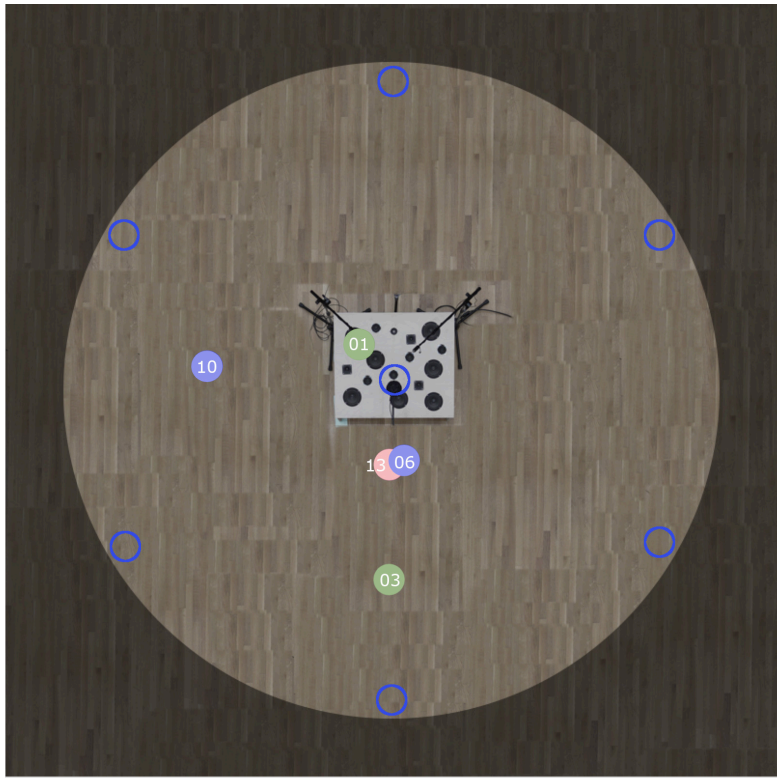
Analysis

Question : *Why this position ?*
Inductive analysis (Bottom-Up)

- Sound Artists
- Sound Engineers
- Curators & Conservators

- Example of position vs coding
  - Representativeness





Conclusion

- Inductive analysis shows clear relationship between the sensory experience and documentation frameworks, and it is transdisciplinary across all domains surveyed.
- Indicates potential for more systematic sensory experience considerations in documentation framework for sound art installations (e.g. Amy Brost, 2018), including all these perspectives.

- Strategies and goals are well shared across domains, but emphasis is different (at the level of generalization that we can discuss)
  - Difference between domain of expertise in terms strategical focus
  - Difference in terms of explicit/tacit knowledge and functions (need more analysis).
- Indicates that spatial audio (6DoF) recording may be used as boundary objects between (non-orthogonal) communities of expertise.

Future directions

- Relation between strategies and functions
  - Re-installation
  - Maintenance/Repair
  - Mediation
- Operationalization for Larger Scale investigation
- Investigate spatial audio (6DoF) recordings as a boundary objects shared by different communities of expertise to discuss documentation of a sound installation work

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