

S O U
N D

D E V
E L O
P M E
N T

C I T
Y

A R T
I S T

E X P
E D I
T I O
N

' I 4

R I G
A

—

H E L
S I N
K I

Sound Development City
2014 Artist Expedition
Riga – Helsinki

Documentation

Andreas Oskar Hirsch
What the heck are they talking about?

About Sound Development City

The artist expedition Sound Development City was initiated in 2012 with the aim of providing a creative, process-oriented space for work and experimentation to like-minded artists from different geographical, cultural and artistic backgrounds. Every year in late summer, Sound Development City goes on a three-week long journey between two European cities with a group of international artists. During this time, the artists work on individual projects and engage in creative exchanges while exploring new cities.

Sound Development City is an adventure and a re-search trip for artists who keep their eyes and ears wide open. It aims to encourage the search for individual means of expression, and allow processes to develop. It provides new insights through encounters with unfamiliar situations, and creates opportunities for artists to collaborate. The expedition's target cities serve as resonating urban space, as work material, sources of inspiration, and playground for public presentations.

The expedition format is meant both as practical instructions as well as metaphor: Sound Development City is a "studio on the road" for the artists, while at the same time it's a call to go on an inward journey, and explore one's own work- and thought patterns.

Sound Development City is a project by Sound Development, a non-commercial, independent and privately funded cultural initiative based in Zurich, Switzerland. Sound Development aims to inspire artists through practical experiences, and provide knowledge and contacts. The expedition format was developed in collaboration with Heller Enterprises, an agency for cultural projects. Sound Development City is financed by Sound Development and put into practice by Heller Enterprises.

Artist Expedition 2014

Twelve artists from eleven countries were selected to participate in the third edition of Sound Development City in 2014. The expedition explored the northern part of Europe and took place in Riga and Helsinki.

The selection process was based on an open call for project proposals, artistic research and work theses that

benefit from being on the road, and which probe urban environments as sites of both playful interventions as well as social engagement. An international jury selected eleven projects by twelve artists from a total of 344 applications. Alongside the project initiators Gabriel Bachmann (Sound Development, Zurich) and Martin Heller (Heller Enterprises, Zurich) the jury also included Mikko Fritze (Director of the Goethe-Institut Finland, Helsinki), Esther Eppstein (Message Salon, Zurich) and Solvita Krese (Director of the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, Riga).

Between 27 August and 14 September, the artists worked on projects covering a wide range of topics: acoustic experiments and perception; observation and decoding; studies on nostalgia; and language and limitations, to name a few. The artistic disciplines spanned performance, documentary, sound art, programming, illustration and public interventions. The expedition crew and participants worked seven days in Riga, and eight in Helsinki. The journey between the two cities was undertaken by each artist individually, via different routes and by various means of transportation. This part of the expedition was dedicated to being on the road and offered time for reflection and further research.

The 2014 expedition was centred around the theme "Mind the Gap!", which served as an invitation to sharpen one's attention to in-between states, ruptures, transitions, and loopholes that can be used creatively and become a new artistic reality.

Riga & Helsinki

Separated by the Baltic Sea, as well as by different language etymologies and cultural hearths, Riga and Helsinki are united by a similar fate. Their strategically privileged locations by the sea have made both cities attractive trade ports already early on. For centuries, sovereignty over either city has changed time and again, leaving behind unmistakable traces, while also strongly shaping society, politics and economies even to this day.

Today, the two cities have very different trajectories: Riga, with its rich cultural heritage, has a negative demographic tendency that is reflected in the many empty houses in the center of the city for example, whereas Helsinki, in

contrast, is one of Europe's most dynamically developing cities and thus faces challenges such as immense pressure on the housing market.

Expedition Documentation

The Sound Development City expedition was documented in several ways. The "Gap Station", an in-house radio station, broadcasted online 24/7 from the radio bus. It offered a heterogeneous collage of sound works by participating artist as well as content produced during the expedition, such as recorded performances, field recordings or daily interviews with the artists, which focused on their work and artistic positions.

A logbook website allowed the artists and the Sound Development City team to post texts, thoughts, images, sketches, snippets, sound pieces and videos onto a collective expedition diary. This collaborative expedition logbook allowed an interested audience to experience the expedition and follow the progression of projects.

And last but not least, the expedition group was accompanied by an expedition writer, who documented and reflected on the on-going processes, the journey itself and the participants' experiences.

The content found in the following pages comes mostly from these sources, while certain reflections were added in retrospect.

Participants & Projects

Vivian Caccuri (BR)

silent walk

Ruth Danon (IL)

Tel Aviv – Beirut

Maša Drndić (HR)

On Nostalgia

Richard Eigner (AT)

Doch wo ist der Schnee vom vorigen Jahr?

Małgorzata Goliszewska (PL)

Twins & In My Sleep

John Grzinich (US/EE)

Listening in Context

Andreas Oskar Hirsch (DE)

What the heck are they talking about?

Rachel James (CA/US)

How to Be a(n) <#\$>

YangFan Li (CN)

Rebuild Old Sound & Trip Jigsaw

Tiago Romagnani Silveira (BR/DE)

& AEAEAEAE (NO/DE)

Untitled

Moritz Wettstein (CH)

Rap Machine

Andreas Oskar

Hirsch

*What the heck are they
talking about?*

Andreas Oskar Hirsch operates under the assumption that birdcalls are in fact coded messages, which we hear as Morse code. Equipped with a recording device, binoculars and a notebook, he investigates what birds in the Baltic might disclose. He evaluates the insights gained by this literary and absurd undertaking as follows: ornithological-cryptographic notes can be presented alongside sound samples; however, statements made by birds can also be graphically rendered into Morse code, or transferred into music. Furthermore, other animals besides birds might happen into the range of the survey.

Morse code is a quasi forerunner to today's digital binary code. It might be an outdated system of signs, but it allows you to do all sorts of things with it nevertheless. You can do graphically abstract things, which will then have a layer of meaning underneath, coded words or text fragments, and cartography also plays a role in it. It can also be musically interesting — I've just recently started to explore that aspect — because some of the sounds the birds emit will have an equivalent in the music notation system. If for example you have four short signals it will be an H, which is the German musical note for B, or you could have an E, which is one short signal only, and so on.

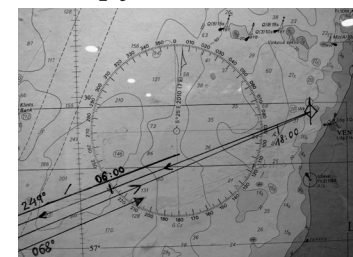
... I have this character that I conceived of while riding my bike, which is called QRVOI — Quebec Romeo Viktor Oskar I. QRV is an amateur radio abbreviation, which means "I am ready (to receive you)". So my name is "I am ready Oskar one". I'm going back and forth between these two characters. Me and "me".

... The idea is to play a game in a way about conducting scientific, or pseudo-scientific research; exposing myself to all these situations that this might get me into — the rain and the tent for instance, riding my bike — and to build a narration that works through sound and text [...].

... I do sound recordings en route as well, while cycling. I have these little microphones on my cap, so this makes it a kind of ongoing radio show somehow that's building up in my head with all these elements coming together.

Excerpts "Gap Station" interview

On Board the Stena Flavia, between Travemünde & Ventspils
Got up just in time for breakfast. Two TV sets are blaring in



the lounge, and outside, the water is clear. Blue-green-grayish sea. [...] After breakfast I go for a walk. [...]

There's not a single bird in sight. [...] Looking south through my binoculars. No land, no ships, only the metallic shimmer of the water. Suddenly, a solitary seagull flying in the distance, way too far off to say what kind exactly. It's going east. No sound. [...]

It's 3:30 pm, Latvian time. Recording the motor noise of the Stena Flavia with contact microphones. I have to get off the Helideck and over the upper park deck, to the chimney. It drones powerfully. The motor has a whopping 21,600kw. [...] Some freshening up on Morse code and some stretching exercises. Hardly five minutes later, a sparrow lands on the railing of the deck. It's probably an Eurasian tree sparrow, though it defies me what it would be doing in the middle of the sea. A modern day migrating bird, perhaps. It's silent. Then it takes off and turns around the corner to the south deck. It doesn't make a single sound, not even a quick Dit — the most basic Morse code signal for the most common letter, E.

Three hours to arrival and with it, the beginning of the first leg on bike: QRV Oskar I on the

road through Latvia, Estonia and towards Helsinki, on the lookout for bird messages.

Posted 24 August 2014

Between Ventspils & Piltene

First day of cycling. My mountainbike is doing fine. QRVOI



calls it the hornet, because of its intense yellow color. Around fifteen kilometers from Ventspils a tiny snake crosses the road in front of me from the left to the right. No superstition associated with snakes as far as I know.

A bit farther about 500 starlings are sitting on an air cable, nicely organized like pearls on a necklace. Their way of talking is in stark contrast to their geometrical line up, though. I am not able to decipher anything. It's just too many of them chirping all at once.

Later on a pigeon says hello from the Hinterland. Three times short—long—short. *RRR*. Fields, grassland and woods. Not a lot of traffic. Probably almost 20°C.

Posted 24 August 2014

Around Twenty-Five Kilometers Northeast of Kuldīga

One night by the Venta, a river that has its source in Lithuania and leads to Ventspils, which is where I've just cycled from yesterday. Found a nice spot after having left the main road and going into the woods for a bit.



Constant rain throughout the night poses a challenge to my tent. In the morning, it keeps going and only stops now and again for a few minutes. Very hesitant to leave my tiny home. Something is telling me, though, that I should leave and face it. The longer I wait, the muddier it will be. It's about eight kilometers through the woods. On the other hand, it might just stop raining in a bit . . .

An unidentified bird calls from the other side of the river: *H, S, S, H, S*.

Innumerable dots falling down from the sky. Lots of *E*'s. Although . . . if you look at them from the side, it's actually vertical dashes. It's only when they hit the ground that they turn into dots. Sometimes quite many of them, when the impact is strong enough to produce a microscopic explosion. So let me refer to the rain as *ET* from now on . . .

Around noon, *ET* calms down and I finally leave. The forest road is quite ok, not as muddy as I thought. The call of an eagle: presumably a lesser spotted eagle (*clanga pomarina*). Three times long, the intonation is slightly going

down at each sign. An *O*. Probably the same bird as earlier that morning.

Cycling for a couple of hours, fortunately almost no *ET* anymore. Just before entering the town of Kuldīga, there's around fifty ducks by a tiny pond. Most of them are hanging out on the lawn, some are washing themselves, most of them seem to be asleep. One says *G*.

Posted 26 August 2014

I'm interested in the connections between the absurd (i.e. futility, inconsistencies) and beauty (the ideal, the sublime, perfection): nature and the way it's manipulated by mankind and our ideas of progress, our tendencies towards dissolution. And I'm also interested in languages, meaning both spoken languages as well as others, like the birdcalls in this project. Automated processes are also important, inventions and tinkering.

Excerpt artist Q&A

It's about abbreviations, communication and misunderstandings.

...

I'm certainly interested in creating a little cosmos, some kind of a system ... We live in a beautiful and at the same time crazy world. The arts are a good way to reflect this, but also to escape from it. And this escapism, I understand it as a possibility that lets you go into something you shape and define for yourself.

Excerpts "Gap Station" interview

Riga

The market of Riga offers an abundance of almost everything



you can wish for. The birds like this place, too. Behind one of the huge halls some hooded crows are taking care of the refuse. Three long signals from a tree on the opposite side of the canal, a short pause, then two long ones. A hooded crow uttering an "Om", a clear sign of the well-balanced state of mind of this species in the crow genus. The repertoire only seems to consist of *T*'s, *M*'s and *O*'s here, but I am sure they can do a lot more. It must be modesty ...

Posted 28 August 2014

Riga

A house sparrow. Lots of them in a bush next to the canal.



Making stops at a puddle now and again, drinking and having a wash. Most common signals of their repertoire: *E* and *I*. To be investigated.

Posted 28 August 2014

Old Town of Riga

Passing by a souvenir shop called Legenda, near the Anglican church where I just recorded the dress rehearsal of a beautiful piece by Latvian composer Romualds Kalsons. Three sparrows are crossing the street and heading off to somewhere over the roof of the shop. One of them sends out two short signals — an *I*. Self-awareness again, like the other day in the woods when I was cycling from Ventspils to Kuldiga. At several points I could hear these self-reflective comments coming from the side of the road. What's the difference between birds and humans? Well, at least self-consciousness doesn't seem to be one . . .

Posted 29 August 2014

Riga Zoo

Owls in the zoo of Riga. Looking at me as if from another dimension. Complete silence in the midst of everything that's going on around them: Other animals sending out their signals, people walking by, talking and laughing. Almost as if their silence were some kind of commentary. In order to obtain a better overview, a northern hawk-owl sticks its head through the grid of the aviary and is contemplating things from above. Zoos are strange places.

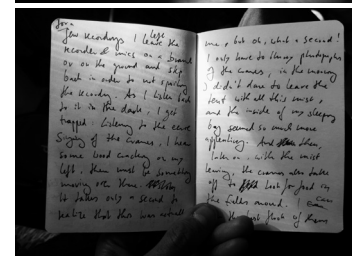


Later on some regular freedom ducks on Ķīsezers lake next to the zoo. Not talking very much, but I am able to decipher the letters *E*, *I* and *D*. At several points, these three letters come in a row and thus spell "Eid", the German word for oath. An oath of freedom? An oath of companionship and solidarity? I would love to think so. Definitely not an oath of office.

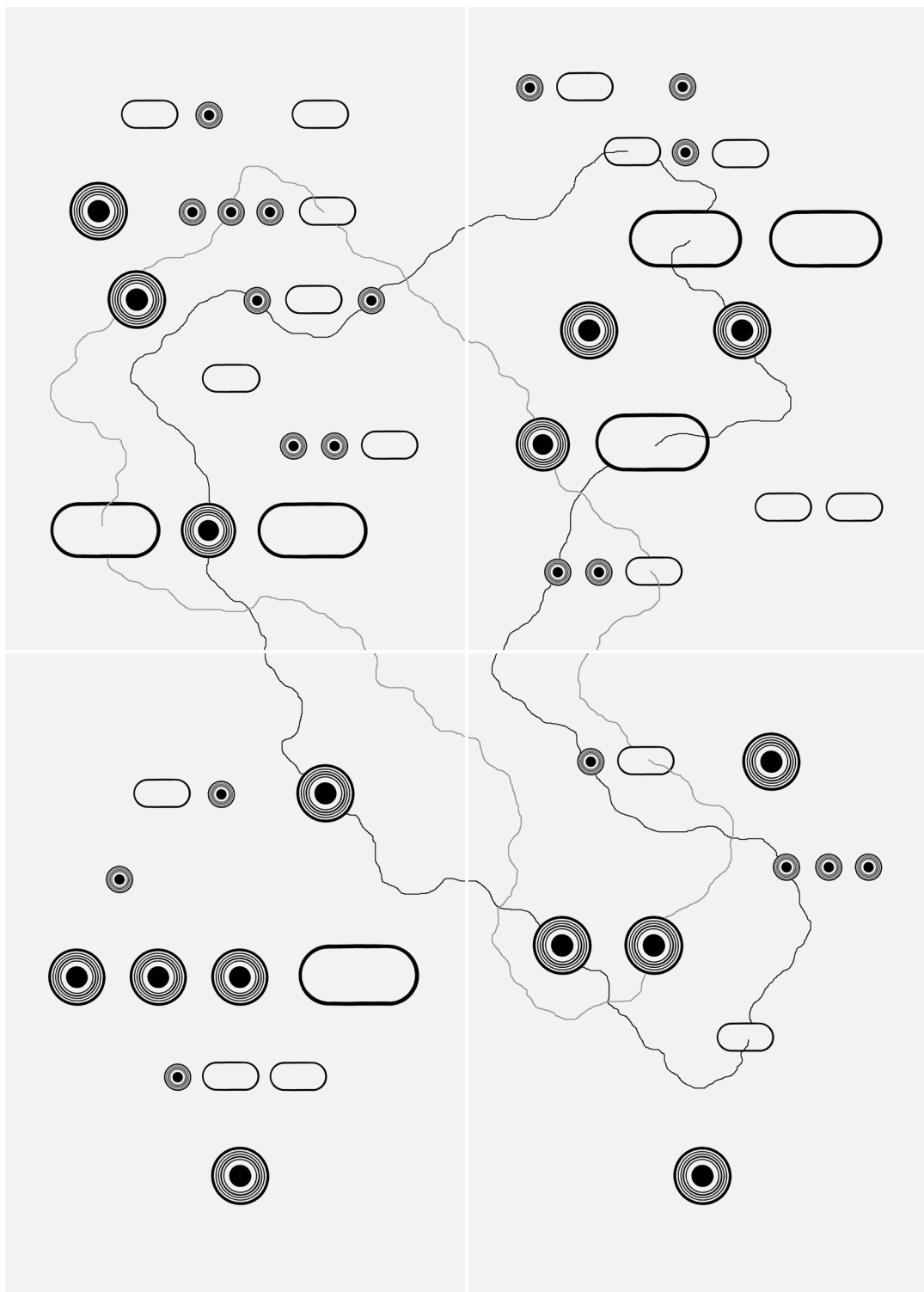
Posted 31 August 2014

Ķemeru National Park

Made it out to record the cranes in the swamp. Only captured a blurry photo of the birds but several hours of beautiful sound recordings. All this is thanks to Davis, the biologist, and a guy I met on the spot, a character almost straight out of a Tarkovsky movie. Grey beard, slow movements, serious eyes, not smiling too often but when he does it's real. He was out there to collect mushrooms and go fishing, and led me to a narrow bit of land in the middle of the swamp. Weaving our arms and saying "Krah Krah", we could both be sure what we were talking about. Several flocks of cranes came in around sunset. Unbelievable sounds. Lots of *T*'s (one long signal), *E*'s (short ones), *A*'s (short—long), some *N*'s (long—short) as well as a whole variety of musical intervals and long carrying echoes. I'll have quite a bit of homework to sort this out further.



Posted 01 September 2014



Cranes at Ķemeri National Park, 02 September 2014, at 5 a.m.

On the Way to Helsinki

Took the bus across the border to Estonia and started cycling from a town called Vatla. Latvia's national bird is with me.

Posted 03 September 2014



Matsalu National Park

Right in front of me, two white wagtails are crossing road number 31 next to Tammiku. The first one: Di-dit di-di-dit. *I, S*. The second one reverses the message to *S* and *I*. *I* stands for island, *S* for south. Whichever way you put it, it seems to be a pretty good idea.

Posted 03 September 2014

Matsalu National Park, near Keskvere

I come across hundreds of cranes again, apparently on their way to the swamp to go perform their nocturnal concert. No way to follow them south into the woods; the area is well protected and it would be silly to try, so I leave them and keep going.

Posted 04 September 2014



Matsalu National Park

One night and half a day at Puise Cape, on the opposite side of Muhu Island. Plenty of house martins around. Very chaotic coding. Mainly *E*'s, *I*'s, *S*'s and *H*'s, as far as I can decipher this jumble. Now and again an *A* as well. Having a look at my list of abbreviation acronyms, the content of their animated conversation can have to do with *A* (di-dah) for "attack", "class-a air-spaces", "asphalt", "alert areas", "ampere" or "adults". *E* (dit) for "echo", "east", an "even altitude" or an "emergency". *I* (di-dit) for "island", (fuel) "injection" or for "infants". *S* (di-di-dit) for "south", "straight-in" (landing), "sensitivity" or for "summer time". *H* (di-di-di-dit) for "hotel", "economy class", "heavy" (items) or a "high level". Not to mention all the possible combinations like *IA* (di-dit di-dah) for "intermediate altitude" or *AH* (di-dah di-di-di-dit) for an "artificial horizon" . . . Quite disturbing all this. I'll need to slow down the recordings to see what's really there . . .

Posted 04 September 2014



On the Way to Risti

Going northeast, I encounter the cranes again, helping themselves in the fields. Probably it's the same ones I saw yesterday. Beautiful diversity of signals again. A few minutes of recording and off they fly.

Posted 04 September 2014



Paldiski

At the beach, about one kilometer south of the industrial harbor. Lots of cormorants around. Hard to say what their messages are. Very few utterances, sort of covered by the noises from the port.

Posted 05 September 2014



Between Paldiski and Tallinn

Another white wagtail on the side of the road. But again, it's hard to get hold of Latvia's national bird. It turns out to be a real recluse. Each time I get near one of them, it stops chirping and simply walks off, almost as if it could sense the record button.



Posted 05 September 2014

Helsinki

The crows here would probably get along well with their comrades in Latvia and Estonia. At least they seem to share the same official vocabulary *T*, *M* and *O*. Unofficial vocabulary being all the letters they use when we're not listening.



As I'm passing through Kaivari Park, I encounter a hooded crow that is busy foraging. Scanning the lawn, it stops and greets me with an *M*—twice long. It continues searching, finds something edible, and jumps onto some small rocks in order to enjoy the meal.

M can stand for “minus”, “magnetic”, “month” or “medium economy discount”. Maybe for “meal” as well . . . I am waiting for another sign, a hint that would direct me further and let me know more exactly what this bird is referring to, but all it's interested in is food . . .

Posted 10 September 2014

On Board the Finnmaid

Twenty-nine hours across the Baltic Sea to Travemünde, sharing a cabin with a silent old Finn who liked to clandestinely smoke his pipe in the bathroom. QRVOI is slowly waving goodbye to this expedition. Investigation, however, will go on.



Posted 15 September 2014

Headquarters Cologne

Here's a translation of what the flamingos in the zoo of Riga said on Sunday, 31 August at precisely 3:05 pm.^{→p.144} According to my Morse code translation tool this is it, but I am not one hundred per cent sure. Need to go through it step by step again and check back with my aviation acronyms. Lots of work—quite hard to keep up with it. Would very much appreciate some help around here.



Posted 13 October 2014

TITA TGAMTAJ
ETTDETMEE O UETA
EMETTTOTTTME
TTTANEEEEETATT
TEIWETNIEEV LI EW
EVTE EN EI ET/ITE
TKETTEOEMTTTE
TTAAEEMETMIN
SEETITTENTETTT
TEETNEETET
NR IoMF UNEBZTKST
EQMEJSTKMMCD
MAIINEORE₃EIEVE
ANMNEABE EYMTM
DITTTETTTTETT
EAEIMNRRTAMTE

ETARTMTTNETITT
TEEEATTNTT₅OA
ISMNATTTATEEE ET
E₅EEETEETT₅ET
DSENNEHTESIITEE
IITEEDTT TTTAED
TDTSTAENETET
TINZEMTTAITEEM
EYENTIOIMAMTE
EANNETTNTGE
TSTGTT ETTFMW
MRTEEE GAS ETET
EN oT OYAUTNEMA
TEEMMEIROEETTT
NDITTTNTT OITEEO
ETM KTETTEETE

Culture in the Open

By Gabriel Bachmann, CEO Sound Development

Sound Development City is an experimental expedition and as such it's a project that directly relates to the philosophy of Sound Development. As a non-commercial, privately funded initiative for culture based in Zurich and founded, in 2002, by Nia Schmidheiny and myself, Sound Development helps artists to realize their visions. We initiate and realize our own projects which aim to inspire and create something new. Sound Development City is conceived as an adventure, following our Mission Statement to "produce and support cultural projects in the open."

The annual expedition addresses like-minded artists and cultural activists from around the world who agitate, provoke and stimulate with fresh, interdisciplinary ideas. The format of the expedition calls for a specific type of artist: one needs to be open to the new and have a noncommittal, exploratory spirit. But at the same time, it's important to reflect on one's experiences and transcribe them into the work process. The members of the group each embark on their own expedition, traveling and exploring at their own pace, with their own specific focus. It's up to the artists to define what they make of the situation. The group, however, is important as network, as cooperators, potential collaborators and as source of inspiration. One of the main questions this format raises is how does the setting influence one's work?

This is what we're interested in — to detach from the predominant orientation towards product and performance in order to deal with the processes instead. Sound Development City is an attempt to break with traditional mechanisms and habits. The format aims to prevent target orientation; rather, it creates openness for ideas to grow.

More information at www.sound-development.com

ANDREAS OSKAR
HIRSCH
DE, *1972

Andreas Oskar Hirsch studied film in Montpellier and visual arts in Cologne. He produces visual works, sound, music, and texts. His interests therein lie particularly in strategies of translation and conveyance of meaning, absurd experimental set-ups and the development of imaging, sound-based and performative processes. Themes of decline and failure play as much of a role as do ideas of the beautiful and the perfect. In the course of his experimental enquiry into systems of signs and connotation, order and disorder collide in various constellations again and again.

→ HirschOnHirsch.com

Imprint

SOUND
DEVELOPMENT
CITY

Idea & Concept
Sound Development
Heller Enterprises

Realization
Heller Enterprises
Responsible: Martin Heller

SOUND
DEVELOPMENT
CITY

2014

Participants & Projects
Vivian Caccuri
silent walk

Ruth Danon
Tel Aviv – Beirut
Maša Drndić
On Nostalgia
Richard Eigner
Doch wo ist der Schnee vom
vorigen Jahr?
Małgorzata Goliszewska
Twins & In my Sleep
John Grzinich
Listening in Context
Andreas Oskar Hirsch
What the heck are they talking
about?
Rachel James
How to Be a(n) <#>
YangFan Li
Rebuild Old Sound & Trip Jigsaw
Tiago Romagnani Silveira
& AEAEAEAE
Untitled
Moritz Wettstein
Rap Machine

Jury
Gabriel Bachmann
Sound Development, Zurich
Esther Eppstein
Message Salon, Zurich
Mikko Fritze
Goethe-Institut, Helsinki
Martin Heller
Heller Enterprises, Zurich
Solvita Krese
LCCA, Riga

Headquarters
Preses Nams
Balasta dambis 3
Kurzemes rajons
Riga
Makasiini L3
Tyynenmerenkatu 6
Helsinki

Local Partners
Latvian Centre for Contemporary
Art (LCCA)
Kaņepes Kultūras centrs
Totaldobže
Goethe-Institut Finland
Helsinki Design Week
Galleria Huuto

Kallio Kunsthalle
Taidekoulu Maa
Vuotekno, Telakkakatu 8

Project Management
Duscha Kistler
Project director & Producer
Andalus
Project director
Nicholas Schärer
Communications
Joëlle Kost
Intern
Lukas Amacher
Radio producer
Uwe Lützen
Expedition writer

Production Partners
Hubertus Design
Design
Astrom / Zimmer
Logbook
Ieva Astahovska
Production Riga
Andrejs Eigus
Concert organizer Riga
Jan Quilitzsch
Matti Vilhunen
Lauri Mattelmäki
Production Helsinki
Santa France
Assistance "silent walk" Riga
Jenni Pöyry
Assistance "silent walk" Helsinki
Madara Bunkše
Assistance "Listening in
Context" Riga

Imprint Publication
Heller Enterprises
Concept
Duscha Kistler
Editor
Nicholas Schärer
Editorial assistant
Kerstin Landis
Scott Vander Zee
Jonas Voegli
(Hubertus Design)
Design
Benjamin Roffler
Lithography
Hili Perlson
Translator & Copy editor
Druckerei Odermatt AG
Printing & Binding

Index of Images
Andreas Oskar Hirsch
11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,
22, 23

Thank you
Jaako Antti-Poika
Zane Dātava
Mārtiņš Engēlis
Pirjo Hangaslahti-Brech
Henry Heike
Sasha Huber
Aulis Junes

Kari Korkman
Maria Lahdenranta
Sandra Lapkovska
Anna van der Lei
Kaspars Lielgalvis
Kristos Mavrostomos
Valts Mikelsons
Henni Oksman
Kaarina Ormio
Rūta Rietuma
Petri Saarikko
Anta Sparinska
Austra Straume
Uuraan Vilpas
Janne Wrigstedt
Martina Wuoristo-Huhta

Special Thanks
Nia Schmidheiny
Gabriel Bachmann
Everyone in the
Sound Development team

2014.sound-development-city.com
Logbook
sound-development-city.com
Project website
sound-development.com
Sound Development

©2014 Sound Development
and the authors

VIVIAN CACCURI

RUTH DANON

MAŠA DRNDIĆ

RICHARD EIGNER

MAŁGORZATA

GOLISZEWSKA

JOHN GRZINICH

ANDREAS OSKAR

HIRSCH

RACHEL JAMES

YANGFAN LI

TIAGO ROMAGNANI

SILVEIRA

& AEAEAEAE

MORITZ WETTSTEIN