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Silences and policies in the shared listening

Ultra-red and Escuchatorio

Abstract

With this article we want to offer a critical approach to participatory practices within sound art. To this end, we will analyse the work of two groups of sound artists who have placed participation and collaboration at the centre of their work and of their definition of sound art itself, using two very different approaches: Ultra-red and Escuchatorio. Both groups understand listening as a political action which always implies a relationship with others and with the environment. However, their very different ways of activating the collective listening may encourage us to consider how collaborative art is understood and practised at a time when the interest in participation from different artistic and cultural institutions (also political) keeps growing.

By considering Escuchatorio and Ultra-red, we want to ask ourselves how it can be decisive who proposes to perform the sound action: whether it is a community in struggle or a group of artists, or a gallery/institution. Different proposers generate different receptors/participants and also different ways of understanding which values are at stake and how they are distributed. Who is able to participate and how it can be done entail different degrees of involvement, impact and barriers. For a specific group that meets in a specific place participatory art can foreground the differences between people who are close to each other (Ultra-red), whereas the participation of anyone who can use any type of recording device and upload recordings to the network emphasises the similarities between people who are otherwise strangers (the expanded radio of Escuchatorio).

"There are many open microphones already, we need more open ears!"
(Escuchatorio, text disseminated through social media on 30 August 2015).
"The point is not to invest a new language or a new sound on behalf of listeners.
Rather, the object contributes to the collective's efforts at world-making."
(Ultra-red, 2013, p. 39).

Participating and collaborating (introduction)

This text intends to reflect on participatory or collaborative sound practices by following the way the different agents at stake are interwoven in an increasingly widespread type of artistic actions. For this purpose, we focus on two groups of sound artists and activists born at two very different moments and places, though not far away from each other: Ultra-red and Escuchatorio.

It is true that the transformation of the audience from simple receivers to more active participants dates back to the Avant-Gardes of the early 20th century (especially in the revolutionary Russia) and was significantly fuelled in the 60s thanks to the artistic practices which back then searched for a way to introduce art to daily life. A good example of this approach would be the unavoidable benchmark of the

Situationists or the first happenings, together with the effervescence of these kinds of practices in Latin America, where the pedagogical issue was tackled with cutting radicalness, as in the case of Paulo Freire, a key figure for Ultra-red. However, participatory art has gained an unquestionable interest in recent decades, becoming a genre in its own right and a clear protagonist of cultural policies which has led to the so-called "social turn" in art (Bishop, 2012).

This trend has created a heated debate which started with Nicolas Bourriaud's text *Esthétique relationelle* (1998). The core of the controversy is not only found in aesthetic issues (while Claire Bishop considers that the importance of aesthetics has been abandoned by the social issue [Bishop, 2012], other authors prefer to talk about Social Aesthetics precisely to emphasise the social perspective as the key feature of these artistic practices [Larsen, 1999]), but also on politics, since the kind of relationships created or the role played by artists are questioned. Thus, when Bourriaud initially celebrated relationships of any kind created by these types of artistic practices as something positive, his stance was criticised, for instance, by Hal Foster (2004), Jacques Rancière (2004), Claire Bishop (2012) and Gregory Sholette (2016).

Likewise, the discrepancies in the use of the adjectives "participatory" and "collaborative" bring forward a clear political element: while Grant Kester advocates the difference between adjectives to point out the different degrees of involvement and commitment by all parties in the creative process (higher in case of collaboration), Bishop considers both adjectives interchangeable (Kester, 2005; Bishop, 2012). In this text, we will use the term "collaboration" when the development of the project or process is shared by the different agents. In the remaining cases, we will use the term "participation".

When we ask ourselves about the different *whos* that are participating in the work of Ultra-red and Escuchatorio, we aim at the kind of relationships and barriers established between the different agents involved in the creative processes of these two collectives as well as at the levels of involvement. It is an approach that focuses more on the social aspect of this type of artistic practices and thus is far from considering the relationships created as good per se (as the relational aesthetic believes).

The main feature shared by Ultra-red and Escuchatorio is their strong political activism, both considering aesthetic issues as something more secondary. This emphasis on the social aspect of their work makes them not only question the capacity of their collaborative or participatory sound artistic practices of influencing politics, but also analyse the inherent intersubjective, relational and social aspects of listening itself. However, their critical analyses of their work and experiences are far apart from each other. The work and philosophy of Ultra-red is in itself a serious critique of relational aesthetics, while Escuchatorio (in a less critical

manner) analyses the type of relationships established in its actions (in this regard, the much longer trajectory of Ultra-red is not negligible).

Finally, it is important to point out that these intersubjective, relational and social issues concerning listening affect all the doing and thinking regarding sound art, either from clearly phenomenological positions, such as those maintained by Salomé Voegelin (2010, p. 94, 182) or Budhaditya Chattopadhyay (2015), or from statements or actions which uphold a more direct capacity of intervention and transformation of the social context, as in the case of Brandon LaBelle (2015, pp. XII-XIII) and Federica Bueti (2010).

Ultra-red and Escuchatorio

Ultra-red was created in 1994 in Los Angeles by Dont Rhine and Marco Larsen, active members of the ambient music scene. They are both involved in different organisations and in social and neighbourhood movements such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), an important activist movement dealing with the AIDS crisis. It is within this intersection of interests and artistic and political/activist implications that their first works are born: *Soundtrax* (1992-1996), a collaboration between the artists and the Los Angeles clean needle exchange programme, Clean Needles Now; *Second Nature* (1995-1998), an investigation into queer public sex in Los Angeles' Griffith Park; and *Structural Adjustments* (1997-2003), a shared investigation with the community members of Union de Vecinos during the mobilisations of Pico Aliso to defend social houses threatened by urban development plans.

This intersection also affects the artistic side of the equation. On the one hand, as a consequence of the openness of the organisation, new members from diverse artistic or activist contexts get involved. It should be noted that the frontiers which establish who belongs to Ultra-red and who does not are very dim due to both the collaborative feature of their works and the multiple activism of its members. At present, its more than 20 members are spread throughout the world: Los Angeles, New York, Berlin and the UK. On the other hand, their way of understanding and practising listening will be modified towards an increasing and deeper focus on its intersubjective component. As a result of this process, their work specially concentrates on the relationships established within the organisations in struggle in which they are involved, or which invite them (Ultra-red, 2000).

For its part, Escuchatorio started with the initiative launched at the end of August 2015 by a group of people linked to sound art and the radio in Mexico D.F. Similarly to what happened with Ultra-red, the number of members of this organisation has been changing in its different calls[1]. Escuchatorio is also a result of a double artistic and political trigger. The artistic trigger was the favourable reception generated by the participatory proposal from Félix Blume, one of the promoters of this group, for

the Day of Listening. Blume issued an open call to the public through CCD Radio, asking for recordings concerning the topic of water. The result was *Irradiación – Llamados por el agua*, a 12-hour broadcast on 18 July, including all the audios received[2].

The political trigger was the first anniversary of the terrible tragedy, which had been emblematic of the serious violent situation Mexico had been going through: the disappearance of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa. Escuchatorio joined the calls for protest in memory of that day and, through social networks and radios, asked people to share recordings from anywhere in the world around the theme of social protest (#EscuchatorioProtesta). For 43 hours, on 26 and 27 September, direct connections were made with the Mexico DF demonstration, and 438 audios were broadcast through an expanded network of Internet, AM and FM radios[3].

Up to now, there have been three other broadcasts. On 1 May 2016 (Labour Day), 202 recordings were broadcast for 12 hours and 50 minutes around the theme of walking as an act of resistance (#EscuchatorioCamina). In 2017, there was a call for silence (#EscuchatorioSilencio), where 110 sounds were broadcast for 19 hours and 10 minutes on 15 and 16 September, on the occasion of the Independence Day of Mexico which is celebrated with the ceremony of "the shout". The last broadcast took place within the international encounter *Connecting to the masses* (13 and 14 November 2017, Amsterdam), as a homage to the centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Social media and organisations in struggle

For each one of these events, Escuchatorio has resorted to the same strategy. They choose a date and a specific theme which they disseminate through social media as an open call. The decision concerning the date, always marked by an event with social implications, intends to "keep it simple" (Félix Blume, in Hernández, 2017), i.e. to make *anyone* feel committed and encouraged to participate. Escuchatorio's work is based on the premise that anyone can record sounds, largely due to the omnipresence of mobile phones. For Félix Blume, this (in principle) accessible action of sound recording is understood and fostered as a straightforward way of activating listening: if you stop to record something, you listen (Hernández, 2017). For this reason, they always try to encourage participation to the maximum extent by enabling direct and familiar channels for the sending of audios (WhatsApp and email) which are disseminated through Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, they provide advice on what can be recorded according to the theme suggested: in the case of #EscuchatorioProtesta, for instance demonstrations, protest songs, accounts, testimonies, slogans, the sound of pots and pans or compositions and in the case of #EscuchatorioCamina, steps, imaginary walks, daily walks or sound landscapes.

The audio material is never censored and always broadcast, no matter the quality, quantity or length of the recordings.

The starting point of the works from Ultra-red is more intricate[4]. As it has been pointed out, their collaborative researches regarding sound start *within* the organisations in struggle in which they are already involved, so there is a shared interest in the initiative. The sounds are recorded during the actions and in the places, they frequent (community organising, political protest, workplace dynamics or gay cruising), and those recordings are shared in collective listening sessions. The reflections and suggestions which come up are incorporated into subsequent actions and recordings or, for instance, into remixes created by the sounds of the protest and the environment, the voices of the members of the organisations and the words of the institution, together with electronically generated noise (Gilbert, 2004).

Although they have over the years received invitations from other organisations, spaces and institutions (educational institutions, museums or arts organisations, explicitly political groups or governmental agencies), Ultra-red has never abandoned this practice of working *from within*, which for them is the most important part of their reason for doing[5]. These invitations, which they do not always accept, usually entail a sort of crisis since they feel compelled to ask themselves about the relationship with the entity inviting them and the relationship they will be able to establish with the participants. Galleries, museums, educational institutions, political or activist groups are all situated. They are not neutral spaces, but rather a context for groups to develop in certain ways and not others, fraught with contradictions and particular differences. Moreover, they are built upon visible and invisible frontiers which establish who gains access and who feels encouraged to participate.

All these circumstances have a direct impact on the work of Ultra-red (Dont Rhine, in Ultra-red, 2014c). After all, it is these relationships that built a collective bond which have become the core of Ultra-red's practice, together with their critical approach. For Ultra-red, it is not about being at the service of an action or a cultural purpose, but to contribute to the establishment and development of relationships themselves, while also being able to modify them. It is about *doing* micropolitics[6].

Communities and *anyones*

Already in 1997, when in Pico Aliso they found out unexpectedly that what the neighbours most valued were interpersonal relationships, Ultra-red starts to focus their practice on the micropolitical scope as the "activist sound artists" they are. They do so by putting attention on the intersubjectivity brought into play by the listening. However, for Ultra-red the listening is not an end in itself, but a tool, among others, for the struggle in which the participating organisations are involved (Ultra-

red, 2014a, p.7). It should be stressed that they understand the listening as a collectively organised process, which, as such, is neither natural nor, by itself, establishes *good* relationships.

The key here would be to rely on the word "organised", which distinguishes Ultra-red's position from other more abstract, general or poetic proposals around the unavoidable intersubjective feature of the listening[7]. How we listen what we listen to can be analysed, articulated, communicated, shared, criticised or modified in a collective way. For this purpose, Ultra-red's work is based on the analysis carried out by Pierre Schaeffer on the different kinds of listening (listen, perceive, hear, comprehend, Schaeffer, 1966), which is subsequently filled with social issues and complemented by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (chapter III of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is almost compulsory reading for people wishing to attend the sessions or workshops organised by Ultra-red). In this sense, the listening is traversed by social and spatial positions, by the relationships established between the sound, the origin of this *sounding* and the listeners, together with the memories, affections, attentions, durations, etc., involved in perception (Ultra-red, in Gaboury, 2010)[8].

Shared listening manages to put at stake such kinds of issues by posing and sharing apparently simple questions such as "What did you hear?" This question for Ultra-red does not consider sound as an object with qualities and origins, but rather aims at a plural "you" traversed by social and historical issues. This puts the group's position in stark contrast to the phenomenological approaches of Nancy (2002), Voegelin (2010) or Chattopadhyay (2015), all of whom, from a first person singular, address the intersubjective side of shared resonances, involving affections, memories and desires, as given, in a more or less ontological sense, rather than something to be constructed collectively and historically. "What did you hear?" is one of the questions with which Ultra-red opens its working sessions and listening protocols as well as the publications which they use for sharing the different listening tools and experiences they have practiced throughout the years.

As a group, seeing each other's faces, exposing their bodies and sharing affection and long periods of time (the projects in which Ultra-red gets involved usually last for years), they listen to recorded sounds which inevitably have temporalities, contexts and actions inscribed on them: "Every sound exists in time and space. And since time and space are the building blocks of human activity and struggle, sound is a venue where perception meets action. It is where the body politics encounters the material." (Ultra-red, 2014a, p. 23)

They talk about what they have listened to, they record actions, walks or places, they articulate in order to analyse and vice versa, then they listen again in an open process that follows Freire's pedagogical approach. Hence, the memory and critical analysis of the sound and the listening deconstruct and are *at the same time*

interwoven with the social meanings, resulting in the emergence of the differences and contradictions around which the communities organise themselves. It is not a matter, in any case, of celebrating diversity *per se* nor of trying to suppress it in the search for uniformities or consensus, but rather that precisely the differences and contradictions as well as the silences hidden behind slogans can be listened to (Ultra-red, 2008). This listening, which puts the "multivalence" of subjectivities at stake (Ultra-red, 2013, p. 2), does not leave anyone unharmed and affects how the group understands and organises itself as well as the struggle with which the group is engaged and how *another* world is made.

SILENT/LISTEN is a great example of Ultra-red's work. This research, carried out between 2005 and 2006 and focused on the AIDS issue, stems from the attempt to build spaces in which the loss and pain can incorporate a critical language against dehumanisation. It consisted of a series of encounters/performances where the participants listened to John Cage's *4'33"* together with the counterpoint of the renowned anti-homophobic slogan "SILENCE = DEATH" from ACT UP. The questions "What did you hear?" and "When was the last time you were in this space to talk about AIDS?" were asked to health care professionals, community organisers, activists and other individuals related to the AIDS epidemic.

Apart from sharing, listening and discussing the loss, pain and silence, SILENT/LISTEN intended to create a network which would link each one of the different places where the action took place[9]. The way suggested to interweave listenings and voices entailed sharing the sound material generated in previous encounters. Hence, the different meetings were recorded and the resulting audios were collectively edited in order to listen to them again. Additionally, several albums were published (*A Silence Broken*, *An Archive of Silence*, *The Minutes*) and new installations were created, such as *The Record*, in 2006, or *Untitled (for six voices)*, in 2008.

The Record is a sound and visual installation consisting of seven copies of Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting* (the visual equivalent of John Cage's *4'33"*), the number of SILENT/LISTEN encounters/performances carried out. Through speakers placed on white tables, one can listen to statements of the different collaborators and participants in the research, interspersed with moments of silence, in which the prevailing feelings were those of confusion and sadness. On the other hand, *Untitled (for six voices)* involves six members of a group of activists who work on the prevention of HIV in penitentiary facilities, the defence of the human rights of the imprisoned and the abolition of prisons. One can see them on six different screens performing brief excerpts of the audios registered during the previous encounters of SILENT/LISTEN[10]. By spreading this collective, creative process, the silences, sounds, voices and words are shared, listened to over and over, analysed and activated, leaving the issues open and weaving relationships without looking for resolutions, but rather for alterations and ways to keep on struggling.

Silence is also the protagonist of one of the actions/calls/broadcasts of Escuchatorio. As mentioned before, 110 audios concerning the theme of silence were broadcast for 19 hours between 15 and 16 September 2017. Though it did not have a single purpose, this *silent* call certainly contained a nature of protest against "el grito" ("the shout") and the calling of the bells with which the independence of Mexico is celebrated each year (in fact, this call brings to mind some of the silent actions carried out by the EZLN[11]). Escuchatorio asked for audios and images (a novelty introduced in this call) in order to share how each participant understands or feels a silence which can be in the form of an action, a composition, a protest or a search. As in the previous actions organised by Escuchatorio, the answers received were not uniform since the people participating come from different places and conditions (even though the majority are active members of the sound art and radio communities).

However, the diversity received and broadcast has a very different effect than the one created by the differences emerging in Ultra-red's practice. In the latter case, their practice of listening and sound register and creation favours the emergence of the differences and contradictions which come up in each organisation, in each *us*. On the contrary, the expanded radio of Escuchatorio seeks to interweave a vague *us* around the world, a network of shared listenings through resonances which, albeit vague, in some way connect the people who protest in any place against Power and its prevailing discourses for the period each one of their actions lasts (a power understood as something external to confront with shouts, slogans or silences [Mónica Nepote in Hernández, 2017]).

Unlike the long-lasting questioning processes implemented by Ultra-red, Escuchatorio proposes one-off and ephemeral listening actions which accumulate temporarily voices, slogans, causes, struggles and territories and show the common features shared among those who stand up (Flores, 2017). This *additive* listening, propelled by the urgency of *now*, is based on the premise that those who become engaged in listening are already capable of committing themselves to what they are listening to and on the fact that this commitment is also, in itself, positive. This way of creating an *us* from anyone in such an open way, together with their political and trustful use of social networks, is clearly inherited from the social movements which took place in different countries in 2011: The Arab Spring, 15M and the different *Occupies*. It is no coincidence that many of the audios broadcast during #EscuchatorioProtesta came from those mobilisations[12].

Spaces and times

Both in their ways of doing and understanding the listening in a "political" sense, Escuchatorio and Ultra-red are highly characterised by the activism to which they

belong and which they put into practice. Escuchatorio sees the listening as an exercise of resistance which mainly engages those who are already offering some resistance to Power. This is because – although their calls are open the participation of anyone – the *anyones* who feel appealed have to be interested in the themes suggested and identified with the kind of language used and its strong political feature. Moreover, they need to have the capacity and possibility of participating and be accustomed to accessing and using the media from which they disseminate and broadcast their actions. Neither the internet nor the social media are neutral spaces – they have their frontiers and impose their times and manners. Therefore, the participants of Escuchatorio's actions are mainly people already engaged with sound practices and people who share certain political profiles and frequently use social media.

That said, the call is open so it may reach unexpected people and places. For this purpose, Escuchatorio establishes, for instance, mobile listening points in which the participants offer their mobile phones and laptops to listen to the broadcasts in the streets, cafeterias, libraries etc. These places are created in the network built by Escuchatorio as an expanded radio: from the internet and the AM and FM radio stations to the streets which proclaim them, via all the places where those sounds are recorded and listened to, such as the private rooms which peep out to the internet from any point of the planet[13], places which ensure that the voices are heard so that they are listened to.

Thus, the audience of Escuchatorio is built with the *sounders* in this multiple spatiality. Since it is not an archieve the *us* of those who intend to share and find each other in the listening is compounded during the *now* of each call. Also, although the brief compilations elaborated after these broadcasts open the door to audiences oblivious to the events themselves, the simple act of listening to these protests would for Escuchatorio already be a way of acting in itself, since it means taking the time to listen to something which we are not paying attention to, but which is being silenced and is trying to question us.

In the case of Ultra-red, the spaces interwoven by the shared listenings are those of organisations or communities: meeting places, inhabited places, spaces of protest or shelter. These are personal spaces and territories underpinned by shared experiences which, at the same time, are eventually shared outwards through installations or albums. We have already pointed out that the priority for Ultra-red is the listening research process from within. Nevertheless, its legacy comes from the activist tradition of the feminist self-awareness groups, the LGBTI groups and the AIDS movement (Robert Sember, in Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 36). The audios and other cultural objects generated during Ultra-red's researches are the result of a process aimed at this internal process, within which anyone who listens is a researcher: there is no audience *within* (Ultra-red, 2014a, p. 30).

The fact that an audience exists outside is, in principle, a side effect and also a risk, since it is disconnected from processes of listening as situated and personal as these (Janna Graham, in Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 129). For this reason, the decision of exhibiting the material generated and the way to do it belongs to those who have been involved in its production.

An interesting case is that of *Vogue'ology* (2009-2011), which stems from the invitation of the House|Ballroom community to Ultra-red. It is important to note that Robert Sember, a member of Ultra-red and an HIV/AIDS instructor, was formerly linked to this community (Ultra-red, in Gaboury, 2010). This collaboration is materialised in a community archive that seeks to plot a historiography that contributes to the construction of both the past and the future by asking how, by whom, for whom, under what conditions and for what purpose the history is told. Objects like dresses, photographs and videos, proposals and assertions comprised this archive generated by the House|Ballroom community which was shown at Ultra-red's pedagogical initiative *School of Echoes*. Framed within popular education, this initiative intends to activate pedagogical spaces to develop and spread activist sound investigation. Within this initiative, several encounters have been held in different places, bringing together activists and artists in order to explore issues such as racism, gender justice, migration, struggles, housing, health and education by means of the listening and sound.

Placing *Vogue'ology* within School of Echoes, Ultra-red tried to prevent the "safe" encounter between the listeners/spectators and the House|Ballroom community through the distant contemplation of an archive with cross-cutting racial, economic and gender issues as if it were something external to them. On the contrary, the focus was established on the position of the listeners themselves due to how the material was shown and, particularly, by fostering meetings and debates on how objects and meanings are linked. Hence, the external listening was aimed at the very context of the recipients of this archive and at the relationships which were created, and not at its origin. This effect is the result of Ultra-red's determination to look for the proliferation of collectives committed to experimenting with a synthesis of political education, political organising and cultural action (Dont Rhine, in Ultra-red, 2014c). Demonstrating this same determination, they have published a series of texts called *Protocols* in which they share their sound investigations in a practical way.

Both the *Vogue'ology* archive and the different Protocols are perfect examples of how time is woven into Ultra-red's work. Within this work, the temporalities that are forged link the memory to what is yet to come through a present which is questioned by means of the listening. If the world has to be transformed in order to create other possibilities, how and who relates the past is crucial, since this account shapes the future (Ultra-red, in Gaboury, 2010). Ultra-red needs long periods, unhur-

ried processes which allow the emergence of the full power of sound as a producer of issues, dislocations and problems through a shared listening which places those *hows* and *whos* at the forefront, thus affecting the community or organisation. Escuchatorio, on the contrary, is propelled by the urgency of now, by all those mobilisations and protests against a deaf and deafening Power which need to know they are not alone. The *anyones* are joining a vague *us* when they listen to sounds or silences in which they can recognise themselves, with this addition seeking to multiply the forces and the possibility of changing something.

Macro and micro policies (conclusions)

This article has attempted to track the relationships woven within the participatory sound practices created by Ultra-red and Escuchatorio. By following the threads of who proposes, who participates, who feels engaged, who stops to listen and who is listened (or silenced) in a participatory sound action, one can outline the maps of a listening understood from the intersubjective perspective. This intersubjectivity sustains the political challenge of both groups, although with a varying degree of involvement and different fields of influence.

Escuchatorio is aimed, in principle, at anyone from any part of the world, even though the initiative of each call comes from a specific group of people. The involvement required from participants in this case is not very strong since the actions are intended to remain as simple as possible: quite broad themes, highly familiar technical and social media, limited periods of action. However, not everyone has access to social networks or recording media (no matter how widespread they are) or feels engaged by the suggested topics of each call (considering their political bias). Indeed, it is other frontiers that Escuchatorio manages to bridge on their expanded radio: those of far-away and diverse places where the voices which protest against a ubiquitous, multiform and deaf Power come from and arrive (a capitalised Power, as it is macro-politics). Interestingly, in spite of the global character of their proposals, the major influence of Escuchatorio's calls happens within the local sphere. This finding and listening to each other, albeit among a vague *us*, can help to sharpen the listening among the closer voices which are perhaps being silenced as well as to stop feeling alone, thus gathering strength for each one of the particular and diverse battles being fought.

In the case of Ultra-red, the emphasis is on the internal relationships so the groups and individuals who participate in their processes are specific and small. The involvement required for these kinds of micropolitical-focused processes is also quite demanding. On the one hand, long periods are needed so that each step can be shared collectively. On the other hand, the commitment is strong since the groups are directly affected by a conflict situation in which each gesture has a weight.

This high level of involvement can keep the people who have not shared the process from feeling concerned. It is not only the themes which may seem unfamiliar, but the artistic objects generated in such situated environments may be difficult to understand. However, this emphasis on relationships precisely fosters a surprisingly broad field of concern in Ultra-red's actions: any group or organisation, any of us can feel challenged since the issue at stake is how the relationships which sustain them are built and how they can be modified (or not) by the listening. For Ultra-red, this power (in lower case) is always a matter of relationships. It is from this point of view that we can understand their commitment to transform the world by analysing how and who listens.

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Notes

1   Some of the members who have been involved in Escuchatorio are Félix Blume, Juanpablo Avendaño, Diego Aguirre, Mónica Nepote, Mirna Castro, Sofía Ortega, Eric Flores Mely, Ávila, Luis Silva, Esteban Azuela, Brenda Hernández, Marcel Miranda, Rafael Olivarría, Marcela Flores Méndez, Nadia Baram, Salvador Chávez, Jacob Wick, Carlos Gamboa and Edith Caballero.

2   Here one can listen to a summary of this event and read the names or alias of the 52 "sound authors" who participated:
https://soundcloud.com/ccd-radio/llamados-por-el-agua?in=ccd-radio/sets/irradiaci-n

3   Here one can listen to a 43-minutes piece which contains part of what was broadcast that day:
http://surplusediciones.com/audiovisual/43-minutos

4   It is necessary to state that this text does not intend to compare the work of both groups, but to think with them. For this purpose, it has to be taken into consideration that the trajectory of Ultra-red is much longer in time, as it is their critical written material (we cannot avoid either that the type of activism within which this group has developed its work favours a constant self-reflection exercise). On the other hand, Escuchatorio is presently going through a reconfiguration process whose results nobody knows.

5   In the controversy generated around the participation of Ultra-red in the 2017 mobilisations of Boyle Heights (Los Angeles) against the gentrification caused by art galleries, one clearly notices the permanent engagement of the members of this organisation with the neighbour-

ing and social communities in struggle. The following links show a part of the controversy created, as well as Ultra-red's clear answer:

https://www.x-traonline.org/online/ultra-red-a-response-to-op-ed-an-ultra-red-line/
https://www.x-traonline.org/online/nizan-shaked-a-response-to-op-ed-an-ultra-red-line/
https://www.x-traonline.org/online/travis-diehl-op-ed-an-ultra-red-line/#footnote-17

At present, the fraction of Ultra-red located in London is also involved in the neighbour mobilisations against gentrification in Elephant & Castle:

https://es-es.facebook.com/ultraredcollective/posts/1739149149512134
http://35percent.org/
https://elephantamenity.wordpress.com/

6   All this requires time and levels of involvement which the short workshops for people who do not know each other cannot offer or reach. However, Ultra-red sometimes carries out this type of workshops, maybe hoping to plant seeds which will blossom later in unexpected ways, as it happened in Milan, where a group was created to continue with the work started in one of their workshops, something that, for instance, did not happen in Madrid after the workshop there in 2009.

7   The intersubjective feature of listening, which actively or passively entails collective relationships, is clear in concerts or music parties, where it has become a crucial aspect in contemporary music and sound art since the twentieth century. The experimental actions of John Cage and Fluxus, the Soundscape project of Murray Schafer, the soundwalks of Hildegard Westerkamp or Janet Cardiff, or the installations of Max Neuhaus are just some recognised examples of sound practices that intend to alter the social and shared nature of listening, making the listeners participate without previously analysing and establishing how to listen, and the approach of listening without looking for this alteration as the result of a shared assembly process.

8   In the *Practice Sessions. Workbook* we find an example of how Ultra-red politically interprets the four-listening diagram of Schaeffer by using examples taken from his listening sessions with organisations:

"1. Listen [Écouter Fr./ *Escuchar* Es.] OBJECTIVE-CONCRETE. Example: "I hear a sound caused by a Los Angeles Police squad car siren."

2. Perceive [*Ouïr* Fr./ *Oír* Es.] SUBJECTIVE-CONCRETE. *Example*: "I hear a sound that I perceive to fluctuate in pitch between high to low. The sound ricochets off the buildings and causes me terrible pain the closer it approaches."

3. Hear [*Entendre* Fr./ *Entender* Es.] SUBJECTIVE-ABSTRACT. *Example*: "I hear a sound that I associate with my first encounter with the police. I was afraid they would take my brother from us. Today I hear and see the police in my neighborhood more than ever."

4. Comprehend [*Comprendre* Fr./*Comprender* Es.] OOBJECTIVE-ABSTRACT. *Example*: "I hear a sound that signifies the 70% that Los Angeles spends its city budget on public safety. The police tell us that they bring safety. But organizing the community is how we have created safety in our neighborhood." (Ultra-red, 2014a, p. 25).

9   The locations where SILENT|LISTEN was carried out were the Baltimore Museum of Art in Baltimore, U.S.A., the Armand Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, U.S.A., the Walter Philips Gallery in Banff, Canada, the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, U.S.A., Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, U.S.A., and the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, Canada.

Ultra-red explains having chosen museums and galleries because it was in those spaces that they were able to start bringing together the organisations during the AIDS crisis. (http://www.ultrared.org/pso8.html).

An important aspect which has not been addressed here is that Ultra-red included a contextualised interpretation of Cage's famous work within its historic moment. For further information, see Barret, 2016.

10   Free access to these works is also an important feature of the political proposal of Ultra-red which keeps questioning the type of relationships we establish. Audios and publications of and about SILENT/LISTEN are available at Ultra-red's website: http://www.ultrared.org/pso8.html

11   For instance, the silent marches of 21 December 2012, which gathered more than 50.000 people, or the march of 8 October 2014 in protest against the disappearance of the 43 students of Ayotzinapa. Apart from sharing the different statements or calls of the zapatistas on social networks, Escuchatorio made an explicit reference to the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in their previous call, #EscuchatorioCamina, when they quoted the beginning of the statement of the "Silent March" of the EZLN in 2012: "Did you hear? It's the sound of your world collapsing."

12   During the 15M movement, several sound artists remained very active. Apart from registering many sound recordings of what happened those days, several participatory calls were made to disseminate specific actions such as pots and pans protests on social media (#YesWeKlang). A part of this interest in the movement from the sound artistic practice can be found in the album *15M. Un minuto para la historia.* [*15M. A minute for history*].

13   For instance, for #EscuchatorioProtesta they received sound registers of demonstrations, protest songs, accounts, testimonies, slogans, the sound of pots and pans, prayers, compositions, etc. from Mexico, Brazil, USA, Spain, France, Colombia, Australia, Canada, Luxembourg, Belgium, Chile, Germany, United Kingdom and Uruguay.

The radios which broadcast for the 43 hours the action lasted were: wmwmwm.net (DF, MX) / phauneradio.com (FR) / grafofonia.blogspot (DF, MX) / resistenciamodulada.com (DF, MX) / laescuchaatenta.com (ES) / lecassetete.org (Marseille, FR) / lumpenradio.com (Chicago, USA) / lacasadelcine.mx (DF, MX) / ibero909.fm (DF, MX) / noFM (DF, MX) / p-node (USA) / Radio Huayacocotla (Veracruz, MX) / Kchung (Los Angeles, USA) / Radio Ambulante (San Francisco, USA) / Fluxo (São Paulo, BR) / Andromeda-tv (JP) / TeaFM.net (Zaragoza, ES) / Pájaros en el alambre (Oaxaca, MX) / Carbonproyecto (ES) / Intonarumori (Murcia, ES) / WebSynradio (FR) / Le Bruitagène (FR) / Oaxaca 3.0 (Oaxaca, MX) / Canal Sud (Toulouse, FR) / Radio Libre (CO) / Radio Campus Bruxelles (FR) / Radio Galère (FR) / Rancho electrónico (DF, MX) / Fréquence Paris Plurielle 106.3 FM (Paris, FR) / Teslaradio (Málaga, ES) / Radio Ara (FR) / Self noise project (MX) / Radio Paax (MX) / Radio Grenouille (FR, Marseille) / Radio Unam (DF, MX) / El Ruido es el Mensaje (AR) / Radio Tlayuda (MX) / Sonic Protest (Paris, FR) / Fundación-Colección EPPCI A.C.