Hoor de Bomen (Vathorst, 2009)

In contrast to earlier walks, the audio in Hoor de Bomen (Listen to the Trees) does not actually guide the listener between the locations, this is done by a folder with a map and photographs. Each chosen tree has a short audio piece connected with it, with more or less text depending on the context. The sound materials are all recorded from the trees themeselves and in the immediate location, which gives a formal connection to place, often concretised by the accompanying text. The text invites the walker to look at the particular tree and the surroundings, sometimes giving historical information, sometimes imagining the future. It was made in the aftermath of the financial crisis which had caused many of the urban developments in the area to be paused. Many locations were then a strange mixture of buildingsite, wasteland, farmland and "nature".

A re-activation of the work would be relatively simple to realise seeing as it consists of individual tracks played at particular static locations. But the advised route and the condition of the trees needs to be checked. Much of the original route led over empty fields which have been built on since then. If some locations are impossible, a similar location should be found.

from the proposal:

Vathorst and memory.

Although they appear superficially to belong to different architectural periods, the buildings of Vathorst are mostly not more than 5 years old. Most of them are built using the same techniques and materials. The history of this new town would seem only to exist in the memories that the inhabitants bring with them from other places. However, the patches of green which will survive the extensive building program and some of the paths which follow routes existing from before the master plan contain traces of a much older memory of place. I am interested in creating a circuit of places which seem to tap into this memory, places which can provide an awareness of this history of landscape in contrast to the ever-accelerating urban development.

Trees.

Many of the trees are older than the houses. In addition to being older, and having witnessed the process of transformation from agricultural land to (sub)urban area, the trees also reflect the changing of the seasons. They are keepers of a cyclical perception of time that contrasts with the linear idea of "progress".

The project is to create a series of sound pieces to reveal the internal world of the trees, to focus for a while on the natural elements of the town, to refer to the passing of the seasons, and to create a network or route of "special" places within the town. I will choose the trees in order to give examples of the different types of trees in the area, but also to form a route when the trees are visited in turn. I imagine that about 6 different sites / trees will be chosen.

The route takes the visitor through different parts of Vathorst, and connects some of the more important (public) spaces with other places that would otherwise be overlooked. As a large part of the area is still under construction, the choice of the trees will have to be made carefully in consultancy with the interested parties (Vario Mundo, planners, bouwbedrijven, stadsbiologen.) The route itself is also open to discussion – I would favour using the "lint" as the main connecting route, because of its circular form, but equally a route could be chosen which would form a "cultural axis."

The sound pieces:

The sounds are collected by attaching special microphones to the trunk and branches of a tree. One can hear the sound of the wind, the movements of the tree and its leaves, but

also surrounding sounds filtered through the wood of the tree. We actually hear the world through the body of the tree itself. This sound suggests a shadow-world, an alternative world where the permanence and slowness of the tree itself stands in contrast to the surrounding human business. Other metaphorical references are the tree as "antenna" – a receiver of vibration and radiation, and the tree as connection between the lived world and the underworld.

I will make recordings of the chosen trees at different times during the year, in different weather conditions, and at different times of the day. I will then compose the sounds into short pieces, representing the sounds of each tree. Sometimes I will have to process the sounds produced by the trees in order to bring them into the range of human hearing.

Presentation / Installation.

My ideal presentation form would be to have a headphone socket in each tree which the listener could just plug in to. For technical reasons and for the tree's welfare however, this is impractical. I suggest here two possibilities for presenting the pieces which differ in cost and permanence

I proposed two possibilities -

1) placing poles with headphone sockets next to the trees
2) an audio tour, the audio online and downloadable but also audio players to be borrowed from the information centre.

The "audio tour" option was chosen for various, mostly financial reasons. A map / folder / poster was designed and spread through the neighbourhood. For the opening and on a few other occasions, guided group walks took place. After the project finished, I hosted it for a number of years on my personal website.