

RADIOORTUNG – radio plays for walkers (dradio-ortung.de)

"RADIOORTUNG – radio plays for walkers" is a newly developed series of radio plays for mobile phones, designed and produced by Deutschlandradio Kultur.

To date three radio play projects have been developed, which were run jointly between the summer of 2010 and autumn 2011 with the co-production partners of the Hebbel am Ufer Berlin, Deutsches Theater Berlin and Schauspiel Köln theatres in Berlin and Cologne.

All three of these radio plays tell stories that are linked to locations and non-linear, as well as also reflecting the latest mobile technologies, in order to create an awareness of the everyday, often hidden interventions into the listener's everyday life through localization, data collection and storage. The radio plays can be experienced within the city using the free, downloadable RADIOORTUNG App (Android) as well as online on the interactive map (dradio-ortung.de).

The idea behind RADIOORTUNG was explicitly not to recreate a geocaching event nor a location-based adaptation of a novel such as Alfred Döblin's "Berlin Alexanderplatz" at Alexanderplatz. Rather, the radio drama department wanted to react artistically to the new mobile technologies, in such a way that the technology itself becomes a player within the individual stories.

For the radio station Deutschlandradio Kultur, RADIOORTUNG is therefore also an experiment with which we are attempting to explore the radio of tomorrow and experiment playfully with new ways of distributing radio plays and features as artistic forms of radio using apps and the Internet.

The second radio play project in the RADIOORTUNG series "50 Aktenkilometer. Ein begehbare Stasi Hörspiel" (*50 kilometres of files. A walk-in Stasi radio drama*) was produced by the Rimini Protokoll theatrical collective. For their mobile phone radio play, Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzl pull Stasi files from the archives into the present day in the city of Berlin.

50 kilometres of files. A walk-in Stasi radio drama

More than 50 kilometres of files are stored in the central archives of the Federal Commission for the Stasi records. Protocols of actions, meetings, talks. From this material, Rimini Protokoll developed a site-specific radio play, in which the subjects of former observations approach their files at the site of observation. About one hundred people were interviewed, recall or reconstruct observations with a microphone. And what do the observation protocols sound like at the site they were recorded for those who were observed at the time, and how quickly can one switch from being uninvolved to becoming an active player? Looking at the familiar ordinariness of the city with the original sound recordings of the time in your ears, a strange picture puzzle is created: how easy it is to read an alternative interpretation into a banal story, how quickly does something become official and unquestionable, simply because it has been recorded in writing? Alone or in groups, dealing with the role of the surveillance authority is a matter for the strollers and online visitors themselves - in search of the audio portals in the city beneath the city.

Description of the contextual implementation

For the radio play, many of those affected applied for the first time for access to their files from the BStU, the agency of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi records of the former German Democratic Republic. Recordings of the bureaucratic process of applying for the files and readings of what people in their immediate vicinity recorded concerning their lives, are made audible. The protagonists delve into "Progress Reports", intercepted letters and previously unseen photographs at the site where the former observation took place. They are confused, disgusted or read with interest, laughing and wondering about this diary parallel to their own lives which was kept by the state.

Following a research phase in the archives of the Federal Commissioner for the State Security Service Documents of the former GDR lasting several months, and appeals through newspaper advertisements, Rimini Protokoll found a large number of people who were prepared to assist the project. Along with the parties involved (both victims and perpetrators from the State Security Service of the former GDR) they gained access to the files and conducted a series of interviews based on this. These interviews were edited in the recording studio into more than 120 short narratives of between two and 15 minutes in length.

In addition to the interviews, the radio play also includes original sound documents from the period between 1975 and 1990: telephone records from the Stasi's so-called central operational headquarters, the telephone exchange which received all calls concerning events observed. Based on these documents, the listener finds out what kind of things the employees of the State Security Service reported and how the exchange of information took place in the age before the digital revolution.

A total of approximately 10 hours of audio material were distributed across the Google Map of Berlin. The city is accessible as an audible, highly subjective archive.

Description of the technical implementation

Using a programmed interactive map, the sound documents were stored on the digital street map in such a way that listeners trigger the radio plays with GPS mobile phones while walking through the city. The Android app constantly compares the position data from the radio play files on the map with the location of the listener and the radio play starts as soon as the listener enters the active radius of a audio point.

With its co-production partner the Hebbel am Ufer Berlin, the radio station lent out mobile phones from a central location over a period of 12 weeks, so that listeners without their own Android smartphones would also be able to walk through the radio play.

Visitors were issued a preprogrammed smartphone with headphones and a radio play street map, with the help of which they were able to move independently through the city without a pre-defined route or sequence. Unlike a pre-composed audio tour, the user decides when in the city itself, how he wants to walk through his own radio play, when he switches from one 'acoustic bubble' to another, when he moves on, makes a turn, turns around, moves from one recording to another, where he goes into depth, what he leaves out.

A further part of the project was the so-called control centre. The interactive map was projected on the wall at the place where the mobile phones were issued so that visitors could follow current listeners live on the map. The visitors to the control centre were also able to eavesdrop on the radio play which was currently being listened to by visitors walking through the city.

In addition to this, SMS messages could be sent to the walkers to direct their attention to

certain things, places or events. Certain SMS messages were also programmed by location, for example, if a visitor passed a certain corner where the path forwards was blocked from sight by a building site. At the end of the auditory tour, each visitor was given a printout of the street map in the control centre showing the route he had walked. In this way, the feeling of being observed was confirmed retrospectively.

The radio plays from the RADIOORTUNG series also remain accessible to the users on their own computers after the event: online visitors can move at any time through the acoustic observation street map of "50 kilometres of files" on the website. Owners of Android mobile phones can also download the app free from the project's website, as well as all of the audio files and go on a discovery tour through Berlin.

Contributors

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