TATE-Á-TATE:

An exploration of Soundwalks and their potential for achieving sustainability.

Submitted by Robert Black to the University of Exeter as a dissertation towards the degree of Master of Science by advanced study in Sustainable Development, August 2012

I certify that all material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified with appropriate acknowledgement and referencing and I also certify that no material is included for which a degree has previously been conferred upon me.

..........................
ABSTRACT:

This paper is an autoethnographical piece based on the burgeoning relationship between art and sustainability. It seeks to explore the transformative potential of performance art to help achieve sustainability using PLATFORM’s Tate-á-Tate alternative audio guides as an example of participatory performance art. The audio guides are a form of participatory activism that seek to disrupt sponsorship of the Tate galleries by BP; and are also a soundwalk performance. The paper will firstly outline the existing relationship between art and sustainability and then move on to define the soundwalk as performance art. It will then discuss the reasons for using autoethnography as the methodological approach. The main part of the paper will then examine the soundwalks as a transformative method through a combination of autoethnographical detail and theoretical discussion. It will examine the practicalities of soundwalking, the role of walking and senses, the concept of slow activism, and performance pedagogy.

Acknowledgements:

I would particularly like to thank my supervisor Ian Cook for his enthusiasm and Sophie Milner for listening.
CONTENTS:

ABSTRACT p. 2

INTRODUCTION p. 4

SUSTAINABILITY & ART p. 7

WHAT IS A SOUNDWALK? p. 14

METHODOLOGY p. 16

ETHNOGRAPHY & DISCUSSION p. 19

Tate Britain – Panaudicon p. 19

Tate Boat – This is not an oil tanker p. 33

Tate Modern – Drilling for Dirt p. 38

CONCLUSION p. 51

REFERENCES p. 53

List of Figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My activist toolkit</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tate Modern Visitor Entrance</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>JMW Turner’s ‘The Golden Bough’</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Joseph Wright of Derby’s ‘Sir Brooke Boothby’</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Francis Bacon’s ‘Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a crucifixion’</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>William Holman Hunt ‘The Awakening Conscience’</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Tate boat at the Bankside pier</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jannis Kounellis ‘Untitled 1979’</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Joseph Beuys ‘Lightning with Stag in its Glare’</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Maria Merz ‘Untitled (Living Sculpture)’</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Turbine Hall</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION:

One of the original motivations for this paper came from an article in the Harvard Business Review called ‘Stop Documenting, Start Experiencing’ (Gulati, 2012). The article discussed a friend tweeting ‘I do’ as he got married. This is a sign of our times; social media rules with people focused on documenting their lives rather than experiencing them. For sustainability social media is the buzzword of the moment and there is great potential to spread ideas to a large audience. There is a thought here though about how spreading information is actually affecting the recipients, are we really engaging someone through social media? Or is there still a degree of detachment between the online and offline personalities and in turn is there a further widening the value-action gap? The worry is that sustainability forgets the potential of other methods and disciplines in its social media crusade. PLATFORM’s alternative audio tours explored here will provide an example of engagement and transformative behavior change that can be achieved using alternative methods from other disciplines.

This paper aims to add credence to the budding relationship between art and sustainability. “Art methodologies are a range of ways of sensing, doing and knowing generated in art that are now circulating more haphazardly, perhaps less systematically, and requiring of a renewed form of understanding in order to trace and develop them” (Fuller, 2008, p. 45). Sustainability is commonly perceived as an ecological and economic problem – a model based on a correlation between quantifiable resources and qualitative desires of progress in social, economic and environmental terms (Kurt, 2006). Sustainability though is also a cultural challenge, it requires a shift in society’s ideals and desires, and culture is an expression of societies collective conscience. It is on this notion that art can be influential in the sustainability debate. Its methodologies can express messages in ways that society responds to and in forms not restricted by conventional disciplinary or political boundaries and rules. This paper will examine the alternative audio tour interventionist sound artworks commissioned by the art activism groups PLATFORM, Liberate Tate and Art Not Oil. It will explore how they work and what they do and use the audio tours as an
example of performance art to discuss the potential for art in engagement and transformative behaviour change for sustainability.

The audio tours were developed in response to the ongoing sponsorship relationship between British Petroleum (herein referred to as BP) and the Tate galleries. Whilst the power, influence and activities of fossil fuel multinationals is in itself a major issue for sustainability, this paper will focus the discussion on exploring how the alternative tours work as a piece of activism and as a medium for transformative behaviour change. The outcome being whether what is being done here firstly works and secondly what about it works. The findings of this research will provide insight into how we as sustainability pioneers can engage individuals, encourage participation and foster individual critical thought; all aspects that can lead to strong pedagogical learning and strong behaviour change.

PLATFORM is a group that combines “art, activism, education and research in one organisation. This approach enables [them] to create unique projects driven by the need for social and ecological justice” (PLATFORM, 2012). Their “art connects...on an emotional level...the artists open up spaces for transformation, inspiration and change” (PLATFORM, 2012).

In developing the audio tours the initial brief called sound artists to “install a new acoustic territory inside the Tate, to create a sound artwork that [could] occupy the Tate space yet exist within a much broader conceptual landscape” (Liberate Tate, 2011). This led to the development of three separate sound artworks or soundwalks collectively called Tate-á-Tate (PLATFORM(a), 2012).

The Tate-á-Tate alternative audio tours begin with Ansuman Biswas’ piece entitled Panaudicon at Tate Britain. The second tour to listen to, whilst you take the Tate Boat from Millbank to the Tate Modern, was created by Isa Suarez, Mae Martin and Mark McGowan. Once at the Tate Modern the third and final tour by Phil England and Jim Welton can be listened to. Each tour is independent and can be listened to in isolation from the others or in the comfort of your own home,
though each is situated so for the full experience it is necessary to visit the galleries.

This paper will firstly outline the sustainability and art relationship and how it can benefit sustainability, this will be further explored in the main body of text. It will then provide a definition of soundwalks and briefly cover their purpose. The next section will be the methodology, outlining what an autoethnographic research approach is and why it is necessary for this paper. These sections will provide a framework for further discussion as to why and how soundwalks (and performance art) as a form of art, using the PLATFORM audio tour example, can benefit sustainability. The main part of this paper will combine theoretical discussion amongst the autoethnographical detail. This will enable the reader to think about the theory behind art and sustainability whilst, to a certain extent, experiencing the audio tours; hopefully enabling a clearer understanding of soundwalks potential to sustainability.
SUSTAINABILITY & ART:  

Sustainability “speaks to the reconciliation of social justice, ecological integrity, and the well being of all living systems on the planet. The goal is to create an ecologically and socially just world within the means of nature without compromising future generations” (Moore, 2005, p. 78 in Kagan & Kirchberg, 2008). It is a concept that is relevant to everyone in society, from multinational corporations to academics from all disciplines and to the everyday person on the street. Its interpretations vary person to person as Ratner (2004) discusses when calling it a ‘dialogue of values’. Sustainable development is multidimensional with social, economic and ecological goals that, in practice, sometimes converge and other times require difficult trade-offs (Ratner, 2004). The key challenges reside “at the interfaces – synergies and trade-offs – between its various dimensions” (Lehtonen, 2004, p. 199). However, to achieve its goal sustainability has for too long been focused “on hardware updates, such as new technologies, economic incentives, policies and regulations, and too little on software revisions, that is cultural transformations affecting our ways of knowing, learning, valuing and acting together” (Kagan, 2012, p. 12). Kagan argues that there is great potential in ‘art’ to lead to the “global environ(mental) change” (Kagan, 2012, p. 12) that will highlight the complex interdependencies required to embrace sustainability fully; and assist a move away from a normative and simplistic reality. The complex interdependencies that form reality and must be grasped to have a complete understanding of sustainability will not be seen until we move beyond the detached modern dichotomies towards an embodied learning process.

Hildergard Kurt has been a keen promoter for the potential of art in sustainability; stating that there is currently little understanding of contemporary art amongst sustainability practitioners. She believes the prevalent discourse is that “artistic practices are reduced to mere entertainment, decorative in character, simply filling in gaps between the so-called ‘real contributions’” (Kurt, 2006, p. 134). Conversely on a practical level artists deal with situations and aspects of society that are relevant; it is “artists whose work
is based on a political awareness of modern and contemporary art that have produced and continue to produce a notable repertoire of forms, presentations, and strategies for the sustainable reformulation of the lived world” (Kurt, 2006, p. 138). Moreover their works “explicitly incorporate different modes of knowledge – the imaginative and poetic, the reasoned, the factual, the emotional, the sensual, narrative and reflective analysis. The contexts and settings may have aesthetic and metaphoric elements” (Heim, 2005, p. 202). Expanding on this Leviseur believes an artist can bring “a focused concentration and connection with recognition and expression of feeling, intuition and empathy. These are usually not accepted, are out of bounds, in the professionals’ approach to the complexities of life in the built world. The artist also brings the ability to think laterally, the ability to translate ideas physically, to make values and meanings visible and transform through unusual media and materials, without the burden of bureaucracy and complex technical issues to address” (1997, p. 62).

When thinking about art as a tool for knowledge and sustainability we are not discussing an ‘art industry’ dominated by capitalist markets. We are thinking about art as a connective aesthetics, art-as-verb, “an understanding that art...has increasingly become a form of knowledge: a means of perceiving, investigating, and changing the world” (Kurt, 2006, p. 142). This is work being done by interdisciplinary artists and creative non-artists, like PLATFORM, that seeks to create change and understand the world rather than solely represent it.

Art approaches sustainability from an alternate perspective; it requires openness and arrives with a manner of communicating sustainability that may be more vernacular to the general public, "it is a result-orientated process that is nonetheless open to any result that may come" (Kurt, 2006, p. 142). This is contrary to the scientific approach to knowledge and sustainability that bases itself on supposedly objective reason and logic. Art in sustainability is not a replacement of science, politics or technology but a form of knowledge to complement and develop further understanding.
Speaking on the relationship of art and sustainability Kurt (2006, p.134) claims that the common discourse of the aesthetic as beautiful or “with embellishment is another hindrance” to the potential of art as a vehicle for transformative change or social knowledge. Art can “through [its] spiritual qualities of a cognitive and perceptual activity that is authentically meaningful and intuitive and that can both mobilise and give hope...[can act] as a counterweight to a world dominated by reason and science” (Kurt, 2006, p. 138). The ‘beautiful aesthetic’ Kurt discusses is one based on a belief of vision as the primary sense in a hierarchy of senses. This view has sight as a detached, unemotional and rational sense that can be trusted to convey the ‘truth’; other senses are deemed easily manipulated by social conditions and are untrustworthy.

The meaning of aesthetic, however, needs to be re-explored; “the concept of ‘aesthetics’ coined by Baumgarten in the eighteenth century encompassed all the senses” (Bello & Koureas, 2010, p. 4). Baumgarten understood the senses “as active generators of meaning rather than just passive receptors of sensations...He advocated cognito sensitive – a sensitive knowledge of and from the senses – as able to grasp human experiences which cannot be grasped through logical thinking” (Bello & Koureas, 2010, p. 4). Sensitive perception therefore is not solely a physical response to stimuli; it is a form of knowledge capable of shaping and creating new realities. It is a way of experiencing and interpreting the world in a wholly corporeal way moving beyond a detached cerebral form of knowledge; it is, necessarily, an embodied way of knowing.

Shelly Sacks in her work on Social Sculpture has discussed the notion of the ‘aesthetic’ as ‘enlivened being’ (Sacks, 2012) as opposed to a “state of numbness” (Sacks, 2007, p. 1). An enlivened being has the “power to see things differently, and to explore ways of getting involved in shaping a democratic, non-exploitative and ecologically sustainable society” (Sacks, 2007, p. 1). In participatory artwork, the senses can be utilized to enliven. In fact, must be used, because to be enlivened requires an embodied awareness in and of the world. “For Bateson, a strong aesthetic sense is a heightened responsiveness to the meta-pattern uniting the living world, rather than an arrested perception... such a sensibility is
biologically rooted in our selves, at a subconscious level, but got numbed in modern societies...the aesthetic reflects a mental capacity which exceeds consciousness” (Kagan, 2012, p. 27). Performance art provides an opportunity to re-engage this mental state and enliven participants.

So art in sustainability is about changing how a person feels or thinks about the world. It recognises the complex patterns that form any given situation and entices individuals to embrace complexity and view a situation from multiple perspectives or forms of knowledge. It sees progress in sustainability through our cultural beliefs and from that base the necessary political, economic and environmental goals can be dealt with and met. Art can awaken us to unsustainable practices by highlighting the complexities. “Performance art pedagogy reflexively critiques those cultural practices that reproduce oppression. At the performative level this pedagogy locates performances within these repressive practices, creating discourses that make the struggles of democracy more visible” (Denzin, 2003, p. 201). Performance art perceives that our cultural beliefs can be transformed or awakened through the use of transitional spaces. PLATFORM “use art as a catalyst, holding up an imagined reality which contrasts with the present reality. Art [for them] is...defined as transformative creativity applied to real situations... The artwork lies in creating an imaginative space where transformative discussion can take place” (PLATFORM, 1997, p. 102). Performance art allows a suspension of the everyday where the imagination can be awakened and can awaken dormant memories. This imaginative space is for the participant, it is a space where the participant can envisage an alternate reality or develop a new way of thinking. There are two imaginations in these pieces "the poetical imagination...which allows for anything [and the] ethical imagination, that which responds to and is answerable to another living being" (Heim, 2005, p. 203) they are used in partnership to produce a response.

Shelly Sacks talks about this in a slightly different way. She has the notion of 'response-ability' in her work; she believes that art and Social Sculpture is about engaging individuals in a way that develops their aesthetic and gives them an
ability to respond to situations. It is about enabling participants to think about their place in the world in a different way (through alternate realities and imagination), an enlivened way in which they have power, and are empowered, to influence and change the processes around them. Wallace Heim succinctly puts it that “imagination provides the ‘luminous clearing’ in which motives, desires and obligations in the world can be compared. New values, subjectivities and ideas can be tried out” (2003, p. 187).

Kagan (2012, p. 32) hopes for an art-as-verb approach, undertaken in this way art holds potential for transformative behaviour in participants by:

1. “*Imagining* potential other states of reality, other configurations of individual and social life, and *enchanted* one’s worldview with this envisioning of alternative futures, thanks to the stimulation of one’s imagination; the artistic process may even give an immediate experience of the imagined alternatives, giving them a feeling of strong presence in one’s life.

2. *Detaching* from, and *subverting*, through the imagined alternatives, one’s established a-priori, assumptions, pre-set mental schemes and fixed routines and habits – and in this process, maybe also unearthing one’s repressed intuitions and knowledge, kept buried at a subconscious level.

3. *Experimenting* with these envisioned, subversive alternatives, in a playful framework with a higher tolerance for failure, and for unconventional behavior, than is usually possible in non-art contexts.

4. *Empowering* oneself as a change-agent in society, changing one’s self-image and perceived capacities to exercise influence and make a change, reducing inhibitions and healing from apathy – that is reducing fear and stress induced by the social context, and *catalyzing* personal and collective motivations and commitments for change.”
The engagement of the participant’s imagination that ‘process art’ (Leviseur, 1997) (performance, participatory, social sculpture and interventions) strives for to create transformative spaces and alternate realities that can lead to transformative behavior is achieved from embodied learning (i.e. senses) and conversation or dialogue. Conversation in its barest sense is the speaking and listening between humans. However communication is not “confined to rational, verbal articulation, but taken as the whole of embodied comportment, responsiveness and communicability” (Heim, 2005, p. 200). Performative artworks are heuristic approaches that initiate conversation between the artists, artwork and participants imbued in the aesthetic, the site and in a moment. The dialogue is a negotiation to understanding the artwork and towards an agreed action or state of mind. The conversation is used to bring participants to “recognition of their position and a knowledge about themselves within the context of nature-human relations” (Heim, 2005, p. 201). It involves understanding yourself in the near, and others, far away. Performance as a heuristic process and being a unique relationship between participant, artist and artwork results in the conversation drifting, it can be guided but not controlled, it is untamed. The milieu associated with a performance is vital because “performances are embedded in language. That is, certain words do accomplish things, and what they do, performatively, refers back to meanings embedded in language and culture” (Denzin, 2003, p. 189).

Genuine conversation in a performance must be an embodied, sensuous, aesthetic experience as “one needs to be moved or affected before those expressive qualities can be meaningful, before the other is heard, before a conversing can begin” (Heim, 2005, p. 211). The embodied performance is also critical for the creation of an ‘ethical matrix’ that is developed through the mutual performance of artist and participant; it is the “character and feeling” portrayed in the mutual performance creating a base from which “the validity of the argument is tested by the measure of the character of the speakers, their tone and whether they can be trusted” (Smith, 1998 in Heim, 2005, p. 212). The ‘ethical matrix’ could simply be described as trust built between the artist and participant. Heim (2005, p. 213) though believes that the ethical matrix is more
than just a check on trustworthiness; it is a method of the performance “through which another reality can be figured”. By constructing an ‘ethical matrix’ the artwork opens the mind of the participant to be guided on a transformative journey. The ethical imagination is employed and the resulting empathy can be used to figure alternate realities. The conversation in an artwork does not dictate a way of thinking to the participant, instead it is a suggestive conversation, which employed with sense and emotions can lead the participant to an imaginative space.
WHAT IS A SOUNDWALK?

Sound art and sound walks are multi-disciplinary making them hard to categorise, this has meant there is not a lot of literature directly concerned with them. Soundwalking is a “multi-sensory and embodied experience and contemplation of space and place” (Butler, 2006, p. 889). Notions of embodied experiences are extensively explored in geography through non-representational theory (Thrift, 2000) and phenomenology, but the literature concerning soundwalks has tended to come from other disciplines. Namely the ‘art’ world and those directly involved in sound art.

In order to establish the methodology used for the research in this paper it is first necessary to define soundwalking, and sound artworks. SOUNDWALK are a commercially successful international collective based in New York City who describe their work as “mixing fiction and reality to provide an exclusive and poetic discovery of a city, on the bridge between Baudelairian stroll and cinematic experience” (SOUNDWALK, 2012). They have been successful in exposing sound art to a commercial setting providing soundworks for Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Puma amongst others and additionally they have developed sound art tours for individuals desiring an alternative experience of a city. They use local residents to guide individuals around the city through headphones. Their work uses voice guidance but also sounds such as footsteps, trains and crowds to create a multisensory experience that sensuously engages the participant in areas that they may normally feel out of place. The tours provide opportunities to understand and learn about certain places whilst also being enjoyable.

SOUNDWALK has been successful in developing alternative understanding of space and place, however, the work of PLATFORM has an additional unique interest for research as it attempts to develop or change the feelings, of the participant, into action. It is firstly and foremost a piece of activism in a wider protest against oil sponsorship of the arts rather than purely a medium to explore place in another way. Butler’s paper (2006, p. 889) sees soundwalking as
a medium that can create “flowing, multisensory and embodied ways for social and cultural geographers to research the outside environment” but also for “presenting site-specific cultural geography to the public in an accessible and inclusive way.” Soundwalks are a way of putting out information in the context of a place, what makes them different to say a video is that they are embodied, multisensory, immersive, participatory and active. Soundwalks firstly involve the producer or creator who decides, through their relationship to situation or place, what sounds to record and what information to portray, but then critically it involves a participant who creates his/her own relationship between themselves, the site and the information forthcoming from the sound work. The artwork and therefore the knowledge is created through a mutual performance.

The embodied, immersive, multisensory, participatory and active qualities of a soundwalk as a piece of performance art are the potentially powerful tools. These qualities cause the soundwalk to become wholly personal to the participant. It is about listening and creating a dialogue between yourself and the art, the participant mutually performs the experience, and so, each individual will create a different performance from the same sound art. The participant also approaches the soundwalk with an open attitude. Spry comments that “in the process of performance, the performer engages the text of another – oral or written by self or other – dialogically, meaning the performer approaches the text/other with a commitment to be challenged, changed, embraced, and interrogated in the performance process” (2001, p. 716).

Sustainability desires this democratic production of knowledge and participation. PLATFORM’s soundwalks, with the benefits of pervasive media, can be downloaded and listened to on a phone. It is simple and accessible to everyone with an Internet connection, making them an advantageous way of promoting a message. The potential for embodied learning is also valuable as it holds a possibility for closing the value-action gap that often exists when individuals are confronted with information.
METHODOLOGY:

An autoethnographic approach is used to research how PLATFORM’s alternative audio guides work as a sound artwork intervention. Autoethnography “is a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural, placing the self within a social context” (Gobo, 2008, p. 61). "Ethnography is not simply 'data collection'; it is rich in implicit theories of culture, society and the individual" (Agar, 1980, p. 23 in Crang & Cook, 2007); it allows an engagement with real world messiness and attempts to make sense of the world as it is rather than simplifying and reducing it to data in a detached and objective view of the world (Crang & Cook, 2007). Ellis and Bochner (2000 in Gobo, 2008, p.61) state that “autoethnographies are usually written in the first person, and they feature dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure and culture.”

Gobo (2008, p.5) states that “to know things we use our five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch...during the knowledge-gathering process, they constantly interact with each other.” A traditional ethnographic approach prioritises observation in which sight plays a large part (though observation still requires use of the other senses). To fully answer the questions set out in this paper the research requires documenting the emotional, sensory and transformative changes and an honest depiction of the whole experience in an organic unmediated way that a traditional participant observation approach to ethnography would struggle to achieve. Spry notes that autoethnography “rejects the notion that lived experience can only be represented indirectly, through quotations from field notes, observations or interviews” (Denzin, 1992, p. 20 in Spry, 2001, p. 711). By taking an autoethnographic approach it is possible to document in a detailed way how knowledge, feelings and emotions are changing and attribute them to aspects of the soundwalk. Thereby determining the positive and negative aspects of the artwork. Additionally, as Kagan (2012) argues, art is a way of realizing the ‘connective interdependencies’ in the world; these are messy and can’t be condensed to data or facts as science attempts to do. To use a method other than autoethnography would begin to
reduce and simplify those ‘connective interdependencies’ on display during the alternative audio tours.

An autoethnographical approach is also an effective way of closing the attitude-behavior gap. The alternative audio tours are attempting to create transformative behavior change in individuals, therefore a large part of the discussion in this paper will rely on an authentic and reliable assessment of how the soundwalks affect an individual. The soundwalk is an internal and immersive experience and so to attempt to understand how it affected a participant would require questioning said individual, there is however a vast gap between what we say and do. An interview or focus group based approach would provide distorted data and would do little to further existing literature. An autoethnography should provide the best method to represent the lived experience of the participant as close as possible.

There is a boundary fine boundary with autoethnography, it can easily degenerate into a simple description of an event or experience, equally Gobo (2008, p. 61) suggests it should not “be configured as a solipsistic activity written to the self as the major audience...[the] boundary is very indistinct and few authors manage to fulfill the requirements of an autoethnography; most of them instead lapse into some sort of intellectual masturbation.” Crang & Cook (2007, p. 146) suggest that “credibility of the account...transferability of the material...dependability of the interpretation [and] confirmability of the study” must be kept in mind to produce an ethnographic piece of purpose and use.

To begin my autoethnography I spent one day performing all three of the alternative audio tours as per the instructions on the Tate-á-Tate website as if I was a ‘normal’ individual. It was only after completing the three tours that I sat down to write about my experience. The reason for this was that I did not want to start analyzing my experiences before they were completed, as I feared it might affect the mutual performance. After having written my immediate thoughts down I began reading additional material and researching more about PLATFORM and the BP-Tate relationship, I also went back to the galleries to take
photos and view the spaces with a more analytical eye. As an autoethnographer I felt a duty to firstly attempt to have the experience as myself rather than as the researcher. Though of course the researcher is always a presence in the body.

In addition to the primary autoethnographical research, information should also be purposed “in a secondary and ancillary manner, by other sources of information used by the ethnographer in the field: informal conversations, individual or group interviews and documentary materials” (Gobo, 2008, p. 5). This paper will use a radio interview on Resonance fm, an arts radio station that interviewed three of the sound artists; Ansuman Biswas, Isa Suarez and Phil England and was hosted by two members of PLATFORM. There are also a number of blogs and reviews about the audio tours that supplement the primary research gathered.

What follows this methodology chapter will be a combination of autoethnographic descriptive writing and discussion of theories, themes and ideas from myself, academics and other individuals. The autoethnographical detail discussing the alternative audio tours flow in a chronological order, there may be more writing on particular sections of the tour that had more of an impact on myself or that lend themselves to interesting discussion. The aim is for the paper, much like the alternative audio tours, to create a dialogue with you the reader, rather than solely presenting my findings. The autoethnographic detail will give an idea of what it is like to experience the performance soundwalks and where relevant the discussion will hopefully guide to some key issues worthy of discussion. Spry (2001, p. 711) comments, “autoethnographers argue that self-reflexive critique upon one’s positionality as researcher inspires readers to reflect critically upon their own life experience, their constructions of self, and their interactions with others within socio-historical contexts”. This autoethnographic paper will inspire readers to think reflexively about how they would feel in the performed experience and that will enable them to engage with the theoretical detail. What is critical is that this paper provides a catalyst for thinking, discussing and doing. It will hopefully feel like a tête-à-tête.
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY & DISCUSSION:

**Tate Britain - Panaudicon**

It is the morning of Friday 22nd June and I’m sitting at my breakfast table, part of my normal morning routine, except today instead of checking the news on my laptop I am on PLATFORM’s new Tate-à-Tate website and I’ve just clicked the download button on their alternative audio tours. The tours are participatory interventionist sound artworks (PLATFORM(a), 2012) commissioned by PLATFORM, Liberate Tate and Art Not Oil to expose the reality behind BP’s sponsorship of our cultural institutions, but particularly the Tate galleries. I know a bit about PLATFORM, their approach of combining art and activism with education and I know that what I am about to do is going to transform me into an activist, if only for the few hours I am listening to the tours, however I have purposely avoided finding out about this particular sound artwork in order to have an authentic experience. While I sit finishing my breakfast the unknown of what I am about to experience is exciting me and surprisingly making me slightly nervous. Taking a sip of coffee the familiar ping of ‘synching complete’ stirs me from my thoughts, the audio tours are on my phone and my activist toolkit (figure 1) is ready! I’m struck by how easy it all is. All I need are my headphones and phone, which are always on me anyway, shouldn’t I be in camo gear with a balaclava and some wire cutters? Pervasive media is changing the world and it seems PLATFORM have cottoned onto this.
9:45am and I am standing outside the Tate Britain building, this is where Liberate Tate enacted their ‘License to Spill’ (figure 2) performance during the Tate Summer party, knowing Liberate Tate’s involvement in commissioning the alternative audio tours spurs an affinity from myself to the three organisations that created the sound artworks; though they do not know me personally or that I am about to participate in their work there is, nevertheless, a sense of kinship and camaraderie.
As I stand in the entrance hall waiting for the gallery to open its doors and welcome me in I look around at the group of people waiting with me. Some have headphones. Are they about to take part in this subversive act with me? For the moment it is impossible to tell. This is one of the magical aspects of the audio tours, no one knows what you are doing, and there is nothing that can be done to stop me. In fact, I am about to be encouraged into the gallery, as a protester and cultural activist. It is a hugely empowering and free feeling, and yet, as I wait, nerves begin to build. The nerves of the unknown, of what is to come and what I might be asked to or be compelled to do. Rather than a feeling of fear that I imagine can occur in some more sensationalist forms of protest the overriding emotion here is one of naughtiness, knowing I am about to break the social conventions of what Tate and especially BP would like me to do in this gallery space. From an onlooker’s perspective, however, I will be behaving to the norm; after all, audio guides are a ubiquitous tool of the gallery. A reviewer of the tour echoes my feelings she says “there is something irresistibly subversive about slinking around an establishment with your headphones in, taking orders from a voice that resembles a TomTom or sleep aid recording” (Kelsall, 2012).

I put my headphones on and press play; I am transported from the empty ‘real’ Tate to a crowded, noisy Tate. Over this noise two voices emerge. The first an official computerised female voice attempting to synch my body and mind with her, a programme that will transform the building into a focusing device. I will be able to see through the walls, beyond the walls, crucially, she will allow me to see what is hidden. The second is a man’s voice or is he my voice?

“Hello, I’m Jiminy Cricket, I’m the voice of your conscience. Do you want to be a puppet, controlled by distant masters or do you want to be free? Then wake up!” (Biswas, 2012).

I find myself copying this voice, he (my conscience) tells me to raise my hand and I do. But he isn’t telling me, he is thinking and I am listening and doing. It is not a didactic voice. I am listening in to his thoughts. It is my choice whether to listen and agree, there is no pressure on me to follow and yet I feel compelled to, so much so that moments later I find myself sitting in a toilet cubicle and imagining
myself in a swamp. Hey, this is fun. It seems the ‘ethical matrix’ (Heim, 2005) is already forming.

Ansuman Biswas’ sound artwork is called ‘Panaudicon’, this space, post-swamp, became the Millbank penitentiary, the first prison to be built in Bentham’s Panopticon design the perfect control structure where everyone could be watched by a guard who himself could not be seen. My ‘Panaudicon’ is the opposite of this it enables me to see “what’s behind the paintings and what’s behind the sculptures and so on, the beautiful things that Tate has put there. What’s the ugly truth, or what’s behind the beauty that is immediately on show” (Resonance, 2012). Biswas is subverting the space by reversing its traditional purpose, I was the prisoner only seeing what I was allowed but the guide turns me into the guard able to see everything at once.

My ‘guide’ is the computerised female, she directs me through the gallery space, through my alternate reality. I feel different from the other gallery visitors, they are part of the status quo, they’re using the gallery as it is meant to be used but I feel they are missing so much. They don’t understand the space; they are not experiencing it as I am. I move through the gallery but it is not just a gallery to me anymore, I don’t just see what is on the walls, I am beginning to see through the walls to an enlightened reality.

Now I am directed to the Clore gallery, but wait. My way is blocked. There are redevelopment works. The guide continues oblivious to my predicament and my immersion in the performance is lost as my mind detaches from my reality in the headphones and begins looking for a way to the Clore gallery. I pause the sound artwork and disengage from the performance. I have to walk outside to an alternative entrance and restart the guide, I’ve lost my place and I rewind it and try to re-orientate myself, a certain amount of the enchantment has been lost and it takes some time for my imagination to bring me back into the performance and engage with it again.
The problems I experienced in finding the Clore gallery are important considerations in creating these forms of ambulatory experiences. First and foremost the alternative audio guides must guide the participant around the gallery using pre-recorded locational directions through a one-way listening device. Tolmie et al (2012) discuss the implications of instruction for ambulatory experiences using ever more pervasive mobile technologies. They determine that instructions have four different levels:

1. “Location – attempting to get people to go to specific places
2. Sequence – attempting to get people to do things in a particular order
3. Comportment – attempting to get people to act and behave in certain ways
4. How they relate to the experience – attempting to get people to engage with it in certain ways and experience certain kinds of tensions and moods” (Tolmie, et al., 2012, p. 6).

Each instruction level interacts with the ones preceding it, the baseline requirement being that the participant reaches each location as and when expected otherwise the next levels of instruction that improve engagement with the experience cannot occur. To reach the Clore gallery meant I had to interpret the instructions as best I could and re-order the process, it involved my personal initiative and compliance with the soundwalk. By producing performance art without the author present to repair anything out of the ordinary such as building works presents a risk, as you are totally reliant on the participant solving their own problems, if they cannot then they may give up and end the experience early. There is a rich seam of instructions flowing through a ‘thin channel’ (Tolmie, et al., 2012), in this case the pre-recorded tour on a phone offers little room for manoeuvre when the unexpected occurs. The hope is that the participant can interpret instructions and manage an effective mutual performance of the soundwalk “in relation to what they understand this particular experience to be about” (Tolmie, et al., 2012, p. 6).

“What’s the worst that can happen if I listen to my inner voice? What happened to that wooden puppet Pinocchio when he listened to his conscience? He became real” (Biswas, 2012) [set to sounds of crickets].
The above quotation is where I begin the guide again, this is the second time (the first being the Jiminy Cricket quote earlier) where I am encouraged to question myself rather than just listen. It is an encouragement to think about my place, my personal reality, am I listening to my conscience? This quotation also serves to focus my mind again by reminding me of previous moments in the tour.

It is in the Clore gallery that I am first directed to a painting (figure 3), this is what I expect with a traditional audio guide. I sit on a bench in front of it while I am told about the painting, there’s a staff member in the corner of the room and he is looking at me. I wonder if he knows what I am doing and if he does what does he think about it. An aspect of these sound artworks is that they can be a permanent protest instillation inside the gallery, subverting the space and
complicating BP’s relationship with the Tate. They are an individual act of protest and there is nothing the Tate or BP can do about it. The staff member cannot know for sure what I am doing but he may have seen many more people with headphones walk the same route as I. It is now, thinking this that I suddenly become aware of the security cameras. I’ve developed a sense of paranoia. Are they watching me? They must have noticed me when I sat on the floor in the rotunda listening to the rumble of the earth. Surely that was a giveaway of my true purpose of being here in the Tate, protesting against the Tate. This paranoia sends me further into the experience, the emotions are exposing my inner self and making me believe.

The voice tells me I am facing 345°NNW and if “I look through the painting and listen to what’s hidden from my eyes, I can hear the waves of structures rising. This is Clare, 1500 miles from central London in the cold North Sea” (Biswa, 2012). This begins the next movement of the soundwalk, surrounded by industrial oilrig sounds I am told this is BP’s oilrig near the Shetland islands. The imagery and metaphor used here is far from subtle – “giant iron butterflies sucking black nectar for a brief day of flight” (Biswa, 2012) – yet as a passage of prose it is rich and engrossing. The following description of the rise and fall of the whaling industry is an obvious metaphor for the oil industry and is very different from the surreal swampy sounds and imagery from the beginning of the tour. Sitting on the bench, solely listening to this intensely descriptive section, gives me an opportunity for my thoughts to mingle with the audio tour’s dialogue. In hindsight, it is an extremely powerful section. The discussion of the whaling industry makes you begin to think about how vast industries and structures change over time. It is the first point on the tour when I begin to question the BP relationship.

My next instruction is to look to my right towards a painting of a reclining male (figure 4). It is not there; instead I see a picture of boats. Immediately my mind jumps to sabotage of the tours by the Tate gallery. They’ve moved the paintings! I then get up to look at the painting I’ve been staring at the last five minutes, that’s a different painting as well. I was meant to be viewing ‘Childe Harold’s
Pilgrimage’ but instead it was ‘The Golden Bough’ (figure 3), they do in fact look similar. I realise the tour is still playing and I’ve missed what was being said. I pause it as I walk over to the space where I was expecting ‘Sir Brooke Boothby’. He has been replaced by another of JMW Turner’s paintings entitled ‘Whalers (Boiling Blubber) Entangled in Flaw Ice, Endeavouring to Extricate Themselves’ (figure 4). I try to stifle a laugh; you’re not meant to laugh in galleries. I laugh, I’m not meant to be doing this audio tour either. I am almost in shock, if my thoughts of sabotage were right how fantastic is this replacement painting after my past five minutes have been spent likening BP to a messy and disreputable whaling industry.

Figure 4: Above: Joseph Wright of Derby (1781) ‘Sir Brooke Boothby’. Source: (Tate Britain, 2012). Below: JMW Turner (1846) ‘Whalers (Boiling Blubber) Entangled in Flaw Ice, Endeavouring to Extricate Themselves’. Source: (Author, 2012)
PLATFORM's audio guides are situated pieces of performance art. They are designed to interpret a place. In this case the paintings are a major part of the place yet PLATFORM have no control over what paintings are displayed. Already paintings have moved or disappeared so for longevity of the audio guides they need to be designed to still work within a changing space. Indeed on a future visit to Tate Britain building work stopped me from entering a room that was a central part of the Panaudicon guide. Biswas (Resonance, 2012) states that his soundwalk is designed more to interact with the gallery itself rather than what is inside it. This means that changing displays should not impact the effect of his tour too much. Actually it may improve it by developing a tension between the Tate and the participant as they wonder what has happened to the paintings like I did. When I was home I also found myself looking up the paintings that were meant to be there and emailing the gallery to find out where they had gone; the answer was disappointingly passive but the whole process had resulted in further action by me after the tours had ended. Performance art often needs to be designed with flexibility in mind so that it can react to changes in space and indeed to different participants who may enact the performance with small variations.

I begin the tour again and am directed to a new part of the gallery called 'Colour and Line Turner's Experiments'. Here I sit at a desk with a sheet of paper intended to allow me to imitate some of JMW Turner's famous works, except, my direction is to close my eyes and draw whatever comes to me as I listen to a section on the destructive Alberta Tar Sands, replete with birdsong, tribal fires and Ansuman's hypnotic voice and characteristic prose. When I am done the female voice tells me that I can do what I want with my resultant picture of pristine boreal forest, “it is up to you to decide how precious it is” (Biswas, 2012). There are more and more references to me, my role and my purpose.

As I leave the romantics exhibition I am led towards Francis Bacon's 'Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion' (figure 5), it is on the other side of the gallery so I listen as I walk. During this walk the tour moves towards a more
direct dialogue on BP and its activities, with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the new Mad Dog oilfield taking centre stage.

I hear BP’s representatives sounded as snarling dogs whilst standing in front of Peter Lanyon’s ‘Porthleven’ instead of what was meant to be Francis Bacon’s painting (figure 5). The grotesque figures in Francis Bacon’s work whilst listening to the snarling dogs and the narrator discuss BP’s current oilfields would have worked well, however with the painting replaced I feel slightly lost

and uncomfortable in the space, not knowing what to look at, and again wondering why the painting has been changed.

As I back away from the painting the dialogue becomes much more didactic, we are coming to the crux of the soundwalk. It explicitly and critically states why BP wants to sponsor the arts. I then receive the call to action from my ‘conscience’:

“If I am not to be a puppet, a robot, an automaton, a sleepwalker then I must make a conscious choice. Surrounded by wealth and prosperity I must deliberately choose what is good” (Biswas, 2012).

After the surreal, imaginative nature of the tour so far, with small pressure on my personal role in the issue, this sudden shift in tone and direct dialogue is striking and effective. Though the dialogue is direct, it is a call to think differently there is no determination to act in certain way (though it is obvious what they would prefer me to think) it is merely to be aware of and to listen to your conscience. This is made obvious as I am directed to stand in front of figure 6 ‘The awakening conscience’ by William Holman Hunt. I am left in a meditative mood, contemplating what I have just experienced standing in front of a painting depicting a woman whose conscience has been awakened and is represented by an idyllic English summer garden whilst listening to a soundscape of birdsong and summer sounds.
This 5 minutes in front of the painting (figure 6), left with my own thoughts, finds me reflecting on all I have just been exposed to. Rather than thinking explicitly about BP’s sponsorship of the arts, though that is very much in the forefront of my mind, I find myself thinking about how I am feeling, about my emotional response because surprisingly for me, something has lodged within me. A deep feeling, a seed of thought predicated in this idea of thinking about things differently and realising my own human agency. It is almost like my memory of this experience could be the catalyst for a form of action in the future, though I do not yet know what or when that will be. But I know that when the time comes I will be able to call on this sensual emotive experience to motivate me. It feels powerful and free.

*The feeling I am left with is an emotional, sensuous seed; it is where art (especially participatory performance art) can make a big difference in sustainability. There are two differing forms of activism on display in the audio tours. Firstly from the creators of the audio tours there is the primary goal of ending the relationship*
between BP and Tate. The audio tours are one part of a wider campaign and their purpose is to spread the message through a different media form and entice individuals to further action directly related to the sponsorship issue, be this through attending meetings, taking part in other actions, sending messages, speaking to friends or signing petitions. However there is also a secondary form of activism, one that does not have a defined outcome and may not benefit PLATFORM’s primary goal but arguably is far more powerful.

It is a concept that Heim (2005) calls ‘Slow Activism’. It was earlier discussed that art in sustainability is about changing cultural beliefs and encouraging transformative behaviour. Slow activism comes from the imaginative spaces that performance art can create, the spaces in which alternate realities can be imagined and rehearsed.

“Social practice events are providing contexts and places in which people can be listened to…places which are aesthetically and ethically coloured but not determined…These works create the conditions in which there is the potential to reason together about human actions within an unpredictable, uncertain world…occasions in which an altered capacity for responsiveness…can be undergone and embodied, and necessary rehearsals. They are experiences which make further experience possible” (Heim, 2005, p. 214).

Slow activism welcomes art’s determination to be open to any result. The artwork steers the conversation to certain areas but cannot force it to a predetermined point. “The activist potential develops in the time it takes to speak about something and for it to be ‘listened’ into existence. This involves not only the matter conversed, but the subjectivities engaged, which are, in the action, opened to change. It is improvisatory, slow activism” (Heim, 2005, p. 204). Activist potential has to be ‘listened’ into existence and that is the key; the participant is the key factor in determining the result, it is only from that individual that an activist potential can come into existence and all the complexities of being a human and the milieu that surrounds that person will influence the experience of the participant.
The slow activist potential of PLATFORM’s alternative audio tours comes from creating a sensuous, aesthetic and ethical experience that is at once enjoyable and informative. The arguments are compelling in that they are not forceful and didactic but enlivening the individual, making them aware of their place in the world, their sub-conscious feelings and their potential to influence; to break through the linear power structures and recognise complexity in the world. The aim is for empowerment by awakening the ‘aesthetic being’. These are emotional feelings that can be stored within and used to cultivate other experiences and to see the world in a different way, in a more questioning way. It seems that rather than slow activism this is prolonged activism. The audio tour experience lays an activist seed within the participant that can then grow depending on the future experiences of the participant. Kagan (2012, p. 37) concurs, stating “rather than trying to change reality heroically with big and salient actions and with abrupt events, we should rather explore the subtle propensity of situations, and induce changes by finding moments of inflections of propensities: In other words, moments of possible shifts of inclinations into other directions.”
Tate Boat – This is not an oil tanker

The next stage of my day takes me to the banks of the river Thames. I am at Millbank pier waiting for the boat that will take me down the river to Tate Modern. The last time I was on the river was 10 years ago yet I only live a five-minute walk away. If it wasn’t for this tour I can’t imagine I would have taken a boat ride any time soon. I’m looking forward to it. Once I am on the Thames Clipper and settled in my seat I press play on ‘This is not an oil tanker’. I am becoming an expert in these soundwalks. The nervous energy I had at the beginning has disappeared. The piece begins with a song, it’s unexpected after the last tour but its catchy and I find myself humming the tune. It is a satirical and humorous song; a playful engagement with the BP issue and its fun. Yet I do not really feel much, I think I am much more likely to forget this moment soon compared to what has just happened in Tate Britain. The people around me are chatting and I’m reminded of my normal travel in London where I always have my headphones on. Then I’m trying to disengage myself from my immediate environment and lose myself in another world.

Figure 7: ‘Tate boat at the Bankside pier’. Source: (Author, 2012)
It could be suggested that soundwalks are a barrier to an embodied experience of place. Butler (2006, p.898) comments that “headphones immediately create a barrier to outsiders and can absorb the listener to such an extent that they can seem like they are in a trance.” Looking at Sacks Exchange Values as a successful piece of participatory performance art that holds a desire to make participants think differently about their place in the world, particularly in relation to global banana trade; Heim (2005, p. 206) describes the Exchange Values display room as “a meditative place, in which it takes time to listen to the voices...For the consumer, the instillation breaks the face-to-face imperative of conversational exchange, but in its place, makes the experience one in which the capacity to listen initiates the aesthetic and moral responses. To listen to another voice demands an attention, in that time, to that particular voice, to the words, their passion and the surrounding ambiance.” As the participant all of your attention is engaged with that voice, and you are compelled to truly listen to what is being said. This is where the audio tours excel, though you are in a gallery with a huge number of distractions around you, as a participant you focus on the soundwalk and immerse yourself in that space that the audio tours create rather than in the normal gallery space. “Hearing plays a decisive role in the lateralization of perceived space, which is listened for as much as seen. Hearing plays a mediating role between the body and the spatial localization of those outside it” (Bello & Koureas, 2010, p. 7). Bello & Koureas are inferring that by morphing the soundscape we can change how that space is perceived and experienced. And the purpose of these audio tours is not to create a normal experience of the Tate galleries as a place but to make them into transitional spaces. So as a participant we are embodied in an alternate place to the normal.

As the song ends I notice the sound of the Thames water lapping alongside the boat but wait it’s actually coming from my headphones and now here is a man spluttering water whilst talking about my gidget! The ‘gidget’ is described as your conscience, there are lots of gidgets that all fit together in a complex web controlled by the power institutions, this occurs as I pass by the houses of parliament. I imagine this has been planned by the artists and is very well timed there is no greater symbol of institutional power. This is a great use of site to
engage the imagination. I find myself in a critical mood and contemplating what secret deals have been forged in those corridors throughout history.

Whilst on the boat listening to the sounds of water, and seeing the Thames, and feeling the wind combined with the sounds of wind and water from the soundwalk it becomes clear that the use of senses is hugely important in the alternative audio tours. Hearing is obviously highly important as they are soundwalks but it is really a multi-sensory experience where all the senses play a part in developing the experience and transitional spaces. The sensory experience confuses me as I don’t know what is real and what is from the soundwalk and so I combine the experiences into my own reality.

*Emphasis on senses other than the visual can lead to a more unmediated response from the viewer as their “immediate purpose is to serve instinctual needs...the senses maintain an uncivilized and uncivilizable trace” (Bello & Koureas, 2010, p. 5). By stimulating the senses there is potential to transport participants to another reality or confuse their current reality thereby creating a transitional space with the participant’s imagination. Individuals’ senses and emotions have deep links that can tap into raw moments. Bello & Koureas (2010, p. 13) discuss ‘sense memory’, where emotions and sense experiences are compulsively repeated as raw and chaotic rather than being integrated into the verbal narratives of ‘thinking memory’”. The belief is that engaging the senses and emotions will more readily subvert the social constraints and discourse of a particular place or practice by delving deep into the mind to the subconscious level.

As I cruise under Westminster Bridge and leave the houses of parliament behind I am faced by testimonies from some of the people who have been affected by BP’s work in Canada and New Orleans. First is a woman whose voice is crammed with emotion speaking about contaminated water. Then I hear from two young boys talking about the oil ruining their lives. I have empathy for the interviewees, they’ve engaged my ethical imagination, they seem genuine and I trust them.
When talking about a conversation there is the dialogue a participant has with the artwork where an understanding is developed but it is also about physical conversations you have with the artist or other people. There is a desire in social practice art for a ‘genuine’ conversation (Heim, 2005), one that relies on the participant, entering “into an embodied responsiveness – conversationally, imaginatively, perceptually” (Heim, 2005, p. 200). In the case of Shelly Sack’s ‘Exchange Values’ the banana skins create a physical connection to the voice, imagination gives shape to emerging thought in this uncomfortable reflective space. “The potential for a revised responsiveness in one’s connections with distant voices and lands is possible, brought about by the assemblage of conversations in a space imbued with the aesthetic, and in which an ethical response is not prefigured, but improvised and formed through those exchanges” (Heim, 2005, p. 2008).

PLATFORM’s audio tours do not immediately lend themselves to ‘genuine’ conversation while they are being performed however they contain interview extracts of various people from Canada and the Gulf of Mexico whose lives have been affected by BP activities. These testimonies while limited in being one-way communication simulate ‘genuine’ conversation. As the participant you listen to what seem honest people talking about their experiences and you are able to think about your response without the pressure of a genuine physical response. It some ways it enables you to be even more truthful. Isa Suarez stated one of her big motivations was to “reach other people across the world and hear their testimonies and their experiences and have their contributions in the piece. I think that was exciting” (Resonance, 2012). Bringing disparate local voices from the global is viewed by sustainability as beneficial in raising the accountability of global powers be they political or corporate. Both Exchange Values and PLATFORM are attempting to give power to the voices of disparate individuals, people who are suffering and ultimately powerless in the face of companies like BP. The value of the ‘ethical matrix’ (Heim, 2005) helps the participant decide if they believe these testimonies and from that they can have a ‘genuine’ conversation even though it is one-way.
One of the reviews of the audio tours complained about the testimony of the young children, “I was aghast as the scenery from the Thames boat was blighted by a toddler’s voice telling me he’d rather walk than drive to save the ocean’s fish” (Kelsall, 2012). This shows how the conversation a participant has is highly personal, for one individual it can work and for another it may not.

The sound artwork finishes with the rest of Mae Martin’s satirical song as the boat Pulls up to the Bankside pier by the Globe theatre and just a short stroll from the iconic Tate Modern. After the despondent testimonies I’ve heard the song seems to have taken on a new feeling for me. Its humour seems much darker and it shows that the past 20 minutes have certainly affected me.
Tate Modern – Drilling for Dirt

The final instalment of the sound artworks is sited at Tate Modern, I have been here many times before, the vast turbine hall is an iconic space in London and I am intrigued as to how it will be used by the sound artists (Phil England and Jim Welton) after my varied experiences from the previous two sound artworks. The novelty of the sound artworks has slightly worn off, I have lost that nervous anticipation and heightened energy I had at the beginning in Tate Britain, though I am still excited about what is to come. Tate Modern feels like the hub of the Tate group, it has been the location of some of the more spectacular performances against BP’s sponsorship such as Reverend Billy’s exorcism of Tate Modern. As I step inside I feel like I am infiltrating some sort of futuristic battleship and I’m going to take it down from the inside releasing it from the evil grasp of BP, my imagination has been working well today! Maybe it is the knowledge that this is where groups like PLATFORM have focussed their efforts, or that this is the flagship gallery of Tate (maybe even British art institutions) but it feels as if my whole journey through these sound artworks is culminating towards some fantastic end.

I begin the tour standing in the entrance to the turbine hall listening to Reverend Billy’s exorcism spectacle singing “They’ve taken money from the BP devil” overlaid by interview extracts form ‘experts’ discussing the issue of ‘social license to operate’ that I was made aware of in Tate Britain. It is very direct and the tone has very obviously been set. After this introduction my tour guide, a well-spoken woman begins to talk, this audio guide “take you on a tour through the gallery and explain why we believe the Tate should say no to money from the fossil fuels industry by terminating its sponsorship deal with BP”. The approach is very different. I am to be guided to certain artworks where “details of the artist’s intention, or a specific material used in a particular work, [will] lead to explanations of BP’s questionable practices…consistently debunking the myth that – as the guide states – BP is a ‘well behaved company: ethical, cultured, philanthropic and associated with all things good’" (Quaintance, 2012).
I am directed to the Surrealism collection entitled ‘Poetry and Dream’, an appropriate choice as my experiences so far today have certainly been surreal. Rather than being transferred to an imaginary science fiction alternate reality as in Tate Britain here I am going on a more traditional tour of Tate Modern, where the paintings I interact with are linked to BP’s history, impacts and quest for a social license to operate. The first is figure 8; it is a bleak industrial townscape with drawings made from industrial strength coal dust. It looks like a depiction of Charles Dickens’ novel ‘Hard Times’. Whilst I look at this artwork I am lectured about BP’s beginnings and exploitation of Iran, the intended reaction is painfully obvious. Despite this, I do find myself angry, surprised, and exasperated. How can a company such as BP become socially acceptable by producing a small amount of sponsorship money? Are we the public so blind?

Sandlin and Callahan (2009) discuss a concept in relation to how culture jammers attempt to create a moment of détournement in their work. Détournement is that moment when a participant’s reality suddenly doesn’t make sense; their perspective changes and they are “caught off-guard by the possibility of becoming someone or something different” (Sandlin & Milam, 2008, p. 339). The performance occurs in dominant frameworks of culture but through moments of détournement the frameworks are restructured as Pollock (1998b:44 in Denzin, 2003, p. 190)
states, “performativity derives its power and prerogative in the breaking and remaking of the very textual frameworks that give it meaning in the first place”.

From these moments of détournement art activists can give individual participants the chance to change or develop themselves. However, the critical point is that it is up to the individual to change, the artist’s job is merely to develop an opportunity. I experienced a moment of détournement in front of this painting where suddenly the oil industry as a whole just didn’t make sense. Soundwalks allow for multiple moments of détournement throughout a performance and in fact rather than just moments it has potential to comprehensively develop an alternate reality over an extended period of time by linking moments of détournement together.

I am next asked to look up into the corner and wave at security camera whilst smiling manically. This is the first time in any of the sound artworks where I’ve felt that my presence as a protestor is being made purposely clear. My wave is saying ‘Hi, I’m here, I’m learning about what you’re doing and there’s nothing you can do about it’. I think about how many times the man watching the security screens has seen this, will he now be keeping an eye on me? He doesn’t know if I have anything else planned to disrupt the space rather than just performing these audio tours. Will the staff on the gallery floor now be made aware of me? It’s fascinating. I am also suddenly very aware of myself in this space, there are other people in the gallery room who see me wave and will have no idea why I did it, they probably think I’m odd.

There’s a duality of emotion going on here. On the one hand I feel I’m doing more for the cause by making my presence known and disrupting the space (I probably feel more than I am in actuality doing), but on the other hand I am beginning to feel slightly alienated from the gallery, its staff and my fellow visitors. In Tate Britain I was experiencing and performing the space in an alternative way but the transformation was in my imagination, it was an immersive and internalised experience, it was my performance. Here in the Tate Modern I increasingly feel as if I am just a small part of PLATFORM’s campaign to end BP’s sponsorship. I feel like a pawn, the performance aspect of waving to the camera or scratching each palm of my hand or going up and down escalators
seem like ruses to make my presence known, rather than ways of engaging me and creating that transitional space for me that leads to behaviour change.

Although there have already been moments in the alternative audio tours where I have been given ‘comportment’ instructions to ‘act’ out of place it is waving at the security camera that first gives me an uncomfortable feeling. I feel a tension between the groups in this performance. Tolmie et al. (2012) discuss the notion of accountability. They state that “instructions never stand apart from who people understand the instructions to be coming from and who they understand the potential witnesses of their following of the instruction” (Tolmie, et al., 2012, p. 8). Participants comply with instructions by managing the tensions in accountability. Here I am accountable to PLATFORM and the authors of the soundwalks; I am accountable to the Tate gallery who have social rules for being in their space and I am accountable to the surrounding body of ordinary citizens. Each holds their own set of expectations of how I should behave, and I in that moment must decide who I am most accountable too and act accordingly. Biswas in his Resonance (2012) interview discusses a motivation for his Panaudicon tour was to explore the tension between “one’s own personal voice, the conscience, the quiet voice that’s in oneself and the big stuff that’s happening in the world”, the tension is created from what is inside and what is outside the body. It is easy to think rebellious or subversive thoughts but how willing is a participant to act on those thoughts in a socially constrained situation.

PLATFORM may want to create this tension to engage the participant further into the experience; the tensions are potentially powerful emotional moments, however there is also a risk of alienating the participant from the process as happened to me to a certain extent. Kelsall (2012) on the other hand believed the tour was at its best when “asking you to wave and smile at the CCTV”. As the soundwalks are designed to engage a wide range of people it is very difficult to know how uncomfortable to make the experience, as people will have different levels they are willing to reach. Kagan states that “not all experiences of art-as-a-verb need to be deeply subversive. But they should be challenging experiences. Non-challenging experiences of ‘art’ may be very enjoyable, but they comfort us in our values, habits
and established knowledge...the challenge-value of art-as-a-verb depends on the specific context and on the people involved” (2012, p. 33). We must be challenged to have transformative experiences but as people will respond differently to challenges there is an element of experimentation involved.

I move on. One of the pieces I’m led to is ‘Lightning with Stag in its Glare’ by Joseph Beuys (figure 9). Approaching this piece I am given a brief description of it and of Joseph Beuys as the founding member of the German Green Party. We then quickly move back on to BP and their role in supposedly bringing the Azerbaijan leader to power, a man who is sympathetic to BP’s needs. I hear about this with more interview extracts from ‘experts’. Although the extracts are interesting and shocking and deeply concern me I am increasingly finding it difficult to decide how much to trust them. I personally question what I hear and the alternative audio guides are encouraging me to question BP’s sponsorship and so I am going to question the accuracy of the testimonies I hear. It is difficult to form a trusting relationship with the integrity of the ‘facts’ when you are only hearing a voice through headphones from an mp3 that has been created to oppose BP. I didn’t feel this in Tate Britain and I am not sure if it was because I was more immersed in the Tate Britain experience or because it was less didactic.

Figure 9: Joseph Beuys (date not known) 'Lightning with Stag in its Glare'. Source: (Tate Modern, 2012)
Additionally in researching Joseph Beuys since, this room with figure 9 exhibited seems hugely relevant and yet during the tour he and it were brushed over very quickly. Joseph Beuys as a founder of the Social Sculpture movement and his promotion of ‘every human being as an artist’ is a concept that desires individuals to engage and involve themselves in the world and awareness of what is around them.

Joseph Beuys’ declaration that ‘every human being is an artist’ is strongly tied to the ideas of Social Sculpture; this statement represents the idea of the ‘creative human’. Within all of us is the ability to interact with the world in creative ways. We can create our own pathways and influence the social conditions that in turn influence us. The ‘human being as an artist’ has an awareness of his or her agency and an ability to respond to situations or processes in order to create alternate realities. Heim in discussing the ideas of Beuys and Social Sculpture says this – “to ‘sculpt’ in the social realm is to work with the ‘materials’ of thought and dialogue. This creativity is both the vocation of an artist and the inherent capacity of every human; the individual is the locus of change” (2005, p. 204).

By performing the alternative audio tour the participant is entering into a communication with the artwork and using the ‘materials’ that Heim discusses to ‘sculpt’ their own vision of reality. The soundwalk provides the opportunity to realise your creative potential. When asked if art was the best possibility of reaching individual freedom Beuys replied with “Yes because all human knowledge comes from art. Every capacity comes from the artistic capacity of man, which means, to be active, creatively” (Mesch, 2007, p. 211). Living in a world that still holds an obvious dichotomy between the analytical and the creative most people need an encouragement to become creative and realise their ‘artistic’ capacity.

To ‘know’ in this ‘artistic’ capacity is to acknowledge complexity, to understand and feel complexity in the world. It implies a more-than-conscious mode of knowing. Aesthetics for the artistic being is a sensitivity and responsiveness to the patterns that connect the world (ecoartscotland, 2011). Rather than simplifying the world into rules and laws we must embrace the complex patterns and respond to them
accordingly. Fuller (2008, p. 49) considers how sensation, or ‘aesthetic’ as we have been discussing it, forms through the complexities of the world and when recognised by our personal sensation becomes knowledge: “sensation, coupled with its resonance in space, in the capacities of behaviours, and physical affordances becomes melodic, something that is built out of the interplay between things and which produces them as things...The recognition of sensation by sensation generates intelligence, melody itself instigates pattern finding, and reflexivity is born”.

The audio tours are attempting to achieve Beuys’ ideas, they want to open our eyes to the reality of BP sponsorship of the Tate. They are enlivening us to a creative, ‘art as verb’ place where we are aesthetically aware and take back our agency but sadly, in Joseph Beuys’ room I did not understand that and I did not feel it.

I hit the elevators at Level 3 and go to Level 4 then back down to Level 3 and now all the way to Level 5 all the while listening to a concoction of sounds and subversive clips from BP’s advertisements. Bizarre. I am quite comfortable following seemingly pointless instructions, i.e. going up and down the escalator, as I believe it must benefit the experience. I trust the voice to guide me on my flow through the gallery.

In these audio tours there is the element of instructions informing you were to go and there is something very important about the idea of movement in these sorts of participatory artworks. Movement can be a very powerful knowledge process. Debord (1956 in Butler, 2006, p. 893) outlines his theory of ‘Dérive’ “In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their usual motives…and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there.” For Debord, dérive was an embodied way of knowing; you let the city’s energy direct you rather than ‘habitual influences’. The translation of dérive is drift, inferring that the city helps you drift through it and thereby you come to know it. The alternative audio tours break our ‘habitual influences’ when entering the gallery, they encourage us to look, and hear and feel the gallery in a different way to convention. Biswas helps us look through the gallery walls, Suarez helps us
hear the Thames water differently and England helps us feel the turbine hall differently by subverting the ‘habitual influences’. Similar to the idea of dérive is Butler’s (2006, p. 904) notion of soundwalks as “a drifting kind of ompholos”, he is describing how the metronomic act of walking entwines with the words and sounds being listened to, creating a kind of meditative state where one can 'find their way'. Ompholos meaning in Greek the navel but also of finding a way. There is a precedent here in popular society for walking to assist the thinking process, and both Debord and Butler seem to see walking, or drifting which happens when you are letting your mind flow with no real conscious control of your thoughts and actions, as a powerful tool for letting those inner truths and feelings expose themselves. Therefore when we talk of transitional spaces we must be aware and embrace the fact that it is also the physical act of moving within a space that has power, allowing us to create the transitional moments and alternate realities in our mind. Moreover McCartney (2005) considers sound recordists to be ‘urban flaneurs’, strollers discovering the secrets or ignored sounds of their space and creating unknown connections.

De Certeau (1984) on walking suggests that immersive connection cannot be achieved without a geometrical perspective. Soundwalking brings walking and listening together as tactics to enhance immersion, the walking providing the geometrical perspective. Walking aids embodied learning by putting ideas into locational contexts and “allows both exchanges with multiple others and personal introspection for oneself. And, as an ordinary activity, low-tech rather than high-tech, it is accessible to all, and open to mixing all sorts of non-elite wisdoms from all human groups” (Kagan, 2012, p. 37). Furthermore the physical aspect of walking or drifting with its slow cadence and regularity causes a heightened attention from the participant. This combined with the headphones mesmerizing the ears with sounds focused on the singular issue rather than the senses being distracted by the surroundings permits and stimulates an intense engagement on a singular issue. It is highly unusual in our society to experience a moment without some kind of stimulus or distraction to cloud your mind and body with other thoughts. To be able to focus on one set of ideas for a 40 minute tour with no pressure of decision
but merely to let your mind drift is at worst a novel and enjoyable experience and at best a powerful transformative experience.

Maria Merz’ ‘Untitled (Living Sculpture)’ (figure 10) is next on my guerrilla guide through the Tate Modern. This piece is linked to the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe. This time instead of interview extracts from experts I hear testimonies from those affected. The testimonies are emotionally charged and you cannot help but have empathy for them and feel their injustice and despair at both their inability to fight BP and BP’s seeming will to take risks with their loved ones’ lives. For me this approach is far more effective in engaging me with PLATFORM’s cause and with creating an emotional response within me that desires to conceive and enact an alternate reality. Descriptions of ‘the BP cough’ are particularly haunting and create a deeper connection than some previous ‘facts’ from experts. I feel that there is less ulterior motive when listening to testimonies.

Figure 10: Maria Merz (1966) ‘Untitled (Living Sculpture)’. Source: (Tate Modern, 2012).
Later I am encouraged to ask a member of staff to direct me to room six in the States of Flux exhibition. I decide to find the room myself rather than ask the member of staff. I don’t totally understand my reasons for this, it could be because of the alienation I felt earlier or that I don’t see the staff as part of the problem and don’t want to make them uncomfortable. Having watched some of Liberate Tate’s more spectacular actions such as pouring molasses on the floor and each other I have wondered about how the staff feel, having to clean up after the action or take questions and control crowds. I find myself slightly concerned for their wellbeing and decide not to involve them.

Figure 11: The Turbine Hall. Source: (Author, 2012)

The end of the tour finds me back in the entrance to the turbine hall (figure 11). I lie on the floor to listen to closing section of my three alternative audio tours. I hear about tobacco companies losing sponsorship of sports that has turned out well. BP needs to be held account. I then hear from an artist, he has submitted an artwork to the BP sponsored national portrait gallery. “Our world is our biggest canvas and our choices are our most important brush strokes” (England &
Welton, 2012). Finally I am encouraged to send a video message to the Tate director, using the video messaging screens, telling him about my feelings regarding BP sponsorship. This is my personal piece of action and my voice. I was very ready to send, what were forceful thoughts at this point, in the end, perhaps naively, I thought I may want an interview with him for this research and so I did not in case it harmed my chances of that. Thinking back on that moment now I wonder if I truly was prepared to record my face, make a record of my part of the protest and align myself with activist groups that in reality I knew very little about or what they stood for, apart from their opposition to oil sponsorship. The fact is that I left the Tate Modern without having left a permanent mark.

Finally it is worth saying something about education. There is a swelling desire for informal learning and informal learning spaces. Beuys discusses infiltrating institutions, or of ‘doing something outside’ of them as part of what he called the ‘educational process’. This was to enable an “awakening of the consciousness which begins ‘not only in schools, but also in grocery stores...as soon as people talk to one another about these things’” (Mesch, 2007, p. 209). He wanted to take the learning process into everyday life with individuals teaching each other. Additionally Ellsworth (2005, p. 5) wants us to explore “anomalous places of learning” such as museums and galleries and sees education as a process where knowledge is created by the “learning self in the making” (ibid, 2005, p. 2). She also envisions critical pedagogy occurring through transitional spaces.

The alternative audio tours raise an important issue and PLATFORM has used them as a medium to educate people about oil sponsorship and the arts. They have infiltrated the gallery and used it as a place of learning but they have also used the Internet and mobile technologies as places of learning. Pervasive media and mobile technologies hold huge potential to infiltrate spaces as Beuys desires and respond to global situations quickly. This can already be see through social networking sights such as twitter that alert people to global incidents in almost real time and allow disparate locals to engage and influence consensus decision making. However what has been discussed throughout this paper has not been about
superficial engagement or fleeting interest, as can happen with social media or pervasive media, but deep education. Or as Ellsworth (2005, p. 4) discusses, strong pedagogy that “involves us in experiences of the corporeality of the body’s time and space. Bodies have affective somatic responses as they inhabit a pedagogy’s time and space.” It is embodied learning that attempts to engage the whole person—including the body and emotions—in a process of ‘becoming’ (Sandlin & Milam, 2008). Giroux’s ideas of the performative becoming “an act of doing, an act of resistance, a way of connecting the biographical, the pedagogical, and the political” (Denzin, 2003, p. 192) tie with the notion of ‘becoming’; pedagogy is a method and process of knowledge rather than purely an outcome. As discussed earlier, with slow activism, the power of the audio tours is in enlivening participants to know their place in the world and be aware and embrace the complexity. Sandlin & Milam (2008, p. 347) whilst discussing culture jamming but equally applicable to performance art call for people “to become cultural producers building new, more democratic cultural realities and spheres... connect with and learn from activists and others involved in social change.”

Performance is a unique method for public pedagogy as it involves individuals in creating public knowledge in entertaining and embodied forms. “When politics becomes poetic, and is presented or enacted through culture—and especially through a fun, exciting, collective experience of culture—it can seem more open and inviting, and less predictable, than other forms of political protest” (Sandlin & Milam, 2008, p. 338). Performance is a truly inclusive form of activism and learning, as Denzin asserts, interventions “represent pedagogy done in the public interest, democratic art for, by, and of the people” (2003, p. 201). Performance pedagogy is a radical “participatory democratic vision for this new century” (ibid, p. 192) where performances make sites of oppresion and power organisations visible.

The strength of performance pedagogy is through this democratic vision where the political is made open to all individuals in an engaging way. However, there were moments when the audio tours alienated me through actions and words, this is counter-productive to the pedagogical learning, as the participant can turn
defensive to the performance and resentful to the artists. Sandlin and Milam (2008, p.345) hold that “when culture jamming insists on the right answer, [it] can also work against critical learning and close down rather than open transitional spaces.” It can “reinforce repressive myths by attempting to dictate who people should be and what they should think, rather than allowing for the open ‘talking back’—the ‘defiant speech that is constructed within communities of resistance’”. The conversation that we have seen is powerful in the mutual performance of an artwork and must be allowed to drift towards whatever result (rather than directed) else the sensuous, aesthetic engagement that can be achieved will be lost.

Sandlin & Milam (2008) discuss culture jamming’s potential to create community politics as strong pedagogy. PLATFORM’s audio tours do hold a potential to develop a community, indeed they are part of a community organisation that welcomes volunteers and participation. However they are a passionate community and for those who perform the audio tours and feel they do not share the level of passion it may be difficult to engage with that community. During the performance you feel you have a connection with the interviewees in reality these are purely virtual, it would be hugely troublesome to track them down and there is no guarantee that a fisherman in the gulf of mexico would want to discuss your ideas. That sense of community is useful in developing a sense of kinship during the tours but not in a practice. PLATFORM do have an online community that people can participate in and develop their thoughts, I would not term this strong pedagogy, though it does provide a space where interest in the oil sponsorship issue can be further explored and current developments can be discussed and made knowledgable. There is also community in knowing that when you think or do something about oil companies in our society there are others out there doing the same thing.
CONCLUSION:

This paper has explored PLATFORM’s alternative audio tours, using them as an example of how soundwalks and the wider performance art genre can be used to benefit sustainability. Sustainability is not a concept that neatly fits into a sub-discipline, it is applicable to all walks of life and for this reason requires interdisciplinary, academic, formal and informal experimentation in learning and implementation. However the dominant discourse of sustainability has been one focused on the priorities of science, economics, technology and politics and has neglected the cultural dimension of sustainability. It has been a perspective of global relationships as determined and finished rather than “searching for the creative forming powers. Whereas in finished forms we find only the past, the forming powers connect us with the world’s state of becoming” (KulturKontakt, 2009, p. 11). Art is dominated by “the prevailing concept of culture [as] very narrow...considering culture to be a sphere detached from the world of real life” (KulturKontakt, 2009, p. 9). However as this paper has discussed, culture and art, when thought of and implemented in appropriate forms is a knowledge forming process in itself. “Art-as-a-verb [has] the potential to foster a sensibility to Nature-Culture’s dynamic complexity. This may hopefully contribute to cultural transformations as the basis for social-ecological reforms. Reconfiguring the hardware of civilization also necessitates wide-ranging transformations in the software of minds” (Kagan, 2012, p. 38). Whilst the current result-orientated policy and economic and technological decisions made on sustainability are indispensible, sustainability also needs a culture; “as long as our consciousness, our inner spirit, does not develop, all our actions will bring nothing new” (KulturKontakt, 2009, p. 11).

From PLATFORM’s Tate-á-Tate instillation we have seen that soundwalking has great potential for sustainability. It is firstly an easily accessible media form with very few barriers to inclusion. Its widening appeal in the commercial sector will promote its reputation for the public and is likely to, in the near future, lead to some innovative experimentations that can be utilised by sustainability practitioners from academics to charities. As one reviewer puts it, “the triumph
is that this is a highly effective, unpreventable form of non-violent dissent – and also a sensual, personal work of art in its own right. Whether you agree with the values behind the Tate-á-Tate commission or not...the beauty of it is that you get to use the space in a very direct way without the institution having any control over it all. There’s been the best part of a thousand downloads and listens since the launch on March 22nd” (Sowula, 2012). The works on a primary level are interesting, enjoyable and are being used by the public.

However, regarding sustainability, the most exciting potential for the use of soundwalking comes from its ability to engage and empower its participants. The soundwalk is a participant led artwork that is highly personal and engaging. You leave feeling empowered with a heightened sense of your agency. The soundwalks are a guide towards self-efficacy; they provide a medium where participants can be educated and can self-educate in a continuous development process, leading to a participatory democracy of ideas.

The soundwalks provide a platform to imagine and rehearse new realities in a transitional space. Performance art like this has to do “with imagination, intuition and thinking as artists. It is about rethinking ourselves and our social order, and negotiating all this with each other” (Sacks, 2007, p. 3). It provides the catalyst for real change by awakening the ‘aesthetic’ and enlivening the participant’s consciousness. The soundwalk by harnessing emotions, sensory stimulation and walking can leave participants as creative human beings aware of global complexity and seeking to affect those complexities. As Sacks states, “such aesthetic/ethical ‘instruments of consciousness’ are significant in our work towards a humane and viable future, if we see not only the outer work that needs to be done, but that the economic, social and ecological crisis, like any other crisis, is also essentially an opportunity for consciousness” (2007, p. 3). Soundwalks are an experimental medium but one worth further exploring as they hold the potential to efficiently transform individuals ways of thinking about our world towards a sustainable way.
REFERENCES:


http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2012/04/stop_documenting_start_experienc.html?awid=7637955932758556576-3271


