

# To Lucía Sanromán and Sofía Olascoaga

29 August 2014

Lucía Sanromán and Sofía Olascoaga  
Mexico City, Mexico

Mexico City, Mexico  
29 August 2014

Lucía and Sofía

So, as we discussed in the garden of Alumnos 47 yesterday, this is the plan for Day 4 of **The Resident**, 2 October, the day assigned to us to lead. Each of us will propose a number of **episodes** that can be five or ten minutes long (if you want to do a twenty-minute episode, that's okay). Then we can review the episodes, find an order, add or subtract if we want to, and decide where the intervals should be. This will be the main content of the morning. The afternoon will be devoted to group work. Sofía could implement some group-work techniques from radical pedagogy.

Concerning the focus of the episodes, here my notes from yesterday:

D: on the 2nd Johannesburg Biennial and the claims — which I heard Olu Oguibe reference once more recently — that its inability to connect with its place and time, in 1997, is a major reason why there have been no further editions of that biennial. Plus the question of whether — and if so, how — contemporary art in South Africa has been marked by the absence of the Johannesburg Biennial in subsequent years. What resources have been denied by its absence? Did I mention those lines by Gabi Ngcobo in the catalogue of The Ungovernables? If I remember correctly, she describes the 2nd Johannesburg Biennial as the kind uncle, who bore gifts and never returned, and whom 'the children' are obliged to miss.

L: on SITELines and reformulating the SITE Santa Fe biennial, led by Irene Hofmann, in order to make it more incisive concerning notions of place and especially regionalism — specifically, the aim to connect SITELines to the history of New Mexico, including the exclusion of Native American, Spanish, and now Hispanic narratives. It would be good to explain how this plays out in SITELines 2014. By the way, it's great that Irene will be able to join us in Liverpool.

D: on the project Inhabitant, which I co-commissioned earlier this year. It translates a performance (that's also an urban-research project) from Johannesburg to San Francisco. In between it was also produced in Istanbul (which may be a partner city for Liverpool). If it has a topic, it's gentrification. We may wish to discuss the question of translation — not only of language, but of actions, of gestures, from one place to another.

L: on your 'retrospective' of inSite (San Diego/Tijuana) in Cuernavaca. You plan to present the timeline to explain the ways in which inSite tracked the development of site-specificity in the 1990s. You'll explain how this history was presented in the exhibition space in Cuernavaca, and address the failed attempt to revisit five key projects throughout that city.

D: on my (ill-informed) perspective on the new direction of InSite. I'm interested in this as a further example of a 'biennial' moving towards an ongoing, community-based model. I have only personal perceptions from visiting with Osvaldo this week. I can relate/contrast this to what Liverpool Biennial has in mind — and at a conceptual level, speak to Osvaldo's claim that the neighbourhood is now a more potent critical tool than the border. I would leave it to Sofía to say what this might mean in the context of Mexico City, and to Lucía to say what it might mean in the context of InSite. Lucía: what is Casa Gallina in your view? In what ways is it continuous with what inSite was before?

L: on the notion of community and civic engagement in Medellín as opposed to that of Antanas Mockus and his Cultura Ciudadana project in Bogota. (By the way, Lucía, you should check out Justin McGuirk's new book Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture.) You plan to discuss these topics through the work commissioned for your Citizen Culture exhibition at the Santa Monica Museum of Art — which just opened on Friday! Congratulations on that. You can explain how the initiatives in both Bogota and Medellín were generated in response to crisis and trauma by enlightened

city governments and their mayors. Address how the relationships between cultural production, urbanism, architecture, and the reformulation of a sense of co-responsibility between citizen and government are powerfully exemplified in these cases — plus a note on the fragility of these administrations.

D: on the exhibition/book Blank: Architecture, Apartheid and After (1998). This is a rare and now somewhat legendary book of photography and texts on the architectural legacies of apartheid. It's a resource for thinking about how cultural practice might address that legacy. For me, there are lessons here for any city that needs to work through trauma — and which city does not?

L: on your own stake in these themes. The story of your relationship to Tijuana and the projects that have resulted from coming to terms with various kinds of urban and social trauma in that city. I've heard you say that all the projects you've done since 2010 as an independent curator are, in some ways, responses to curiosities, frustrations and intuitions about how culture can function to oppose social and political dissolution and entropy.

Sofía: you need to add your episodes to this list.

I look forward to seeing you both in Liverpool.

Best wishes

D

---

29 August 2014