The Inner Public

Krzysztof Wodiczko

In this essay I would like to elaborate on the specific kind of public that emerges in my projects and that is generated from within the process of social and technical production of these projects. I call this public the Inner Public. *The Inner Public is critical to project participants' testimonial role and to the social integrity and complexity of the projects. For the participants, and for the development of the projects, the group and network of people who constitute the Inner Public function as the projects' first audience and informed interlocutor. The Inner Public also plays a role as secondary witness and as an emotionally involved "fearless listener," without which the participants' stories and testimonies – my projects' foundation – cannot be developed and shared. Participants receive moral support and tactical advice from the Inner Public, and, considering the risks attached to their acts of public truth-telling, a sense of protection. Participants are the nucleus and the core of the Inner Public. Through its involvement, the Inner Public generates the development and transformation of the projects. In sum, the integrity of any project, in all the stages of its production, including its public reception and its social afterlife, depends on the testimonial role of the project participants and the audience function of the Inner Public.*

Project Participants as Collaborators

My works in public space include participatory projections-animations of urban monuments as well as the performative use of specially designed communicative equipment. These projects'

purpose is to inspire and assist the people who choose to take part in them to become present day *parrhesiastes* (free, fearless speakers) and social agents.[1] By extension, the aim of these projects is to contribute to the process of animating the city as a site of agonistic public discourse and dynamic democratic process.[2] The most critical aspect of my projects is the process of involving, inspiring and assisting participant-collaborators in the development of their capacity for sharing and critically communicating their experience in a frank, fearless and emotionally articulate way. Through these projects they performatively tell the truth of their lived experience, not only on behalf of themselves, but also, as emergent social agents, on behalf of others who have lived through and continue to suffer unjust conditions of life, but do not have the advantage of such communicative media.

In most discussions about my work the focus is on the spectators rather than on the participants who are the key contributors to my projects. This is due to the fact that my projects are treated as spectacles or public events–something that is developed solely for the perception and reception of the so-called "public." Consequently, those conversations that refer to my projects tend to focus on questions and matters concerned with the "reaction of the public," the "audience's response," and further, of the "public impact" of the works. These issues are important, but in my view, divert attention from most of my projects' social and artistic objectives. When people examine my projects from an external perspective (that of the spectator), they risk missing the point of view of its inner workings and the projects' focus on the participants as project collaborators, performers, truth-tellers and testifiers. The external perspective also misses the psychologically developmental and aesthetic aspects of the formulation of public witness testimony.

To be fair, the limited focus on public reception is in part understandable, given that those who comment on a work are often not aware of the process that goes into the project's development. Since many participants desire to remain anonymous, and, due to the psychologically sensitive process of recording testimony,

the inner perspective of a project's development often cannot be shared. Thus, the work is perceived externally, on the basis of its final public presentation and in terms of video documentation. The focus on the final appearance of the projects misses what I consider to be the main point of the work: everything that is human and social and that contributes to the making of the project *before* the final moment of its public presentation and reception. This includes, among many other aspects, the initial meetings with the people who may take part in a project, the long process of their self-selection, the elaborate process of recording and re-recording testimonies, related conversations and discussions, as well as other developmental stages of the project–usually referred to as "preparatory" material.

In most theoretical and critical discussions of public art, there is rarely any emphasis placed on the value and meaning of projects for those who invest lived experience in them. However, a grasp of the psychologically developmental, therapeutic, educational and performative procedures of these works is crucial for understanding the social objective of such projects. In this essay I would like to recount the basic developmental stages of the process involved in making any one of my projects. This, I believe, is important for understanding not only the method of my work, but also the method of other artists' whose projects involve working with people. It's impossible to develop a more sophisticated account of methodology until we move beyond the narrow focus on audience reaction that is typical in much art criticism. Such a limited, external focus, seemingly insightful and no matter how well meaning, reduces the scope and understanding of the project. Considering the kind of work I do, I would much prefer if a more appropriate question was asked, such as: "What was the meaning and the value of the project to those who choose to speak, perform and address the public through it?"

To save one soul in a city by inspiring and assisting someone to break their silence and publicly share, address and denounce unacceptable conditions of life is to save the entire city. By salvaging

and expanding the inclusiveness of the city's democratic process and its public space as a site of critical discourse, the people who choose to be part of a project are not merely 'participants,' since such word would suggests too passive a role, but are active agents who take the project to heart and contribute to it by putting themselves on the line. For this, they must also develop an artistry—sometimes to the point of performative virtuosity—in making use of these projects in public space. A self-selected group of such collaborators and performative users always plays a fundamental role in each project. If they succeed in making sense of the project for their own lives and the lives of others, it is their success. If they do not succeed, I consider it my failure.

Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The Tijuana Projection* (2001). Organized and commissioned by INSITE 2000, part of the project in the Border Art Festival of San Diego and Tijuana. Photo courtesy of Krzysztof Wodiczko.

Two Publics

Two kinds of publics are constituted by each project. The first public is internal. It comes from within the project and is formed through the discourse generated by and accompanying all the social and technical stages of a project's development, research, production and postproduction. I call this the *Inner Public*. The second public is external as it comes from outside the project and encounters the project in its final or near final form, through its public tests, final presentation and through the unfolding public discourse around it. It becomes a witness and an audience to what is presented as a final work, a result of the workings of the *Inner Public* itself. I call this second public the *Outer Public*.

In the development of each project, my primary focus is always on the formation of the *Inner Public*. The measure of a project's success is its capacity to inspire, assist, and protect the development and transmission of the public voice and expression of those who choose to take part in it. As they gradually begin creating and perfecting the project's narrative and master their communicative performance they become its formative force—its primary contributors. The formation of an *Inner Public* begins with a small group of potential contributors. This Core Group serves as an "avant-garde" in the formation of the *Inner Public*. These few people, three or four of them, encourage others to join the project. Even if later in the process of producing a project one of two of its members drop out for some reason (as it happened in the case of one of the projects I'll discuss below, produced in Tijuana), their formational function is crucial. The Core Group is not only a nucleus, it also serves as a reservoir from which the "participants" are recruited and the *Inner Public* further developed.

The Core Group benefits from the support of a team that develops a strong trust towards the project and, in this case, consisted mainly of the head of Factor-X, a Tijuana-based worker's rights organization, and her co-workers, as well as a group of family members and friends who provided hidden, behind the scene

informal support. Lawyers, curators, production and postproduction teams and of course myself are a part of the Core Group's support system. The process of decision-making regarding each step in the development of a project is shared by all parties. The project's discursive dynamic is an important aspect of the project because it brings to it both the inside and the outside perspective. Considering this dynamic, the Core Group, thanks to the formal support team as well as the informal support network that operates behind the scene, becomes the nucleus of the first public of the project, its *Inner Public*. The *Inner Public* is born of the project and acts as its foundation and vital force. Its role as social agent may go beyond the support that is offered to project participants because its members are connected with other social support groups and networks through which they may add critical support and an informed perception of the project.

The Inner Public

The project and the formation of the *Inner Public* begins as soon as those who keep coming to a project's initial meetings begin to discuss it and consider their potential involvement in it. This is usually a small number of people to whom the idea of the project has been presented. Often, they are initially suspicious of the project, for fear of being manipulated by it. At the same time, for some, their curiosity and intuitive interest contradicts and challenges this suspicion. Taking a leap of faith they may eventually choose to endorse the project's overall cultural aim and consider the possibility of joining it. Without fully knowing why, they are gradually drawn to the idea of contributing. Overcoming or at least temporarily putting aside their initial suspicion, they open up to the project and consider the possibility that in some ways it will be useful to them. At this stage, their role shifts beyond being mere participants. Rather, they become co-creators as they gradually become involved and invested in developing the project. Initial discussions become increasingly sharp and articulate and exchanged stories gain in honesty, fearlessness and emotional charge. What is said, and how

it is said, connects the participants' existential experience with a critical and political perspective.

As meetings proceed and are attended by new potential participants, who are often accompanied by their friends and families, the Core Group of those who are now fully committed to the project emerges. This group becomes the core of subsequent meetings. Every participant deliberates over the possibility of their direct or indirect, "behind the scene," involvement in the project by gauging what they might gain from it, emotionally, socially, and culturally. They take into consideration not only their own gain but also the project's social impact on others and on society at large. In this way, regular meetings are extended by other contacts and gatherings, behind the scene, which trigger the focus of the *Inner Public* on matters that are often kept private, hidden, or suppressed, and which then become issues of political and public significance. Despite the fact that the project's working meetings unfold within places that are not "public" and are that are invisible to the "outside world," these discussions are nonetheless part of the larger public discourse. This is because of the "publicness" of the project and the fact that issues that are normally hidden but that are then shared, exchanged and passionately deliberated are the very heart of these meetings.

Engaged in this discourse, members of the initial group finally confirm their "participation" in the project. They have come to perceive the social need for revealing in public the hidden truth of their lives, and they do so on behalf of themselves and others. They see the value of the project as a vehicle for such testimony. They also feel that through the project they can connect or re-connect with the larger society and in addition gain communicative skills. In this way, the Core Group of the project's *Inner Public* is formed. In further stages of the development of the project, and as a result of its social inclusiveness, this Core Group of the *Inner Public* will greatly expand. When expanded, the *Inner Public* will engage others who are not directly involved but who are supporting those who attend the meetings. Through its connections with the

broader city population, the *Inner Public* becomes an informative and supportive force affecting the reception of the project on the part the *Outer Public*.

Stages in the Formation of the Inner Public

The *Inner Public* is formed through the following successive stages. The idea of the project is presented to an art institution that is experienced in the production of media-based projects in public space, such as a media art center, public art festival, museum, etc. The institution then establishes an initial connection with those social support organizations that are most relevant to the project, be it a war veterans' association, a homeless center, a *maquiladora* workers association, an immigrant support center, or a transitional social housing service. These organizations in turn involve their cadre of social service workers as potential collaborators. The proposed project is then presented to other members of the organization. As the first objective of these workers is to protect and help the people they serve, they will likely raise many questions and concerns regarding the participants' safety and the project's concrete cultural, social and psychological benefits for the participants. These issues must be further discussed with both the social workers' superiors and with the art institution.

In the case of the Tijuana-based project, staged at El Centro Cultural, the process of determining the subject matter for the work, as well as identifying a potential urban site and learning about and discussing possible options and issues, included, among other contacts, the head of a team of social workers at Factor X, an urban sociologist from the University of Tijuana who's work focuses on the situation of Maquiladora workers in Tijuana (specifically addressing violence against women and their social and legal supporters by factory managers, the police, and unemployed men, and against police by drug cartel's etc.), and some very initial but important contacts with female maquiladora employees. The idea of creating

a projection-animation at El Centro Cultural, an iconic building in Tijuana which residents call La Bola, and of inscribing speaking faces onto it, developed in response to what I learned from these people. I thought that the idea of projecting, in the most familiar and accessible public space in the city, the magnified faces and voices of these who refuse to hide and be silent, who bravely tell the truth of their lives and share their critical position on the current situation in Tijuana, and who do so through the façade (face) of the most prominent structure in the city, made democratic and "parrhesiastic" sense. My initial sketches presenting this idea were than presented to the above mentioned people and to the curators, to whom I also conveyed my willingness to change the proposed projection idea, should they feel it was for some reason wrong or inappropriate. I was a bit surprised that it met with their approval without much question or worry. During the subsequent preproduction and production meetings the aesthetic direction of the projection itself was seldom discussed or questioned.

If the project "survives" this initial stage of consideration, examination and discussion, and if it promises both benefits and safety, it is now ready to move on and be presented to potential participants by a social worker, by myself and by the project's social production coordinator. Potential participants are initially skeptical and suspicious of being invaded and manipulated by the project. My responsibility is to make clear to them that my aim as an artist is to animate public space with the ideas, experiences, and voices of those who are marginalized from it, for their own benefit and for that of the larger public. It also has to made clear that the specific direction of the project is subject to changes occasioned by the participants' feedback and that the substance of the testimonial, critical and propositional input must come from them and not from anyone else. The participants are made to understand that they will be both the authors and actor-performers of what they say and how they say it through the project.

Despite the above explanations, the integrity of the project is put to the test once again by both the social workers and the

Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The Tijuana Projection* (2001). The headset, equipped with a video camera, LED lights and a microphone allows the wearer to project her face and voice in real time onto the facade of El Centro Cultural in Tijuana. Organized and commissioned by INSITE 2000, part of the project in the Border Art Festival of San Diego and Tijuana. Photo courtesy of Krzysztof Wodiczko.

potential participants who feel curious but still skeptical about the undertaking. While discussions take place some among the potential participants express a guarded interest in joining the project; others no longer show up to the meetings. On the other hand, those who initially claim to have "nothing to say," but keep returning time to time to observe the proceedings, may come to be the most motivated, articulate and frank performers and animators of the projects. Still, the project is in danger of being psychologically compromised and even destroyed by potential participants, who doubt, mistrust, and scrutinize it for having been proposed to them from an external, unknown, and uninformed agent. It is now in serious danger of being rejected entirely. Despite such a self-defensive reaction, the social production team and I continue to

organize the meetings, determined that the project will somehow take place.

The obligation of the primary team is to survive this potential destruction and present itself as strong again and again. We may have to present the project to new potential participants as a way to spark the interest and confidence of those in doubt. It is now clear to the latter that they are the ones who must choose the project rather than be chosen by it: no one is going to be rejected but neither is anyone going to be a privileged participant. Upon such realization, the project seems to have survived the danger of destruction. Consequently, its use value has increased as it has begun to be perceived as self-confident, open, inclusive, and durable. As participants understand that the project is in their hands, they become both its users and collaborators. As discussions continue, the participants feel that they are ready to confront difficult matters and take on brave tasks, such as publicly sharing the harsh and often painful truth of their lived experience.

As the proposed project gradually loses its "outsider" status, it is progressively adopted and shaped by the inner world of the Core Group of potential participants. While it still belongs to the outside world from which it originated, it has now become part of the inner world of those who infuse it with their shared stories, testimonies and critical ideas. The project becomes a sort of "transitional object" for the participants who in this way become its collaborators.[3] To secure the project's developmental character, the issue as to whether it is "Wodiczko's artistic project" or the "art of participants testimonial performance," is formulated and brought into discussion by the organizers. It is not raised again, and—in the course of the increasingly emotional exchange and sharing of stories by the Core Group and later by the participants in prerecording and recording sessions—it is perhaps intuitively understood as an inappropriate and potentially disturbing question. The project absorbs the ideas, imagination, and hopes of those who now intuitively feel that they can somehow use it for the betterment of their own traumatized lives, and even further the lives of others like themselves. Some

sense a potential new role and even a mission for themselves as spokespeople and social agents.[4]

The meetings gradually take the form of an experience-sharing and truth-telling workshop, during which some participants write notes in preparation for the video recording. In some instances the project becomes a truth-writing workshop. Because writing is governed by a different part of the brain than the one responsible for speaking, writing helps some people recover suppressed and difficult memories. They may try to read them aloud before recording them for projection or before sharing them with the use of the performative equipment that I design for use in public space. At the same time, outside of the meetings, potential participants discuss the project with their friends, trusted members of their family, lawyers, psychotherapists, social workers, investigative journalists and so forth. They may be in a contact with lawyers (in the case of the Tijuana Projection through the Factor X social support organization) or psychotherapists, art therapists and cultural workers (in the case of Derry-Londonderry project discussed below through the Verbal Arts Center). They debate the meaning of the project and the risk and benefits that further and deeper involvement may entail.

An increasing number of people are now involved as indirect contributors to the project. The *Inner Public* expands in scale and scope beyond the initial Core Group, becomes more confident and committed to the project, and is more open and inclusive to newcomers. As others join the working meetings, the traumatic memories and difficult experiences are now shared and confronted. The project is now ready for further development. Supported by a network of informed and engaged members, the initial Core Group of potential participants has now become an integral part of the growing inner circle of the project–its *Inner Public*. This could include not only family and friends, but also social, legal, and therapeutic support networks, as well as a technical production and postproduction crew, including a film crew, video editing and special interface equipment crew, and a projection, sound and

lighting team, among others. At this stage, the formation of the *Inner Public* is complete.

The Inner and the Outer Public

The public media, especially their local branches, as well as socially minded journalists and reporters, tend to focus their attention on project collaborators and other members of the team, giving them voice through interviews. This offers an additional opportunity for the members of the *Inner Public* to share further with the *Outer Public* what they have to say, that is, beyond what has been already said through the projections-monument animations or public performances with instruments. Prepared by their own testimonial work in the project, the project's participants-collaborators-performers may now wish to say more, through radio, television, and the press. In this way the witnesses, listeners and readers multiply the points of conversation throughout the city. This increased mediation injects a pointed content to the exchange of information and views among the members of the *Outer Public*. The project takes place not only during the public presentation but also, and often, during the earlier projection and performances tests, when media people and passers-by stop and speak to the project's performative users, to the crew members, to project coordinators and to other members of the *Inner Public*. Ad hoc discussions about the project's technical aspects switch to questions related to the project's social aspects.

People in the city begin to hear rumors while driving by (stopping without turning off their car's engine). Because "someone was wearing strange equipment" or because there is "something involving the monument," the next day at work, or in some other situation, someone will ask someone else what was happening and may receive a quite informed and passionate answer. The public media, especially the press, use the secondary or ripple response to the project to acknowledge and address the issues that are still

too controversial to expose directly. Rather than "tackle the problem head on," the press takes the opportunity of the projection event or media performance itself and of the availability of direct statements and stories from people who collaborated in it, interviewing each of them (and myself) separately to raise issues with apparent objectivity. Typically TV crews interview the larger, diversified "audience," with the same question: "What do you think about this?" When present at that moment, the members of *Inner Public* often relay the question to others in order to trigger further public discourse and to reach toward the *Outer Public*.

Speaking of the impact of the *Inner Public* on the *Outer Public*, one must acknowledge the importance of "unintentional" contributors, collaborators and users of my projects. In one example, the projection on *El Centro Cultural* in Tijuana, such an unexpected collaborator was a professional interpreter who was commissioned from Mexico City to provide live translation of the unfolding of a real time projection narrative. At one point the interpreter burst into tears, unintentionally interrupting the flow of translation and of public reception. The emotionally disturbing narrative of the projection became emotionally disturbed itself. A large number of people, who had come from San Diego and knew little if any Spanish, and who had been wearing headphones to hear the translation, suddenly took them off. The translator told me later that this was the first time in her long career that she had experienced such an emotional and unprofessional reaction. This was a reaction that came from her heart or stomach, perhaps triggered by some of her own lived experience, a "Brechtian" interruption producing the "alienation effect."[5] She joined the project only at its final production stage but unexpectedly and unintentionally became its crucial collaborator. Her "unprofessional," emotionally charged behavior greatly contributed to the strength of the *Inner Public* and to the project's perception by the *Outer Public*.

The Outer Public as Witness

Even when viewers come to a project as mere spectators, they often stay there not "without interest" and listen to—and hear—painful stories and testimonies. They may stay through repeated cycles in the projection loop for ethical reasons. Despite even the rain, they perhaps feel obliged to listen and watch out of solidarity with those who bravely opened their mouth and spoke out. What is projected is not only the truth of what is said, but also the truth of the very refusal to remain silent about that truth—the truth about the possibility of doing so with emotional intensity, honesty, and with a sense of social mission. Testimony in public space is an assault on the silence about matters that are vital to the city and to its people. Viewers are reluctant to walk away from such a blast of truth. Perhaps they feel obliged to stay because what is said is difficult to hear and because it is painfully true.

It is possible that some spectators regret they were not part of the performance, because they realize its critical and proactive (transformative) dimension. Realizing this loss, they are ready to take on the role of relay, to speak up, to break the silence, and to design a more meaningful way of living with their own trauma. Were they spectators? Were they an audience? Although many may come with the expectation and intention to simply "enjoy" the projection as a "spectacle," they may find themselves drawn into it as unintentional witnesses, co-witnesses or secondary witnesses. They recognize through their own experience the truthfulness of the testimonial narrative of the projection. Staying with the projection, these viewers both reveal and publicly confirm the accuracy that is transmitted by the project's stories, testimonies and statements. Through their emotional focus on the projection, they build an empathetic bridge between themselves, as members of the *Outer Public*, the participants and the *Inner Public* of the project. Through their "fearless listening" they add to the credibility and the truthfulness of the project. Despite emotional difficulty, and even sometimes the rain, these committed and well-informed

people give an example to others to stay and bear witness. They become true contributors to the project and help build the civic consciousness of the *Outer Public*.

"Fearless Speaking" Requires "Fearless Listening" and Vice Versa

The projection at El Centro Cultural gained momentum when the project participants spoke through special wearable equipment to project their faces and voices "in real time" onto the gigantic façade of El Centro Cultural in front of the assembled crowd. They were encouraged when sensing the supportive focus and fearless listening commitment of this special and large contingent of the *Outer Public* and this added to their confidence and the emotional force of their fearless speech. This added to the external "moral support" received by participants by trusted and emotionally supportive social workers, friends, family members, lawyers, and others from the project team and larger network of the *Inner Public* who came to encourage and protect them. My own participation was temporary of course, but continuity was created through Factor X, a Mexican government sponsored organization that teaches the maquiladora workers about their human, legal and political rights, especially these relate to labor relations, which supported the project. They continued to use the original footage of the projection's testimonial videos as well as the video documenting the actual event of projection long after the projection event to solicit new members, to educate them and trigger their engagement. It was also used by Factor X social workers as part of their case studies presentations at national and international conferences on Maquiladora labor and border economy. This is another example of the influence of the *Inner Public* on the *Outer Public*, this time in terms of the "afterlife' of the project.[6]

Case Study: Public Projections in Derry-Londonderry, 2013

As was the case in Derry-Londonderry some participants may need to seek the approval and endorsement of larger groups of people before the can make a final commitment. They may need the approval of the segregated and embattled parts of the city where they themselves live and work. Participants, especially those involved in social work, have done this so as to protect their families, the people with whom and for whom they work, themselves and the project from violent repercussions. They present to others the larger benefits of the public dialogue that the project is hoping to encourage, and defend it against sectarian mistrust and opposition. Again, in the case of the Derry projection, dialogue was especially difficult and critically important, since it was based on and relied upon the participation of people of all ages from both the Republican and Loyalists communities, many of whom, in the not too distant past, were fighting and killing each other in a protracted civil war. Radical groups and militants from each side of the conflict were ready to threaten the project by posing the risk of violent attacks against participants and the larger public.

According to the account of a cultural worker from the Verbal Art Center, a cultural center responsible for co-organizing the project, and thanks to the engagement of the participants, community workers and activists, at least five hundred people from Protestant and Catholic parts of the city were involved behind the scene as part of the project's social and political support. These five hundred people greatly multiplied the *Inner Public* well beyond the twenty-two core participants (from both Catholic and Protestant communities). This was in addition to the similar number of people on the social, cultural and technical production team plus their friends and families as well as these who could not participate but were "around." The Derry City Council did not expect that the project would receive such broad social support. Its members were not aware or were not confident about the potential benefits of the

Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Public Projection for Derry Londonderry*, Lumiere Festival, Derry-Londonderry, Ireland. Produced by Artichoke, Commissioned by City of Culture 2013, photograph by Maria Niro. Photograph courtesy of Krzysztof Wodiczko.

project, secured by the very process of its production via an *Inner Public*, and expressed fear that the project would cause violence rather than encourage an open and inclusive dialogue in public space. The fears increased when the City Council was informed by Sinn Féin, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, that it "cannot protect the project" against threats of attacks from militant paramilitary groups in the city.

Despite such a tense situation, the risk of violence diminished because of the support that was gained by the participants from their inner circles and because of the positive impact of informal community meetings that engaged influential groups from Catholic and Protestant sections of the city. Generated in this way by an *Inner Public* of nearly six hundred people that represented two

very different religious and political views, the project's method acted as a security blanket and buffer zone for the development of it's final presentation, when members dissolved potential violence by invisibly but effectively mixing with the *Outer Public* at various sites of projection. They did this by merging into the "audience," (*Outer Public*) during the projection without being recognized as members of the *Inner Public*. They would engage in conversations with spectators, "infiltrating" them with a more refined or informed perception of the project based on an understanding of the projection as a cultural contribution to the necessary work of an open and inclusive engagement with the memory of the civil war. People endorsed and protected the project as a cultural vehicle for the creation of an inclusive public space and for the transformation of a dangerously segregated city into a common place. They supported the use of public space for symbolic, nonviolent exchange, open to opposing views and beliefs, including the traumatic memories of The Troubles (the civil war in Northern Ireland).

With the support of its *Inner Public*, the project was ready to become a transitional zone in conflict transformation that could contribute to a positive peace process, based on open, "agonistic" memory discourse and not on the idea that this violent history should be segregated to public silence and private sectarian talk.[7] As a result of the presence and influence of the *Inner Public*, the violent members of sectarian groups from the *Outer Public* lost their social support and could not attack the project. Projections were staged at the Derry Corner, a site charged with the memory of Bloody Sunday and of the beginning of The Troubles. The project demanded an emotional focus on the voices of the participants who expressed opposing points of views, critical interpretations of the past and the present, and ideas about the future. By listening to disturbing memories and testimonies, the *Outer Public* actively engaged in agonistic memory and no violent reactions against the project took place. And so, the fears of the City Council and the warnings from Sinn Féin proved to be unfounded

Case Study: El Centro Cultural Tijuana, Baja California Norte, Mexico, 2001

For the El Centro Cultural projection in Tijuana, there were eight core members who finally chose to join the project. The work focused on women who had suffered domestic and labor-related violence. Through the larger-than-life projections of their faces the participants testified about their own experiences and those of hundreds of young maquiladora workers who had survived police assaults, drug violence, gender abuse and life threatening industrial working conditions. The project was organized by the InSite 2000 border art festival. Key to the project was the involvement of Factor X, which I've described above. Factor X, as I've noted already, is an organization that functions primarily to teach Maquiladora workers about their rights. Since the overwhelming majority of these workers are very young women Factor X also operates as a post-traumatic self-help support group for them, and thus indirectly supports their families. In their discussions with workers and their families Factor X helps them cope with, and reduce, the many forms of violence that they regularly encounter, including violence related to either the workplace or the police, domestic and sexual violence and violence they encounter in crossing the border into the U.S..[8] It is the first space in Tijuana in which these workers can share experiences that had been, due to shame, previously kept private, such as physical abuse, rape, incest, sexual abuse, their merciless exploitation at work, and medical and family problems in Tijuana, and in the countries and villages from which they came in southern Mexico further in Central and South America. Factor X meetings fostered arguments, discussions, confessions, grievances and new demands, and helped in the development of stories, testimonies and statements for the project.

My arrival at the Factor X center initiated a process of self-selection by potential participants. Because people seemed reluctant to participate, I was repeatedly questioned by a social worker, who insisted that I call her regularly but who was nearly

impossible to reach by telephone. I had to keep proving myself committed, qualified, and resilient, despite the fact that the odds seemed stacked against the project. I faced initial doubt and skepticism on the part of this social worker. Other members of Factor X as well as the militant lawyers' group that supported and protected its operation were understandably wary of foreign filmmakers and journalists who notoriously exploit local misery for their careers abroad, and who, doing so, simplify, romanticize and sensationalize the life of people and compromise their safety. However, in the end, a new perception of me emerged and I began to be called "artista polaco" (Polish artist), which gave me some credibility—though one could just as easily have called me American or Canadian. The name "Polish artist" was probably invoking the myth of the Pole as imaginary fellow-revolutionary from the time of Mexicans' nineteenth-century independence struggles and definitely as someone to be trusted more than a "Gringo" (a derogatory name for Americans in Mexico).

At each meeting, there was a different configuration of potential self-selecting participants. A discussion about collaboration led us to include the feedback and tangential involvement of even those who ultimately decided to not participate. Each of the potential participants began consulting with their families and friends before considering taking a calculated risk in agreeing to join the project. As it has been the case with many other projects, the eight people who eventually decided to embrace the project were each part of larger networks that were not directly involved but acted as witnesses, disputants or supporters. This multiplying effect also expanded to an outer circle of social workers, lawyers, and professionals. Some maquiladora women workers who came to the meetings to discuss their involvement in the project brought their babies and children. Others brought their husbands, brothers and sisters, and even their dogs. All of these became contributing members of the *Inner Public*, even the dogs.[9]

Because it was a public project, the contributing performers had to think carefully about what they would say and how to say it.

One striking example of the calculated risk involved in participating in the projection came from a woman whose husband had been imprisoned as a result of her report to the police and a lawsuit for incest. He had made it clear that upon his release he planned to kill her, but she chose nevertheless to speak through the projection with the hope of protecting herself. She hoped that the visibility and public knowledge of her situation granted by the project would lead to a degree of protection on the part of the media and the public sphere. The process of developing the project created a protective buffer zone of witnesses between the protagonists and those who might wish to act against them. Thus, from the initial core, the circle of the *Inner Public* began expanding into concentric networks of people who came to provide social protection and moral support to participants during the projection tests and later during the final presentations.

The following is an account of the people who contributed to the development and formation of the *Inner Public*. There were eight project participants and three social workers—members of the Factor X organization. The three social workers engaged a few others, plus some other volunteer rights workers who were working for Factor X. About six people engaged others in discussing and elaborating the project and so there were about eighteen people total. The initial group of users-contributors expanded through their closest friends and family members, who provided consultation, consolation, and opinions (eight contributors x three or four close contacts = 24-36 people). The friends and family members of the Factor X professional help network became implicated in decisions related to the project (about eight professionals involving five friends and family members in discussions = 40 people). There were also the social researchers and academics from outside of Factor X, like urban geographers from the University of Tijuana, a documentary filmmaker-activist, and the colleagues of artists from a border art collective (about ten people).

All of these people were highly engaged in discussions about the project and without them it would have been difficult for me to

learn about Tijuana's labor and cultural context. Also involved was the social production coordinator of the project and her assistant, two InSite 2000 festival co-curators, the director from El Centro Cultural, a translator, and a videographer documenting the project, as well as volunteer student helpers (six to seven people). Last but nor least there was an emotionally and politically committed technical production crew made up of around 25 people: a technical coordinator, a video and sound recording team (three to four people), a video editing team (two people), a video projection team (three people), a sound projection team (three people), people to light the building (one or two people), the videographers (three operators plus one technician), the real time projection interface, sound and video mixing team (two people), a professional interpreter, some university students and a few others who assisted.

All of the aforementioned people were the members of the *Inner Public*. They amounted to a sizable group of about 150-200 people. This *Inner Public* was always there, as Brecht would say, "not without interest," that is, with a willingness to become motivated, responsive, unnerved, at times shocked or radicalized by what they saw. Being a passive or active part of the tests and of the final projection event, some of the members of the *Inner Public* chose to act as the project's informal advocates as well as a protective buffer zone for the safety of those participants performing in public. Most of the 150-200 members of the *Inner Public* had been socially connected with a large number of people from various social strata in the main cities of Tijuana and San Diego. Through such links the *Inner Public*—a strong, well informed, and emotionally supportive context-specific nucleus—helped to generate some 450 to 600 members of the *Outer Public*. This developmental and interventionist *Inner Public* formed a temporary context-specific nucleus around which the project generated its *Outer Public*, which now includes the reader of this text.

Deliberations on the "role of the public" in public art must take into account the fact that in some cases such art, through the social and technical process of its making, may generate its own

public, a "public-within," the *Inner Public*, and that such a public may indirectly and directly effect the larger reception of work by a "public-without," the *Outer Public*. This may be especially evident in the case of artistic and cultural projects that are based on the development of communicative performance by the participants (collaborating contributors) and on the support received by them from their families, friends, and the projects' social and technical production team, as well as from other social groups, organizations and networks.

Krzysztof Wodiczko is renowned for his large-scale slide and video projections on architectural facades and monuments. He has realized more than ninety of such public projections in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, England, Germany, Holland, Northern Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. Since the late 1980s, his projections have involved the active participation of marginalized and estranged city residents. Simultaneously, and also internationally, he has been designing and implementing a series of nomadic instruments and vehicles with homeless, immigrant, and war veteran operators for their survival and communication. He received the Hiroshima Art Price "for his contribution as an international artist to the world peace", and represented Poland and Canada in Venice Biennale. The comprehensive monograph of his work has been published by Black Dog, London (2012) and his collected writing will be published in fall of 2015 by the same publisher. Krzysztof Wodiczko is a Professor of Art, Design and the Public Domain at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University.

Notes

This text, updated in Vinalhaven during the summer of 2013 and 2014, is based on lecture notes for the symposium *The Public in Question: The Politics of Artistic Practices*, held at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, May 4-5, 2007. Fragments are drawn from an unpublished interview I did with Dorris Somer at Harvard University in 2009.

1. Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, edited by Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001).

2. Chantal Mouffe, "For an Agonistic Model of Democracy," in *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 80-107.

3. D.W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," in *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, [1971] 1982), pp.1-25.

4. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence–From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

5. See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, edited by John Willet (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964).

6. One year after the projection, a Ph.D. candidate from Dublin visited the Tijuana projection site and the Factor X organization. Her dissertation addressed Dublin issues through the encouragement of Factor X to think seriously about developing new educational and cultural methods on domestic and workplace violence as they relate to human rights and politics. Examining the Dublin and Tijuana situation, she referred to Foucault's concept of fearless speech. She later wrote me a note about her experience in that Tijuana bore out my own observations that the courage to speak depends on reciprocal fearless listening and that public truth-telling (testimony) and public truth-seeking (witnessing) are interdependent.

7. On the subject of conflict transformation and positive peace, see Hugh Miall, *Conflict Transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task*, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004, available online at http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/miall_handbook.pdf, accessed September 15, 2013.

8. Maquiladoras are Mexican factories run by foreign companies that export their products to the country of origin. More than 90% of all the murder victims in Tijuana are teenage women. The factories where they work broadcast their labor preferences on big banners that say "Girls Only." Murder is the most visible crime committed against these young women–and therefore against their families and children–but the private and common crimes of rape and incest are a significant feature of their exploitation. A large part of the population of Tijuana is supported by these women as cheap and dependable labor in the many hundreds of maquiladora factories along the border. Tijuana is a large metropolis and the great numbers of unemployed and frustrated men are sources of violence against women.

9. If the initial objective of Factor X was to teach younger maquiladora workers their rights, the projection also eventually became a forum for

the trainers themselves, regarding their social, political and cultural activity. Benefits could be perceived to come from public media art, including its art education and art therapy aspects, especially since the activists of Factor X raised issues linked to their own lives that would otherwise not have seemed primary. In many ways they began to work as a post-traumatic stress therapy self-help group.