

# IMPROVISING GAZTEXES

By Mattin & Aitor Izagirre

**In what way improvisation does need to learn from squatting to create and live in the most autonomous and free social environment?**

**How can being squatted by improvised music affect the organisation of gaztexes?**

**What would happen if squatters began to play improvised music and improvising musicians began to take steps towards self-management?**

**How can we violate the roles and identities that are adopted and adhered to even in alternative scenes?**

**We invite you to produce unrepeatable and unique situations that collapse the idea of squatter/musician/audience as well as talking/meeting/concert from an experimental point of view; situations that help us to develop new strategies.**

There is no future (R.I.P.)

Squat the present (A.V.C.)\*

In this constellation of occupied spaces in which, despite its limits, it is possible to experiment with forms of collective aggregation outside of control, we have known an increase of power. We have organised ourselves for elementary survival – skipping, theft, collective work, common meals, sharing of skills, of equipment, of loving inclinations – and we have found forms of political expression - concerts, leaflets, demos, direct actions, sabotage. Then, little by little, we have seen our surrounds turn into a milieu and from a milieu into a scene. We have seen the enactment of a moral code replace the working out of a strategy. We have seen norms solidify, reputations built, ideas begin to function, and everything become so predictable. The collective adventure has turned into a dull cohabitation. A hostile tolerance has grasped all the relations. We adapted. And in the end what was believed to be a counter-world amounted to nothing but a reflection of the prevailing world: the same games of personal valorisation as regards theft, fights, political correction, or radicalism – the same sordid liberalism in affective life, the same scraps over territory and access, the same scission between everyday life and political activity, the same identity paranoia. In addition, for the luckiest, the luxury of fleeing periodically from their local poverty by introducing it somewhere else, where it is still exotic. We do not impute these weaknesses to the squat form. We neither deny nor desert it. We say that squatting will only make sense again for us provided that we clarify the basis of the sharing we enter into. In the squat like anywhere else, the collective creation of a strategy is the only alternative to falling back on an identity, either through integration into society or withdrawing into the ghetto.

*L'Appel (Call)*

What kind of relationships can be established between squatting and improvised music? In squats there is a tendency to generate self-determination and self-management. When playing improvisation there is an intention of playing instruments in a strongly personal way, rejecting the obligation of its history and trying to establish a self-determined kind of music and a relationship between musicians. So it is possible to produce subjectivity beyond of the logic of market, getting subjectivity from the production of objectivity, that is, from the material conditions in which it happens (there is a concrete space with specific material problems; if a stage is used or not, fixing

bathrooms, to assemble a bar or a kitchen, etc...).

Improvisation and squatting share an attitude when it becomes the time to question conventional ways of inhabiting places or the relationship between instrument and/or places. In gaztetxes there used to be more freedom of behaviour in terms of sexuality, morality, political thought, etc. Squatting is the strengthening of present time in overdetermined places, an improvisation with our bodies in which the future is always uncertain and unstable and what joins us together is the responsibility of the moment, the here and now.

In Euskal Herria there is a very strong tradition of squatting and self-management with social aims – the gaztetxes. In the history of the gaztetxes movement there was always a strong connection with punk, a tradition that still exists today. Punk gave a strengthening, bravery and bad temper to these first kicks when squatters began to open spaces. Punk was much more than only music: it was a social scene that included different aspects like radio stations, pamphlets, music, literature, politics, etc. ... but the strength of music has been, and it still is especially important.

Concerning gaztetxes, punk has been key to the focus of a lot of energy and creativity. People needed to look for places in which they could practice. Many gaztetxes began being rehearsal rooms and many squatters were born from this necessity where musicians became squatters.

To play punk it is necessary to compose songs and have a place to practice. The energy has been shown not only in the first manifestations of squatting, but also also in concrete and everyday actions to maintain the possibility of making music. In gaztetxes, among other things, people organised themselves to follow a planning of concerts with everything it implies from the social point of view.

But nowadays punk rock is on the way to death because of a constant reproduction of clichés and stereotypes caused by a progressive self-exhaustion exercise. There are 'manuals' about how to make good punk rock, implicit rules adopted after years of practice and social experience. The 'solidification of rules' was established with the practice out of which many spaces were born. How does this standardisation of music affect the rest of the activities in these spaces? Isn't it a new institution inside of the spaces what is doing almost everything so 'extremely predictable'?

Besides, in improvisation the musical production and its presentation take place at the same time. There is no pre-made structure like 'a song' that mediates in a foreseeable way between the proper musicians or between musicians and audience. Because of this, it is possible that anybody joins in with the improvisation at any time or leaves it when he/she wants. Punk songs are strongly tied up with certain structures like riffs, chorus, intros, refrains, melodies, etc. Though, the practice of improvisation is open to any element that can appear in the right situation where the improvisers are. This opening makes it possible, for example, to have a conversation while playing instruments. Improvisers interact and listen amongst themselves unlike, for example, a punk guitarist who only interacts with other musicians or even only with himself.

Although punk tries to break with the notions of virtuosity and 'good playing', in his 'rock' version , it is still necessary to have an instrument and play it. Improvisation tries to break with the features and conventional hierarchies of musical quality. But improvisation also has its conventions. There is still a division between a musician and the audience at concerts: usually musicians are respected for their musical abilities and talent. When an improvisation begins, it may be not known who is definitely inside and who is definitely outside, and this converts the relationship between participants into something political and public. As Jean-Luc Guionnet says, every time we improvise we have a new opportunity of building a temporary small society and deciding which kind will be: anarchic, democratic, totalitarian, aristocratic, etc.... it is only in our hands.

Improvisation as social experience begins with the 'collective making of a strategy' to transform the space of those present.

Nowadays there are a lot of people improvising in Euskal Herria and on many occasions improvised concerts are organised in gaztetxes. But seldom has the relationship been kept in mind between this musical practice, its connotations, impact or possibilities and these special kind of spaces. With this experiment we want to expand and explore what could become improvisation in relation to squatting. Experiment: we want to collapse formats of talking, conversation, meeting and concert to produce a social space as open as possible. Words, gestures, noise, silence.... Questioning the usual barriers between squatters, musicians and audiences. We are not trying to define this experiment in a specific manner (everyday situation, performance or concert), we want to create a unique and unrepeatable situation for those people who are going to participate in it. We don't need to hide behind expectations. It's about trying to deal with the relationship with the environment from a different point of view, with neither roles nor established hierarchies (e.g. musicians are active agents and the audience is a passive being). We will talk, play and connect with ourselves in many ways, not to be one thing nor another, mostly in a way in which practice shows us its possibilities. With this experiment we want to understand better not only the gaztetxes actual situation in Euskal Herria, but also to produce situations that help us to understand what squatting can be when connected to improvisation and vice versa. What kind of relationships can exist between these two practices and in which ways they can complement each other in a social and cultural experience as powerful as the gaztetxes' one.

Dates:

- August 24, Txorimalo Gaztetxea presentation, Algorta 7pm
- August 25, Udondoko Gaztetxea, Udondo Enparantza 18. Leioa 7pm
- August 27, Matadeixe, Azkoitia 7pm
- August 28, La kaxita, Irun 7pm

Come everyone who wants to, we don't charge nor pay anything for participating! (Victims of Capitalism Association)

Sometimes gaztetxes have been contacted in advance and people know that we are coming. In other cases when we couldn't contact anyone we will simply appear with no announcement. We are still looking for more dates, if you can help, please call us.

\*Asociación de Victimas del Capitalism (Victims of Capitalist Association)

Mattin [at] mattin.org / aizmad [at] gabone.info