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This essay collection and its accompanying CD have emerged from a sense that the field of sound, and our understanding of it, are undergoing a set of changes. The starting point for the idea arose from a Leverhulme Artist-in-Residence Fellowship held by BJ Nilsen in the UCL Urban Laboratory during 2012. Other points of connection include the regular Stadtklang events organized by the Urban Laboratory, and emerging intersections at UCL between architecture, acoustic ecology, and the study of urban soundscapes.

Our critical engagement with sound has been facilitated through the development of interdisciplinary fields such as “acoustic ecology” and “sound studies,” yet the topic is nonetheless extremely difficult to accommodate within existing approaches to the organization of knowledge. The study of sound is marked by a series of intersecting domains derived from history, physics, law, musicology, and many other areas—each bringing its own set of intellectual concerns and institutional entanglements.

The Acoustic City comprises five thematic sections: urban soundscapes with an emphasis on the distinctiveness of the urban acoustic realm; acoustic flânerie and the recording of sonic environments; sound cultures arising from specific associations between music, place, and sound; acoustic ecologies including relationships between architecture, sound, and urban design; and the politics of noise extending to different instances of anxiety or conflict over sound. In putting together this collection, we have also sought to de-centre some of the implicit assumptions underlying earlier approaches to the study of sound by including feminist insights, post-colonial threads, and other approaches that necessitate a more nuanced reflection on the sensory realms of modernity.

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The lower level of the Spichernstrasse U-Bahn station, located in the former West Berlin, has an unusual feature. Set in the wall of the southbound platform is an illuminated case containing details of an installation completed by the sound artist Gabriele Stirl as part of the refurbishment of the station in 1987. The pattern of coloured tiles chosen by Stirl for the tunnel walls corresponds to a musical score comprising twelve colour-sound (Farbklang) instruments. Her synesthetic response to the redesign of a utilitarian space connects with wider interest in the aesthetic complexity of urban soundscapes, encompassing fields such as acoustics, musicology, and multiple cultural discourses surrounding the meaning, significance, and perception of different sources of sound.

Urban soundscapes are marked by a dense layering of sound that ranges from the humming spaces of the domestic interior to vast infrastructures of noise extending across the city. The acoustic city has a porous and disruptive spatiality through which we may encounter “the Other” or simply others. In one of Siegfried Kracauer’s vignettes from Weimar-era Berlin, he describes being startled by sudden screams or shouts in the night as if the streets themselves could no longer bear the emotional burden of their human inhabitants. Similarly, Jonathan Raban’s encounter with early 1970s London in Soft City is suffused by a series of dense soundscapes that mirror the social heterogeneity of the inner urban neighbourhoods at the time. Sound is a concrete phenomenon that is spatially distributed; it can be experienced across great distances; it exhibits immense variability through its diverse material and environmen-
What is a soundscape? It is a word that we seem to have been able to do without until it was coined by R. Murray Schafer in 1969. At the beginning of *The Tuning of the World* (1977), Schafer defines a soundscape as “any acoustic field of study,” whether that be “a musical composition,” “a radio program,” or “an acoustic environment.” Schafer makes the point that a soundscape cannot be captured in the same way that a landscape can be captured in a photograph. Unlike a camera, a microphone samples details: “It gives the close-up but nothing corresponding to aerial photography.” Where a map provides a representation of a landscape that one may easily learn to read, making sense of the many different kinds of sound notation required to document a given soundscape requires both much more information, and much more training. And, where maps are iconic in some way, the notations of soundscape are translations of sound into visible or legible form.

The success of the idea of the soundscape is suggested by the promotion of the term into the title of Schafer’s *Tuning of the World* when it was reissued in 1993, the year that marked the foundation of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, followed in 2000 by the first issue of *Soundscape: The Journal of Acoustic Ecology*. It was not just that the concept of the soundscape has been elevated to star billing in Schafer’s 1993 book: it is that giving the book this title means that the book itself was now itself conceivable as a kind of soundscape—that is, as a certain gathering-together or taking-to-be of the whole field of modern sound that may itself count as a kind of soundscape. Indeed, we might note that, though there is a great deal in Schafer’s book about individual elements of the soundscape, whether natural or human—waves, winds, birds, bells, cars, electric fans—relatively little is said about their fields of interrelationship, perhaps because it is the book itself which constitutes that field. For a soundscape, like a landscape, is the outcome of a particular act of associative attention, an effort or aptness to hear certain sounds as consonant, though we will see that there are markedly different forms of synopsis, or synaudience, for the “sounding together” of sounds.

It should not be a surprise that the two definitions of the word soundscape offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary*—“(a) a musical composition consisting of a texture of sounds; (b) the sounds which form an auditory environment”—should associate the ideas of a composition and a disposition, a sound arrangement made, and a sound arrangement to be made out. The making out of a soundscape, whether in the mode of construction or construal, involves, first of all, a disaggregation of an ensemble of sounds from the contexts of action and significance in which they are embedded (in which, odd though it may seem, they may be heard, but not heard as “sound” at all), and second a new aggregation of these disjoined sounds with each other, in such a way that they may seem to be brought on to a single plane of expression and intelligibility.

There is a curious effect of advancing and recession involved in the composition of a soundscape. A soundscape must be pulled out, or “foregrounded” from a previously formless condition, or rather something that is not in any kind of “condition,” formed or formless, at all. But, insofar as it is in fact a soundscape, what it is foregrounded as is a kind of background, making it the making manifest of an implicitness. It is for this reason that the kinds of musical compositions that tend to be called soundscapes are ones that suggest reservoirs or repertoires of possibility, environments of sound, against which other kinds of sound might stand out, rather than specific actualizations of sound. There is something loose and latent in the idea of a soundscape, which is always somehow in advance of its collection as sound. A soundscape is therefore a kind of precomposition, a score rather than a performance.

There is an added complexity that comes when the sounds involved are those of animals. For most, the sounds that constitute a soundscape are sonically autonomous, existing as pure and distinct sounds, with a purely contingent relation to other sounds in the environment. The sound made by an aeroplane coming in to land may have a relation to the sound of the highway I can hear in the distance, in that the highway will get me to the airport to meet a passenger on the incoming plane, but this is a relation between the things making the sounds, not between the making of the sounds. If there is a dialogue between highway and skyway, it is one that takes place because of my act of attention. But if I hear a blackbird at its sweet rippling ruckus on the gable of the house opposite, and then a second or
are. Soundscapes are always constructed, and the construction of soundscape should be regarded as part of the larger work of what Peter Sloterdijk has usefully called the work of “explicitation” in modernity:1 Insofar as explication means the bringing into the foreground for the purposes of management and design of what had previously been merely given or implicit, and since the soundscape must be defined as a foregrounding of a background phenomenon, the making of a field into a figure, the construction of soundscape is part of the huge effort of rethinking the relations between the human and the natural that must characterize our future. In a world in which, as Michel Serres has repeatedly said, “we depend on things that depend on us,” there seems no possibility of returning to a condition of immanence or innocence.

I began by suggesting that the concept of the soundscape both draws our attention to the particularity of sound and also draws us away from sound, or places sound beside itself. I then proposed that the audible presence of animals in urban sound is both a kind of haunting and a hollowing out of the tinnitant self-enclosure of human sound. Even as it points to the eviction of animals from the characteristically urban spaces of the modern world, the anomalous sounds of animals in the city point to a new, delocalized, even evaporated kind of urbanism, one in which the urban and the rural interpenetrate each other. This haunting serves to point us away from the cramping idea of location, of the factitious and reactionary notion of the here-and-now that hovers around every notion of the soundscape, and to adumbrate a newer, more conjugated, and convivial auditorium of the world.

**Endnotes**

8 Schafer, _The Tuning of the World_ p. 78.

Four questions to begin with: What is the pitch of the neo-liberal city? How does the pitch of the city construct images of and for the humanity that travels through it? How does gender relate to control of this space—corporate, commercial, privatized space, and the few remaining places we might (often erroneously, or perhaps nostalgically) refer to as “public space”? How does the soundscape of the city relate to forms of control—that I will call here “soft coercion”—that often goes unnoticed, or at least blends into the background and becomes simply part of the tapestry of the urban sonic environment, alongside the whirl of traffic, the babble of the crowd, birdsong, sirens? We may think of the sound of the city as somehow being “neutral” on its own terms, or at least cacophonous enough to escape linear description, but by paying careful attention to the patterns of urban sounds, we do more than simply listen: the overfamiliarity of certain sonic tropes starts to tell us something significant about the way in which both gender and control are constructed and reinforced. This essay considers the now ubiquitous use of female-sounding voices in a variety of urban settings: information announcements on public transport, especially buses, trains, and train stations; instructions on supermarket machines; security announcements.6 The references here will apply mainly to the UK context, but it is apparent that many European and North American cities will exhibit similar features. Much of what I am looking at also applies to
This acoustically defined form of social stratification represents a late-modern variant of the association between dirt—in this case sonic detritus—and extreme forms of social and spatial marginalization: there are certain parallels here with the role of scheduled castes in India or the *burakumin* of Japan, who are largely restricted to dirty, menial, or dangerous forms of labour. The presence of sound sweeps in the future city underlines the continuing necessity of human labour in order to allow urban space to function: this is no automated science fiction utopia, but a noisy future metropolis riven by stark forms of social difference. The relegation of the sound sweeps to residential zones near the city’s “sonic dump” is reminiscent of those communities that eke out a living from waste, living in or around the vast garbage dumps that have developed in parallel with modern cities.

Through his work as a sound sweep, Mangon traverses the acoustic terrain of the city meeting different clients who require his specialist sound removal services. He enters the foyer of a “huge forty-storey apartment block” where “the marble walls and columns buzzed softly with the echoing chatter of guests leaving parties four or five hours earlier.” On entering the penthouse apartment, he meets the appropriately named Ray Alto, who is described as a “doyen of ultrasonic composers,” and clearly part of the new sonic elite. “Noise, noise, noise—the greatest single disease-vector of civilization,” declares Alto, whose apartment’s “wide studio windows” take in an “elegant panorama” of the city below. For Alto and his wealthy neighbours, sound has become yet another focus of anxiety stalking their architectural citadels; a source of contamination that serves to blur distinctions between inside and outside, yet simultaneously enables the emergence of specialist kinds of acoustic consumption.

In a later passage, Mangon drives out towards “the stockade” used for the storage of unwanted sound:

> Here and there among the dunes they could see the low ruined outbuildings of the old explosives plant, the white galvanized iron roof of one of the sound-sweeps’ cabins. Desolate and unfrequented, the dunes ran on for miles. They passed the remains of a gateway that had collapsed to one side of the road; originally a continuous fence ringed the stockade, but no one had any reason for wanting to penetrate it. A place of strange echoes and festering silences, overhung by a gloomy miasma of a million compacted sounds, it remained remote and haunted, the graveyard of countless private babels.

Ballard’s evocation of an acoustic miasma connects his imaginary late-modern metropolis with nineteenth-century fears of contamination. The city’s sonic edgelands mark the apotheosis of a new acoustic order in which the poor are relegated to an increasingly noisy existence. These sonic dumps have a complex topography of residual sounds contained in their “sound-absorbent baffles” that only Mangon and the other sound-sweeps can safely
At half past four on a crisp July morning in 1952, a man could be seen leaning over the balcony of his room at the luxury London Savoy Hotel. Below his feet, the city was only beginning to wake up, but radio personality, broadcaster, and naturalist Ludwig Koch had kept himself awake all night. He had spent hours concentrating on the sounds coming through his headphones, and the long wait near his improvised recording studio had been interrupted only by quick glimpses across the balcony. Behind the legs of a cherub statue, the hotel management had found a nest of kestrel eggs—the high façade being an ideal habitat for the breeding pair. Realizing the opportunity, Koch now tried to record the sounds of the parents feeding their fledglings.

But through his earphones that morning, he heard no sound of a chick. “The noises of all kinds, including those of Waterloo Station, were deafening.” By the time he stopped recording at ten o’clock, he had finally succeeded in recording its typical notes, luckily “clearly audible above the din of London.” Nonetheless, the city had kept sounding through—with anything from the traffic noises below, to Big Ben chiming in the background—imposing itself on the ornithologist and future listeners to his recording.1

Although ornithologists have predominantly situated their inquiries in the rural landscape, the urban context serves as a preferred habitat for a plethora of avian species. As a result of birds adopting urban and industrial infrastructure such as canals, landfills, factories, and old buildings as their habitats, ornithologists have also been progressively inspired to redefine the boundaries between the rural field and the city.2 These new spatial contexts, however, also presented the ornithologist with a social and material ordering that was substantially different from the traditional ornithological field-site. This ordering, as geographers, historians, and sociologists of science have repeatedly highlighted, has also had a bearing on the production of knowledge taking place in the city.3 Recent scholarship has pointed out, for instance, that “how scientists chose their research topics and framed them conceptually; how they organized their research practices; and how they articulated and stabilized certain beliefs as valid scientific claims,” has been affected by the city’s socio-spatial setting.4 But just as research practices have been affected by the spatial and temporal rhythms with which urban life unfolds, I propose, they have also been intricately textured by the sensory distractions and city acoustics that resulted from them.

For Ludwig Koch, the urban context had long provided a familiar background for his observations and recordings. As director of the cultural branch of Electrical and Musical Industries Ltd5 from the early 1930s, he had been well positioned to explore the new possibilities of electrical means of amplification and recording outdoors, while applying these in the production of a series of gramophone sound books on educational topics. Although Koch initially began recording commissioned soundscapes of German cities such as Cologne and Leipzig, he soon specialized in publishing natural history recordings. Intended both for a general public and scientific study on animal vocalizations, Koch produced these recordings in close collaboration with a host of prominent ornithologists and conservationists at

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ACOUSTIC flânerie

Daubenton’s bat (Myotis daubentonii). Source: Hugh Clark, Bat Conservation Trust.

Echolocation calls: the common pipistrelle (P. pipistrellus) echolocating around a peak of 45 kHz, and the soprano pipistrelle (P. pygmaeus) peaking around 55 kHz. Using different frequencies means that the two species interpret the world slightly differently: the soprano pipistrelle can echolocate smaller insects invisible to the common pipistrelle using its lower frequency call. It seems a mixture of both species are here this evening.

Our group moves off and we stop on a bridge crossing the lake where it narrows. As well as the pipistrelles calling overhead, we can hear another occasional sound on the detectors like rapid machine gun fire at around 40–60 kHz. Shining a torch beam on the lake’s surface reveals a bat with long narrow wings doing leisurely turns around the lake foraging for insects inches above the surface. This is a Daubenton’s bat (Myotis daubentonii) and is commonly associated with rivers, canals, and lakes—even in heavily urbanized areas (figure 4). It has a call that uses a range of frequencies, emitting calls in rapid succession to gain as much information about its environment as possible as it forages so close to the lake’s surface.

The “heterodyne” bat detector, which the group is using, is converting the frequency of ultrasonic calls into sounds we can hear. Heterodyne means “different sound” and describes the way that these types of detectors work. For example, the detector receives a bat call, and mixes that frequency with its internal frequency, and emits the difference between the two signals. For example, if a bat was echolocating at 45 kHz, and if the internal frequency of the detector was set at 44 kHz, then we hear 1 kHz (within our hearing range). The internal frequency setting of the detector is changed with the dial and this alters the species that the detector can pick up. For example, to hear noctule bats, the dial would have to be lowered to around 20 kHz, or else their lower frequency calls might be missed.

One or two of the group are lucky enough to have more sophisticated bat detectors, which convert the sounds rather differently by slowing down the calls and thereby lowering the frequency into our hearing range. You can hear how the bat call really sounds using these “time expansion” detectors (albeit slowed down ten times). Bat calls sound more like short bird chirps rather than wet slaps or machine guns. It is also possible to see visible representations of the calls on some detectors in the form of spectrograms, so the call can be heard and seen as the bat flies past. Spectrograms are graphs that plot the frequency of sound over time (figures 1–3). Noctule bat echolocation calls can be seen as low frequency, long curved shapes; Pipistrelle bat echolocation calls look a little like noctule calls but are thinner and narrower, and of higher frequency. Daubenton’s bat echolocation calls are extremely short calls that are nearly straight lines and cover a wide range of frequencies. Feeding buzzes are seen in spectrograms as a sequence of calls that get closer and closer together as the bat hones in on its target.

We listen on the bridge for a while, marvelling at the cacophony of sounds around us. However, feeding buzzes and echolocation calls are not the only sounds that bats make: during the breeding season in the late autumn, social calls are often also heard. The precise meaning of these calls is not well known but it is thought that bats use these calls to sing to each other and to attract mates. Social calls sound like chirpy trills and are often of lower frequency, and some people can even hear them without a detector. I thought we might be lucky and hear a social call tonight, but it is not to be this time; perhaps it’s a little bit too early in the year.

Although there are around eighteen species of bats in the UK, only some have been found to occur in London. There may be more species present in the city, but bats are extremely cryptic. Using bat echolocation calls to identify species is a great way to survey bats. However, bat call identification is a tricky business, many species can sound similar, and the same species can sound unalike in different habitats. For example, many species in the genus Myotis (including the Daubenton’s bat) are almost indistinguishable from each other, and a pipistrelle bat call may sound more like the noctule in open habitats, and more like the Daubenton’s bat in dense woodland canopies. Recent developments in voice recognition technology have led to the development of automatic call identification tools for bats. These technologies have the potential to transform our understanding of the distribution of bats in our city and beyond.

The detector I am using tonight is pretty experimental—I attached one of the time expansion detectors to my smartphone and an app displays the calls on my phone’s screen. I hope that in a few years this system will be commonplace and bat detectors will be just a small, cheap add-on that you attach to a smartphone, opening up this acoustic world to
EAVESDROPPING
Anders Albrechtslund

Eavesdropping is a type of surveillance that involves listening to private conversations in secret. Today, this auditory-focused practice seems to stand in the shadow of CCTV in particular, but also advanced hi-tech surveillance methods involving drones, data mining, and location technologies. A dominant understanding of surveillance today is that it is something extremely precise, effective, and constant, developed from a stereotypical interpretation of George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four and the Panopticon.¹ This representation of surveillance is dominant in popular culture as well, where films like the Bourne series (2002–2012), Minority Report (2002), and Eagle Eye (2008) all focus on CCTV surveillance, only a few films such as The Lives of Others (2006) and The Conversation (1974) centre their narratives on auditory surveillance activities.

In this essay, my ambition is to nuance this one-sided understanding and use eavesdropping as a lens to explore aural surveillance as something that can also be limited, fragile, and partial. As a phenomenon, eavesdropping stands out from visual forms of surveillance and this might make it easier to escape the inadequate Big Brother image, and here Bruno Latour’s concept “oligopticon”—introduced in his book Paris: Invisible City—is useful.² Oligoptica are specific, grounded views, and according to Latour, we should think of these as the opposite of the all-seeing Panopticon. This means that instead of thinking about surveillance...
Writing in 1971, Reyner Banham suggested that one of the many reasons that the culture of Los Angeles was remarkable, and worthy of celebration, was that its aesthetic sensibility was driven by unconventional approaches to creativity that were not so evident elsewhere. Citing the city’s custom car phenomenon as one example of a vernacular culture that emerged from “delinquent origins,” Banham marvelled at the “wonders wrought in backyards by high-school dropouts” offering up for the public gaze vehicles that were transformed into “wild extravaganzas of richly coloured and exotically shaped metal.” But as interesting as the car in all its customized varieties was was to understanding the human ecology of Los Angeles, it is the fact that a kind of unschooled or haphazard aesthetics emerged from such unlikely origins that is interesting. Here was an environment in which backyard tinkering was elevated to new creative heights through the reconfiguration and modification of some of the most familiar products of mass culture, which would take on a look and style that made a virtue of the backyard origins of the creative process. And so, out by the Pacific Ocean at Venice Beach in the 1970s, a gang of young surfers with no waves to catch after the sea had gone out for the day decided they would reinvent surfing as skateboarding. Skateboards had already existed, of course, but what the new innovators did was to throw out its dull show-pony origins, with its rules and performance set pieces, and open the way to the idea that the skateboard was a means for some kind of self-invention. They sought out the curved concrete swimming pools of empty residential properties—drained of water and left to dry out in the long summers—which soon provided something akin to a concrete wave that could be “surfed” all day.

At the other end of the creative scale, we might point to a similar aesthetic at work in some of the Los Angeles buildings of Frank Gehry, which seemed to do no less than celebrate “Metropolitan Los Angeles as an unfinished city.” The casual observer driving past Gehry’s famous Santa Monica residence would see a construction seemingly thrown together from materials that looked as if they were recovered from the leftovers of a storm that had blown through his property—corrugated metal siding, plywood, chain link fence, and so on—and reconfigured to present the back as the front.

And just as the Gehry residence became an icon of the city, so Edward Van Halen’s famous self-built “Frankenstein” guitar and the experiments he conducted with sound and amplification would express the sonic aesthetics of a Los Angeles “backyardism.” But in dabbling with technology and acoustics, and arriving at a unique sonic identity that would come to be associated with the city, Van Halen sought to satisfy a more general synaesthetic crav-
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SOUND CULTURES
The opening sequence of Mika Kaurismäki’s 1982 film Arvottomat (The Worthless), his first feature film after returning to Finland from studying film in Munich for five years, is one of the most famous in Finnish film history. We see an aerial view in black and white from a helicopter flying over the Gulf of Finland and into the centre of Helsinki, before we cut to the feet of protagonist Manne (played by celebrated Kaurismäki actor Matti Pellonpää, who died in 1995 at the age of 44) kicking off his boots from the end of his bed as the phone rings (an old-fashioned landline of course, which, out of shot, he drags toward him by the cord). The sequence is accompanied by Sibelius’s most well-known composition, the stirringly patriotic Finlandia, but something is wrong—there’s a chugging prog rock accompaniment to it, with syntheiser, bass, and drums, rearranged by Anssi Tikanmäki, scoring his first film, which strikes a jarring note. Tikanmäki subsequently became celebrated for this Sibelius arrangement, which the Sibelius estate never gave permission for, although Mika Kaurismäki claims they knew about it. The composer went on to score numerous other Kaurismäki films (including Aki’s 1999 silent film Juko), and his orchestra—which includes two of Tikanmäki’s brothers—accompanied the film live at the Berlin Film Festival, and has also accompanied a number of other classic silent films by Dziga Vertov, Eisenstein, Murnau, and Von Stroheim. In 2012, the Tikanmäki Attack and Roope Latvala, a heavy metal guitarist with the group Children of Bodom, released an album Anthems, in which eight well-known national anthems are given the heavy metal-orchestral treatment. The Worthless also features a live performance by Finnish rock singer Rauli “Badding” Somerjoki—his nickname was derived from Paddington Bear—who died in 1987 at the age of 39. Somerjoki was a master of rock, tango, old waltzes, and humppa, which Peter von Bagh defines as “a kind of fox-trot perceived and understood through the Finnish backwoods.”

The Worthless announced a new beginning in Finnish cinema: the film was produced by veteran director Jorn Donner, co-written by the two Kaurismäki brothers, and featured Aki Kaurismäki in one of only two on-screen roles; the other was the lead role as a motormouth womanizer in Mika’s 1981 graduation film, the fifty-minute short Valehtelija (The Liar), also set in Helsinki, which tips its hat to Godard’s Breathless on a number of occasions. Here, Aki plays the same character, Francophile Ville Alfa, also the name of the production studio, and it is of course “Alphaville” reversed. A minor character is even called Anna-Kaarina. We first encounter Ville in The Worthless in a very Godardian moment: reading a copy of Le Monde in a bar, denouncing it as crap, and throwing it away. The film, which won the Finnish Jussi award for best direction, is a road movie set between Helsinki and Tampere involving a stolen painting, and is heavily influenced by film noir, Godard, and the French
“THE ECHO OF THE WALL FADES”: REFLECTIONS ON THE “BERLIN SCHOOL” IN THE EARLY 1970s
Tim Caspar Boehme

Until today, “Krautrock” has remained a curious cultural outgrowth. During the 1960s and 1970s, German musicians tried to emancipate themselves from the Anglo-American rock mainstream. Initially, this attempt gained little public resonance in Germany, yet over subsequent decades Krautrock extended its international influence as a source of inspiration and has generated distinctive strands of music that remain difficult to classify. These musical currents, as in the case of the duo Cluster, can be thought of as aesthetic reflections on specific topographies, especially when compared to other representatives of the so-called Berlin School. Since Cluster’s career has undergone many changes, we first need to address the general background against which we can interpret their music.

A distinction between regional schools is common in the historiography of Krautrock, exemplified by the differentiation between a “Düsseldorf School” and a “Berlin School.” On the one hand, it is legitimate to categorize quite heterogeneous musicians by regional criteria subsumed under “Krautrock,” an ambivalent term from an artist’s perspective, since bands from Düsseldorf—such as early Kraftwerk and Neu!—share stylistic commonalities that distinguish them from the specific idiosyncrasies of their Berlin-Krautrock colleagues Tangerine Dream or Klaus Schulze: “motoric” rhythms for the former; open, spacious sequencer-patterns for the latter. On the other hand, generalizations of this kind may lead to sweeping gestures of incorporation, which ignore artistic as well as local details.
THE SOUND OF DETROIT: 
NOTES, TONES, AND RHYTHMS FROM UNDERGROUND

Louis Moreno

Reflecting on the urban crisis of the 1960s and 1970s, certain observers claimed that what was unfolding was an event so vast, and its causes so complex, that it outstripped the “mundane” framework of political analysis.1 To properly understand the process enabling advanced capitalism to tear up the foundations of everyday life, they suggested some kind of complementary restructuring of the senses was needed. Here, science fiction seemed to provide the tools to track the urban mutations of deregulated capital.2 The proposition was later refined by the critic Fredric Jameson: the dystopian compulsion to imagine the global destruction of cities was nothing less than the attempt to comprehend capitalism as a totality. But, Jameson added, the inability to think beyond the event of catastrophe diagnosed a state of political inertia.3 If the differentia specifica of the utopian genre was the imagination of a society without private property, then one of the defining political features of the current era might well be a secular decline in the capacity even to fantasize, let alone realize, a world free of the influence of real estate.

Perhaps another symptom of this pathology appears in the range of stock images that construct our contemporary sense of “the global.” Take, for example, three stereotypes of the contemporary city subject to globalization—each demarcated forms of urban future all circumscribed by the gravitational field of international capital. At the top level, the architecture of the “global city,” encapsulates a perhaps now mannered expression of the “future city,” a high-rise transnational command structure of financial capital. Bordering this gated community, there is the image of the developing mega-city region consisting of the spatial reflux of a global proletariat in a state of agglomeration. Finally, we have the materialization of Marx’s metaphor of “dead labour.” Cities defined not simply by vacated structures, but the abandonment of entire infrastructure; whole geographies sinking under the weight of fixed capital now surplus to global requirements. Each of these images respectively encapsulates dominant, emergent, and residual moments of planetary urbanization.

DANCING OUTSIDE THE CITY: FACTIONS OF BODIES IN GOA

Arun Saldanha

Music has a thirst for destruction, every kind of destruction, extinction, breakage, dislocation. Is that not its potential “fascism”?
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

The faculty of sight is central to the very concept of tourism. Tourism is defined through photography, ads, museums, “views.” But are tourists merely pairs of eyes? Tourists swim, talk, climb, stroll, relax, become bored perhaps, or ill. They taste, smell, listen, dance, get drunk, have sex. Travel involves entire bodies—and different bodies. Soundscapes especially warrant a differential and embodied approach. An exemplary place to think about travel as an event involving hearing and movement is the psychedelic rave scene in Goa.

My basic argument is that music, through the connections it enables between bodies, things, and physical conditions, orders bodies into grids of social difference. In a “Third World” destination such as Goa, this ordering becomes a matter of political and ethical concern.

Towards the end of the 1960s, when India was known in the West as the province of spirituality and authenticity, Goa’s secluded beaches were rediscovered by hippies. Life in the village of Anjuna centred around taking drugs, swimming in the nude, and playing guitar and bongo. This counterculture was a quest for a life of drugs and music outside the confines of urban white modernity. The hippies would hold all-night parties on the beach. Parties were intimate and generally held some distance from the village, so the villagers could sleep. Both Goans and older hippies can be quite nostalgic about how the parties manifested a more or less symbiotic relationship between locals and foreigners. But then a charter tourism industry developed in the wake of the hippies. News of white tourists, especially the naked female ones, rapidly spread all over India. By the late 1970s, the majority of tourists were domestic. Since then, the controversies about the cultural, environmental, and economic corruptions of tourism have been endless and the party scene is all but dead.

The music played in Anjuna was always music to get stoned to: Pink Floyd, The Grateful Dead, Bob Marley, The Beatles, The Doors, Led Zeppelin, Parliament. Then, in the mid-1980s, something quite unexpected happened, something shrouded in mythical narratives of origin common in most popular music. The music in Goa started becoming electronic, aimed at dancing for hours. As house and techno were developing in Chicago, Detroit, New York, Ibiza, London, and Manchester, acidheads in Goa started looping the bits they liked by sticking pieces of magnetic tape together, exchanging the tapes with friends and becoming deejays. Under the full moon, on the rim of the Indian Ocean, far away from the city, the Goa freaks felt very much connected and alive.

Back in Europe, travellers tried to make sounds that captured those feelings best. They then brought the resulting tracks to Goa. A rapid circuit formed of music being made in northwestern Europe, but danced to in Goa. By around 1992, ravers were so confident something new was happening they christened their music Goa trance—identified by a punchy kick.
MUSIC AS BRICOLAGE IN POST-SOCIALIST DAR ES SALAAM

Maria Suriano

In the early 2000s, Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) saw the emergence of a genre known as Bongo Flava, a blend of foreign-derived styles ranging from hip-hop to ragamuffin. Sung in standard and street Swahili and dubbed “the music of the new generation” (muziki wa kizazi kipya), this style has become for urban youths the most preferred method of intra- and inter-generational communication. In an influential essay published in 1978, anthropologist Johannes Fabian argued that popular music and performance not only reflect, but may also affect the socio-political reality.1 This essay builds on Fabian’s influential insight and on other key scholarly works on a range of Tanzanian musical genres, which have shown that popular music not only mirrors, but also produces socio-political realities.2 It illustrates that Bongo Flava has been an instrument of social innovation and self-affirmation in a specific African context.3 Aesthetics, morals, and politics are intimately associated in East Africa, and there exists a long-standing connection between popular arts and the political landscape. The term “politics” is used here in its broad meaning; while in conventional political science, politics can be carried out solely by the state and the ruling party, popular modes of political expression have often been articulated beyond the channels of official politics.4 The “OPNI” (objets politiques non identifies) or “UPOs” (unidentified political objects) possess political potential.5 However, the relationship between popular culture and prevailing forms of power is quite complex and does not necessarily carry or imply an open challenge.

It is from Dar es Salaam—the main cultural and economic hub of Tanzania, with its four million official residents—that Bongo Flava has been popularized at a national and regional level. The beginning of this music can be traced back to 1991, when Saleh Jaber, a young boy who mastered Swahili and English (an exception at the time), released Ice Ice Baby, King of Swahili Rap, the first rap tape in Swahili. Since there were no recording studios in the country, he used instrumental versions of US rap hits (by artists such as Vanilla Ice and Naughty by Nature) and Jamaican reggae as the base for his own Swahili and English lyrics, though at times he sampled phrases from the original raps.

Such an artistic product was made possible by novel economic and political conditions: the free market and the privatization of the media. President Julius Nyerere retired in 1985 when the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank approved the “Economic Recovery Plan.” President Ali Hassan Mwinyi brought an end to the famous Ujamaa form of socialist policies that had been launched in 1967. He permitted goods such as televisions to be imported; thus images of Western culture inundated the Tanzanian markets like never before. During this time of political reforms and commercialization, African American genres such as hip hop and R&B were broadcast for the first time by the newly opened radio stations; during Ujamaa there was only one (government-controlled) radio station. Since the early 1990s, these styles have become influential in the everyday lives of Tanzanian urbanites—who have since experimented with bass lines, drum beats, and guitar riffs—producing a bricolage of foreign and local elements.

According to reggae singer and music journalist Innocent Nganyagwa, Dar es Salaam-based reggae singers were despised in the early 1990s for playing foreign music. In response, they named their reggae “local flavour” (fleva ya nyumbani or ladha ya hapa). Sharing with early rap artists the common discrimination suffered, they invited rappers to their performances.6 Dar es Salaam rappers initially rhymed in English. Journalist Saleh Ally, a former rapper himself, argues that the first to give rise to hip hop were well-off pupils of the International School of Masaki, a privileged neighbourhood; they mastered English and were exposed to foreign genres.7 However, disadvantaged urbanites did not live insular lives: some shared information and had friendship ties with their wealthier counterparts. Artist Inspekta Haroun contends that in the early days slums such as Temeke, which generated numerous performers, were “thirsty for hip hop.”8

A significant factor in the popularization of Bongo Flava has been the rise of professional recording technologies: Mawingu, the first studio established in Dar es Salaam in 1993, marked a turning point. It is in this city that most artists, producers, and distributors work, and the most prominent radio stations, recording studios, and television channels are to be found. This does not mean that each style that was incorporated into Bongo Flava over time necessarily originated from Dar es Salaam. Ragamuffin, dancehall, and reggae were popular in the 1990s in urban Uganda and Kenya respectively; they reached Dar es Salaam afterwards. Member of Parliament and early rapper Joseph Mbilinyi, a.k.a. Sugu (stubborn),
The sound of film infiltrates and refigures the city. For many decades, a pivotal experience during the course of urban walking was to pass the foyer or side-doors of a cinema and abruptly hear a blurred cacophony—film-dialogue, noise or explosions from films of conflicts, music—expelled from that space. Especially in summer heat, with the opening of windows, doors, and emergency exits, that sonic eruption into the adjacent urban environment, from cinematic orifices, was accentuated. The walls of a cinema auditorium form the carapace reinforcing the concentrated experience of the film audience, exempted, for a few hours, from the imperatives of exterior urban space; that experience, especially in its corporeal dimensions, was primarily a sonic one, amalgamated from the elements emitted from the cinema’s sound-system, together with the voices and noises of spectators, which—in such environments as all-night cult-movie screenings or those occupied by audiences culturally oblivious to any need for spectators to watch a film in silence—formed an incessant counterpoint to film soundtrack elements: voices of seduction, voices of outrage, voices of adulation.

The first auditoria constructed specifically for the celluloid projection of films, from the 1900s (following several years, from 1895, in which film-projection had inhabited the space of pre-existing venues, such as variety halls and theatres), were not conceived as environments for sonic projection, since film itself remained silent, even if the auditorium itself was saturated with multiple strata of noise. But from the late 1920s, cinema auditoria, such as those designed by the influential architect S. Charles Lee in Los Angeles, formed film’s acoustic receptacles, intended to transmit sound as immediately and physically as possible to the audiences seated within them. In 1929, the Surrealist film theorist Antonin Artaud underlined that corporeal aspect of film sound in its emergence, together with its active diminution of the film-image: “The image presents itself only in one dimension, it’s the translation, the transposition of the real; sound, on the contrary, is unique and true, it bursts out into the room, and acts by consequence with much more intensity than the image, which becomes only a kind of illusion of sound.” The pervasive sonorization of film from the early 1930s—resisted only by experimental film movements—consolidated worldwide film industries’ vast cultural power, as important instigators of human experience and perception, via the medium of film and through film spectatorship in sound-sensitized cinema spaces, for the remainder of the twentieth century. All technological experiments of the following decades, especially the 1950s and 60s, designed to magnify infinitely the presence and propulsion of sound in enclosed spaces, as with IMAX in Canada and Astrorama in Japan, are simultaneously experiments with space and corporeality. Such experiments, often requiring extravagant and expensive technological specifications, also necessitated the engagement of an urban population attuned to entering specialist auditoria, such as IMAX cinemas or projection spaces created for world’s fairs and expositions, primarily to experience the corporeal dimensions of film sound, even in excess of their desire for film’s images. An exception to that concentration of film sound within the enclosed space of the cinema...
Schafer’s simplistic view of the city—a source and site of noise, a “sonic sewer” or “pandemonium”—being screened off in concert halls, which function as substitutes for outdoor life and counterpoints to the deleterious processes of modern urbanization, overlooks how concert halls are themselves part of the technological modernization of cities. If we expand the interdisciplinary terrain of “acoustic ecology” to encompass a more nuanced understanding of the multiple links between the physical spaces of the city, the human body, and sound, the field carries the potential to develop a historically and materially grounded conception of sonic space that counter-balances the prevalence of ahistorical phenomenological approaches and anti-representational theories of sound, which tend to overstate ideas of virtuality, downgrade the material realm, and emphasize a dichotomy between visual and sonic culture.

West Berlin’s period as an island city, which lasted from 1961 until 1989, has yet to be critically reassessed for its cultural and intellectual achievements. The divided city of Berlin has long been viewed as the symbolic stage of the Cold War, with its cultural output interpreted through the lenses of two competing ideological systems. Recent studies in art and architectural history have argued that instead of the advent of post-modernism, we can observe a Berlin-specific renewal of the legacy of modernism in the decades after the Second World War. One of the less studied aspects of West Berlin’s cultural transformation is the place of sound in architecture and urban design. Sonic spaces played a pivotal role in the cultural and material reshaping of the city. In order to consider the precise ways in which West Berlin played a key role in the persistence of specific aspects of twentieth-century modernism, we need to address how this urban enclave was sustained—both economically and culturally—during the Cold War years.

By the 1960s, the city had long been established as a subsidized enclave. While the Berlin Wall cemented its island status in 1961, its economic isolation had begun much earlier. From 1949 onwards, following the Berlin Blockade and the loss of the city’s capital status, its commerce, and its industries, the federal government kept West Berlin alive with direct subsidies that “in some years amounted to over half the [city’s] budget.” West Berlin’s Wunderwirtschaft (miracle economy), as former Weimar Stadtbaurat (building commissioner) Martin Wagner referred to the city’s economy, created a context in which municipal urban planning “obstructed progress” by subsidizing regress, a process that had started with the dismissal of Hans Scharoun from his position as Stadtbaurat.

During his short-lived appointment from 1945 to 1946, Scharoun had worked across intensifying geopolitical divides to develop a comprehensive rebuilding plan for Berlin as a modern metropolis with Weltstadtkarakter (cosmopolitan spirit). Scharoun and members of the Freitagsguppe saw a chance for political change and hoped to realize ideas developed previously during the interwar years, such as implementing economic and legal reforms to abolish property ownership and prevent “land speculation [which] stands in the way of a natural and healthy development of the city.” With municipal elections ahead, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) opposed the group’s work on the Kollektivplan (collective plan) as “utopian plans creating confusion” and asked Scharoun to resign. The administrative split of the city in 1948, West Berlin’s increasing significance as a strategic geopolitical space, personnel continuities with those architects and planners active under the Nazi regime, and a US-oriented and strictly anti-communist SPD in the municipal government created a constellation in which progressive voices were increasingly marginalized. Shortly before his death in 1957, Martin Wagner wrote a fierce critique of West Berlin’s urban planning programmes and those avant-garde architects involved in highly state-subsidized municipal housing projects. The Hansaviertel (1953–1960), a costly housing project not affordable for the average West Berliner, celebrated architecture’s International Style by including numerous high-profile architects. For Wagner, these 48 architects had composed “48 petty scores” creating a “Misstunke (discord) typical of almost all municipal teamwork of our times” celebrating “orgies of directionlessness with its orchestral cacophonies of drums against trumpets and basses against violins.” Wagner emphasized the dangers of reducing the modern movement to an aesthetic style in the absence of any consistent and radical po-
In the early twenty-first century, tuning in into one’s mobile music has become a prevalent means to get some distraction, entertainment, or inspiration on the go, and nearly all digital gear has integrated a radio or stereo function to do so. Listening to music when on the move has taken manifold forms and meanings: teenagers crank up the loudspeakers of their cell phones while waiting at the bus stop; tired travellers relax by wiring themselves to their personal stereo; boom boxes are taken along to accompany a picnic in the park, or to deliver the music for amateur dancers who meet in public to pursue their hobby. For those particularly sensitive to noise, industry even offers noise-cancelling headphones to silence the noise of the city. Others use mobile stereos to shape new forms of mobile urban music cultures. Berlin, for instance, has attracted mobile DJs who play their stereos here and there to gather a local crowd, before moving on to prevent an intervention by the police. In almost any bigger city, silent discos are organized through social media and people come together to dance to the sounds of one’s individual MP3 player.

Music has always been a means to claim power or mobilize followers, to create emotions or maintain feelings of familiarity, be it the case of march music, the sounding organs of churches, or the loudspeakers of current public rallies. When music became available through records and radio, it was also soon taken along and used in “mobile” ways. Early record players and radios operated without electricity and hence, were in some ways “wireless” though they could not be operated on the go. But even if their mobility was quite restricted, urbanites of the 1920s and 1930s took music playing technologies to outdoor locations such as garden allotments or on summer picnics, as portrayed in Robert Siodmak’s film *Menschen am Sonntag* (1930), a cinematic reflection on the leisure activities of young people in Weimar-era Berlin.

But it was not until the widely-used portable music players of the second half of the twentieth century, that mobile sounds invaded the city and its periphery. In the hand of individual users, such equipment has enabled urbanites to reappropriate public spaces and their soundscapes. Portable radios, tape recorders, and later digital players became a means of creating a personally controlled auditory sphere when away from home, during holiday travels, or on the way to work, on the subway, or while shopping. Moreover, the appearance of the sound-enhanced individual in public space led to new configurations of the city: the conjunction of urban masses with shrinking portable devices, and even wearable technologies, resulted in changing patterns of how to move around urban space and encounter others. Transistor radios became available to mass consumers in the late 1950s, followed by portable recorders in the 1960s, and radio-recorders in the 1970s. But it was in particular during the 1980s, when urbanites explored new forms of mobile music listening through the widespread appropriation of stereo boom boxes and headphone-equipped Walkmans. Most notably, young users explored the mobile potentials of their “object nomads” and thereby formed both new cultures of mobile stereo listening, and novel ways to appropriate urban soundscapes. While the boom box listener adds the personal sounds to the public

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1 Young people with a cassette player, West Germany (1980).
Source: “Billige Kombis für junge Hörer” (cheap combinations for young listeners), Test Radiorecorder (Mono), Test, No. 12, 1980.
ACOUSTIC MAPPING:
NOTES FROM THE INTERFACE
Gascia Ouzounian

There is something about mapping that seems almost antithetical to sound. The idea of mapping stems from our desire to know where we are going. In order to orient ourselves, we need to create grids and boundaries. But boundaries don’t apply to sound. Unlike maps, sound does not rely on surfaces or depths; rather, it penetrates them.

Steph Ceraso

The interactive sound map is a relatively recent invention, having emerged at the intersection of soundscape studies, acoustic ecology, and sound art practices in the late 1990s. New mapping technologies like Google Maps and social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and AudioBoo have significantly impacted how sound maps are developed and understood; so have licensing agreements including Creative Commons “ShareAlike,” which permits people to freely share media including audio recordings, with the right to copy, distribute, transmit and adapt the recordings for non-commercial purposes if they are credited to the author and attributed in the manner the author or licensor specifies.

Such innovations helped facilitate projects such as the British Library’s UK Soundmap (2010–2011), to which over 350 people submitted approximately 2,000 recordings over the period of one year, tagging field recordings onto a Google Map of the UK, and sharing uploads and commentary through their social media accounts. The same technologies and licensing agreements underpin numerous other online and interactive sound mapping projects, many of which share the aim of popularizing the concept of soundscape.

What is more contested is the effectiveness of sound maps in transmitting information about the acoustic environment in meaningful ways, and indeed the very notion of the sound map itself. Some, like cultural theorist Steph Ceraso, regard sound maps as oxymoronic, bringing an ephemeral, three-dimensional, dynamic, and “boundless” medium (sound) into dialogue with a tool (maps/mapping) that has historically evolved in two-dimensional and static terms, and that generally aims to establish boundaries that are understood as being fixed. Others see sound maps as a means to “control” sound. One blogger writes, “reducing sound to a visual field is a bit awkward—do we really hear better while looking at a two-dimensional picture on a screen than we would if we were actually in the space being represented? Maybe not, but the general desire to control sound is very strong, and what better way to control something than to pinpoint it?”

In what ways do sound maps succeed, and in what ways do they fail? How do they change the ways in which people

1 A tagged electrical box on Annandale Embankment in Belfast as part of the project X Marks the Spot (2012–ongoing) by Matilde Meireles. The poster indicates the frequencies of the different tones that are being emitted by the box (48 Hz, 191 Hz, etc.). The relative lightness or darkness of the numbers corresponds to their relative amplitudes, with darker numbers corresponding to louder tones. In this case, the most prominent tone is 239 Hz. Below the list of frequencies is a QR Code or Quick Response Code that, when read by a smartphone, will load the project’s Web site, xmsbelfast.com. Photo by Matilde Meireles.
5 Hong Kong, Narrow Passage (December 2011).
A notated fragment of footage shot in Hong Kong alleyways in January 2011. The recorded soundtrack here is transcribed as pitches, timbres, and rhythms without any attempt to organize them. The intrinsic distortion of musical notation is used as a montage technique; the soundtrack was reassembled using its scored-out image.

6 Acoustic Score (July 2012).
This notation maps the interrelation between the acoustics of a railway arch in North West London and a moving point-of-audition. The experience of echoes, especially flutter echoes, is exclusive to the location of the listener. Resonating sound here transforms geometry, a visual parameter of space, into something more visceral, musical. A montage of viewpoints in an echo-filled space will exponentially increase its sonic complexity.

7 Score of a Sound (July 2012).
A sound, a kind of whistling, rises above the background noise. Clear and articulate, it pierces through the heavy blanket of city sounds. It is a single point in a featureless expanse, then a line, then a plane, and finally an idea for a script.
5

THE POLITICS OF NOISE
procedures, the determination of flight paths is not transparent to most people concerned. It seems prone to influence from vested interests and largely beyond democratic control. The "techno-organizational management" of the related conflicts usually sidesteps larger political questions such as siting decisions, mobility patterns, or the different public subsidies to air traffic.7

The technocratic handling of noise issues certainly contributes to the fact that noise levels can explain only about a third of the variation in annoyance in the population around airports in quantitative surveys. One factor, which has so far received little attention beyond the notorious night-time disturbance, is the role of the specific timing of noise events or, more precisely, their socio-temporal setting. Both interview quotes above have already highlighted the importance of certain moments in time: the structuration of the year through the seasons, the working day with its work time, the afternoon when people come home from work, or the weekend where many are outdoors for at least a few hours. Thus, noise is very time-sensitive, even more, it is entirely context- and time-dependent in its occurrence and perception: this is not just the neighbour's TV during the night-time, but also the charter flights on Saturday mornings or the "men of business" flying back to their home base every workday's late afternoon.

Again, looking into the interview materials regarding aircraft noise, we find a lot of statements where the sensitive times are conceptualised as very specific social times, times of being with the family, and more importantly still, times of being together with peers and friends. It is in these moments where people seem to feel and dislike aircraft noise most. Noise is a communicative disruption and a bodily experience that cannot be rejected or denied. One is being overwhelmed by the noise, overwhelmed at least for a short moment, overwhelmed in the presence of friends who inevitably notice the situation. The peers or friends witness the interruption of communication in the house or in the garden, they experience the interruption of a normal communication:

"Sunday I had visitors and we sat outside … when a flight comes you can’t talk anymore and then the people ask: ‘Is it like that all day? That’s impossible!’"

Friends or colleagues may make remarks about it—or the resident anticipates that they might make remarks or have thoughts about the situation. In particular, for suburban homeowners who have moved to a region where aircraft noise prevails, or built houses there, the noise seems to operate as a concrete, corporeal denial of the good life, a sudden proof of the non-achievement of an entirely successful life.8

Thus in several cases, my interview partners seemed to feel ashamed in front of others. They wouldn’t mind the noise so much when they were alone or in the family, where everybody knows and shares the situation on a daily basis. Again, this was said mainly in the suburban parts of town, where noise levels encounter the gradients of real estate prices. The pastoral ideal, we could conclude, is more endangered in the green zones of the outer city than in the inner, truly urban parts.

The absence of such shame may facilitate, on the other hand, processes where noise annoyance can develop into a productive social and political force. Thus, Guillaume Faburel writes about his research in the environs of the large Parisian airport at Orly, where aircraft noise contributes to territorial structuration by “strengthening community ties and the logic of local identity through the mechanisms of resistance that it induces and the mobilisation of exclusive resources.”9 In other cases, declining housing costs due to airport noise have simply led to strong social or ethnic segregation, with some groups forming “airport-related communities” like the South Asian community in the borough of Hounslow near London’s Heathrow airport.
... Mangon, with his auditory super-sensitivity, was greatly in demand for his ability to sweep selectively, draining from the walls of the Oratory all extraneous and discordant noises—coughing, crying, the clatter of coins and mumble of prayer—leaving behind the chorals and liturgical chants which enhanced their devotional overtones.

J. G. Ballard, “The Sound-Sweep”

Sound, even as it slips away, remains present. In one of his short stories, J. G. Ballard depicts an alternative urban reality in which a sonic vibration does not vanish after appearing but persists by becoming embedded in the architecture. Not only do walls have ears; they also have memory. Yet as few sonic experiences are worth listening to eternally, Ballard’s vision includes a new category of municipal service worker. Equipped with powerful sonovacs, these sound-sweeps vacuum clean the urban fabric, in accordance with the norms of what is and is not considered a worthy sound. As with many other urban services, access to the most efficient sound-sweeping is privatized, so only affluent citizens can ensure that their reality is selectively silent, thereby treating themselves to local acoustic delights and avoiding urban clutter.

Alas, there were no sonovacs to clean up the acoustic mess when the conflict over night-time noise—which had been increasing in Warsaw for a decade—escalated into real sonic warfare in the spring of 2013. As in Ballard’s tale, the story is one about the privilege of sonorous (de)selection. Yet, the stakes concern the sound-making people and venues themselves, not just the sound vibrations that were to be removed. In Warsaw’s gradually gentrifying district of Powiśle, a group of inhabitants from the luxurious gated condos overlooking the Vistula, took a stand against the noise issuing from the cafés and bars that the municipality of Warsaw had permitted to line the riverbank. Among them was the wife of a renowned architect who commissioned a noise measurement, and then sued the municipality of Warsaw for leasing the riverbank area—situated directly in front of the luxury condos—to a concert venue. This case shed new light on the class lineaments of the noise struggle. First, it challenges the common perception that the chief actors in the disabling of urban nightlife are “grumbling elderly residents” of relatively low income and education. In fact, Powiśle, prior to its creeping gentrification, was a working-class district, and when it hosted several alternative music clubs in its former barracks during the 1990s and 2000s, the local tenants scarcely made any fuss. Second, the plaintiff’s plea for “equal rules and rights” to be applied to “all inhabitants of the district” was dubious at best. Famous for many commercial buildings, her and her husband’s architectural office is also infamous for two major investments epitomizing urban inequality in Warsaw: an enormous gated community “Marina Mokotów,” for which over twenty hectares of public space was excised relatively close to the city centre; and a luxurious department store called “Vitkac,” whose huge, plain black granite wall has, despite long protests, completely blocked access to light for tenants from the neighbouring apartment block. The obviously anti-egalitarian background of the wealthy noise-busters met with virulent responses from the Warsaw cultural scene, including a local newspaper, the Gazeta Stołeczna. Siding with the bars, the paper started a belligerent pro-noise campaign with the slogan “Warszawa—tu się hie śpi” (There ain’t no sleeping in Warsaw), which has included hiring a group of instrumentalists to play classical music in public venues, pointedly just after official quiet hours. As the conflict escalated, the “culturalists” accused the wealthy tenants of gentrification, of privatizing space, and of thwarting Warsaw from becoming a “normal” modern metropolis with a vibrant nightlife. On the other side, the “new rich” have denied the cultural relevance of what they refer to as “selling beer and vodka,” and denounced local café-bars as “out-and-out businesses,” and their frequenters as “crowds of drunk, unruly kids.”

Although conflicts between night-time economies and tired inhabitants are natural for any big city, in the case of Warsaw something more complex is at stake. In line with Steve Goodman’s definition of “sonic warfare,” some features of Warsaw’s (still ongoing) sound struggle reveal a lot about how sound and silence have been historically used as forces of political class struggle in Poland, simultaneously offering insights into the “economy of attention” in contemporary capitalism.

First, compared with most other European capitals, Warsaw remains a particularly quiet city, such that the level of aggression surrounding the noise struggle has shocked outsiders. Second, few serious attempts have been made even to alleviate the problem through technical measures. Instead, the whole discussion quickly transmogrified into a perversely inverted dispute over the right to the city, in which both groups have been trying to denigrate and symbolically exclude each other from the city centre, with each suggesting that the other

...
Hear this: clanking of utensils; water filling plastic bottles; tender bottoms being slapped; grown-up cheeks struck; raucous laughter in the corners; coins being sorted; technologies of communication, communicating—phones, televisions, and amplifiers—creating, collapsing and distancing words and lives; sellers of wares, necessary, unrequired, and varied, dangling their goods through the prosess of their throats; children otherwise told to “shut up” in the classrooms frolicking about imitating the tongues elders speak—I will fuck your sister, you are a cunt; the elders making claims to the fucking—of mothers, sisters, daughters—with more intent and lost innocence; aazaan on the loudspeaker from the mosque in the corner defining the day for many; the same loudspeaker announcing the find of a young Hindu boy, who if not claimed timely enough will be converted; the precious touch of the hand to the bells in the temples nearby, ting-tong, tong-tong, tinging; the hum of the city passing by; the vehicular conversations, honkingly undertaken; confidences of the most delicate sorts shared across corridors, lanes, and lives; songs of yearning penetrating through; a young girl on the roof remembering the cities she is forbidden to visit; an old man spinning yarn of the lives he has not lived to everyone in general and no one in particular.

This is but a brief listening into of a dying afternoon from a corner of the three slum settlements—camps—often collectively recognized as the slums of Govindpuri, a nearby lower-middle class residential area in South West Delhi. This is a listening of the inside (and its outside) from the inside of Govindpuri by an outsider; however, there are those who remain, at best, muted. To then extend masculinity to Govindpuri’s soundscape as an over-arching characteristic is not an attempt at simplification of its listenings, but an invitation to hear into it from a gender-specific trope. One sound—more accurately an instance of sonic performance by women in Govindpuri—however, has the potential to disrupt the reckoning of noise—politically and philosophically—in itself. In that, the listening attempted here aims to rehabilitate noise within the sonic triad of “noise-sound-silence,” wherein sonicity linearly moves from a state of chaos, through certain validations to an absolute state of calm. I will tease out these negotiations by attempting the biography of a sound—wailing—in the immediate context of Govindpuri, and then extrapolate it onto the broader materiality of the sonic capacities available to Others in the city.

Slums are marginalized spaces in the materiality of a city. And in a city like Delhi, with its hyperbolic transformative agendas to become a “world-class, clean, and green city,” these spaces, more than ever, represent the perversity of a past desired to be conveniently lost: poverty, violence, unstructured growth, “over-population,” dirt, filth, and noise. Acutely aware of the particular predicament of the sustained, strategic, and everyday violence of marginalization that the slums and its residents encounter, the space, its sociality, and cultural politics have their own modalities to internalize this violence; and in that process deliberately define the boundaries of their own margins and locate their own Others. One section of society in Govindpuri on which this violence of othering and marginalization is inscribed is its women. Gender, however, is not the sole category of othering, and its associative social, cultural, and political disenfranchisements. The considerations of caste, class, communal affiliation, and political loyalties are equally determinant in these processes; however, for the sake of the listenings proposed here, it will be the voices—or lack thereof—of the women in Govindpuri that will form the focus of our attention.

The brief listening of a dying afternoon in Govindpuri is suggestive of the density and intensity of it soundscapes. It is indeed thick. To be heard here—literally, metaphorically, and politically—necessitates employment of effective sonic, technological, and social interventions. Given the space of Govindpuri is highly gendered, the women are denied these techniques of being heard, and thus their entry and assertion into its soundscapes often remain, at best, muted. To then extend masculinity to Govindpuri’s soundscape as an over-arching characteristic is not an attempt at simplification of its listenings, but an invitation to hear into it from a gender-specific trope. One sound—more accurately an instance of sonic performance by women in Govindpuri—however, has the potential to disrupt the intersecting sonic, spatial, and gendered masculine hierarchies, however temporarily: it is that of a wailing woman.

An emaciated, sickly woman is sought, and quickly found. It is an early, cold, January morning in 2012. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi elections are a few weeks away. I
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12
SIMON JAMES PHILLIPS | #2 (EXCERPT)
Recorded by Peter Lenaerts in Podewil, Berlin.
Instant compositions scored in real-time in one uninterrupted movement through different rooms and spaces. A piano player improvises in an empty room. Over time the recordist travels around and away from the piano and explores first the space, and then the adjacent rooms and floors of the building. While the pianist plays with the acoustics and reverberation of the room, the sound is further shaped and transformed by how the recordist uses the different rooms and their features. The architecture becomes an editing device that continuously changes the texture and quality of the recordings. Simon James Phillips

13
OLIVIA BLOCK | UNTITLED FOR PIANO, BELLS, CASSETTES
Composition. Chicago, February 2014.

14
BJ NILSEN | ABNEY PARK CEMETERY
Field recording. London, April 2012.
Sounds of various birds including Blackbird, Terdus merula, Robin, Erithacus rubecula, Dunnock, Prunella modularis, Blue Tit, Cyanistes caeruleus, Great Tit, Parus major, Wren, Trogloglotes troglodytes, and Magpie, Pica pica. Published by Touch Music (MCPS).

15
MATTHEW GANDY | ABNEY PARK WOODPECKERS
Great Spotted Woodpecker, Dendrocopos major, with Magpie, Pica pica, and other birds in the background.

16
MATTHEW GANDY | CACEROLAZOS

17
PASCAL WYSE | HONKY
Field recording. Lyon, October 2007.
Recorded from hotel window on Place Bellecour during a taxi strike.

18
GODÉ LOFOMBO | BAMBITINGA FARDC
Intro/Outro BJ Nilsen Reinickendorf, near Tegel Airport.
Field recording. Berlin, Germany, February 2014.

19
MATTHEW GANDY & BJ NILSEN | CHAMISSOPLATZ
Guitar improvisations and sound collage.
Berlin, March 2014.

20
CHRIS WATSON | STREET MARKET
Field recording. Ramnagar, Uttarakhand, Northern India, January 2011.
Published by Touch Music (MCPS).

21
VENOZ TKS | STRAWBERRY SELLERS
Field recording. Marrakesh, Morocco, February 2014.
Published by Field Music (MCPS).

22
EKKEHARD EHLERS | MARIA & MARTHA
Published by Freibank.

The Acoustic City CD was curated and compiled by BJ Nilsen and Matthew Gandy.
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Thanks also to Mark Pearson for assistance with the identification of bird songs and to Rudolf Thome for permission to use dialogue taken from his film Berlin Chamissoplatz (1980).