



SOUND, LANGUAGE & THE MAKING OF URBAN SPACE

Conference at the University of Copenhagen

August 24th and 25th 2023



Contemporary histories of sound and hearing often open with a lament that this subject matter has too long been ignored in favor of studies of the written word or of vision. But over the last two decades, auditory history has entered the discipline with a vengeance—at the intersection of the history of music, the body, technology, medicine, disability, the environment, and everyday life. ¹

Thus wrote the American historian Sophia Rosenfeld a decade ago. Since then, the study of sound history, listening regimes, auditory practices and the cultural history of noise and silence has continued to bloom and bud, often with the context of the city and urban life at its center. From the late Raymond Murray Schafer's pioneering studies of the urban soundscape via Bruce Smith's concept of "acoustic communities" and Karin Bijsterveld's and Peter Payer's explorations into the conceptualization and abatement of urban noise to Emily Thompson's study of architectural acoustics. Lately new approaches focusing on social engineering, the sonic personae, auditory cultures and sonic affects in the production of urban space have appeared and further increased our knowledge and curiosity about the interrelationship between sound and the city.



Workers in Glud and Marstrand's factory in Copenhagen, 1904

1 Rosenfeld, Sophia 2011: "On Being Heard: A Case for Paying Attention to the Historical Ear", *American Historical Review*, 116:2, s. 316-334., s. 317.

Although rarely treated in the context of historical sound studies, the diversity of languages also forms a central part of urban soundscapes. Conversations, shouts and singing, in the marketplaces, busses, schoolyards etc. work as semiotic elements in human constructions of and navigation in urban spaces. In recent years, the study of dialects has also circled back to the city, investigating and rediscovering how urban communities are both shaped by and shaping linguistic development on the national level and beyond.

This conference centers on the city, the metropolis, and on sound and language as central elements in the production of urban spaces and communities. The organizers particularly welcome contributions that explore ways in which sonic and linguistic approaches to urban communities, lifestyles and practices can enrich each other.

We also invite paper proposals from scholars of all fields centering on questions such as

- How have sounds, soundscapes, noise and human utterings been portrayed as part of the urban experience past and present?
- How have sound, noise and language been used to delineate class, gender, race and other hierarchies in the city?
- How have the materiality, architecture and structure of the city affected the configuration of soundscapes and sonic experiences?
- How can we reconsider notions of privacy, social boundaries and community by studying past sonic practices?
- What are the relevant methodologies and sources for the study of silence, noise and listening practices of urban communities in the past?

Paper proposals of up to 300 words plus short bio of up to 100 words to be send to Jakob Ingemann Parby at jakobp@kk.dk before January 2nd 2023.

Confirmation of acceptance of proposal: February 15th 2023.

All accepted speakers should deliver a 2000-word paper by June 15th 2023. The papers will be published in the conference proceedings following the event. Guidelines for the papers will be sent to accepted contributors in late February.

Participation is free for speakers.

Participation fee for other participants: 100 DKK (lunch and coffee included).

Confirmed key notes:

Sophia Rosenfeld: *On Being Heard 2.0 – The Historical Ear Revisited*

Sophia Rosenfeld is Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania with a special interest in European intellectual and cultural history with a special emphasis on the Enlightenment, the trans-Atlantic Age of Revolutions, and the legacy of the eighteenth century for modern democracy. Among her most important publications are *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 2001); *Common Sense: A Political History* (Harvard, 2011), and *Democracy and Truth: A Short History* (Penn Press, 2019). Currently she is co-editing the 6-volume series, *A Cultural History of Ideas*, out this fall (2022). Among her other interests are the history of the emotions and the senses; the history of free speech, dissent, and censorship; the history of aesthetics, including dance; the history of political language; contemporary political theory and feminist theory; the history of epistemology; the history of information and misinformation; and experimental historical methods. Rosenfeld has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, the Mellon Foundation, both the Remarque Institute and the Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU, and the American Council of Learned Societies, as well as visiting professorships at the University of Virginia School of Law and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

David Garrioch: *What is urban about Early Modern urban sound?*

David Garrioch is professor emeritus at Monash University and has published extensively on Early Modern Urban History with a particular interest in Eighteenth Century Paris, including the award-winning *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* from 2003 and the seminal work *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris 1740-1790* from 1986. His most recent book is *The Huguenots of Paris and the coming of Religious Freedom* (Cambridge UP, 2014). Currently he is working on several projects, including a fire history of European cities from the 16th to the 19th century, a history of religious confraternities in eighteenth-century Paris, a collaborative book on women's letter-writing in Early Modern Europe, and a study of artisan mobility in eighteenth-century Paris.

Visiting Fellow at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris in 2003 and early 2008. Visiting Professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Lyons, 2005. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, served on the Executive of the Australian Historical Association, the Editorial Boards of *H-France*, *French Historical Studies*, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* and *Parergon*.

Karin Bijsterveld:*Stolen Silence: Listening to the History of Quiet Spaces in Urban Environments*

Karin Bijsterveld is professor of Science, Technology & Modern Culture at Maastricht University and has published extensively on the history of sound. Among her key publications are *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century* (2008), *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices* (co-edited with José van Dijck, 2009), *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (co-edited with Trevor Pinch, 2012) and *Sound and Safe: A History of Listening behind the Wheel* (with Eefje Cleophas, Stefan Krebs and Gijs Mom, 2014). She has edited *Soundscapes of the Urban Past: Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage* (2013) and a special issue on Auditory History for *The Public Historian* (2015). In 2019, she published a synthesizing, open access publication about the history of listening in the sciences: *Sonic Skills: Listening for Knowledge in Science, Medicine and Engineering (1920s-present)*.² Bijsterveld is founding member of the European Sound Studies Association, member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, and of the Royal Holland Society of Sciences and Humanities. A recent publication is an article on speaker identification at the Stasi (*Isis*, 2021), and an upcoming one is the open access Palgrave volume *Interdisciplinarity in the Scholarly Life Cycle* (with Aagje Swinnen).

² <https://www.palgrave.com/de/book/9781137598318>

About the organizers

The conference is organized by *Sounds of the Capital*, a collaborative research and dissemination project investigating the sonic history of Copenhagen.

- Jakob Ingemann Parby, senior curator, Museum of Copenhagen (PI)
- Pia Quist, professor, Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen
- Bjarne Simmelkjær Hansen, Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics, University of Copenhagen
- Kasper H. Andersen, Team leader of History, Moesgaard Museum
- Mikkel Thelle, senior researcher, The National Museum of Denmark
- Vivi Lena Andersen, head of public outreach, Museum of Copenhagen
- Regitze Lindø Vestergaard, curator, Museum of Copenhagen

The project has been made possible by a generous grant from The Velux Foundation.

References

- Bailey, Peter. 1996: "Breaking the Sound Barrier: A Historian listens to noise" i *Body & Society*, 2:2, s. 49-66.
- Barthes, Roland 1997: «The Semiology and the Urban» in Leach, Neil (ed.): *Rethinking Architecture*. New York og London: Routledge, 158-172.
- Bijsterveld, Karin, 2001: "The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age: Technology and Symbolism of Sound in European and North American Noise Abatement Campaigns, 1900-40", *Social Studies of Science*, 31:1, s. 37-70.
- Bijsterveld, Karin 2008: *Mechanical Sounds: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century*. MIT Press.
- Boutin, Aimée 2015: *City of Noise: Sound and Nineteenth Century Paris*. UI Press.
- Einarsen, Hans Philip og Meyer, Frank 2018: "Superdiversitetens lydspor". Frank Meyer (red.), *Norges lyder. Stabbursklokker og storbykakofoni*. Oslo, 105-118
- Garrioch, David 2003: "Sounds of the City: the soundscape of early modern European towns". *Urban History*, vol. 30, issue 1, s. 5-25.
- Gasquet-Cyrus, Médéric 2016: "The accents of Marseille: Perceptions and linguistic change" in Jennifer Cramer & Chris Montgomery (eds.): *Cityscapes and Perceptual Dialectology: Global Perspectives on Non-Linguists*.
- Llano, Samuel. 2018: "Mapping Street Sounds in the Nineteenth-Century City: A listener's guide to social engineering", *Sound Studies*, (May 2018), s. 1-19.
- Morat, Daniel, (ed.) 2014: *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19th- and 20th-Century Europe*. Berghahn.
- Payer, Peter 2018: *Der Klang der Grossstadt – Eine Geschichte des Hörens*, Wien 1850-1914, Böhlau Verlag.
- Picker, John 2003: *Victorian Soundscapes*. Oxford University Press.
- Rosenfeld, Sophia 2011: "On Being Heard: A Case for Paying Attention to the Historical Ear", *American Historical Review*, 116:2.
- Schafer, Raymond Murray 1977/1994: *The Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books.
- Schulze, Holger 2018: *The Sonic Persona*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Simpson, Paul 2016: "Sonic affects and the production of space: 'Music by handle' and the politics of Street Music in Victorian London" i *Cultural Geographies*, 24:1, s. 89-109.
- Smith, Bruce R. 1999: *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England. Attending to the O-factor*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Sterne, Jonathan 2003: *The Audible Past – Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Duke University Press, Durham & London, 2003.
- Thompson, Emily 2004: *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933*. MIT Press.