

Encouraging Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Sound Awareness among City Makers. A Workshop Report

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While the effects of sound on the wellbeing of urbanites are well documented, sound and the auditory experience are relegated to discussions (both policy and academic) on noise management and control. There is converging evidence that sound can be considered as an urban resource that can support or enhance processes of urban public space design, transformation and management. Among increasing calls advocating for sound awareness and moving beyond the sound-as-noise approach among citizens, researchers, practitioners and policy and decision-makers, we organized an interdisciplinary workshop bringing together actors from two well-established fields of research and practice that have so far engaged in limited collaborations in Amsterdam: public space and sound. In this paper we report on the findings of this workshop, organized in Amsterdam in September 2016, entitled: "Urban Public Space and Data Gathering: Sound and the Amsterdam Auditory experience".

Its goal was two-fold: (1) to create a *platform* for discussion and inter and multidisciplinary collaboration and exchange between various local public space and sound experts, and (2) to create *awareness*, both methodological, in terms of strategies and best practices for conducting urban research in multidisciplinary teams that could continue the efforts to bridge the gaps between research and practice, as well as thematic, by focusing on sound and the urban auditory experience, taking participants outside the classroom and asking them to reflect on their own sensory experience, in situ, in real time.

The workshop had a mirror-like structure, including identical debates focused on three key aspects of participants' knowledge on and experience with public space (morning), and sound (afternoon): (1) challenges faced in everyday work; (2) challenges faced in collaborations (particularly interdisciplinary or academia-practice collaborations); and (3) strategies of discussing and communicating these challenges to partners from other disciplines or fields of practice. The innovative component of the workshop was its soundwalk through the center of Amsterdam, as a teaching or awareness-raising method, that helped participants to tap into their own tacit knowledge on urban auditory experiences and elicited interest in the auditory composition, identity and even design of the city.

A synergistic consensus emerged where auditory issues were connected to broader theories and problems from public space research and sound was given as a topical case study. These include: the importance of situated approaches, a focus on people as end-users of spaces, understanding intra- and intergroup differences among user groups and relying on bottom-up approaches for accessing local knowledge and supporting successful local interventions and transformations of spaces, including locally-based auditory interventions.

Such workshops are essential for the development of platforms for cooperation and communication, where researchers and practitioners enter dialogues on local and universal practices on how to bridge inter- and trans-disciplinary gaps, how to translate research needs into policy needs (and vice versa) and where sound awareness can be promoted among participants, emphasizing sound as a resource that can help city makers to achieve their goal of developing livable cities, accommodating the dynamic needs of diverse groups of users.