

SoundEffects



An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience

Iben Have

Associate Professor

Media Studies

Aarhus University, Denmark

Helle Breth Klausen

PhD Fellow

Media Studies

Aarhus University, Denmark

Editorial

Sound and Senses

www.soundeffects.dk



SoundEffects | vol. 8 | no. 1 | 2019

issn 1904-500X

We hear and listen using our auditory sense. However, it has been acknowledged within several disciplines from neuroscience to humanistic approaches that our sensory system is not isolated in single senses, but is working as an ensemble perceptually, bodily, socially, culturally and technologically. Audio is often opposed and compared to vision, in relation to cultural theory and studies of the audio-visual – at least within sound studies and media studies. But the close relation between hearing and touching – the auditory and the haptic sense – has been of growing interdisciplinary interest within the last decade from different perspectives: sound and sensory studies, affect studies, perception and cognitive sciences as well as psychology and neuroscience. With this special issue on *Sound and Senses* we present eight distinguished articles dealing with different aspects of sound and sound experience in relation to the multisensorial experience of sound in different physical and mediated environments.

We precede with an invited article by Lutz Koepnick titled ‘Figures of resonance: Reading at the edges of attention’. *Through the acoustic concept of resonance* ‘in all its multisensorial complexity’, as he puts it, Koepnick offers a cognitively centred framework of perception and attention and *encourages us to rethink* attention in an age of often highly mobile media uses and multisensory media technologies. With a historical view on debates about the impact of audiobooks on traditional reading Koepnick reformulates existing concepts, expectations, norms and hierarchies of attentiveness, auditory perception and reading today.

Like Koepnick, Marcia Jenneth Epstein is also dealing with aspects of audio, reading and attention. In her article ‘Dyslexia, distraction and ambient noise: The role of hearing in reading disabilities and delays’, she takes a didactic approach to how the soundscape of schools influences the learning environment. A significant theme of this issue on sound and senses is exactly how the environment must be considered when analysing and discussing the multisensorial experience of sound. Inspired by Steven Feld’s notion of acoustemology, Christian Benvenuti shares Koepnick’s interest in using concepts from acoustics to explain broader cultural aspects of media and technologies. In the article ‘An acoustemology of streaming media and information and communication technologies’, Benvenuti discusses how sonic structures of our informational environment, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are reshaping not only our soundscapes, but also how we perceive ourselves.

Environmental context is also framing Jennifer Lucy Allan’s article ‘Foggy notion: Sound and weather, and the intermingled senses’, in which she convincingly explores the effect of fog on our sonic experiences of the world, asking how fog affects what we hear, its effects on our perception of the environment and how these findings point to further possible interrogations of the interrelations of sound, the senses and weather.

Allan's article resonates with another main theme of this issue, namely the intimate sensorial and bodily experience of proximity and touch in the use of mediated sound. This theme is leading in the article 'Interpenetration of vibrating thresholds – eroticism, sound and sensorial intimacy', where Eduardo Abrantes discusses experiences of sensorial intimacy and explores some of the contemporary erotic uses of mediated sound in e.g. pornography, VR and ASMR. ASMR (or Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) is also the empirical pivot in Helle Breth Klausen's article "'Safe and sound" – what technologically-mediated ASMR is capable of through sound', suggesting a theoretical framework building on the concepts of 'para-social interaction', 'telepresence' and 'social audio-grooming' to explain how technologically-mediated ASMR is capable of establishing a sense of presence and intimacy through sonically binaural qualities and caring narratives in role-plays in ASMR videos on YouTube.

We are also very proud to present original insight into the first part of the experimental audio-visual work series *override*, through Iris Garrelfs' article 'override: An experiment in interrupting the congruity of audio-visual relationships', in which she explores how sound might function in combination with vision, and how sensing and sense-making might relate to each other in an experiment on a double-decker bus with the help of a mobile phone and noise-cancelling headphones.

Materialisation of sound is demonstrated through Rob Mullender's original article 'Divine agency: Bringing to light the voice figures of Margaret Watts-Hughes' discussing the sound artist Margaret Watts-Hughes' (1842-1907) instrument, the eidophone, enabling visualisation of sound structures through vibrations of pigments on glass surfaces.

Another article presenting an original and innovative method for experiencing sound through other senses than hearing is Maurice Windleburn's 'Formulating a "cinematic listener" for John Zorn's file card compositions'. The composer and multi-instrumentalist John Zorn (b. 1953) used a so-called file card method of organising sound blocks into an overall structure. This arrangement of sound blocks has previously been compared to cinematic montage; however, with the term 'cinematic listener' Windleburn takes this comparison further by suggesting how the experience of sound blocks includes visual aspects compared to cinema.

The issue finally brings a review of Pierre Schaeffer's book *Treatise of Musical Objects – An Essay Across Disciplines* from 2017 by Patrick Valiquet – a book title pointing at the interdisciplinary aim of *SoundEffects*.

Welcome to SoundEffects, vol. 8, no. 1.
Iben Have & Helle Breth Klausen