

# SoundEffects



An Interdisciplinary Journal of Sound and Sound Experience

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## Editorial

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Sound studies covers a vast area of different fields within art studies, architecture, musicology, film and media studies, perceptual psychology, anthropology etc. This not only means that sound has no natural 'home', but also that sound is conceptualised in various ways depending on the concepts, methods and approaches that traditionally define each area of study. Sound may be considered a musically structured art form that one must listen to carefully, disturbing and unhealthy noise in urban environments that must be reduced or part of mass communication that must either be critically analysed or studied as meaningful entertainment. Sound can be described in physical terms, in formal terms and in more (inter)subjective terms, depending on the academic interest. It is not possible to define a common language, a *lingua franca*, spoken by all researchers and practitioners of sound. This may seem regrettable. On the other hand, such a language may not even be desirable, since we can benefit from the present polyphony, which keeps sound studies connected to and integrated with all kinds of academic and artistic practices. In other words, it is both a challenge and an advantage: a challenge because we need to be updated on sound studies in all kinds of areas, and an advantage because it makes sound studies more than just an esoteric subject area. As sound researchers and practitioners we have a natural need for interdisciplinarity, and we have to maintain an ongoing dialogue about sound across many different fields of study.

This issue of SoundEffects opens with Emma Tornborg's 'Sound and stasis in pictorial poetry'. It aims at explaining the effects of the representation of sound in poetry in relation to temporality and imagery. It is shown how verbs can create not only movement, but also a sense of time, including stasis or a sense of timelessness, in the form of a frozen mental image. The importance of mental images is supported by experimental results from cognitive science and investigated in a short analysis of poems by Gustafsson, Tranströmer and Hillbäck.

In 'Conceptualising the audiobook experience' Iben Have and Birgitte Stougaard Pedersen combine media studies and comparative literature in considering the audiobook as a medium that gains from being auditory rather than written, from being read with the ears instead of the eyes, to such an extent that it may no longer be considered just another variant of a written literary practice, that is, as a remediation of the printed book. It is an entirely new way of experiencing in which mobility plays a constituent role. The audiobook is not only different from the traditional book in terms of the four modalities suggested by Elleström (material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic), but also in terms of the typical listening situation that combines aural fiction and movement through social space.

In 'Urban sound design – can we talk about it?' Nina Hällgren sets out to sketch a different approach to sound and urban design than the traditional method of noise mapping, which is mainly concerned with quantitative measures of Db and ideas of good (low Db) sounds and bad (high Db) sounds. She argues that a more fine-graded

scale concerned with qualitative aspects of sound is needed in order to make urban spaces more acoustically varied and vibrant. How this can be done is then demonstrated in a project undertaken by the author, using several complementary methods to map qualitative sonic differences within a specific urban area.

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay's article 'The cinematic soundscape: conceptualising the use of sound in Indian films' considers three different periods within Indian cinema related to both technical features and practices of sound recording and presentation in cinemas. The first period is characterised by location sound and monaural reproduction. In this phase, the sound – although part of a fiction – seems to document the film's location and space. In the second period, many films are presented with stereophonic audio effects, thereby trying to emphasise emotional aspects of the sound experience. Finally, the third phase is a return to 'synch' sound, but the sound is digitally remastered as surround sound that gives rise to a new conception of cinematic space.

Tina Hanssen investigates the use of low volume microsound in artworks by composer and sound artist Miki Yui in 'Please, do not turn up the volume', which means to educate listeners on audio aspects of everyday life. These sounds make it difficult to perceive differences between the artwork and the sounds of the gallery, thereby giving rise to misperceptions. This is exemplified in two works, *Mamogato* and *Out in the Dark*, which deal with combinations of familiarity and unfamiliarity, creating an auditory imagination and memory.

In 'A museological approach: radio as intangible heritage' Christian Hviid Mortensen studies the challenges that come from bringing 'intangible forms' such as radio into the space of the museum, which traditionally deals with material objects on display. An exhibition is both information and a narrative that organises this information for the user. Through the concept of 'affordance' it is considered how both intrinsic and extrinsic factors can influence user behaviour and this is exemplified in the design of a radio exhibition, 'You are what you hear'.

Finally, the issue contains two reviews. Birgitte Stougaard reviews Neumark, Gibsons and van Leeuwen's *VOICE – Vocal Aesthetics in Digital Arts and Media*, and Nicolai Jørgensgaard Graakjær reviews Taylor's *The sounds of capitalism. Advertising, music, and the conquest of culture*.

Together and separately these articles – as well as the reviewed books – are examples of how different theoretical and practical traditions are brought together to describe, analyse and discuss the conceptualisation of sound. Welcome to the third issue of SoundEffects!