

Introduction

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1. »Take a Closer Listen«

It happened when his Ipod was out of batteries. Lying in a park in Geneva, on a mid-summer day, with his headphones still on, he suddenly heard the sounds of the park as if played on his Ipod: people talking, a dog barking, a truck passing, kids laughing, birds singing. The idea for a book was born. Artist Rutger Zuyderfelt invited people to »take a closer listen« to the sounds that normally go unnoticed to them, and asked them to think of their »favourite sound«. By the end of 2009, he had gathered fifty-two detailed descriptions of sounds, as well as a few accompanying stories.¹

Many of the sounds submitted were those of nature: the »flapping of birds' wings«, or »wind blowing through trees«. Some were sounds of nature audible in enclosed, man-made spaces, like »rain falling on a tent's roof« and »snow lightly hitting a glass window«. Other stories just referred to the sounds of people talking or things moving: »neighbours' muffled conversation«, »umbrellas opening and closing« or a »far-off fog-horn from a ship at sea«. Still others, however, referred to the sounds of crowded, urban environments such as »rumbling train engines«, »constant traffic on a distant road«, a »busy playground several yards away«, or »echoes in a tube station«. And some seemed to be associated with joyful expectation, such as »mail falling on a doormat«, »a new pack of coffee being opened« and »a book page being turned«.²

Some seven decades before, in the mid-1930s, residents of the city of Groningen, The Netherlands were also invited to take a closer listen. The organization involved was a

1 Zuyderfelt 2009, 3, 5, 7.

2 Zuyderfelt 2009, 10-73.

local noise abatement committee, one similar to those established in many other Western towns and cities in the first decades of the twentieth century, including New York, London and Berlin, to mention a few metropolitan examples.³ The Groningen committee publicly announced its plan to take action against unnecessary noise, and asked local residents to provide information on the sounds they considered annoying. This triggered a response of over one hundred letters.⁴ Most of the letter-writers complained about »street noise«, notably the sounds of the horns and engines of cars, trucks and motor bikes, but also the noises of municipal street cleaning services, carts, trams, trolley buses, trains, and people loading and unloading cargo. Others felt bothered by the sounds of local tower carillons, factories and steam whistles, street vendors, public loudspeakers, soldiers doing firing exercises, children, dogs, cats and cocks. Quite a few also had concerns about the loudness of their neighbours' radio.

The complainants often stressed the incessant and »piercing« character of the unwanted sounds, their sheer multitude, as well as their untimely nature: a »screaming army« of flower vendors, rag-dealers and iron mongers passing through the street »day and night«. Each morning, a family woke up far too early due to milk factory workers »throwing with« their milk »tins« and »lids«. Other commercial activities, such as the outdoor second-hand car market, would start as early as in the middle of the night, with »slamming car doors« and »endless« starting up of engines »in vain«, for not all cars offered for sale there were »of the modern kind«. Motorized traffic contributed to the hubbub, but so did the numerous carts delivering milk or vegetables, which had »no rubber tires« while the street pavement was rather »uneven«. In their letters, the writers also voiced medical concerns (»I have been seeing the doctor for over a year now and suffer a lot from nervousness«) or claimed that »the sick« in their family could not stand the noise anymore, hoping that the committee's members could do something about it. Furthermore, the noise of motor bikes, driven up and down the road by the neighbourhood street kids (sons of the »knife-grinders and oil millers« and a few »pimps«) would cause houses to »shake«, while the drone of electric engines felt, as one letter put it, »as if my brain begins to tremble«. Hospital patients, one writer knew, suffered from sleep disturbance caused by a local carillon, as was true of »strangers visiting our town for just a few days«. The city was overcrowded with »twitter bicycles«,

3 Bijsterveld 2008.

4 Archives Anti-lawaai comité Groningen (ALCG, Noise Abatement Committee Groningen), File »Brieven op Persberichten« (Letters in response to Press Reports), 1935-1937; courtesy Hero Wit, now stored at Maastricht University, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences. The committee itself numbered the letters to which we refer.

»car din« and an outright »chaos of sounds«. One complainant regretted that those from the nearby countryside (»*buitenmensen*«) would often go into Groningen very early, at a time when the urban residents (»*stadgers*«) were still sound asleep, »as they go to bed later«. Another contended that it was usually »lower-class lads and girls« who felt a need to scream and yell.⁵

We do not present these examples to suggest that urban dwellers' appreciation of urban sound used to be more negative in the past than it is today. It might have been just as easy to find negative stories about present-day urban sounds, or, conversely, positive ones about such sounds in the past. Rather, our interest is in how these stories are staged. Intriguingly, many of the stories about favourite sounds generally speak of sounds that are hardly discernible, such as muffled sounds or lightly tapping ones. These sounds also tend to be produced at a certain distance from the listener: far-off, several yards away, amounting to echoes rather than the real thing. We classify them as typical instances of the »comforting sound« topos, a description or staging of sound which foregrounds people's experience of safety, a calm atmosphere, a sense of security. We will explain this topos in more detail below. In contrast, most of the Groningen letters contained examples of »intrusive sound«, of discourse on violent sounds that, often repeatedly, intrude people's private spaces without being appreciated by them. In their narrative structure and style, the letters highlight the inescapability of noise by enumerating the many different sources of sound and mentioning their recurrence; or by emphasizing the weakness of the complainants or others suffering: hospital patients, the sick, neurotics or children. An alternative rhetorical strategy adopted is to present the noise-makers as people of a lesser kind (boys, lower-class youths, or pimps) than the complainants – all honourable citizens by implication.

This book addresses all these various ways of »staging sound«. It focuses, however, not only on how sounds are captured in text – the textualization of sound – but also on the staging and dramatization of sound in radio and film. And it is not just about all the sounds one can imagine, but about the sounds of the *city* and how these urban sounds have been staged in texts, radio plays and film productions created in the long twentieth century.

5 All quotes in this paragraph are from the ALCG-letters, respectively: 99, 102, 103, 107, 105, 101, 103, 107, 80, 100, 106, 64, 104, 102, 80, 83 and 66.

2. Media and the Staging of Sound. Textualization and Dramatization

What is the use of our concern with the various ways urban sounds have been »staged«? The Groningen examples quoted above underscore that sound frequently figures as a deeply contested phenomenon, most notably in urban, densely populated areas. What is music to the ears of some residents may be unwanted sound, and thus noise, to the ears of their neighbours. Such clashes over urban sounds do not only touch on their individual meanings to those who hear them, but also express ideas about what the character of the city should be like, and what is allowed to be audible or not. Should we, for instance, conceive of cities as dynamic domains whose charm partly, if not largely, derives from the complex symphony of sounds they generate on a daily basis, or should we rather conceive of them as places of important intellectual work where all residents are entitled to find the peace and tranquillity needed to work diligently and productively?

Past sounds and the perception of these sounds by historical actors can also inform us about the changing character and identity of cities. We usually do not have direct access to these past sounds, however. There are very few recordings of everyday Western life before 1900, in part because early anthropologists focused on making recordings of *non-Western* societies.⁶ And for the years up until World War II, most recordings of everyday sonic environments were in fact made for radio plays and films. Our knowledge of past soundscapes, transient and intangible as they are, is therefore largely dependent on historical texts in which people described what they heard and what these sounds meant to them. At the same time, however, our *imagination* of such soundscapes has been nourished by the soundtracks the makers of radio plays and films created for their productions. And it is this *mediated* cultural heritage of sound that presents us with a unique chance to study the dramatization of urban sound over time, and thus to understand the varying and changing representations of urban identities. This has been the objective of the research project this volume draws on: »Soundscapes of the Urban Past: Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage«.

Methodologically, we – the members of the Soundscapes of the Urban Past-team Jasper Aalbers, Karin Bijsterveld, Andreas Fickers and Annelies Jacobs – started from the view that representations of sound, both in historical text and in radio play and fiction film, always imply a particular dramatization of sound. It has been common for historical actors to articulate their perception of sounds only when particular sounds *moved* them, in either a positive or a negative sense. In making their responses to sound ex-

6 Brady 1999.

PLICIT, and thereby rhetorically strengthening their position, they employed particular *repertoires of dramatizing sound*. But not only historical actors did so. Makers of radio plays and fiction film have similarly developed repertoires, and at times genre-specific repertoires, for dramatizing sound in order to articulate their take on the protagonists of their stories or the settings in which they situated these stories. We have therefore treated documents referring to putative historical realities on the same plane as media expressing fictional realities, by focusing on the repertoires of dramatizing sound they had in common, while also being open to the genre-specific differences in such repertoires. Among the repertoires we started with were *auditory topoi* such as the intrusive sound, the sensational sound, the comforting sound, and the sinister sound; we already mentioned two of these frequently used forms of staging sound above.⁷ We used these auditory topoi as a key tool for analyzing the dramatization of sound in historical texts, radio plays and fiction films, and the same applies to several other *narrative* strategies for capturing sonic experiences.

In addition, we examined the dramatization of sounds in terms of *keynote sounds*, *sound marks* and *sonic icons* featuring in these sources. The notion of »keynote sounds« refers to sounds that make up the background sound of a sonic environment, such as traffic sound in the modern city. In music, it finds its analogies in the keynote of a composition as well as in the basso ostinato, a repeated bass line. »Sound marks« refer to the sounds that stand out in a particular environment, and are considered typical for a specific location, such as the bell of London's Big Ben or the phrase »mind the gap« in the London Underground.⁸ Over time, particular sounds can become *iconic* for particular locations through the conventional ways in which they are deployed in written narrative, in film and on the radio, as well as through subsequent inter-textual references. A good example is the brief accordion tune that for many has come to evoke the city of Paris. In theory, such *sonic icons* may not bear any relationship, or no relationship anymore, with the actual location – the iconicity is merely a convention. Often, however, particular sound marks from the past somehow persist and become iconic over time. In addition, particular sounds may acquire a narrative iconicity. For example, the sounds of arriving coaches and cars, of door bells ringing, of doorsteps and wheels crunching the gravel have come to signify shifts in plots and scenes in a canonized manner.⁹ A similar example is the routine representation of landing airplanes in films through the sound of the screeching of wheels touching the tarmac.

7 Bijsterveld 2008.

8 Schafer 1994 [1977].

9 Krug 2003, Thomsen / Schneider 1985.

The artificial iconic character of this sound is even more evident to those who know that in reality we cannot hear the wheels, owing to the masking effect of the roaring engines. But sounds may also perform narrative roles in less conventional and more surprising ways: they create additional drama, suspense or identification marks.¹⁰ A seminal example is the sonic »close up« Alfred Hitchcock employed in *Blackmail* (1929). He amplified the word »knife« among incomprehensible babble in order to highlight the significance of this word to the protagonist. This signifier, in turn, elicited the connotations of strength, significance, and aggressive intrusion that loud sounds have often had in Western culture.¹¹ A focus on the iconization of sound in film – as in radio plays and historical text – thus also allows for an analysis of the particular ways in which sounds have been loaded with meaning. As concepts, »keynote sounds« and »sound marks« were coined by the composer and environmentalist Raymond Murray Schafer in the 1970s. His publications opened up the historiography of sound by documenting and reflecting on changes in the Western soundscape, or sonic environment, since the Industrial Revolution.¹² (For a detailed discussion of the notion of »soundscape«, see Jonathan Sterne’s chapter, this volume.) Initially, historians of sound started out in a similar vein: they catalogued all the sounds citizens could hear at particular moments in time.¹³ Historian Alain Corbin stressed, however, that it is at least as interesting to examine how citizens’ past habitus conditioned their ways of listening. Which sounds did they listen to most attentively, and why? Which sounds seemed simply below their thresholds of perception? And what were, in terms of auditory and other sensory impressions, the configurations of the tolerable and intolerable in past societies?¹⁴ Corbin’s work on bells in the nineteenth-century French countryside has revealed how bells not only structured the villagers’ days and mediated news in ways we would not be able to understand today, but also how they contributed to people’s spatial orientation and expressed the symbolic power of towns.¹⁵ More recent publications on sound give ample attention to such cultural meanings of sound and shifting modes of listening.¹⁶ Several even focus on the chang-

10 Pisters 2007, Lastra 2000.

11 Bijsterveld 2001.

12 Schafer 1994 [1977].

13 Thuillier 1977.

14 Corbin 1995.

15 Corbin 1999 [1994].

16 See, for instance: Thompson 2002, Bull / Back 2003, Bijsterveld 2003, Rath 2003, Sterne 2003, Smith 2004, Cockayne 2007, Parr 2010, Morat et al. 2011, Müller 2011, Schwartz 2011, Birdsall 2012, Pinch / Bijsterveld 2012.

ing »sensescapes« of *cities* in particular, even though sound is only one of the sensorial experiences under study.¹⁷

From these studies we know that many conflicts about sound have involved issues of power and the right to dominate some environment with specific sounds or, conversely, to free a setting from such sounds. The urban campaigns in the late 1800s by the intellectual elite against street musicians, for instance, were an expression not only of noise abatement, but also of annoyance about the nearby presence of people lower in class and of foreign origin, and as such they were related to the rise of a new professional class of urban writers, journalists and professors working at home.¹⁸ Similarly contested sounds were the rhythmical sounds of mechanical industry and the chaos of urban traffic. If some interpreted these as sounds of progress, others saw them as vulgar attacks on distinguished minds.¹⁹

While many of these studies address how urban dwellers have regulated these sounds and even adapted to them over time, the sonic icons used in radio plays and films may have canonized alternative representations of the modern city, for instance by stressing the chaotic bombardment of the ear over the comforting aspects of urban sound. To develop a more layered argument, then, we compare the dramatization of urban sound in historical documents with the dramatization of urban sound in radio plays and films. This allows us to capture differences and similarities in the representation of urban identities through the staging of sound *across* different media. To prevent overgeneralization in our conclusions about the urban, however, we have confined our exploration of the staging of urban sound to *three cities* in particular: Amsterdam, Berlin and London. These capital cities inject, as Jill Steward and Alexander Cowan have said about such cities, »into the commercial activity common to all cities a strong administrative element as well as all the richness and theatre of public rituals.«²⁰ At the same time Amsterdam interestingly differs from Berlin and London in not having their metropolitan size. Another self-imposed restriction is temporal: we only cover the long twentieth century, years of intense motorization and »multi-culturalization«, although our sources on radio plays and sound films, of course, only go back as far as the 1920s and 1930s, the decades of their rise. Yet, while all members of the Soundscapes project team had a focus of their own – Annelies Jacobs studied the dramatizations of sound in historical text

17 Adams / Guy 2007; Cowan / Steward 2007, Diaconu/Heuberger/Mateus-Berr/Vosicky 2011. See for an overview of relevant literature also Howes 2011, 66.

18 Picker 2003.

19 Smith 2001, Bijsterveld 2001.

20 Steward/ Cowan 2007, 9.

on Amsterdam; Andreas Fickers unravelled the representations of Berlin, Amsterdam and London soundscapes in radio plays; and Jasper Aalbers examined the sound of fiction films with plots situated in these three cities²¹ – this book centers on the *synchronic* rather than diachronic aspects of their analysis. It explicitly *compares* the staging of urban sound *across* our cultural heritage of text, radio and film: which repertoires of dramatizing urban sound did these media have in common or not, and how did these contribute to the collective of stories we tell about cities, and thus to urban identities? This media-comparative approach to sound is rather new, and therefore our undertaking has a highly explorative character.

Auditory Topoi, Acoustic Profiling and Audiographs

We have touched upon the notion of auditory topoi several times, but have not yet explained it in more detail. One of us has distinguished four auditory topoi – intrusive sound, sensational sound, comforting sound and sinister sound – in a study of public debates on the problem of noise in Western societies in the long twentieth century, *Mechanical Sound*.²² This typology of auditory topoi, inspired in part by work of Michael Cowan²³ and Philipp Schweighauser²⁴ on the textualization of sound and noise in poetry and literature, originally drew on an analysis of quotes in Western, largely realist novels published between 1875 and 1975 on urban, industrial or mechanical sounds, often involving sounds that resulted from modern technologies. It was possible to distinguish the four ideal-types by classifying these quotes in terms of the *quantity*

21 Annelies Jacobs focused on four episodes in the history of Amsterdam, 1875-1895, 1918-1940, 1940-1945, and 2005-2010, periods known to display important transitions in urban sound. Newspapers, travel-stories, diaries, city council reports and police archives have been her most important sources, see Jacobs 2013 forthcoming. Andreas Fickers studied three different types of radio plays produced since the late 1920s: radio plays as »theater of the blind«, adaptations of literary works for radio, and experimental radio plays such as »sound portraits«, »sound montage«, »sound symphonies« and »acoustical films« (see Döhl 1985, 40-59, and Cory 1994, 337). Jasper Aalbers studied a selection of 95 films produced in the 1930s, 1950s, 1970s and 1990s, and set in Amsterdam, London or Berlin. See Aalbers 2013 forthcoming.

22 Bijsterveld 2008.

23 Cowan 2006.

24 Schweighauser 2006.

of sound-sources described, the *distance* between the protagonist or narrator and the sound, the *direction* of the sound, and its *rhythm*.

		Evaluation of sound		
Negative			Positive	
<i>Intrusive</i>		<i>Sinister</i>	<i>Sensational</i>	<i>Comforting</i>
Quantity	Multitude	Single	Multitude	Single
Distance	Close	Diverse	Diverse	Far
Direction	→ subject	Unclear	→ and ←	Unspecified
Rhythm	Irregular or Unpredictable	Unspecified	Regular	Regular or Unspecified

Auditory Topoi of Technology (Western novels, 1875-1975)

Intrusive sound is expressed as a multitude of different sounds or a series of recurrent sounds. They invade or threaten the existence of a vulnerable or fragile quality, such as nature, harmony or one's heart, mind, body or security. The noise frightens the protagonist and seems to move ever closer, if not penetrating him or her. *Sensational* sound is the positive counterpoint of intrusive sound. Like intrusive sound, sensational sound refers to a multitude of sounds, such as the crowds of the city or traffic. Unlike intrusive sound, however, the sources of sensational sound can be felt both close and rather far from the narrator or protagonist, and, in all cases, they fill the environment and surround or »lift« the subject in an enthusing way. *Comforting* sound, like sensational sound, has a positive ring. Yet unlike sensational sound, a comforting one is a single source of sound, or a single type of source. It is often a sound heard at a certain distance, usually from an unspecified direction, but even when described as nearby it does not infringe on the narrator's or protagonist's subjective experience. In all cases the shelter, security and harmony of the narrator or protagonist's direct environment (the bed, the house) are highlighted. A *sinister* sound, finally, is usually a single sound within a more or less silent environment. It functions as an ominous sign of what is ahead. Its distance may be close or indeterminate, and its direction is often unclear. It is the sound of suspense, like a creaky door in a haunted house.

The variety of sounds categorized as belonging to one topos or another suggests that such stereotypical expressions of sound in literature are more or less independent from the source of the sound. The sinister sound, for instance, refers to both human and non-

human or mechanical and non-mechanical sources of sound. At the very same time, however, the quotes analyzed highlight particular aspects of mechanical sound. In the topoi of both sensational and intrusive sound, it is the multitude, movement and continuity of the sounds of traffic and machinery that increase the tension. Although the single scream of a tramcar or whip-crack can be striking, it is the recurring character of the phenomenon and the mix of all sounds together that heighten the drama in particular. In the case of sensational sound, it is the collective and ongoing rhythm that contributes to the textual staging of their positive effects. In the case of intrusive sound, it is often the irregularity, chaos, and unpredictability of sounds – the opposite of cadence and rhythm – that contributes to the dramatic performance.

The presentation of distance and direction do additional »dramatic work«. The continuity of comforting sounds creates a soothing hum, but their distance and unspecified direction ensure their innocence. In contrast, the movement of sounds towards the narrator helps to stylize sound as intrusive noise, whereas lack of knowledge of the exact location and source of sound contributes to its dramatization as being a malevolent or creepy sound. Mechanical repetition, however, is responsible for the inexorability *and* the untiring animation of sound, and referring to the continuous character of mechanical sounds helps conjuring up the soothing spirit of the comforting sound, the dynamics of the sensational sound, and the inescapability of the intrusive sound. Given the »mechanized« character of the twentieth-century city, it is likely that the auditory topoi of the intrusive, sensational, comforting and sinister sound are also detectable in the representation of urban soundscapes in historical texts, radio plays and films.

We have gradually acknowledged, however, that our research in »Soundscapes of the Urban Past« should be equally open to what the representation of voices in the urban context can do. As Greg Goodale shows in his recent book *Sonic Persuasion. Reading Sound in the Recorded Age*, the use of dialect on early twentieth-century American sound recordings of dialogue often signified urban immigrants, and played out elite pronunciation against lower-class dialect and immigrant slang.²⁵ And Philip Schweighauser has explained how American writers in late nineteenth century and after recorded such new immigrant voices in their novels. Often these writers emphasized the »obscurity of foreign-sounding speech«, as if immigrant voices produced »nothing but unintelligible noise«, or depicted their voices as excessively loud, hoarse and croaking, ways of »acoustic profiling« along the lines of class and race.²⁶ In case the writers furnished a particular protagonist with a consistent acoustic profile, Schweighauser even speaks of an »audio-

25 Goodale 2010, 16-26.

26 Schweighauser 2006, 62, 65.

graph«, a characterization technique that endows fictional bodies with a set of distinctive acoustic properties designed to position characters with regard to the ensemble of social facts and practices that constitute the fictional world they inhabit. These acoustic properties may range from characters' accents, dialects, or intonation patterns to the sounds produced by their laughter, snoring, or the acoustic impact of their footsteps. The positioning accomplished via audiographs may involve value judgments on the part of other characters, narrators, and implied authors as well as implied and empirical readers.²⁷

So on top of the conceptual and methodological equipment we started with – auditory topoi, keynote sounds, sound marks and sonic icons – we took audiographs and acoustic profiling of language and voice on board in order to study the staging of urban sound. In our next chapter, we will explain which narrative tools were additionally important to understand how writers and makers of radio and film »captured« the urban sonic environment. Finally, we had a special interest in films that had their counterpart in radio plays and novels, such as *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, as this facilitated our comparison across different media. Our chapter entitled »Sounds Familiar« will discuss the issues of »intermediality« associated with such re-use of narrations.²⁸

4. An Ears-on Experience and the Organization of this Book

As explained above, our interest in the staging of urban sound in text, radio and film has been driven both by the idea that such cultural heritage is a significant entrance into *representations of the urban past*, and that such representations, in turn, are markers of cultural shifts and variations in *urban identities*. A third motivation, not mentioned yet, has been to inspire the employment of such cultural heritage in history *museums* aiming to inform their audiences on the changing meanings of sound in the urban context. Our project and book, we hope, may enrich the ways in which museums present, and again stage, cultural and urban history.

In recent years, museums have fully embraced multimedia in order to attract new audiences. Exhibitions, however, are still predominantly visual in character, even though this book's next chapter will start with examples of auditory exhibitions. It has been one of the aims of our project to create an installation at the Amsterdam Museum²⁹ which, in

27 Schweighauser 2006, 71.

28 Rajewski 2005.

29 Formerly: Amsterdam Historical Museum.

an interactive manner, presents our knowledge of changing urban soundscapes and the ways in which they have been perceived. Such an exhibition can also literally speak to audiences with visual impairments, a growing group of people in the graying West. The installation entails a reflexive simulation of past soundscapes of Amsterdam that will be presented in a closed room, with pictures serving as decoration for sounds instead of the other way around. We will make the simulation with help of *Virtual Soundscapes™ Technology (VST)*. VST is a digital tool developed by the American company Harris, Miller, Miller & Hansen Inc. for simulating changes in sonic environments. Normally, the tool enables citizens to listen to virtual sonic environments such as a highway lane, and to the effect of interventions – such as noise barriers – on these soundscapes. We aim to apply VST in such a manner that it cannot only simulate *future* soundscapes, but also *past* soundscapes. Doing so requires the recording of obsolete technologies' sounds, and asks for extensive historical research into past conditions and cultural contexts. In contrast to recordings available in sound archives, the tool enables the interactive re-enactment of changes in soundscapes by gradually adding and removing layers of sound, and the reconstruction of masking, shielding and reverberation effects. Our installation will also be a *reflexive* one, by which we mean that we do not merely provide the museum visitors with sounds, but also with information about how historical actors perceived and gave meaning to these sounds.

It is by no means self-evident, however, how such information can be best and most effectively offered to museum visitors. In the Amsterdam case, we have developed, in addition to the virtual soundscapes, three radio play-like storylines for three episodes in the history of Amsterdam – the late nineteenth century, the interwar years and World War II – that convey how Amsterdam residents gave meaning to their changing sonic environments. At the symposium *Staging Sound in the Museum: The Ears-on Experience of History* which took place at the Institute for Image and Sound, Hilversum, the Netherlands on February 3, 2012, we discussed many other options, several of which will be discussed in our next chapter, »Shifting Sounds«. The main thrust of that chapter is, however, to offer museum curators inspiration for presenting auditory histories by showing how authors of texts and makers of radio plays and films used particular strategies for capturing and articulating such soundscapes. In doing so, »Shifting Sounds« both aims to contribute to a comparative study of staging urban sound across different media, *and* to be a source of inspiration to the museum world.

This book has been organized around three major chapters: »Shifting Sounds«, »Sounds Familiar« and »Sonic Artefacts«. The first two were written by the core members of the Soundscapes project, the first with Karin Bijsterveld and the second with Andreas Fickers as lead author, and both chapters have a comparative ambition. While »Shifting Sounds« unravels narrative tools that make urban auditory experiences *tangible* for a

few moments, »Sounds Familiar« aims to study intermediality through the lens of sound by focusing on and comparing the staging of urban sound in the novel, radio play, film and television series *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Its perhaps surprising argument reveals that the richest expression of urban sonic experiences is found in the novel, rather than in the radio play, film and television adaptations, despite their reliance on actual sounds. We asked Carolyn Birdsall to contribute the third major chapter, »Sonic Artefacts«, because we believed it to be worthwhile to study the staging of urban sounds not only in radio fiction, but also in radio documentary. Birdsall zooms in on the reality codes and thus the sonic *artefacts* of early German radio documentary. Just like the other key chapters, this chapter has a media-comparative element. It does not only show how conventions from visual documentary informed radio documentary, but also how visually based technique such as *bird's eye perspective* found its auditory counterpart through a particular use of the microphone in radio.

After the three main chapters were completed, we asked several scholars from Sound and Media Studies to write *expansions* to these chapters. Historian of the Senses Mark M. Smith, Film Studies scholar Patricia Pisters, and Radio studies experts Evi Karanathasopoulou and Andrew Crisell responded to »Shifting Sounds«, »Sounds Familiar« and »Sonic Artefacts«, respectively. Smith has taken the opportunity to call out his fellow sound scholars to make their ears wet and listen to the sounds of urban water more carefully. Pisters brings her expertise on film theory to the floor to tackle issues such as the use of film music as expressionist sound, gendered representations of voice and the territorializing effects of sound. In response to Birdsall's chapter, Karanathasopoulou and Crisell suggest to move beyond studying radio for how it represents the city through sound and equally focus on how it has contributed to an urban aesthetics more widely. The three main chapters and their expansions constitute the first three parts of our book. The last, fourth part harbours three contributions that each reflect on our book's key theme in a rather fundamental way. Sound and Media Studies scholar Jonathan Sterne critically takes up the longstanding debate on the virtues and vices of the notion of »soundscape« itself. Interestingly, he sheds new light on the work by the author to which R. Murray Schafer himself credits the notion of soundscape, and how this work informed Schafer's take on it. But even more importantly, he contextualizes the notion by linking it to the rise of hifi stereo sound in the 1960s. This justifies, a posteriori, our use of the concept of soundscape in a book about the staging of sound in media productions: speaking about soundscapes is particularly topical and useful when analyzing *mediations* of our sonic environments.

In the subsequent contribution, anthropologist of auditory culture Holger Schulze unravels and reflects on the experience of listening to museum audio guides. Rather than discussing the content of specific audio guides, he draws on phenomenology, anthropol-

ogy and the notion of *dispositif* to clarify what happens with our body when we listen to audio guides. He shows, in fact, how complex it is to wander through a museum and orient ourselves in time and space when also listening to recorded sound.

Our book ends with silence. In the last chapter, Ross Brown discusses the two minutes of silence on the Eleventh of the Eleventh of the Eleventh. It is in these two minutes, in London as well as in similar rituals in Amsterdam and other Western cities, that we experience the city anew by listening to its silence. Radio and televised recordings and broadcasts of these silences in fact stage city noises once again, albeit in subdued and perhaps even more telling ways.

5. Acknowledgements and Concluding Remark

The research project from which this book originated has been funded by the *Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO)* in the context of its research programme on Cultural Dynamics. We would like to thank NWO for its interest in our idea to study mediated sound as an alternative and intriguing entrance into the study of cultural change. We are also highly grateful to the *Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences of Maastricht University* for enabling us to organize the workshop Soundscapes of the Urban Past, where we discussed the chapters, expansions and reflections for this book. In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to photographer Moniek Wegdam. On February 13, 2012, she took the photo that is now on our book's cover. It shows the Dam, Amsterdam's most famous square, from exactly the same point of view as George Hendrik Breitner painted it in the years between 1895-1898. Feel free to compare the photograph from 2012 with the painting from the late 1890s. It will give you a first, highly mediated impression of the differences between the Amsterdam soundscapes of today and those of the late nineteenth century. What do you think: was it more silent back then? Or should we listen to the sounds as mediated by our cultural heritage rather differently? This concern is the topic of our next chapter.



Figure 1: George Hendrik Breitner, *Gezicht op de Dam* (Amsterdam, 1895-1898)

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